A

STUDIES IN POETRY AND CRITICISM

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STUDIES IN POETRY AND CRITICISM

BY

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μαλακὰ μὲν φρονέων ἐσλοῖς
τραχὺς δὲ παλιγκότοις ἔφεδρος
PINDAR

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TO

SIR OLIVER LODGE,

WHOSE SYMPATHIES EXTEND EVEN TO TRIFLES

LIKE THESE, THIS VOLUME

IS INSCRIBED.

PREFACE

THOUGH the essays here collected have, with one exception, appeared in current periodicals and reviews, they are not merely reprints. Most of them have been much enlarged, one or two have been almost re-written and all have been carefully revised. Though the subjects of which they treat are various, I venture to hope that a certain unity may be discerned in them, arising from an endeavour to regard both criticism and poetry more seriously than is at present the fashion. The first seems to be resolving itself almost universally into a loose record of personal impressions, the second to be regarded as little more than a medium of aesthetic trifling. In the wretched degradation into which *belles lettres* have fallen we seem to be losing all sense of the importance once attached to them, when critics were scholars and poets something more than aesthetes. In the essay on Longinus an attempt has, therefore, been made to recall criticism to its old sources and traditions, and thus to illustrate how, if it is to be what it is of power to be, it must rest on far more solid foundations than undisciplined and uninstructed susceptibility,—on the foundations, that is to say, laid by its classical masters.

So, too, in the essay on the True Functions of Poetry I have ventured to re-state and bring home what once were truisms, but what will now appear—and to too many—paradox and extravagance.

How far my estimates of the poets whom I have passed in review will recommend themselves to others I know not, but this I should like to say: I hope emphasis will not be mistaken for dogma. Such estimates, even were they those of a critic entitled to far more authority than I can pretend to possess, must be experimental, and can have no approximation to finality. But it is right that when well-weighed they should be attempted. Thus only can the literary product of each age be sifted and proved, thus only the balance at last adjusted.

My thanks are due to the proprietors of the *North American Review* for permission to use the articles on the Poets and Poetry of America; to Mr. John Murray for permission to use the articles on Longinus which appeared originally in the *Quarterly Review*, and on Byron; to the editor of the *Contemporary Review* for permission to reproduce that on the poetry of Mr. Gerald Massey; to the editor and proprietor of the *National Review* for allowing me the use of that on Miltonic Myths. The original sketch of the essay on Mr. William Watson's poetry appeared in the *Westminster Gazette*, but it has been much enlarged and, indeed, almost re-written. The paper on the True Functions of Poetry has not been printed before.

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ESSAYS

I

THE POETRY AND POETS OF AMERICA

THERE goes a story—I had it, if I remember rightly, from the late Professor Nichol—that the editor of the *Golden Treasury of English Poetry* was asked by an American lady why he did not supplement that work by a Golden Treasury of American Poetry. "American Poetry!" he exclaimed with supercilious surprise. "Why, who are your poets?" "Well, among others," she replied, "we have Chaucer, Shakespeare and Milton." It was a retort as fair as it was wise; no paradox, though it seems one; not wit, but truth. And although a review of American poetry is necessarily concerned only with the "others" referred to, we cannot insist too strongly on the relation of those others to the patriarchs of Anglo-Saxon song—on the essential unity of almost all of what finds expression in the poetry of England and in the poetry of America, in the genius which inspires both, in the art which informs both. The great schism of 1776 was our own mad work. A war, as purely internecine as that in which the Roundheads and Cavaliers confronted each other at Marston Moor and at Naseby, was

forced on the descendants of both in another hemisphere. The sword, once drawn, was not sheathed till England was humiliated and America independent.

What followed, followed inevitably. With the Atlantic intervening, with the Puritan and republican elements in overwhelming ascendency, with colossal potentialities of expansion and development, with much that was irreconcilable with subordination to the Mother Country rapidly defining itself, reunion under a common flag, even had it been desired, became impossible. But, if the effect of the great schism was, during many years, to alienate, and to canker; if it sowed the seeds of all that has since resulted from mutual mistrust and jealousy, from conflicting interests, from rival aims and competitive ambition, it has never extended to what constitutes the bond of bonds—the inheritance of common blood, of common creeds political as well as religious, of a common language, of a common literature.

O Englishmen! in hope and creed,
In blood and tongue our brothers!
We too are heirs of Runnymede;
And Shakespeare's fame and Cromwell's deed
Are not alone our mother's.

"Thicker than water," in one rill
    Through centuries of story
Our Saxon blood has flowed, and still
We share with you its good and ill,
    The shadow and the glory.

Joint heirs and kinsfolk, leagues of wave
    Nor length of years can part us:
Your right is ours to shrine and grave,
The common freehold of the brave,
    The gift of saints and martyrs.

In these words, Whittier gave expression to sentiments which perhaps appealed more directly to his fellow countrymen generally fifty years ago than they do to-day; but to-day and for all time will they find response, will they be very creed, wherever, in our mutual relations, the humanities prevail.

In estimating the achievement of America in poetry, it is very necessary to bear all this in mind. It is not by regarding it as a rival counterpart of our own, which in some respects it is, and by continually instituting, either directly or tacitly, comparisons and parallels with its English archetypes and analogues, which it necessarily does invite, that we can possibly do it justice. For by such a method the whole focus of criticism is deranged. We expect more than it is reasonable to expect, and are disappointed; we find much for which our criteria are insufficient, and are perplexed. And the English people have assuredly not done justice to the poetry of America. Our leading critics have always regarded it pretty much as the Greek critics regarded the poetry of the Romans; for what was indigenous in it they had no taste, from what reminded them of their own artists they turned with contemptuous indifference. The silence of Dionysius and Longinus about the poems which are the glory of Roman literature, is not only exactly analogous to the silence of Arnold, Pater, and their schools about the poems which are the pride of Transatlantic literature, but it sprang from the same causes. Where originality existed, it was originality which did not appeal to them; where comparison with the genius and art with which they were familiar, and from which their

own touchstones and standards were derived, was challenged or could be instituted, sensibly or insensibly it was instituted, and inferiority stood revealed. A Greek who expected from Horace what he found in Sappho and Pindar, and an Englishman who expects from Bryant and Longfellow what he finds in Wordsworth and Tennyson, might be forgiven for being disappointed. But, for all that, Horace is Horace, and Bryant and Longfellow are true poets.

Two other causes have contributed to the underestimation of American poetry in England, and for one of them the Americans themselves are, I fear, responsible. I mean the prominence which has unhappily been given to what is essentially mediocre and inferior, sometimes by indiscreet and absurd eulogy, and sometimes by associating it in Anthologies and Critiques with what is excellent. We find, for instance, in Mr. Tyler's otherwise admirable Literary History of the American Revolution a lamentable want of balance wherever poetry is in question. Ballads and political songs, bad enough for the bellman, are described as "worthy of Tyrtaeus"; lyrics and other poems which never, even at their best, have any other than historical interest, are praised in terms which would be exaggerated if applied to the poetry of great masters. No critic could mention the name of Mr. Stedman without respect for his immense knowledge and his catholic taste; but I venture to think that the scale on which his justly celebrated *Anthology* is planned has been signally unfortunate for the promotion of his object —namely, to bring home to the English-speaking

race the merits of American poetry. Most people will, I fear, lay it down with something of the impression with which the weary scholar closes thankfully the tomes of the Poetae Latini Minores, so immensely does what is commonplace and of every degree of mediocrity predominate over what has merit and distinction. Had Mr. Stedman confined his plan, I cannot forbear adding, to the inclusion of the best, and the best only, he would have had no difficulty in finding material for a charming volume. As it is, his collection is only likely to confirm the impression which it was his idea to correct.

Another cause affecting the reputation of American poetry in England, is the prominence which has been given, not to what represents it at its best or in relation to its finer qualities, but to what appeals to the multitude. *The Raven* and *The Bells* are anything but typical of the peculiar genius of Poe; but *The Raven* and *The Bells* have overshadowed everything else which he has written in verse. Neither Bryant nor Whittier has fared any better; what is most commonplace in them has been most popular. Lowell's fame rests almost entirely on what is most broadly humorous in the *Biglow Papers*. Holmes is associated with comical trifles like *The One Horse Shay*, as Bret Harte is with *Truthful James* and *The Heathen Chinee*. Longfellow has been described as the "Laureate of the Middle Classes," and every one knows what that implies. Nor is this all. In many, and perhaps in many more than we suspect, the impression made by the aggressive eccentricities of Whitman and his school, on the one hand, and the florid extravagance of the school of Joaquin

Miller, on the other, has so predominated over the impression made by the true masters of American song, that work as little representative of what is best in American poetry as it is of what is best in our own poetry has come to be regarded as essentially typical. And so it is, and from these causes chiefly, that England, as a nation, has not done justice to American poetry.

To a survey of that poetry, a brief sketch of its origin and early history is a necessary prelude; for its characteristics are to be traced to conditions and circumstances long preceding its articulate expression. Schiller, in a famous lyric, has described the austerities amid which the German muse was cradled and nurtured, and attributed its lofty spirit to their severe discipline; but austerities sterner still tempered the infancy of the American muse.

In the zenith of our own Golden Age of poetry and letters, when Shakespeare had just finished *King Lear* and Bacon was meditating the *Instauratio Magna*, the first pioneers of American civilization landed at Jamestown. Michael Drayton in a hearty and spirited ode had bade them Godspeed, and blended with his blessing a prophecy that the New World would not be without its bards. But upwards of a hundred and sixty years were to pass before that prophecy was even partially to be fulfilled. During those years, it would be scarcely possible to conceive conditions more unpropitious to the production of poetry, or more propitious to the development of those heroic virtues which poetry loves to celebrate, and of that "character," as Emerson calls it, which is the noblest substratum of poetry itself. The frag-

ment of Percy, and the narratives of Captain John Smith and of William Strachey, record the storm and stress of the early part of this period, the period which witnessed the settlement of Virginia. Then came the landing of the Pilgrim Fathers, and, amid hardships unspeakable, preceding and ensuing, the foundation of New Plymouth. With the foundation of Massachusetts which followed, began the history of all that is implied and involved in the establishment and constitution of New England. In the South, also, there had been the same activity. The colonization of Virginia had been succeeded by the foundation of Maryland and the two Carolinas. Round the Delaware, New York, and Chesapeake Bays, the Middle States had been gradually formed. All this had been a work of Herculean labour, absorbing every energy, and taxing to the uttermost man's powers of effort and endurance. Forests had to be cleared; marshes to be drained; the savage aborigines to be kept at bay. Carrying their lives in their hands, inured to privation and distress in their severest forms, these hardy and dauntless adventurers lived daily face to face with the grimmest realities of life. The toil of the pioneer accomplished, other toils not less arduous and incessant awaited them in the duties incumbent on the citizens of infant States, the duties of the builder, the agriculturist, the legislator. Then came the wars with the Indians. Incessantly harassed by the raids of these murderous enemies, always on the watch for mischief and assassination, in 1637 they brought the first of these wars to a climax, by the annihilation of the Pequots, men, women and children, a scene of almost unparalleled

horror.[1] Still more terrible was the second war in 1674, which lasted two years, and in which Massachusetts was overrun by the savages, some eighty towns raided, some twelve totally destroyed, and ten in every hundred of the men of military age either killed outright, or dragged off to a death of agony by torture.[2] Nothing in history is more thrilling than some of the contemporary narratives which place us in the midst of these frightful experiences of the Fathers of Virginia and of New England.

In this iron school was tempered the character of the forefathers of those who were to create American literature. Nor must we forget who these men originally were. However mixed was the population of the States in the South and of the middle group, the founders of New England were almost entirely what that name implies—Englishmen: but they were Englishmen of a peculiar type. The first emigrants had quitted Europe because of their dissatisfaction with the regulations and ritual of the Established Church. The successive emigrants between 1630 and 1640 consisted of those who, despairing of the cause of religious and civil liberty under Charles I, had left the Mother Country in impatient indignation, to realize what they desired in a community of their own founding. In spite of many differences of opinion, these men, like their brother Puritans in England, had a common character. In their religious convictions enthusiasts and fanatics, with the Bible and the Bible only as their guide and rule,

[1] See Street's spirited poem, *The Settler*, Griswold's *Poets and Poetry of America*, pp. 399-410.

[2] See Dwight's poem. *Ibid.*, pp. 14-17.

they sought in its precepts and in its examples all that they desired to learn and all that they aspired to become. Almost everything they did, almost everything they meditated, took its ply and its colour from this enthusiasm. But the gracious philanthropy of the New Testament appealed to them far less than the sterner teachings of the Old. Here they found justification for the fierce intolerance which, in their uncompromising creed, ranked with the cardinal virtues, for the rancour with which they regarded the enemies of God, and for the many ruthless deeds which were, no doubt, forced upon them, but which appear to have cost them so little compunction. And here, too, they found the patterns on which their lives were fashioned, individually as well as collectively. Never since the days of the Patriarchs did men live, in a sense so literally true, "as ever in their great Task-master's eye," or find such sustainment in the sense of duty fulfilled, and in simple faith.

To enter their homes is recalling the world of the Chosen People. Each busy day, each frugal meal, opened and closed with prayer. Next to God, in a child's eyes, stood his parents, and next to his parents, his elders. Frivolity, irreverence were almost unknown, and anything approaching to their expression, either in word or act, was set down with a severity strangely out of proportion to the offence. To be abstemious and chaste, to speak the truth at any cost and under any stress, to regard the world's gauds and the world's honours with contempt, to be patient in tribulation and sober in prosperity, to recognize in conscience the veritable voice of the Al-

mighty and the obligation to obey that voice as man's paramount duty—all this was of the essence of their ethics. Public life had the same cast. Their very government was a theocracy. At the head of it the God of Christian faith, its magistrates His servants, its citizens those only who had been initiated through Baptism and the reception of the Lord's Supper. In Virginia, indeed, the other distributing centre of the English race, becoming as it did an asylum for Cavaliers, broken aristocrats, and Church of England men, society and the temper of those who composed it presented a remarkable contrast to all this. But, mighty as the part has been which Virginia has played in politics, in war, and in commerce, she has been no factor in the spiritual and intellectual life of America, which was to take its bent from her austerer sons in the North.

Thus was produced, partly from what was inherited from their forefathers, and partly from what was the result of the long probation and discipline of those iron times, a race of men the like of which this world has never seen. Indelible is the impression which they have made on all who have contributed, and on all which has been contributed, either in politics or in literature, to the glory of America. We trace their lineaments in every great statesman and in every great soldier who has succeeded them in the Western World, whether from the South or from the North. Their purity, their earnestness, their simplicity, the noble ardour of their love of liberty, their God-fearing spirit and profound sense of man's religious and moral responsibilities, permeate, or if they do not permeate,

at least colour, almost every characteristic contribution, both in verse or prose, to American literature. Even where their theology had ceased to appeal, and the light had faded out of Puritan orthodoxy, Puritan ethics and the Puritan temper still prevailed. Franklin, Emerson, and Hawthorne were as essentially the offspring of these men as William Bradford and Thomas Hooker were their representatives. When poetry awoke, and it was long before it awoke, it was their soul which suffused it. Their soul has suffused it ever since.

To the influence of these silent forefathers, American poetry owes its distinguishing notes—it has them in common with the characteristic poetry of Germany—its simplicity, its purity, its wholesomeness. No American poet has ever dared, or perhaps even desired, to do what, to the shame of England and France, their poets have so often done—what is mourned by Dryden:

> O gracious God! how oft have we
> Profan'd Thy heavenly gift of Poesy,
> Made prostitute and profligate the muse
> Debas'd to each obscene and impious use.

We should search in vain through the voluminous records of American song for a poem by any poet of note or merit, with one exception who is an exception in everything, glorifying animalism or blasphemy, or attempting to throw a glamour over impurity and vice.

But the men to whom American poetry was indirectly to owe so much contributed, as might have been expected, nothing to its treasures. There came over with them more than one distinguished scholar,

and many who either were, or were to become, theologians of eminence; men, too, full of enthusiasm for education, to whom America owes her first schools, her first libraries, her first university; but no one, with the solitary exception of George Sandys, who carried in him the seeds of poetry.

Nor was the period which succeeded the establishment of the new communities more propitious to literary activity. Constant friction with England, chiefly in connection with the royal governors, constant disputes among the States about boundaries, and with the aborigines about commercial affairs—these were their occupations. Then came the coalition with Great Britain against the French and their Indian allies—a momentous crisis, culminating in the conquest of Canada and the preservation of the Colonies from subjection to France. Seven years afterwards followed the epoch-making Revolution which transformed Anglo-America from a congeries of scattered communities into a mighty nation, and which for a time effectually hushed everything except the voice of the orator, the tumult of debate, the roar of cannon, and the myriad clamour of the popular press. That story need not be told here; it is a story no Englishman will ever love to tell or to remember. To America, it was all that Marathon and Salamis were temporarily to Hellas; all that the loss of her Continental possessions was, permanently, to England. Regarded in relation to its effects, immediate and subsequent, and in relation to its examples and its lessons, it is perhaps the greatest single event in the history of mankind. That it should not have awakened the American

muse seems at first sight surprising, for it opened every spring of poetic inspiration. It appealed, and appealed thrillingly, to passion, to sentiment, to imagination. In no lyric ever burned more fire than glowed in the speeches of Patrick Henry, of James Otis, of Richard Henry Lee, of Alexander Hamilton. No epic has celebrated scenes which surpass in impressiveness and picturesqueness the scenes which America witnessed between 1775 and 1782, or idealized heroes of nobler and grander moral temper than most of those who shaped the destinies of the Western World at that tremendous crisis.

Still lyric, still epic, still poetry in every form of its genuine expression, slept. But, if we reflect, this need not surprise us. Wordsworth has admirably defined poetry as emotion recollected in tranquillity. As men who make history seldom write it, so, when poetry is expressing itself in action, it has little need to express itself in words. The achievements and character of those who welded America into a nation were of a piece with all that had originally fashioned, moulded and preserved the several communities now federated. Both were works to which every citizen contributed, and in which every citizen took absorbing interest. As a rule, the Puritan despised poetry, even when he had leisure for it. Hymns and Biblical paraphrases, indeed, he tolerated, patronized, and, if he had the ability, produced; but when it went beyond these it became vanity, and his sympathy with it ceased. What need of poetry to inspire, when the voice of Duty, when the voice of God Himself, was calling? Of what worth the tribute of song to "live battle odes,

whose lines were steel and fire"; the homage of mere aesthetic appreciation to virtues so practical, to achievements so real? But there was another reason, and perhaps the chief one, for the silence of song. The triumph of the warrior and of the statesman could have seemed no triumph to the poet. To him England was all that Athens, all that Rome, had been to his brethren in ancient times, the object of his profoundest reverence, of his fondest affection, the consecrated home of the lords of his art, and fraught with memories inexpressibly dear. Before, an exile, he was now an alien. Nothing, then, can be more natural than that this revolution should have failed to awaken poetry.

The poetry which the Revolution could not inspire was not likely to be inspired by the period which immediately succeeded. The history of America between 1782 and 1820 is the history of the most distracted time in her annals. All was fever, all was tumult. The old world was passing away, the new world had not defined itself. While the fierce conflicts between Federalists and Democrats tore and perplexed her central councils, dividing the whole Republic into hostile camps, feuds and disputes peculiar to themselves kept the separate States in constant turmoil. The alliance against England, instead of conducing to permanent harmony, seemed only to have the effect of aggravating their differences. To all these distractions were added the distractions involved by America's association with that mighty European revolution, the torch of which had been lighted by her own; by the relations with Napoleon, by the second war

with Great Britain. The termination of that war in 1814 marks no epoch in American history, but it ushered in the period which witnessed the birth of her Poetry, not in the historical—for she had already produced much—but in the true sense of the term.

Nothing more deplorable than the verses which have come down to us from the earliest colonists and from the ante-Revolutionary age could be conceived. They consist chiefly of paraphrases of the Psalms, such as find expression in such doggerel as the *Bay Psalm-Book*, of descriptive poems and of miscellaneous trifles of a serious cast, and were the work, generally speaking, of Puritan divines, schoolmasters, and scribbling governors. They may be dismissed without ceremony; for to settle the relative proportion of worthlessness between Benjamin Thomson, "punning" Byles, Michael Wigglesworth, who, "when unable to preach by an affection of the lungs,

> In costly verse and most laborious rhymes
> Did dish up truths right worthy our regard,"

Nathaniel Evans and Mrs. Anne Bradstreet, the "mirror of her age," as, unhappily, in poetry she was, would indeed be a futile task. A little later we find a group of versifiers who, in their several ways, almost rise to the dignity of mediocrity. Such would be John Trumbull, who began his career with a poem bearing the ominous title of the *Progress of Dulness*, but whose *McFingal* is a very respectable imitation of *Hudibras*, containing original touches not unworthy of its model. Timothy Dwight, who,

under the guise of independence, sometimes echoes Pope, sometimes Beattie, sometimes Cowper, but who in another strain produced a spirited lyric *Columbia*, which long endeared his name to his countrymen, and in one of his poems, *The Conquest of Canaan*, an epic in eleven books, stumbled on a few lines which pleased Cowper.[1]

No such exploit enlivens the intolerable epic and the still more intolerable mock heroic, the *Columbiad* and *Hasty Pudding*, of Joel Barlow, in the first of which he certainly disputes the palm of somniferousness with our own Blackmore. Nor can anything be said for the smooth platitudes of Alsop, of Honeywood, and of Clifton. One poet only in this period had a touch of genius; and he was, as his

[1] Cowper reviewed the poem in the *Analytical Review* when it was reprinted by T. Johnson in 1788. See Southey's *Cowper*, vol. vii. 314-319. The lines which he pronounced to be "highly poetical," are:

Now Night in vestments robed of cloudy dye,
With sable grandeur clothed the orient sky,
Impell'd the sun obsequious to her reign,
Down the far mountains to the Western main;
With magic hand becalmed the solemn even,
And drew day's curtain from the spangled heaven.
At once the planets sail'd around her throne:
At once ten thousand worlds in splendour shone;
Behind her car the morn's expanded eye
Rose from a cloud, and looked around the sky:
Far up th' immense her train sublimely roll,
And dance and triumph round the lucid pole.
Faint shine the fields beneath the shadowy ray,
Slow fades the glimmering of the west away;
To sleep the tribes retire: and not a sound
Flows through the air or murmurs on the ground.

name implies, of French extraction. In the too voluminous poetry of Philip Freneau there are a few flowers, somewhat wan and frail it is true, but, like his *Wild Honeysuckle*, worth the gathering. There is a note of distinction in the verses *To Neversink Heights*, *To the Dying Indian*, *The Indian Burying-ground*,—a line from which, as Professor Nichol points out, Campbell condescended to appropriate, —and in the verses to *The Hurricane*, but he is never sure and generally trivial.

The numerous patriotic songs inspired by the struggles with England and the realization of American nationality, such as Robert Treat Paine's *Adams and Liberty*, Hopkinson's *Hail Columbia*, the anonymous *Yankee Man-of-War* and Key's *Star-spangled Banner*, are not without ring and lilt, but owe their charm chiefly to their sentiment. To one of them higher praise than this is due. *The American Flag* of Joseph Rodman Drake is effective rhetoric, a little strained, perhaps, but instinct with true enthusiasm.

And now, with surprising rapidity, these matin chirps became full quire. As we advance in the

[1] Freneau's stanza is:

By midnight moons o'er moistening dews
In vestments for the chase arrayed,
The hunter still the deer pursues,
The hunter and the deer a shade.

In *O'Connor's Child*, Campbell writes:

Now on the grass-green turf he sits,
His tassell'd horn beside him laid,
Now o'er the hills in chase he flits,
The hunter and the deer a shade.

second quarter of the century, our ears are almost deafened by the chorus of songsters which greet us on all sides, some from the Southern, some from the Middle, some from the Northern States. This activity is, no doubt, to be traced mainly to the progress of education and culture, for which there was more leisure, and which had flourishing centres at the universities. The result of this was that the poetry of England was studied with sympathy and enthusiasm, and the natural consequence was imitation. Young men acquired the same facility in composing English verses, almost indistinguishable, so far as form was concerned, from their originals, as clever undergraduates at Oxford and Cambridge composed Ovidian elegiacs and Virgilian hexameters. As these imitations were occasionally produced, not merely by men of talent and of such accomplishments as memory and industry can acquire, but by men of sensibility, with some of the qualities of genius, and even a spark of genius itself, some of this poetry, if only just rising above mediocrity, is far from contemptible. It is most interesting when it is touched with what is essentially native, with ancestral moral enthusiasm, with character, with the impressions made by American tradition, scenery and life; in other words, where it differentiates itself from English models. Mere imitation, with nothing superinduced, is perhaps most conspicuous in Hillhouse's stilted and wretched concoction in travesty from Milton, Young and Pollock; in Sprague's bombastic Pindarics and parrot echoes of the heroics of Pope's school; and in others, who need not be specified. In Allston, in Pierpont, in

Brainard, and in Percival, we have the most conspicuous and most comprehensive representatives of the poetry of the best culture, though the last two are unconscionably careless and diffuse in style, while the best poem of the first, *The Sylphs of the Seasons*, is too much an echo of Burns's *Vision*. Carlos Wilcox, though his blank verse, which is a bad imitation of Thomson's, is intolerable, deserves notice for his minute and accurate description of nature, closely recalling, as Street did afterwards, our own Richard Jefferies's prose studies. In Paulding, Halleck, Drake and John Howard Payne, the author of the world-famous lyric, "Home, Sweet Home," native elements predominate over external; and they all, in their several ways, assisted the development of the Home school.

Paulding is better known by his prose writings; but his *Backwoodsman*, written in smooth and musical heroics, contains very pleasing descriptions of American scenery, and his *Old Man's Carousal* has long been, and justly, a favourite. Halleck's spirited historical ballad, *Marco Bozzaris*, recalls Byron, his *Alnwick Castle* Scott, but worthily and in no servile way; while his *Burns*, his *Redjacket*, his ballads written in conjunction with Drake, his vigorous *vers de société* and his *Fanny* at least prove his versatility; but we can hardly feel with Whittier that he has "consecrated New York," and that "shady square and dusty street are classic ground for him." *The American Flag* will long preserve the memory of Drake, and his *Culprit Fay*, though too evidently showing the blended influence of Scott, Coleridge and Moore to be entitled to the

praise of originality, was considered at the time of its appearance a remarkable production. Dana's wild poem the *Buccaneer* struck a new note of the Monk Lewis order, and there was originality, though of a somewhat tawdry kind, in Maria Brooks's *Zophiël*, a poetess so unaccountably pronounced by Southey to be "the most impassioned and the most imaginative of all poetesses."

Of the many disciples of Mrs. Hemans and Miss Landon flourishing at this time, Lydia Sigourney stands alone. It is not fashionable to praise Mrs. Hemans in these days; but I will have the courage to say that higher praise could scarcely be given to a poetess of the secondary order than to say, what may be said with truth of Lydia Sigourney, that she stands beside Mrs. Hemans. Nothing more simply touching was ever written than her *Widow's Charge*, and if her threnody on her mistress and model is too ambitious, it is both noble and pathetic.

Nor was the South silent. Edward Coate Pinkney has no pretension to genius, and he was too close in imitation of Byron and other English poets; yet he had a very pleasing lyrical gift, and such lyrics as *A Health*, *A Serenade*, and *A Picture Song* tremble on excellence, while Richard Henry Wilde has left one lyric, "My Life is Like the Summer Rose," which, if falsetto, has one line which a true poet might envy:

> On that lone shore loud moans the sea.

And yet, in spite of all this activity and achievement, De Tocqueville could say in 1835 that America had not produced a single poet of a high order.

Certainly, he could not have been refuted by citing any of the poets of whom I have spoken; but we have now come to a poet who could be triumphantly produced to falsify the statement. In William Cullen Bryant, America produced her first poet of distinction, the first who has some pretension to originality. Griswold tells us that when *Thanatopsis*, Bryant's first characteristic poem, was submitted to Dana, then editor of the *North American Review*, Dana and one or two critics whom he consulted were satisfied that a poem so finished and so noble could not have been written by an American. Their wonder was, no doubt, increased when they learned that it was not only written by an American, but by an American scarcely out of his teens.

It is no figure of speech to say that the American muse found her first voice in Bryant. He has been called a disciple of Wordsworth; it has been pointed out that his favourite measures have all been borrowed from ours; that in Young's *Night Thoughts* and in Dyer's *Ruins of Rome* had been sounded the note which he struck with more power and impressiveness in the poems peculiarly characteristic of him, and that his blank verse is but a variation of the blank verse of English masters. This is true only in the sense in which it is true that, but for Ennius we should never have had Virgil, and that, but for his classical predecessors in ancient Greece and Rome and in modern Italy, we should never have had Milton. Bryant's relation to Wordsworth may be more accurately indicated by calling him, in virtue of his own native genius, and not by virtue of imitation, the "American Wordsworth"; his relation to

Young and Dyer, by distinguishing between what is accidental and what is essential; and of his blank verse it may be said, with literal truth, that in structure and rhythm it is his own. Nature, and Nature only, was his inspirer and teacher; and pure and simple and wholesome as herself was her disciple and prophet. From his Puritan ancestors, he had inherited his moral temper and cast of mind, his purity, his simplicity, his earnestness, his love of liberty, his reverent piety, his profound seriousness; and with all this some good genius had blended the aesthetic temperament, and bestowed on him the gifts of the poet. And so he went out among the wonders and beauties of the New World, "the rolling prairies,"

> The gardens of the Desert,
> The unshorn fields, boundless and beautiful,
> For which the speech of England has no name,

under

> The thick roofs
> Of green, and stirring branches all alive
> And musical with birds that sing and sport
> In wantonness of spirit, while, below,
> The squirrel, with rais'd paws and form erect,
> Chirps merrily;

through the great solitudes with their

> Myriads of insects, gaudy as the flowers
> They flutter over, gentle quadrupeds,
> And birds that scarce have learn'd the fear of man,
> . . . . and sliding reptiles of the ground
> Startlingly beautiful;

or heard from

> Dim woods the aged past
> Speak solemnly;

or stood and gazed on

The hills
Rock-ribbed and ancient as the sun: the vales
Stretching in pensive quietness between:
The venerable woods, rivers that move
In majesty, and the complaining brooks
That make the meadows green; and, poured round all,
Old Ocean's gray and melancholy waste;

or lay and listened to Earth's voice:

A voice of many tones—sent up from streams
That wander through the gloom, from woods unseen
Swayed by the sweeping of the tides of air,
From rocky chasms where darkness dwells all day,
And hollows of the great invisible hills,
And sands that edge the Ocean, stretching far
Into the night.

In his nature poems, there is at times an almost magical note, as in the first two stanzas of *The Water Fowl*:

Whither, 'midst falling dew,
While glow the heavens with the last steps of day,
Far, through their rosy depths, dost thou pursue
Thy solitary way?

Vainly the fowler's eye
Might mark thy distant flight to do thee wrong,
As, darkly painted on the crimson sky,
Thy figure floats along.

And how fine are the lines in the next stanza but one:

There is a Power, whose care
Teaches thy way along that pathless coast,
The desert and illimitable air,
Lone wandering, but not lost.

And *The Gladness of Nature* pulses with the ecstasy which it describes. "O Fairest of the Rural

Maids" may remind us a little too closely of Wordsworth, but this exquisite lyric, as well as *The Evening Wind*, could only have been written by one whom Nature had initiated. Mr. Stedman speaks of the "elemental quality" of Bryant's poetry: it is a most happy expression, as any one will feel after reading such poems as *The Prairies*, *A Winterpiece*, *The Evening Wind*, *The Hunter of the Prairies*, *Inscription for the Entrance to a Wood*, *The Painted Cup*, *A Hymn to the Sea*, *A Forest Hymn*, *A Hymn to the North Sea*, *Among the Trees*, *A River by Night*.

But to this exquisite susceptibility to the power and charm of nature, and to this inspired faculty for catching and rendering them, he brought other qualities. He was not, like our own Wordsworth, a profound philosopher, but he was deeply impressed with the mystery, solemnity, and sadness of life, and also with the momentous importance of the moral responsibilities resting on all on whom the gift of it has been conferred. This element is sometimes distinct from his nature studies, and sometimes blends itself with them. It is seen in its distinctness in such poems as the *Hymn to Death*, *The Past*, *Life*, *The Journey of Life*, *The Crowded Street*, *The Future Life*, *Blessed are They that Mourn*, and that noble poem, *The Return of Youth*; but it is when blended with his nature studies that it is most impressive. In what majestic threnody does he contrast the eternity of nature and the transitoriness of man in *Thanatopsis*, and again in *The Fountain*, and again, with tenderer pathos, in *The Rivulet*. With what eloquence does he enlist Nature in the service of

man's spiritual and moral instruction, as in the *Forest Hymn*, *The Old Man's Gospel*, and an *Evening Revelry*; or make her bring balm for the wounds of life and solace and comfort, in such poems as the *Walk at Sunset*, *Green River*, *Inscription for the Entrance to a Wood*, *A Scene on the Banks of the Hudson*, *Lines on Revisiting the Country*, *A Summer Wind*. In the beautiful *City Hymn* he leads her from her solitudes to irradiate the sordid and crowded life of the street and of the mart, while in *June* and *The Burial-place* he would have her wreathe the dishonours of death with her loveliness.

The dominant note in Bryant is, certainly, threnody; but it is threnody without gloom. He had inherited from his Puritan ancestors the faith that illumines life and looks through death, and it never fails him. To his Puritanism is probably owing also his absolute freedom from any traces of a mystic or pantheistic tendency in his treatment of Nature. His diction, his style, his versification, if the result of the study of English models, are, in the main, his own, and seem to be the spontaneous utterance of what they convey. Never when he is at his best were conception and expression in more absolute harmony. It has been observed that his vocabulary is a limited one, and that the measures in which he writes were few and simple; the reason is, because the sphere in which his genius moved is limited, and because he only employed such measures as were most appropriate for his few and simple themes. It is as difficult to associate art with his poetry as it would be to associate art with the vibrations of an Aeolian lyre.

Perhaps such a stanza as this—and how haunting it is—owed something to the file:

> I sat and watched the eternal flow
> Of those smooth billows to the shore,
> While quivering lines of light below
> Ran with them on the Ocean floor;

but, if it did, it is art indistinguishable from nature. Perfect simplicity is the note of Bryant, and absolute sincerity, yet how magical, now with the note of pathos, now with the note of the sublime. He realized what he wrote in *The Poet*:

> . . . Let no empty gust
> Of passion find an utterance in thy lay,
> A blast that whirls the dust
> Along the howling street, and dies away;
> But feelings of calm power and mighty sweep,
> Like currents journeying through the windless deep.
>
> Seekest thou, in living lays
> To limn the beauty of the Earth and sky?
> Before thine inner gaze
> Let all that beauty in clear vision lie;
> Look on it with exceeding love, and write
> The words inspired by wonder and delight.

He moved, it must be conceded, in a very limited sphere, and had comparatively few notes; but, within that sphere how admirable; of those few notes, how true a master!

II

In Bryant America produced her first poet whose work approaches classical merit. But for many years he stood alone, mediocrity surrounding as mediocrity

had preceded him. His influence was great on the later works of some of the poets who have already been mentioned, and he had many disciples among the younger men, but they were all mere imitators. Among the poets, if they can be dignified with such a title, intervening between the period marked by the appearance of Bryant's first volume and the appearance of the characteristic work of the great New England group in the latter part of the century, a few may be noticed as, in different ways, typical. Street, the author of *Nature* and of the *Gray Forest Eagle*, is interesting; for, though his work has very little poetic quality, his descriptions of Nature are remarkably minute and accurate, and he is certainly the best representative of the Nature school. How faithful and vivid, for example, are pictures—and his poetry abounds in them—like these:

> The hemlock stands, an ivory pyramid,
> And the link'd branches gleam, like silvery webs,
> Trac'd on the glittering azure of the sky;

and

> The last butterfly,
> Like a wing'd violet, floating in the meek,
> Pink-colour'd sunshine, sinks his velvet feet
> Within the pillar'd mullein's delicate down,
> And shuts and opens his unruffled fans.[1]

In versatile and voluminous Charles Fenno Hoffman, we have Byron and Moore and Dibdin and Miss Landon, variously and vigorously diluted, without a line of any distinction; and Hoffman is typical of a then flourishing school. Lunt has vigour and mettle, as his *Lyre and Sword* testify. In Pike's "Hymns

[1] See, for Street, Griswold, pp. 395-401.

to the Gods," we have an excursion into classical themes, suggested, no doubt, by Keats's *Endymion*, on which they are plainly modelled, and which they echo as faithfully as his *Lines written on the Rocky Mountains* echo Shelley's *Stanzas written in Dejection at Naples*. Southey's intolerable epics found an imitator in Sands, who also paid the same tribute to Campbell's *Gertrude of Wyoming*. But it is unnecessary to particularize further; and, perhaps, we may take N. P. Willis as most comprehensively representative of this period. Traveller, journalist, playwright, novelist, essayist, man of the world—a readier and defter pen and more versatile talents were probably never possessed by man. And all these qualities and accomplishments are reflected in his poetry. It has no depth; it has no concentration; it has no distinction; but it is always readable, and it is generally pleasing. His genius resembled those light, friable soils where every seed that falls takes root, shoots up, bursts readily into leaf and flower, and ends in producing a fruit, which is indeed fruit, but which is hardly worth picking. To originality Willis had no pretension. Every note he struck had been struck before with far more vigour in England, and with vigour equal to his own in America. In a word, if we except the poetry descriptive of native scenery, and that was modelled on Bryant, the verse of this period is merely the English poetry of the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, with inferior variations, over again in feeble echo. "I am tired," wrote Judge Story to his son, "of the endless imitations of the forms and figures and topics of British poetry." And what Judge Story complained

of in prose, Paulding bewailed in verse. Apostrophizing the muse of his country, he asks:

> How long in servile imitative rhyme
> Wilt thou thy stifled energies impart,
> And miss the path that leads to every heart?

But this prodigious multiplication of mediocrities, and this tardy development of true poetry are not difficult to explain. All national poetry of a high order must have its root in life, in the propitious soil of such social and political conditions as are conducive to its inspiration and nutriment. It must have a past rich in tradition behind it; it must have a present throbbing with what appeals to imagination, to sentiment, to passion; its energy must be concentrated, that spark may catch from spark, and flame from flame: it must have touchstones and standards, derived primarily from what was best in preceding achievement, mutually applied and mutually exacted by rival competitors for fame: it must have enlightened patronage: it must have response and sympathy from those to whom it appeals. None of these conditions existed in America; it would be more true to say that conditions the very opposite to these obtained everywhere. Where energy was concentrated, it was concentrated almost entirely on commercial and industrial pursuits. The extraordinary facility which the country afforded for the accumulation of wealth, was soon discovered and utilized. With material prosperity, came all that such prosperity carries in its train. The attainment of much, inflamed the passion for more. Each year increased the fever; and America, speaking generally, rapidly assumed the

gross features so familiar to us in Emerson's portrait of her. National life there was none. Between the several States, which had each its own characteristics and its own interests, there was almost as little unity as there was between the Italian republics of the Middle Ages.

Nor were other conditions more favourable to the development of poetry. As there was everything to depress it in social and political life, so there was no bond of union, no common centre; poets had no stimulus from mutual enthusiasm and mutual emulation. Without enlightened patrons, without public sympathy, without responsibility to any critical tribunal, each poet went his own way. There was nothing to encourage him to excel. He was in a country which had no literary tradition of its own, and where criticism was in its infancy. And this was not all. In everything relating to the humanities, he was an Englishman. He spoke as his native tongue the English language, he was nourished on the English literature. The schism which had severed all other bonds with the Mother Country only drew this intellectual bond the closer. England was, indeed, to America all and much more than ancient Greece was to ancient Rome; and, like Rome, America gloried in her servitude. The genius of Bryant had, as we have seen, succeeded in breaking these shackles, but only so far as extended to the treatment of Nature. Beyond this, the movement had not progressed; at that point it was arrested. And so remained, unexplored and unworked, all those rich mines which were to yield so much precious ore to Whittier and to Longfellow, to Lowell and to the other poets of the Revival.

American poetry presents the extraordinary anomaly of having no infancy. Like the portentous child in Hesiod, it was born with gray hairs. Decrepit from its birth, it had in itself no principle of vigorous life. By re-creation only could that life inspire it. The process had been commenced by Bryant, it was now to be completed. America was to have a poetry of her own.

On the 31st of August, 1837, Emerson delivered an Address at Cambridge which sounded a trumpet note. Thus rang the thrilling strain:

"Our day of dependence, our long apprenticeship to the learning of other lands, draws to a close. The millions that around us are rushing into life cannot always be fed on the sere remains of foreign harvests. Events, actions arise that must be sung, that will sing themselves. Who can doubt that Poetry will revive and lead in a new age, as the star in the constellation Harp, which now flames in our zenith, shall one day be the pole-star for a thousand years? . . . We have listened too long to the courtly Muses of Europe. The spirit of the American is suspected to be timid, imitative, tame. Public and private avarice make the air we breathe thick and fat. The mind of this country, taught to aim at low objects, eats upon itself. Young men of the fairest promise who begin life upon our shores, inflated by the mountain winds, shined upon by all the stars of God, find the earth below not in union with these. . . . We will walk on our own feet: we will work with our own hands: we will speak our own minds. The study of letters shall no longer be a name for pity, for doubt and for sensual indulgence. A nation of men will, for the first time, exist, because each believes himself inspired by the Divine Soul which also inspires all men."

Noble words; as Holmes justly says, "Nothing like them had been heard in the halls of Harvard since Samuel Adams supported the affirmative of the question, 'Whether it be lawful to resist the Chief Magistrate, if the commonwealth cannot otherwise be preserved.'" It was, he says, the American intellectual Declaration of Independence.

The response to this appeal was so immediate and enthusiastic that it must have fallen on sympathies prepared to meet it more than half way. And that, indeed, was the case. A reaction had begun to set in: a stir was already in the air, Channing's similar but less eloquent appeal, delivered fourteen years before, had sunk into many minds. Everett's Orations and writings had struck, and very powerfully, a native note in prose, as Bryant and, in a minor degree, Whittier had done in poetry. If we glance at those who were to create the poetry of the next generation, and, where they had been already active, compare what they produced before 1837 with what they produced afterwards, we shall have some idea of what the movement, defining itself in that year, meant. Whittier and Longfellow were in their thirty-first year; the first had produced nothing of any value except *Mogg Megone*; the second, nothing at all but a few trifles contributed to magazines. Holmes, some two years younger, had given to the world a thin volume, which would have been forgotten long ago had it not been for his subsequent fame. Poe, an anomaly in everything, had produced some fine poems, but he was almost unknown. Lowell, in his nineteenth year, as yet guiltless of verse, was an undergraduate at Harvard. Whitman,

of the same age, and equally silent, was a wandering schoolmaster. Bayard Taylor was a child of thirteen, and Miller and Bret Harte were not born. The history of American poetry, till quite recently, centres round these names. With Emerson is associated the transcendental school; with Whittier, the purely native school. Longfellow, Holmes, and Lowell are the centre of what may be called the academic and eclectic group; Poe stands alone; so, happily, does Whitman. Taylor represents the cosmopolitan school: Miller, the poetry of the Pacific slope: Lanier, the poetry of the South, and Bret Harte was the founder and representative of what Mr. Stedman calls the transcontinental school.

In some respects, Emerson is among the greatest of American poets; but it is not by virtue of his poetry, but by virtue of his prose and by virtue of what in his verse is independent of the form of verse. If we take Wordsworth's definition of a poet as exhaustive, namely, that he is "an inspired philosopher"; or if we estimate the quality of poetry by a criterion furnished us by Emerson himself, that it is to be judged by "the frame of *mind* which it induces," then there can be no question about Emerson's eminent place among poets. But these criteria are not sufficient. Poetry must have other qualities, even those indicated by Milton; it must be "simple, sensuous, impassioned." Simple, Emerson never is, except in touches. Where his poetry does not move in a world of symbolism, it moves in a world of riddles; and what it discerns it so encumbers with the laces and jewels of recondite fancies and phrases, that we dwell rather on the

ornaments than on what they adorn. He seems to think and feel in aphorisms. Some of his poems resemble necklaces of crystals, and have all the hard, cold glitter of crystals. They abound in passages of which the following is typical:

> The kingly bard
> Must smite the chords rudely and hard,
> As with a hammer or with mace;
> That they may render back
> Artful thunder, which conveys
> Secrets of the solar track,
> Sparks of the super-solar blaze.

He seems to have modelled his style on that of the poets of our Metaphysical School, particularly on that of Donne, of whom he has many reminiscences. His predominating characteristics as a poet are, if we may use the expression, intellectualized fancy and transcendental enthusiasm. But he had no attribute of the born singer. His verse, even where the themes are simple and natural, as in the touching *Threnody* and in *May Day*, has a constrained awkward movement, and, what is worse, leaves us with the impression that it has only been by the greatest labour that such an effect has been produced. We feel that what Milton said of himself in composing prose, namely, that he had only the use of his left hand, Emerson might have said of himself in composing verse. Occasionally, he can be most felicitous, as in

> Thou canst not wave thy staff in air,
> Or dip thy paddle in the lake,
> But it carves the bow of beauty there
> And the ripples in rhyme the oar forsake;

or in

> Though love repine and reason chafe,
> There came a voice without reply;
> 'Tis man's perdition to be safe
> When for the truth he ought to die;

or in the justly famous

> So nigh is grandeur to our dust,
> So near is God to man,
> When Duty whispers low, *Thou must*,
> The youth replies, *I can*.

But such felicities are so rare that they come upon us, as Matthew Arnold remarks, with a sort of surprise, just as the *Concord Hymn* in point of composition stands almost alone among his poems. He was not a born singer. The moment we place his *Dirge*, excellent as the first part of it is, beside Wordsworth's parallel *Extemporary Stanzas on the Death of the Ettrick Shepherd*, or the *Fourth of July Ode* and the *Boston Hymn* beside Whittier's lyrics in a similar strain, we see at once the difference between Emerson and those who, in Juvenal's phrase, have "bitten the laurel." His ear, moreover, is so defective that, the moment he leaves the simplest measures, or attempts any variations on them, his verses become intolerably dissonant. Nothing could be more unmusical than his blank verse.

But his poetry is absolutely original; and, if we seek in it what we find in his prose, it is interesting and precious. There is enough thought in it, illumining and inspiringly suggestive thought, to set up a dozen poets. An intense lover of Nature, natural description is a very prominent element in

his poetry. And his pictures and touches are always fresh, vivid, and accurate, though he has nothing of the clairvoyance and magic of Bryant. Speaking of sea-shells, he says in one of his poems:

> I fetched my sea-born treasures home,
> But the poor, unsightly, noisome things
> Had left their beauty on the shore,
> With the sun and the sand and the wild uproar.

It was so always with him: as a philosopher he could read Nature, and he was poet enough to delight in her and to describe her, but he was not poet enough to steal her beauty and catch her magic. He wooed, but she jilted him.

Among the most remarkable poems produced by the disciples of Emerson—and he had many, notably Alcott, Cranch, Ellery Channing, and Thoreau—are the sonnets of Jones Very, which, though not of the highest order, deserve to be better known than they are; and Cranch has written one or two striking poems in the same metaphysical strain. These, for example, deserve, as Sir Thomas Browne would say, an asterisk, and would have pleased Donne:

> We are spirits clad in veils;
> Man by man was never seen.
> All our deep communing fails
> To remove the shadowy screen.
>
> Heart to heart was never known:
> Mind with mind did never meet:
> We are columns left alone
> Of a temple once complete.
>
> Like the stars that gem the sky
> Far apart though seeming near;
> In our light we scatter'd lie,
> All is then but starlight here.

In passing to Whittier, we pass to a poet of a very different order. Of Quaker descent and of the Quaker persuasion, his early surroundings, those of a New England farmstead, his later, the storm and stress of the abolitionist struggle, with the Bible, the *Pilgrim's Progress*, the poems of Burns, and the current political journalism of his time as the chief sources of his literary education, he rapidly rose to eminence, some insisted to pre-eminence, among the poets of his country. His long life falls into two eras, the first closing with his sixtieth year in 1865, up to which time, he says, his poetry was something episodical, something apart from the real object and aim of his life; the second with his death, in his eighty-fifth year, in 1892. But in both these eras his genius moved in the same sphere, and was bounded by the same horizons. He improved in technique; his note grew mellower; and, as the cause to which his life had been so nobly devoted was won, he passed out of the fierce turbulence of aggressive polemics into a serener atmosphere. He said himself, when at the height of his fame, "I set a higher value on my name as appended to the Anti-Slavery Declaration of 1833, than on the title-pages of my books"; and the remark gives us the key to his character. His noble enthusiasm as a philanthropist cost him dear as a poet. It left him no leisure, from early manhood till past the prime of life, to do justice to his powers. It forced him to give to journalism and controversy what he might have given to fame, and to consider of secondary importance everything which was not subservient to the moment. The result was that the habits and

defects peculiar to those who devote themselves to the production of ephemeral literature became confirmed in him. What was characteristic, and necessarily characteristic of the work which he produced under pressure and when he had no time for meditation and labour, is equally characteristic of the work which he produced when he had ample time for both. Whittier has left abundant proof that Nature had qualified him to take a much higher place among poets than the place he holds; and the reason for his failing to attain it may obviously be traced to what I have described, his monotonous insistence on the themes inspired and suggested by the cause to which he devoted his life, his too easy acquiescence, as an artist, in commonplace standards of aim and attainment, and his want of broad generous culture. His facility of expression and his deft and wonderful skill in spinning poems became a snare to him. Sensitive and restless, he knew no repose. Lowell describes him as having

> A fervour of mind that knows no separation
> 'Twixt simple excitement and pure inspiration.

And, unfortunately for his fame, we owe almost as much of his poetry to "simple excitement" as to "pure inspiration." But when under this inspiration, his lyrics have a *verve*, swing and fire which are irresistible, and which fill us with responsive enthusiasm. The cause to which his Anti-Slavery lyrics were dedicated has long been won, and the incidents of the great struggle to which they refer are dim traditions now. But who can read, unmoved, such lyrics as *The Paean*, *Stanzas for the Times*, *To*

Englishmen, *The Song of the Free*, *The Farewell*, *Massachusetts to Virginia*, *The New Year;* or listen, unthrilled, to the crashing joy-bells of *Laus Deo?* There is great power in *The Slave-Ships*, and true pathos in *The Farewell*, while *Barbara Frietchie* is a little masterpiece. In his narrative poems his great infirmities as an artist are most conspicuous. *Mogg Megone* and *The Bridal of Pennacook*, though interesting as anticipating Longfellow in dealing with Indian legends, are crude, diffuse, cumbrous; and *The Tent on the Beach*, which is among his maturest works, has no pretension to unity. Heavily drags also *The Pennsylvania Pilgrim*. But of his ballads and ballad-lyrics the very least that can be said for some of them is, that they are among the best of their kind. *Maud Muller* is justly famous, and *Skipper Ireson's Ride* will always be among the classics of humorous song. But his most pleasing poems are those which fairly entitle him to be called the Burns of New England. His pictures of its rural scenery and life, such as we find in *Miriam*, *Hampton Beach*, in *The Tent on the Beach*, in *Summer by the Lakeside*, in *The Old Burying-ground* and above all in *Snowbound*, which is his masterpiece as a poet, are indeed delightful, and can never lose their charm.

Mr. Stedman tells us that Horace Greeley pronounced Whittier to be the best of American poets. It would surely be more correct to say that, among the eminent poets of America, he stands lowest. The profound respect which must be felt for him as a man; the noble object to which so much of his poetry was directed; its high moral and religious tone; its wholesomeness, its purity and its other

most unquestionable merits must not seduce us into mismeasurement. Whittier's very best work is not work into which any high poetic quality enters. His average work is essentially commonplace, and scarcely rises to mediocrity.

His studies from Nature, truthful, fresh, and most pleasing as they generally are, are too diffuse, and produce their effect, not as the touch of genius produces it, but by the commonplace process of a faithful accumulation of superficial details. His style, even at its best, has little distinction, abounding in such feeble pleonasms as "The tear on her cheek was not of rain," and such grotesque lapses into prose,—and they are not unfrequent,—as this:

> In him brain-currents, near and far,
> Converged, as in a Leyden jar.

His versification is correct and musical, and at times has real charm; but it has few notes, and on these notes it harps too monotonously. He owed nothing to study and books, had no touch of classical culture. In tone, in temper and in sympathies, for good and for detriment, spiritually, morally, and intellectually, he was a New England Quaker on whom Apollo had smiled, not ungenially, but with something of the constraint and reserve likely to be evoked by the homage of so unwonted a votary. But the annals of poetry would be poorer, had such a name as Whittier's not been inscribed on their pages. Noble example is nobler than the noblest poem, and the tradition of a life which was a poem, an inheritance more precious than a poem which is written. And therefore poetry itself, the poetry of

the world, has room for Whittier's, for, impressed on what he wrote is the *character* of the man who wrought, his purity, his simplicity, his philanthropy, his uncompromising loyalty to conscience and duty, his cheerful piety, all that speaks in

> The letter fails, the systems fall,
> And every symbol wanes;
> The Spirit, overbrooding all,
> Eternal love remains;

—all that speaks in the beautiful verses which he addressed to those who had less confidence than himself in the faith which sustained him:

> I walk with bare, hush'd feet the ground
> Ye tread with boldness shod:
> I dare not fix with mete and bound
> The love and power of God. . . .
>
> And so, beside the Silent Sea,
> I wait the muffled oar:
> No harm from Him can come to me
> On ocean or on shore.
>
> I know not where His islands lift
> Their fronded palms in air,
> I only know I cannot drift
> Beyond His love and care.
>
> O brothers, if my faith is vain,
> If hopes like these betray,
> Pray for me that my feet may gain
> The sure and safer way.
>
> And Thou, O Lord! by whom are seen
> Thy creatures, as they be,
> Forgive me, if too close I lean
> My human heart on Thee!

Whittier was not the only poet inspired by the

Abolitionist struggle and the events preceding and resulting from the great war of 1861. Of the innumerable lyrics, anonymous and appropriated, inspired by them, some became famous. The catch song, *John Brown's Body*, has little to recommend it but the sonorous music to which it was set, and Randall's *My Maryland*, as well as the anonymous *Blue Flag*, have mettle and fire; but higher merit belongs to Julia Ward Howe's *Battle Hymn of the Republic*, which has the power and enthusiasm of something more than rhetoric. Brownell's war lyrics have vigour, not distinction; but distinction certainly belongs to Mrs. Lynn Beer's vivid and pathetic lyric, *All Quiet along the Potomac*, and to Forceythe Willson's most touching and dramatic picture of the death of *The Old Sergeant*.

But to return to the main stream. If Whittier is the most purely native of American poets, Poe is the most purely alien. In no touch has he anything that recalls the temper and genius either of the North or of the South; in no feature can the features of his fellow countrymen be traced. Of morality, or of anything pertaining to morality, he has nothing; of patriotism he has nothing; of any concern or interest in the world around him, nothing. An anomaly absolutely unique, the poetry characteristic of him might have been produced in any country and at any time. As he was an American citizen, and the descendant of American citizens, though his mother was an Englishwoman, America has a right to claim him. And, need it be added, America has a right to be proud of him, but for reasons very different from those which make her proud of her other poets.

Poe is to her literature what Keats, in an infinitely higher sense and measure, is to ours—an artist for art's sake, to whom little appealed but the Beautiful, and whose poetry, at its best, is the expression of exclusive homage to it. He was the first American poet to disassociate poetry from nature and life, from the world of men, and to transport it into a world of imagination and fantasy.

An artist more consummate never existed; and, although the fascination and witchery of much of his poetry had its origin from mystic sources of genuine inspiration, and cannot be resolved into triumphs, into miracles of conscious art, yet, as we know from himself, he revelled in the display of mere mechanical craftsmanship. This he did in *The Bells* and *The Raven* obviously, and, almost as obviously, in *Ulalume*; and in this consists the insincerity of his poetry, "the two-fifths sheer fudge" of Lowell's well-known sarcasm. Of no poet may it be said with more truth that he was the slave of music; hence some of his poems, like *Israfel*, and the poem just mentioned, *Ulalume*, resolve themselves into mere music; but it is a music which had never before been heard on earth. It is in such poems as *The Haunted Palace*, *The Conqueror Worm*, *The City in the Sea*, *Lenore*, *Dreamland*, that, in his fantastic vein, he is at his best, because his magical power as an artist and musician is employed legitimately to body forth the genuine conceptions of imagination, weird and in various degrees touched with insanity as that imagination is. But the poems which come most home to us are the love lyrics and threnodies, whether represented by such a classic

gem as "Helen thy Beauty" or by *Annabel Lee*, with its pathos in quintessence and haunting harmony, or the magic of *Eulalie*, and *The Sleeper*, or the utterly unanalyzable fascination of the verses *For Annie*.

The contrast between Poe's lawless and turbid life and the purity and serenity of the world in which he moved as a poet, is not more striking than another contrast presented by his constitution and temper. With the aesthetic sensibility, imagination and enthusiasm of a poet he united a precise, cold, logical intellect, in the exercise of which he delighted. His analysis of the rationale of *The Raven* is well known and is most significant. Of what may be traced to this characteristic there is too much in his poetry. Its enthusiasm, we often feel, is not wholly pure: its passion has not always the note of sincerity, nor is it always on the wing of inspired imagination that he soars to his weird realms. To this characteristic may be traced, also, his precise and clear-cut style, so lucid, so coldly chaste, so deliberately, so exquisitely finished. His marvellous tact as an artist taught him to blend most harmoniously and effectively the opposite extremes of studied simplicity and studied preciosity.

The poetry of Poe was a new creation. It owed something to Coleridge, something to Shelley, and something to Tennyson, but nothing like it as a whole had appeared before. If *The Raven* and *The Bells* are little better than *tours de force* they are absolutely original: if *Ulalume* and *Israfel* are tuneful nonsense, no such tuneful nonsense had as yet been heard. Every note which he struck he

struck for the first time, and every note which he struck has since vibrated in the lyric poetry of America and England. It would be idle to institute any comparison between him and the other lyric poets of the English-speaking race whose immortality he will share, for he stands absolutely alone. Every generation will delight in his poetry, but it will never come home to men like the poetry of his brethren. They will be fascinated with the weird witchery of its music, and with the mystic beauty of its strange, wild fancies. They will wander with mingled emotions through its wonderful Dreamland, now radiant with the light of heaven, now lurid with a light which is the light in delirium's eyes. They will be touched with its pathos, so simple, yet so intense. They will marvel at its miracles of technical triumph. But they will draw no inspiration from it. It has nothing of the influential virtue of vital poetry: it carries no balm for the heart's wounds, no solace for life's cares. It never kindled a generous emotion or a noble thought. To rise from its perusal is like waking from a dream, a dream that haunts, but a dream that finally fades, leaving no traces, from memory.

> Not his the song that in its metre holy
> Chimes with the music of the eternal stars:
> Humbling the tyrant, lifting up the lowly,
> And sending sun through the soul's prison bars.

And now we come to that eminent and gifted trio in whose work the transatlantic poetry of the last century may be said, in many important respects, to culminate. It would be difficult for any critic, unless he wishes to be paradoxical, to say anything new

about poets so long and so widely discussed as Longfellow, Holmes, and Lowell. Each has his place assigned, and, no doubt, rightly assigned, to him, both in his native country and in Great Britain; and it is a proof of the intimacy of the relationship in all that pertains to the humanities between America and ourselves, that the estimate formed of them by their countrymen should differ so little from the estimate formed here. I am not speaking of the academic school of criticism which has ignored them, nor of the modern preciosity school which has affected, and still affects, to despise them, but of the audience and tribunal to which they appeal and by which they would desire to be judged—general readers of culture and intelligence, and competent critics with catholic tastes and sympathies. The correctness of the estimate formed of their work is due to the instinctive good sense which has not expected more from them than they had to give, and thus allowed no discontent or querulousness to interfere with generous appreciation of what they did give.

These three poets have very much in common. All professors in the same university, they were essentially scholars and men of manifold accomplishments, profoundly versed in English literature and intimately acquainted with all the chief languages and literatures of Europe, where all had resided, not as casual travellers, but as students. They were thus men of cosmopolitan culture and of cosmopolitan tastes and sympathies. All delighted in society, and were almost as distinguished by their social qualities as by their literary accomplishments. For

all, the composition of poetry was mere recreation, subordinate, in the case of Holmes, to the duties of a busy practising physician; in the case of Longfellow, to the duties of a Professor of Belles-lettres; in the case of Lowell, to vocations more various than had ever before, perhaps, fallen to the lot of one man. Their lives were easy and prosperous; two of them were humorists, delighting in such trifles as amuse good-natured *flâneurs*, and the third, if not a humorist, had the tastes of a refined dilettant. Nothing less like bards or prophets could possibly be imagined than these genial, polished, and most accomplished men.

No great poetry ever appeared under such conditions, and from men so constituted and tempered great poetry we cannot hope to find. We find what we might expect, not a poetry rooted in contemporary national life and drawing its inspiration and nutriment from that life: not intensity, not passion, not enthusiasm, nothing of that homogeneousness and originality characteristic of a poetry which has the note of the *Zeitgeist*, and is the unforced and common product of propitious social and political conditions; but a poetry academic, eclectic, occasional, having its models in many literatures, deriving its material and inspiration from what happened accidentally to appeal to the poet as an individual, either in his private or social life, or in his studies. Thus, when it took an objective form, it ransacked the annals legendary and historical, not of America only, but of almost every country in the world, without, however, transferring them, after the manner of inspired poetry, into symbols and

analogues of the life pulsing round it. When it took a subjective form, it resolved itself into a series of fragments, as various in expression as in matter, sometimes serious, sometimes trifling, seldom original, never profound. It is a poetry which plays on the surface of life, catching its lights and shadows; dealing with its ordinary experiences, and giving musical utterance to such reflections and sentiments as those experiences are wont to evoke from normally and healthily constituted men and women. But, being essentially composite, it has many tones and many notes, and ranges over a wide field. Now it is academic, and, seeking its themes in subjects dear to the scholar and student, affects classicism and the grand style, and here, as a rule, it is not successful; now, as in Lowell's Commemoration Ode, it kindles with noble moral fervour; now it is the perfection of simple idyll, pure nature with pure nature's note:

> A certain freshness of the fields,
> A sweetness as of home-made bread,

and here it has often inexpressible charm. Occasionally, it surprises us, as in the *Biglow Papers* and in other humorous and semi-humorous pieces, not only by its raciness, vividness and power in comedy and satire, but by its inimitable presentation of the idiosyncrasies of national character. A very long life may fairly be predicted for Parson Wilbur, Hosea Biglow and Bird o' Fredom Sawin. But its excursions into such realms as these are the exception, not the rule. Its favourite sphere is the sphere which has been indicated, the sphere of

Goethe's *Hermann and Dorothea*, of Schiller's and Heine's lyrics and legends, of Wordsworth's "ballads" and nature poems, of Tennyson's home idylls and *In Memoriam*, of Prior's and Praed's *vers de société*. And this realm it, too, made its own, enriching and permanently enriching the poetry of the English-speaking world.

I have associated Holmes with Longfellow and Lowell. Had he been living, that most modest of men would probably have asked with surprise how any one who presumed to talk critically of poetry could have so mismeasured him. It would have been necessary to explain that he stood beside them rather for the convenience of tabulation than for any intention of assuming his equality. But even then he would have shaken his head. And, indeed, Holmes's most striking characteristics are those of the *improvisatore*, his extraordinary versatility and his not less extraordinary facility in composition. He has fire and mettle, witness his *Bunker-hill Battle* and his *Old Ironsides* and *Lexington*: his fancy can be exquisite, with a touch of magic, as the *Chambered Nautilus* testifies; and equally exquisite and magic-touched his pathos, as in *Under the Violets*. He can be impressive to sternness as in *The Two Streams*—a really fine lyric—and *The Living Temple*: he can catch the deep religious fervour of his Puritan forefathers, as in his Hymns. His humour can be delightful, as in *The One-Horse Shay* and in *Parson Turell's Legacy*. His tact and grace and his felicity of charming and appropriate expression as a poet of social functions, of anniversaries, and of all such occasions as call for the wreath of the moment, are

quite unsurpassed. But we love him best as the poet of the changes and chances of man's life, and as the tender laureate of the memory-consecrated past; as the cheerful optimist, when night is nigh —as the poet of such poems as *The Last Survivor*, *The Shadows*, *All Here*, and of that poem which for all time deserves to be bound up with its sister poem in prose, Cicero's *De Senectute*, I mean *The Iron-gate.* We love him, as we love Horace, for his genial humanity, his mellow wisdom, such as find expression, for instance, in an unforgetable quatrain like this:

> Man judges all: God knoweth each:
> We read the rule, He knows the law;
> How oft His laughing children teach
> The truths His prophets never saw.

And this is typical of much more.

In passing from Holmes to Lowell, we pass from charm to power. In originality, in virility, in many-sidedness, Lowell is the first of American poets. He not only possessed, at times in nearly equal measure, many of the qualities most notable in his fellow poets, rivalling Bryant as a painter of Nature, and Holmes in pathos, having a touch too of Emerson's transcendentalism, and rising occasionally to Whittier's moral fervour, but he brought to all this much beside. The first part of the *Legend of Brittany* in its sensuous richness reminds us of Leigh Hunt at his best: *The Sirens* and *Irene* recall Tennyson too nearly, perhaps, but they are no discredit to their model. In one vein he produced such a masterpiece of mingled pathos and nature painting as we find in the tenth Biglow letter of the second series: in

another, such a lyric gem as *The Fountain*: in another, *The First Snow-fall* and *After the Burial*: in another, again, the noble Harvard Commemoration Ode. And the author of these poems was the creator of Parson Wilbur, Hosea Biglow, and Bird o' Fredom Sawin, as well as the author of *A Fable for Critics*. This is a wide range; but we must distinguish between the degrees of success with which it has been attempted. No work produced before a poet has found his natural level, has found himself, can form any factor in an estimate of his work as a whole, in an estimate of his place among poets. At least two-thirds of Lowell's earlier poems, however pleasing and eloquent, have something of the note of falsetto. Many of them are simply eclectic experiments. The more ambitious poems, *Prometheus*, *Rhoecus* and *Columbus*, are little more than academic exercises, and not of a high order even among such compositions. *Sir Launfal*, except for the beautiful nature pictures, scarcely rises above the level of an Ingoldsby Legend.

The truth is, that Lowell was in constitution and temper a humorist and moralist touched with aesthetic sensibility, with the fancy not with the imagination, with something of the fervour, not with the enthusiasm, of the poet. Much which, as a poet, he should have owed to Nature, he owed to culture and to the sympathetic study of preceding masters, notably Keats and Tennyson. A cultivated taste is a poor substitute for instinct; for the one is as fallible as the other is infallible. Hence, we are never sure of Lowell. He deserts Keats in *A Legend of Brittany* to collapse into melodrama expressed in

the language of melodrama, just as the *Indian Summer Reverie*, with its exquisite nature pictures, trails off into flat bald prose. Except in his earlier poems and in his pictures from nature, his poetry has little sensuous charm. He had plainly a most defective ear for rhythm and verbal harmony. Except when he confines himself to simple metres, we rarely find five consecutive lines which do not in some way jar on us. His blank verse and the irregular metres which he, unfortunately, so often employs, have little or no music, and are often quite intolerable. Of the distressing effect of clogged consonants, sibilants and cacophonies of all kinds, he appears to be as unconscious as Browning. Some of these defects, or, at least, their exaggeration, are perhaps to be attributed, like his jumbled metaphors and other faults of expression, to carelessness and impatience of the work of correction. No poetry owes so little to the file.

But, after all the deductions which the most exacting criticism can make, it still remains that, as a serious poet, Lowell stands high. As a painter of Nature, he has, when at his best, few superiors, and, in his own country, none. Whatever be their aesthetic and technical deficiencies, he has written many poems of sentiment and pathos which can never fail to come home to all to whom such poetry appeals. His hortatory and didactic poetry, as it expresses itself in the Harvard Commemoration Ode, is worthy, if not of the music and felicity of Milton and Wordsworth, at least of their tone, when that tone is most exalted. As a humorist he is inimitable. His humour is rooted in a finer sense of the becoming and in a

profounder insight into the character of his countrymen than that of any other American writer. *The Biglow Papers* will live as long as *Hudibras*; and, as long as Butler's crystallizations of shrewd wisdom and ethic truth, will live and appeal the similar aphorisms with which Lowell's poems are studded.

III

Sydney Smith, having occasion to discuss some subject with Lord Melbourne, and knowing that great man's habit of indulging very liberally in a certain expletive, proposed that they should save time by assuming that the said expletive had been applied to everything, and proceed to business. I propose to deal similarly with Longfellow's hostile critics. Let it be conceded at once that he had little, if any, originality; that he would have been nowhere without the lyric poetry of Germany, of which his own is often merely an echo, without the literatures of Europe generally, to which almost everything he has written can be traced; that he had no depth of thought; that he had neither sublimity nor passion; that he failed egregiously when he attempted anything ambitious; that he succeeded most when he was most modest; that he never composed a line beyond the comprehension of the *bourgeoisie*, nay, of intelligent boys and girls, and very much which was dedicated and intimately appealed to them. And yet, it remains that, to thousands, whose tastes have been formed by the sympathetic study of the aristocrats of classical poetry, and who are compelled to acknowledge the justice of these allega-

tions, they come, like those grating truths which we wish were falsehoods. It is like listening to reproaches on those we love; distressed and irritated, we long to retort on those who utter them. And, indeed, there is something almost sacred in the fame of Longfellow; for to how many thousands, to how many hundreds of thousands, is his poetry consecrated by its associations. As Froude beautifully says of the silvery cadences of our liturgy, that they "chime like church-bells in the ear of the English child," and haunt his memory with their music long after childhood has passed, so, like church-bells have chimed for our children another music as silvery and as haunting—the music of Longfellow. To how many a death-darkened household, to how many a life, clouded with the cares or bending under the burdens which few escape, has his poetry brought balm and sunshine and encouragement. Such poetry as is characteristic of him is no more intended for critics than the Bible was intended for theologians, or the spring that gushes forth and refreshes the toil-worn traveller, to supply material for analytical chemistry.

And yet is there much satisfaction in showing that, even on the application of strict and exacting critical standards, even if we accept Sainte-Beuve's dictum that the question for us is not whether we admire any given work but whether we ought to admire it, even from this point of view, Longfellow's admirers have nothing to fear. He is almost always sound in quality and sound in style. Even where sentimentally he is thinnest and most trite, as in *The Footsteps of Angels*, *The Rainy Day*, *The Bridge*,

The Reaper and the Flowers, *Children*, we are touched and rightly touched; for the pathos, though simple, is genuine, and its expression exquisite in its propriety. *The Psalm of Life*, I am not speaking of it as a work of art, is a noble poem, and all the mouthings of it in Infant Schools and in Young Men's Christian Associations, and all the strummings of "middle class" pianos will never make it other than noble. Though his themes are so often the themes so dear to Eliza Cook and her circle, his refinement and tact often enabled him to maintain a level above commonplace. He was never trivial; his style seldom lacks distinction.

His range and power as a lyric poet and balladist would be best seen by placing beside the poems which have just been referred to, *The Skeleton in Armour* and *Victor Galbraith*, which have a fire and verve rare with him; the impressive and noble quatrains in the *Arsenal at Springfield*; the exquisitely pathetic verses entitled *Weariness*, and the *Bells of Lynn*, with its finely-cadenced lilt and swing. *The Building of the Ship* cannot bear comparison with Schiller's *Das Lied von der Glocke*, which was its model, but the concluding lines, the apostrophe to the Union, have all the fervour and strength of Whittier's lyric when at its very best, and must go to the heart of every true American. Of his longer poems, *The Tales of a Wayside Inn* will scarcely add to his reputation; but the *Saga of Olaf* shows how faithfully he could catch and render the notes of the Eddas. *The Golden Legend*, whatever exception may justly be taken to its infirmities of structure and want of unity and concentration, contains, frag-

mentarily, some of his very best and most impressive work: Elsie's chant, in the fifth part, beginning "The night is calm and cloudless," is one of the most exquisite lyrics to be found in American poetry:

> The night is calm and cloudless,
> And still as still can be,
> And the stars come forth to listen
> To the music of the sea.
> They gather, and gather, and gather,
> Until they crowd the sky,
> And listen in breathless silence
> To the solemn litany.
> It begins in rocky caverns,
> As a voice that chants alone
> To the pedals of the organ
> In monotonous undertone;
> And anon from shelving beaches,
> And shallow sands beyond,
> In snow-white robes uprising
> The ghostly choirs respond.
> And sadly and unceasing
> The mournful voice sings on,
> And the snow-white choirs still answer,
> Christe eleison!

His most powerful work, from a dramatic point of view, is the *Courtship of Miles Standish*, but the works in this group on which his fame will rest are of course *Evangeline* and *Hiawatha*. Of *Evangeline*, it would be impertinent to say anything more than that it is the crown and flower of American Idyll, a poem belonging, like our own Goldsmith's *Deserted Village*, to the poetry which a nation enshrines in its heart of hearts. As a work of art it will not, of course, bear comparison for a moment with the German masterpiece on which it is obviously modelled,

but in its simple pathos it comes more nearly home to the affections than *Hermann and Dorothea.*

If anyone wished to make out a case for Longfellow's claim to what is almost universally denied him, originality, he would do well to take his stand on *Hiawatha.* He may have borrowed his form and metre from the *Kalevala*, his material from books in his library, and have failed, as he always does fail, in concentration and unity; yet he at least broke new ground, and produced a work which is often of singular charm, and which had no prototype in art.

As a translator, he is all but unrivalled. I am not speaking of the hideous fidelity of his version of Dante, but of such masterpieces as his version of the *Coplas* of Manrique, of Salis' *Silent Land*, of Muller's *Beware*, of Uhland's *Castle by the Sea,* and the versions from the Swedish and Danish. Perhaps the only poems of Longfellow's to which, generally speaking, justice has not been done are his Sonnets; but some of these Sonnets are among the finest ever written in any language; such would be *Dante*, and the first and second of those on the *Divina Commedia*; excellent, also, if in a less degree, are the three others, as well as *Nature*, *Giotto's Tower*, and *Chaucer*—but nearly all have distinction.

Many would no doubt dispute Longfellow's title to be considered America's greatest poet; probably no one would dispute his title to be considered her greatest poetic artist. His supremacy there is confirmed alike by the range of his attainment and by its quality. It is a long way from the most exquisite of his lyrics to such lyrics as the *Saga of King Olaf*

and *Victor Galbraith*, from the *Voices of the Night* and *Birds of Passage* to the *Courtship of Miles Standish*, from the Sonnets to *Hiawatha*, from *The Golden Legend* to *Evangeline*; and in every one of these experiments his success has been universally acknowledged. It is no small achievement to have been able to sound again the note of the Sagas and the *Kalevala*, the note of Manrique, the note of Dante, the notes of Goethe, of Schiller, of Uhland and of Heine, not as a mere imitator, but as a kinsman and copartner in inspiration; to have created a style admirable alike in lexis and in rhythm, the perfection of purity, lucidity, and propriety, with a music all its own, equably harmonious but never monotonous, because in gracious and exquisite harmony with every conception and every emotion that inspired it.

And so, having conducted him to where he is safe from hostile criticism, we will reverently and gratefully leave him, without adding to the impertinences of that criticism by any attempt to settle his relative place among modern poets.

From the great New England trio we come to the most versatile of American men of letters, Bayard Taylor. Sensitive, receptive, finely touched and finely tempered, with a faculty of fluent expression and production, which few, even of his own countrymen, have rivalled, he dedicated a life of crowded experience and of almost limitless industry to literary work. In serious poetry, there was scarcely any note which he did not strike. Studies from the Greek, studies in Oriental life, studies in Italian life, studies in Pennsylvanian, in Californian, in

Norse life: lyrics in every key and in almost every measure, Pindaric, Hafizian, Shelleyan; threnody and dithyramb, love-song and war-song, state-song and ballad: narratives and idylls of equal range and variety: drama, ideal, realistic, lyrical. And if it be said, as it may with justice be said, that he failed conspicuously in nothing except when he became metaphysical, we must not grudge him the tribute to which such gifts and such achievements are entitled, the tribute of admiration. But no poetry of a high, or even of any permanent, value at all has ever had its root in what we admire in Taylor. He is, like Willis, little more than an *improvisatore*. His poems, having no unity and no enthusiasm, either moral or spiritual, are mere studies in song. He has neither depth nor distinction, neither subtlety nor power in reserve. At his best, he is above mediocrity, but, with very rare exceptions, below excellence. How incomparably inferior, for example, is the Bedouin Song, praised so highly by Mr. Stedman, to Shelley's *Lines on an Indian Air* which it so nearly recalls, and which apparently inspired it. The rich and noble but somewhat extravagant poem, *The Metempsychosis of the Pine*, and the very exquisite verses from *Euphorion* on the death of a friend's child, seem to me to stand absolutely alone in his poetry:

> For, through the crystal of your tears,
> His love and beauty fairer shine;
> The shadows of advancing years
> Draw back, and leave him all divine.
>
> And Death, that took him, cannot claim
> The smallest vesture of his birth,—

The little life, a dancing flame
That hover'd o'er the hills of earth,—

The finer soul, that unto ours
A subtle perfume seemed to be,
Like incense blown from April flowers
Beside the scarred and stormy tree,—

The wondering eyes, that ever saw
Some fleeting mystery in the air,
And felt the stars of evening draw
His heart to silence—childhood's prayer!

And more exquisite verses never came from a poet's pen. There is pathos too and power also in *Under the Stars*, in *Sunken Treasures*, and in *The Mystery*, which last has a memorable line:

Death may not keep what Death has never made.

An achievement far more valuable than any of his original poems—except, indeed, for touches and fragments, is his admirable version of Goethe's *Faust*.

With Taylor are associated four poets, one of whom is justly distinguished, while the other three have at least individualized themselves—Thomas Bailey Aldrich, Richard Henry Stoddard, George Henry Boker and Thomas Buchanan Read. As a writer of *vers de société*, as a balladist, lyrist, and descriptive poet, Aldrich is among the most accomplished and pleasing of American poets, as such poems as his *Palabras Cariñosas*, *Babie Bell*, and *Lynn Terrace* amply testify. Stoddard is the author of some pretty lyrics, of some respectable blank verse, and of a threnody on Lincoln which unfortunately invites comparison with Marvell and Tennyson; Boker of some dramas which have gone

the way of W. H. Wills's, and of some pleasing lyrics and ballads. Read produced a good descriptive poem, *The New Pastoral*, at least one pretty lyric, *Drifting*, and a war song of real merit, *Sheridan's Ride*. With this group of poets may be classed Dr. Thomas William Parsons, a scholarly and accomplished poet, whose lines *On a Bust of Dante*, if perhaps overpraised, have real merit, and John James Piatt, a representative poet of the Middle West, who holds no undistinguished place both in idyll and in reflective lyric.

In singular contrast to the poetic activity of the New England and Pennsylvanian schools was the sterility of the South. It had only produced three poets whose names are worth recording. Henry Timrod, the author of *The Cotton Boll*, had a touch of genius; and of merit also is the work of Paul Hamilton Hayne, who, like our own Southey, was a good man and not a bad poet: his lyrics, *A Little While I Fain would Linger* and *In Harbour* are very pleasing. But by far the most distinguished poet of this group was Sidney Lanier. Lanier is plainly a disciple of Poe, whose music he often closely recalls, but he was a man of rich and fine genius, over which, however, he had no control and which seems to have intoxicated him. "The very inner spirit and essence of all wind-songs, passion-songs, sex-songs, soul-songs, and body-songs"—so he wrote of himself—"hath blown upon me like the breaths of passions, and sailed me into a sea of vast dreams, whereof each wave is at once a vision and a melody." So it is with him in such poems as the really superb *Marshes of Glynn*, *Sunrise*, *Corn*,

Psalm of the West, *Nirvana*, in such lyrics as *The Sun has Kissed the Violet Sea*, the verses to Neilson, and in the less intense but most charming *Song of the Chattahoochee*. But Lanier failed to do justice to his genius as a poet, by deliberately fettering himself with a most mistaken theory. He endeavoured to blend and reconcile what is peculiar to music with what is peculiar to poetry, so that his poetry tends to confine itself to the expression of what is more appropriately expressed by the sister art, too often resolving into mere sensuous melody and vague dreamy suggestiveness; but his poetry is full of beauty and charm; and it is original.

Very different were the strains coming from the Pacific slope. There a poet appeared who at one time promised to be among the most eminent, as he is certainly among the most remarkable, whom America has produced. Of the genius of Joaquin Miller there can be no question. His *Songs of the Sierras* struck a new and powerful note. Full of fire and passion and colour, with all the race and flavour of the wild, rich world of their nativity, they swept along, like his own Vaquero,

> On stormy steed,
> His gaudy trappings tossed about and blown
> About the limbs as lithe as any reed,

and the woods, where

> Birds hang and swing, green rob'd and red,
> Or droop in curved lines dreamily,
> Rainbows reversed, from tree to tree,

and monkeys run through the leaves

> Like shuttles hurried through and through
> The threads a hasty weaver weaves.

And, the long days through, from blossom'd trees
There comes the sweet song of sweet bees,
With chorus tone of cockatoo
That slides his beak along the bough,
And walks and talks and hangs and swings
In crown of gold and coat of blue,

and the land of the tornado, when—

The tasselled tops of the pines are as weeds,
And the redwoods rock like to lake-side reeds,
And the world seems darkened and drowned forever,

—the land of sun-maids "tawny-red like wine" with "rivers of hair and hearts of gold"—all this had found its poet. But Miller never got beyond the *Songs of the Sierras*; to the themes of which, or to themes kindred to them, he always returned, when he had anything distinctive to say. What seemed, therefore, a work of splendid promise included the fulfilment of that promise. Shallow-rooted and without buds, his poetry flaunted into full life a gaudy, broad-blown flower. But it was of native growth and no exotic.

Of native growth, also, and no exotic was the prodigious product of transatlantic genius which we have now to inspect. One of the most accomplished and scholarly of English critics, the late John Addington Symonds, told us that we were to see in Walt Whitman "A Behemoth, wallowing in primeval jungles, bathing at fountain heads of mighty rivers, crushing the bamboos and the cane-brakes under him, bellowing and exulting in the torrid air; a gigantic elk or buffalo trampling the grasses of the wilderness, tracking his mate with irresistible energy; an immense tree, a kind of Ygdrasil, stretch-

ing its roots deep down into the bowels of the world, and unfolding its magic boughs through all the spaces of the heavens; the circumambient air, in which float shadowy shapes, rise mirage towers and palm groves; the globe itself, all seas, lands, forests, climates, storms, snows, sunshines, rains of universal earth; all nations, cities, languages, religions, arts, creeds, thoughts, emotions; the beginning and the grit of these things, not their endings, lees and dregs."[1]

The most distinguished of living English poets, on the other hand, sees in the touches which awaken these astonishing elemental melodies only "the dirty and clumsy paws of a harper whose plectrum is a muck-rake," and whose Muse may be resolved into "a drunken apple-woman indecently sprawling in the slush and garbage of the gutter, amid the rotten refuse of the overturned apple stall.[2]

These have not the accent of impartial criticism. It may, perhaps, assist us to a more balanced estimate, if we assume the truth of three propositions; namely, that if a man six feet high, "of striking masculine beauty and of venerable appearance," chooses to stand on his head in the public streets, and proceed to other improprieties of which the police take cognizance, he will at least attract notice, and create some excitement; secondly, that the law of reaction in literature, as in everything else, will assert itself, that, when poetry has long attained perfection in form and has been running smoothly in conventional grooves, there is certain

[1] *A Study of Walt Whitman*, pp. 155-6.
[2] Swinburne's *Whitmania*.

to be revolt both on the part of poets themselves and in the public taste, and the opposite extreme will be affected and welcomed; and, thirdly, that if a writer has the courage or impudence to set sense, taste and decency at defiance, and, posing sometimes as a mystic and sometimes as a mountebank, to express himself in the jargon of both, and yet has the genius to irradiate his absurdities with flashes of wisdom, beauty and inspired insight, three things are certain to result. Those who sympathize with the reaction of which he is the representative will dwell with ecstasy on the very little which is the salt of his work, will either ignore the rest, or, coming to it with judgement prejudiced by their admiration for what is vital and excellent, invest it with factitious merits. Those of conservative tastes will dwell only on what disgusts and offends them, and have no eyes for anything else; and those who belong to neither party, but are quite willing to judge what they find on its own merits, will be perplexed, and probably misled, by the conflicting opinions so importunately vociferated, with all the heat of partisanship, by the others.

This is precisely what has happened in the case of Whitman. There can be little doubt that he employed the style which he affected, as well as the shameless obscenities of such pieces as *The Children of Adam*, to attract attention. It was a cheap and easy means of attaining a unique position as a poet. Nor was his mode of expression his only expedient for securing singularity. Since Rousseau, no man had presented himself absolutely nude to the public gaze. That edifying spectacle was now repeated,

and all who were interested in such exhibitions could inspect and contrast them at their leisure; and, certainly, the stalwart and virile American showed to great advantage beside the puny and emasculated Frenchman. Having thus succeeded, as might have been expected, not indeed in gaining respect, but in drawing all eyes upon him, he proceeded to pile eccentricity upon eccentricity and extravagance upon extravagance. A celebrated statesman once observed, on being informed that the English people would not "stand" a certain measure which he was preparing to carry, that his experience had shown him that the limits of what they would "stand" had never yet been discovered. But what they would "stand" in art—the American people, it must be remembered, were never hoodwinked by him—Whitman resolved to try. He gave them page after page of mere jabber, of twaddle so absolutely drivelling that it fascinated by its sheer audacity. Sometimes it assumed the form of inanities and platitudes, such as any man of average intelligence would, even in familiar conversation, be ashamed to express; sometimes it strung together long lists of names transcribed from maps and gazetteers, introduced with a "What do you see, Walt Whitman?", extracts from Natural Histories, travels, scientific treatises, and even from newspapers; more often it vented itself in transcendental or political ravings. Altogether, it presented a phenomenon the like of which had not only never been seen before, but the like of which would have seemed to any sane man impossible outside the cells of a lunatic asylum. But Whitman was no lunatic, and well knew what he was

after. All this was merely, in his own words, "Drum-Taps"—the arts of the astute showman, to collect a crowd for a show which, in some respects, was well worth seeing.

But when we come even to Whitman's serious and genuine work, large deductions have to be made for what it would be unduly harsh to call charlatanry, but which certainly comes very near it. His "chants"—for that is the term he affected—have been called poetry in solution, but what is in solution in them is not poetry of his own but the poetry of others. This "most original of American writers" is, in truth, more indebted to his predecessors and contemporaries than any other American writer. He simply resolved into his own diffuse jargon, and revoiced in his own "barbaric yawp," what had been expressed legitimately, in the true form of poetry, or in simple prose, by Burns and Blake, by Wordsworth, by Goethe, by Shelley, by Tennyson, by Carlyle, by Emerson, by Thoreau and by many others. Whether his appropriations were conscious and deliberate, or whether they were the result of what was in the air, so to speak, scarcely affects the point of importance. He was not, what by a trick of expression he affected to be, original in anything that was sane in his philosophy and propaganda. One illustration will suffice, for it is typical. Wordsworth wrote, and wrote as a poet:

> The stars of midnight shall be dear
> To her: and she shall lean her ear
> In many a secret place,
> Where rivulets dance their wayward round,
> And beauty born of neighbouring sound
> Shall pass into her face.

Whitman writes, *more suo:*

There was a child went forth every day:
And the first object he looked upon, that object he became,
And that object became part of him for the day, or
A certain part of the day, or for many years, or
Stretching cycles of years. . . .
The horizon's edge, the flying sea-crow: the fragrance of salt
marsh and shore-mud:
These became part of that child who went forth
Every day, and who now goes and will always go forth every day.

"Plainly," as Mr. Stedman naïvely observes, "there are some comparative advantages in Wordsworth's treatment of this idea." It is pitiable to see a critic like Addington Symonds exalting Whitman into a bard and prophet, and dwelling fondly on the inspired power and beauty of chants, or portions of chants, which, he must have known, were simply centos, with Whitmanian dilutions or extravagances, from Goethe, or from Wordsworth, from Thoreau, or from Emerson. It was this sort of homage which confirmed Whitman in his megalomania, in that monstrous and ludicrous egotism which led him to preach, and finally no doubt to believe, that, to employ his own jargon, he was all, and that all was he. To speak quite plainly, Whitman began by being in some respect a charlatan, and paid the penalty by becoming at last something very like a madman. He had to pay also another penalty mortifying to his vanity, and, to do him justice, to a nobler instinct. He aspired to be the poet of the democracy, but the democracy would have nothing to do with him; and it was right, as it almost always is, in its judgment of what directly appeals to it. He has been compared to our own Blake, whom in some respects he

nearly resembles; but, as Professor Nichol admirably put it, Blake was a prodigious genius marred by almost insane violence, Whitman a writer of almost insane violence occasionally redeemed by touches of genius.[1]

How, then, are we to explain the fascination which his work has undoubtedly had, and still has, for so many? Making all due deductions for what has been explained already, there can of course be no question about Whitman's genius. Had he been true to it, he might have stood high among genuine poets; for, on the rare occasions when he is true to it, he has lyric notes of thrilling power, he has pathos, he has passion, and in his nature-pictures he has often a magical touch. At times, true enthusiasm possessed and inspired him, and there is no mistaking its accent. A poem like *Pioneers*, firm-blown and from the heart, rings like a clarion. The poem *When Lilacs Last*, and the shorter piece *O Captain, My Captain*, are noble threnodies. *Out of the Cradle endlessly Rocking* is at times beautiful alike for its pathos, nature-painting, and rhythm. A poem, again, like the *Vigil on the Fields* came from the heart and goes to the heart. In *Sea Drift* there is more which reveals him at his very best, for he is generally at his best when the sea and elementary forces are his themes. Nor can it be denied that the strange uncouth mode of expression which he adopted had at times curious propriety.

Another secret of his fascination is his impressive and imperious personality and his cosmopolitan sympathies and gospel. If, in the first, there is

[1] *American Literature*, p. 214.

much which is grotesque and disgusting, there is more which justly commands admiration. Every inch a man, big-brained, big-hearted, fearless, resolute and robust, he is not only the incarnation of strength, but he is the soul of independence and philanthropy. Art and the humanities may look askance on him, as he on them; but mother Nature, to whom alone he did homage, had every reason to regard with pride one of the loyalist and most stalwart of her children. And, indelibly as his vices, follies, and infirmities, is all this—and it is very attractive—impressed on his writings. Though there is nothing original, either in his propaganda or in his prophecies, yet, however ragged and dissonant the note of his trumpet, he is among the heralds of the mighty future—before America, before mankind—of the Republic of Republics, of world federation, of universal brotherhood, of the religion of humanity, of the "one God, one law, one element" of Tennyson's vision. No one can read unmoved such poems as *By blue Ontario's shore*, *Thou Mother with thy Equal Brood*, *Song of the Broad Axe*, and *The Mystic Trumpeter*. I have spoken of his herald-trumpet's ragged notes; let us listen to one of his clear notes:

Marches of victory—man disenthral'd—the conqueror at last.
Hymns to the Universal God from universal man—all joy!
A re-born race appears—a perfect world, all joy!
Women and men in wisdom, innocence and health—all joy!
War, sorrow, suffering gone—the rank earth purg'd—nothing
    but joy left;
The ocean fill'd with joy—the atmosphere all joy—
Joy, joy in freedom, worship, love! joy in the ecstasy of life!
    Joy! joy! all over joy!

This is at least worth translating into poetry. But Whitman's virtues will be of no more avail, and all he has left will inevitably fall "into the portion of weeds and outworn faces." The world never respects a man who does not respect himself, and to bawl out indiscriminately what should be said and what should not be said (ὁ ῥητὰ καὶ ἄρρητα βοῶν) was a synonym with the Greeks for a blackguard. Of this offence, Whitman was guilty, not accidentally but on principle, not morally only, but intellectually and aesthetically. He was, no doubt, what he was fond of calling himself, a child of Nature, and his admirers have called him the poet of nature: but no *poet* can be true to nature who is not true to art.

We now pass to a poet as essentially native as Miller and Whitman, but standing in remarkable contrast to both. If Miller is the most diffuse, and Whitman the most extravagant and lawless of the native school, Bret Harte is the most concise and restrained. His reputation as a humorist has eclipsed his reputation as a serious poet, and he will no doubt live mainly by his prose stories; but his serious poetry has scarcely had justice done to it. Much, indeed the greater part, of his verse was, no doubt, produced as mere journeyman work, and certainly does not rise above the level of what a skilful craftsman could, in the course of that work, easily turn out. With this we need not trouble ourselves. It is in a narrow sphere that his distinction lies; it lies in the clairvoyant vividness and thrilling power with which he realizes and presents a pathetic scene or incident, in his faculty of piercing to the heart of some dramatic situation or circumstance, and repro

ducing it with corresponding nearness and truth, and in the nerve and grip of his narrative. Nothing could well exceed the power and pathos of *The Station-master of Lone Prairie*, or the charm and pathos of *Dickens in Camp*. Even such waifs as *Jim* and *In the Tunnel* smite the tears into our eyes. *Guild's Signal* may owe its pathos—and what pathos there is in it!—to the fact, but how admirably is that fact presented; in *Grandmother Tenterden* he is again at his best. The exquisite little poem *The Mountain Heart's-ease* is in another vein, but it deserves a place beside Burns' *Daisy*. In *Ramon*, *The Hawk's Nest*, *Dow's Flat*, and in *The Old Camp-fire*, we have leaves from a life which no one has painted as he has done. *Miss Blanche Says* and *For the King* are spoilt by too great fidelity to a bad model, Browning, and *Concepcion de Arguello* by a fault very rare with Bret Harte, diffuseness. His style, terse, lucid and sinewy, "with its sabre-cuts of Saxon speech," is all his own, and has set American realistic poetry to a new tune. Bret Harte has great versatility. When he strikes the notes which other poets have struck, it is often with added charm. In spite of Longfellow there is room for such a poem as *The Angelus*, and in spite of Praed and Owen Meredith, room for *Her Letter*. As a humorist in verse he stands on a much lower level, and whether, as Professor Nichol opined, he must often have wished "to hang that Heathen Chinee, and to give the lie to Truthful James, and wring the neck of the Emeu, and 'cave in' the heads of the whole Society on the Stanislaus," I cannot, of course, say, but it is very certain that they have intervened between

the lower reputation which they have given him and the higher reputation to which he is justly entitled. Nor can it be denied that they are, *quantum valeat*, perfectly original, and have, like one or two of Mark Twain's kindred strains, a most provoking fascination.

But Bret Harte, even where he was strongest, had a powerful rival in the author of *Jim Bludso of the "Prairie Bell"* and of *Little Breeches*. All lovers of poetry, both in England and in America, must regret that Colonel Hay's crowded life did not leave him more leisure to cultivate a genius which, within its range, is as rare and fine as it is virile. It is not given to many minor poets to strike such notes as we hear in the two poems referred to, in such a sonnet as *The Haunted Room*, and in such a lyric as *Remorse*. How exquisite is the following:

> Sad is the vague and tender dream
> Of dead love's lingering kisses
> To crush'd hearts, hallow'd by the gleam
> Of unreturning blisses;
> Deep mourns the soul, in anguished pride,
> For the pitiless death that won them;
> But the saddest wail is for lips that died
> With the virgin dew upon them.

And now we descend to the levels where it becomes impossible to distinguish. During the last few years, there have been at least a hundred and fifty poets and poetesses, of very many of whom even the indulgent catholicism of Mr. Stedman has not taken cognizance. And in the case of the majority of these, so uniform is the standard of merit, so essentially similar in quality the work, that distinction

depends, not on any application of critical tests, but purely on the accidents of personal taste. Nor has this poetry, throughout its whole range, any landmarks or eminences; whether we regard it comprehensively, or in relation to those who have individually contributed to it, nothing stands out in striking singularity. In the minor poetry of almost all periods and of almost all nations, there are particular poems with which everyone is familiar, and in the writings of most minor poets there are particular poems with which we instantly associate them. But this cannot be said of any of these poets. Even the best of them remind us, I fear, of what Dr. Johnson said of the Giant's Causeway—it was worth seeing, but it was hardly worth going to see. If their volumes happen to come in our way, the chances are that we turn over their pages with real pleasure. We are pretty sure to find a pure and wholesome tone, refinement, grace, often charm, all the marks of careful culture based in many cases on a sympathetic acquaintance with European *belles-lettres*, and a power of expression and a skill in technique, generally, which fifty years ago would only have been found in the work of masters. But it is, we feel, the poetry of accomplished artists, who do not sing because they must, but because they can. Eclectic and cosmopolitan, or trivially native, it is essentially the work of art, and too often of nothing but art, with no root in life, national or individual; in its themes, a weary sameness; in its tone and spirit, a certain insincerity, or at all events a lack of genuine enthusiasm where enthusiasm is affected. Here and there, particular poems and particular poets may be found whose

work would, in justice, require some modification of this criticism. The most deservedly eminent of living American critics, Mr. Edmund Clarence Stedman, has, like our own Matthew Arnold, confirmed his title to speak with authority on poetry by his own contributions to it. The too facile and voluminous poetry of James Whitcomb Riley, an essentially native product, though in no way comparable to the *Biglow Papers*, is full of humour, vivid life, and graphic nature painting, but it is hardly likely to travel further than the country of its birth. And, certainly, an honourable place must be claimed for more than one poetess; Mrs. Thaxter's lyrics have at times true inspiration and great charm, particularly when her themes are the sea, and bird life. The lyrics and sonnets of Mrs. Helen Jackson Hunt display great technical skill, and have often much beauty. Emily Dickinson is, in her jerky transcendentalism and strained style, too faithful a disciple of Emerson, but much of her work has real merit. The refined and thoughtful sonnets of Mrs. Chandler Moulton can never lack grateful appreciation, and more than one of her simple and tender lyrics will long be gems in every anthology. But a higher place, perhaps, than belongs to any of these poetesses must be assigned to Miss Helen Hay, whose sonnets and lyrics have both subtlety and power, and whose last work, *The Rose of Dawn*, in its rich picturesqueness, dramatic intensity, and sustained power, seems to me, in spite of its occasional collapses in style, one of the most brilliant contributions which has recently been made to American poetry.

But it is time to conclude. The future of American poetry is as dark as that of our own, and criticism is not concerned with prophecy. The immediate prospect is, it must be owned, not encouraging on either side of the Atlantic. In the sphere of intellectual activity, nothing is seriously energetic but Science, or vitally influential but the scientific spirit; and, what that spirit has engendered—the spirit of investigation, analysis and criticism—is ubiquitous. Under this deadly solvent of the spiritual and imaginative faculties of man, their two creations, poetry and theology, seem to be melting away, the one resolving itself into an aesthetic appeal to the senses, the other into a code of ethics. Materialism and wealth-accumulating labour and luxury, with all that accompanies and all that follows in their train, have and must inevitably have the effects which Wordsworth, Emerson and Ruskin attributed to them. Literature generally will degenerate, as it has degenerated, into little more than a means of affording recreation and amusement to those whose serious interests and occupations are elsewhere; and poetry will cease to appeal, or will share, as it now shares, in this degradation. But Man's finer and nobler energies can only be depressed, they can never be extinguished or even lose their vitality. Unerring and inevitable as the law of gravitation in the physical, is the law of reaction in the spiritual, world. Materialism—and let us understand the word in its most comprehensive sense—has still a long course to run, of that we may be quite sure. But all that poetry represents and vindicates can never fail at last to assert itself. Very different, however,

from the poetry of the past must be the poetry of the future. It will not imp its wing from the mythology of Olympus and Hippocrene, or seek inspiration from

> Siloa's brook that flowed
> Fast by the Oracle of God.

Of that there can be no doubt. It must have other inspiration, other themes. It is more likely perhaps to find the first in the immense, emancipated, undeveloped life, with its infinite potentialities and possibilities, which is unfolding itself in the New World, than in the more contracted, tradition-trammelled life of the Old. Its themes, we may be sure, will be the themes in the treatment of which Whitman fumbled and stammered, its religion and ethics the religion and ethics of which Emerson was the prophet. In a word, it is likely to be a poetry the features of which have been more clearly, if still dimly, adumbrated in the genius typical of America, than in the genius typical of any of the European nations. A reaction against the restless, hollow, degraded life at present characteristic of the great centres of business and fashion is inevitable, and with that reaction poetry may awake,—the poetry of a fuller day,—and the famous prophecy find its realization, not politically only, but in another and nobler sense as well:

> Westward the course of Empire takes its way;
> The four first acts already past,
> A fifth shall close the drama with the day;
> Time's noblest offspring is the last.

THE COLLECTED WORKS OF LORD BYRON.[1]

THE completion of what may be regarded as a final edition of Byron's writings both in poetry and prose is surely a notable event in literary history. Nothing indeed is likely to modify very materially either the estimate which has been formed of his character since the appearance of Moore's work, or the verdict which his countrymen have long since passed on him as a poet. But we are now in a position to understand much in the man himself, and more in his work as an artist, which it was not possible to understand fully and clearly before; we are enabled to review both, if not in any absolutely new light, at least in the light of testimony and illustration so ample, nay, so exhaustive, that probably nothing of any importance will ever be added to it. These thirteen volumes form, in truth, a contribution to biography and criticism to which it would be difficult to find a parallel in

[1] 1. *The Works of Lord Byron: Letters and Journals.* Edited by Rowland E. Prothero. Six vols. London: Murray, 1898-1901.

2. *The Works of Lord Byron: the Poetical Works.* Edited by Ernest Hartley Coleridge. Seven vols. London: Murray, 1898-1904.

modern times. There is no corner, no recess, in Byron's crowded life, from boyhood to manhood, from manhood to the end, into which we are not admitted; we know him as we know Pepys and as we know Johnson.

To say nothing of a correspondence in which his experiences and his impressions, his idiosyncrasies and his temper, are reflected as in a mirror, records intended for no eyes but his own reveal to us his most secret thoughts. He is exhibited in all his moods and in all his extremes. We can watch every phase which, in its rapid and capricious alternations of darkness and light, his extraordinarily complex and mobile character assumed. The infirmities, the follies, the vices which revolted Wordsworth and Browning and degraded him at times to the level of fribbles like Nash and Brummell, and of mere libertines like Queensberry and Hertford; the sudden transitions by which, in the resilience of his nobler instincts and sympathies, he became glorified into the actual embodiment of what at such moments he expressed in poetry; the virtues on which those who admired and those who loved him delighted to dwell, and which could transform him momentarily into the most heroic, the most generous, the most attaching of men; the strange anomalies for which the perpetual conflict between his higher and baser nature, and between his reason and his passions, was responsible; his mingled charlatanry and sincerity, refinement and grossness, levity and enthusiasm; the magnanimity and dignity which could occasionally be discerned in him; the almost incredible paltriness and meanness of

which at times he was capable; his sanity, his good sense, his keen insight into men and life, his admirable literary judgements, so singularly and glaringly contrasted with the childishness, the obliquity, the extravagance which he displayed when under the influence of prejudice or passion—all this makes his autobiography, in other words, his correspondence, memoranda, and journals, a psychological study of the profoundest interest.

Nor is this all. His poetry is so essentially the expression of his character, and was so directly inspired by his personal experiences, that these records form the best of all commentaries on it. From a still more important point of view, they, or at least the greater portion of them, are equally remarkable. Byron's letters will probably live as long as his poems. Voluminous as they are, they never weary us. Social sketches dashed off with inimitable happiness; anecdote and incident related as only a consummate *raconteur* can relate them; piquant comments on the latest scandal or the latest book; the gossip and tittle-tattle of the green-room and the boudoir, of the clubs and the salons, so transformed by the humour and wit of their cynical retailer that they almost rival the dialogue of Congreve and Sheridan; shrewd and penetrating observations on life, on human nature, on politics, on literature, dropped so carelessly that it is only on reflection that we see their wisdom, keep us perpetually amused and entertained.

Of the conscientiousness and skill with which Mr. Prothero has performed a most difficult task it is impossible to speak too highly. In the first place,

he has spared no pains to make the correspondence complete. With what success, a comparison of the number of letters which have appeared in preceding collections with the number printed by him will at once show. If he has, to some extent, fared as those who glean after the full harvest must necessarily fare, he has not only preserved much which was worth preservation, but he has been able to add substantially to what was of most interest and value in preceding collections.[1]

Mr. Prothero has not only given us an exhaustive edition of the letters, journals, and memoranda, and settled what must henceforth be their standard text, but he has done much more. No man entered more fully into the social and literary life of his time, or took keener interest in the incidents of the passing hour, than Byron. The consequence is that the letters and journals teem with allusions and references to individuals and to current topics, as well as to the literature of the day, which the lapse of nearly a century has made unintelligible without continual elucidations. This Mr. Prothero has given us, and given us in a measure pressed down and overflowing. We have memoirs and notices of all the persons, many of them long since forgotten, to whom the letters are addressed, or of whom they

[1] For the ample material at the disposal of Byron's editors, without which the present edition both of the letters and of the poems would have been impossible, the world is indebted to the diligence and enthusiasm of the second and third John Murray, who during eighty years spared no time or expense in collecting it. If they and their house owe much to Byron they have certainly endeavoured to repay their debt in a manner which their creditor would most have appreciated.

make mention; and rare indeed it is to find anything requiring explanation which is left in obscurity. His notes are in themselves delightful reading, and we are not at all inclined to quarrel with their occasional diffuseness.

But important as this edition is as concentrating all that throws light on Byron as a man, it is still more important from the light which it throws on his work. If, in editing the correspondence, journals, and miscellaneous prose writings, Mr. Prothero had a difficult task imposed on him, a still more difficult task was imposed on his coadjutor, the editor of the poems and dramas. When we say that Mr. Coleridge's edition contains, not only every complete poem and drama written by Byron, but every fragment of the smallest interest which can be gleaned from authentic sources; that his text has been formed by collation with the early printed copies and with the original manuscripts where they are extant, as in most cases they are, every variant and erasure being carefully noted; that every poem is furnished with elucidatory notes explaining allusions and citing parallel passages to which Byron was, or may have been, indebted; that to each of the chief poems and collection of poems is prefixed a more or less elaborate bibliographical, critical, and generally illustrative introduction—some estimate may be formed of the immense labour expended on his work.

A poet more troublesome to a conscientious editor than Byron could hardly be found, and this for three reasons—the multiplicity of the sources of his text, the large space which topics of ephemeral interest

fill in his poetry, and the difficulty of identifying or even of explaining the innumerable reminiscences and references which his loose and desultory but immense reading supplied in such profusion. A very superficial acquaintance with Byron's writings will enable any one to understand what the adequate annotation of such poems as the *Hints from Horace*, *The Vision of Judgment*, *The Devil's Drive*, *The Blues*, to say nothing of *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*, and, above all, *The Age of Bronze* and *Don Juan*, must imply. No doubt the labour was somewhat lightened, as Mr. Coleridge acknowledges, by that great work, which has lightened so much editorial labour, the *Dictionary of National Biography*; but all that the Dictionary could afford represents only a fraction of what was necessary for the elucidation of these poems. Mr. Coleridge has brought to his task an extensive knowledge of general literature, and a still more extensive knowledge of the literature immediately preceding and contemporary with Byron. Memoirs, correspondence, "ana," novels, travels, periodicals, newspapers, and all such publications as are known to have been in Byron's hands, have been explored by him; and with the happiest result. For he has thus been enabled, not only to explain the innumerable references and allusions in the poems which the lapse of time has, for the present generation, rendered obscure or even unintelligible, but, in conjunction with the notes on the text, to furnish us with the best of commentaries on Byron's methods and technique. The chief infirmity of the notes lies in the parallel passages. Mr. Coleridge, very rightly,

attaches importance to them as illustrating a striking characteristic of Byron—the union of originality with an indebtedness to his predecessors and contemporaries so considerable as to be not a little surprising, particularly in a poet of his temper. But many of the most remarkable of these reminiscences are not noticed by Mr. Coleridge, though a place is found for many which might easily be resolved into mere coincidences. To this, however, we shall return presently.

To pass to the contents of these seven substantial volumes, which represent all that has been given, or probably ever will be given, to the world in verse from Byron's pen. The first question which every reader will naturally ask is: do they add anything of importance to what we already have, any poem which deserves permanence, any poem which strikes a new note? This may be answered, with some little reserve perhaps, in the negative. Of the thirty poems published here for the first time, the insertion of at least two thirds could only be justified by the consideration that it was desirable to make the collection complete. The eleven early poems printed from the Newstead manuscripts are much below the level of the verses comprised in the *Hours of Idleness*; the lines beginning "I cannot talk of love to thee," *Julian*, *The Duel*, the *Ode to a Lady*, in volumes iii and iv, have no distinction; few of those printed in volume vii are, so far as intrinsic merit goes, worth preserving. Every one will turn with interest to the seven stanzas, with the prose note, containing the savage attack on Brougham, which

were to follow stanza clxxxix in the first canto of *Don Juan*, and to the fourteen stanzas opening the seventeenth canto of *Don Juan*, found in Byron's room at Missolonghi. But no one can read them without feeling how little, even as a satirist, his reputation gains by the first series, and how painfully, in their flaccid diffuseness, the second series illustrates his decadence. Nor is the fragment of the third part of *The Deformed Transformed* likely to gratify anything but curiosity. The most remarkable of these pieces is the fragment of a poem on Aristomenes, dated Cephalonia, September 10th, 1823, in which he certainly struck a new note, and, what is not a little surprising, a note closely recalling Keats.

The fragment is short and it may be transcribed:

> The Gods of old are silent on their shore
> Since the great Pan expired, and through the roar
> Of the Ionian waters broke a dread
> Voice which proclaimed "the Mighty Pan is dead."
> How much died with him! false or true—the dream
> Was beautiful which peopled every stream
> With more than finny tenants, and adorned
> The woods and waters with coy nymphs that scorn'd
> Pursuing Deities, or in the embrace
> Of Gods brought forth the high heroic race
> Whose names are on the hills and o'er the seas.

On a general review of these poems it is impossible not to be struck, as in the case of the letters, with the admirable judgement which Moore displayed both in what he published and in what he suppressed. We can quite understand Mr. Coleridge's desire to make this edition of Byron as complete as possible, but one is glad to learn that he

has not extended his editorial discretion beyond the limits of what is here printed, for, in giving permanence to some of these pieces the extreme limits of such discretion have been reached. The lees even of Byron are not exhilarating, and as we gather from Mr. Coleridge that lees still remain, it is to be hoped that no less discreet successor of Mr. Coleridge will be permitted to allow vulgar curiosity to regale on them.

But it is as affording more copious material than has hitherto been collected for a critical estimate of Byron's work as a poet that this edition is perhaps of most interest and importance. We are now enabled, thanks to Mr. Coleridge, to distinguish between what Byron owed to nature and what he owed to predecessors and contemporaries, and, following him into his workshop, to study his methods and to be admitted into all the secrets of his technique. It will certainly come as a surprise to many to learn how often the most vehement and impetuous of poets, in what appears to be the full tide of impassioned inspiration, is, at the same time, the most patient of artists; how, with so much originality in essence, his poetry is, in expression and often in imagery and sentiment, almost as much indebted to assimilative memory as that of Gray or Tennyson.

Among Byron's many affectations was his almost morbid anxiety to have it supposed that composition cost him no labour; and of this he was always boasting. "Like Edie Ochiltree," he said, "I never dowed to bide a hard turn o' wark in my life." That he composed, as a rule, with great rapidity seems certain, but that he took immense pains in preparing

himself for composition, and in revising what he composed, is abundantly apparent, not only from the elaborate accuracy of his realism, when realism was his aim, but from the testimony afforded by the variants and deletions in his manuscripts and proofs. Of the first, we have two very striking illustrations in *Don Juan*, namely, the shipwreck and the incidents succeeding it in the second canto, and the siege of Ismail in the seventh and eighth. Of the shipwreck, he himself said there was "not a single circumstance of it not taken from fact; not indeed from any single shipwreck, but all from actual facts of different wrecks." The fidelity with which this part of the poem was compiled, in other words, constructed out of passages dovetailed from Dalzell's *Shipwrecks and Disasters at Sea*, Hartford's *Remarkable Shipwrecks*, Bligh's *Narrative of the Mutiny of the Bounty*, and his own grandfather's *Narrative*, shows to what patient drudgery Byron could sometimes submit. Most of the passages borrowed by him have been duly recorded in Mr. Coleridge's notes, but one of the most interesting and remarkable appears to have escaped his notice. The magnificent stanza—

> And first one universal shriek there rush'd,
> Louder than the loud ocean, like a crash
> Of echoing thunder; and then all was hush'd,
> Save the wild wind and the remorseless dash
> Of billows; but at intervals there gush'd,
> Accompanied with a convulsive splash,
> A solitary shriek, the bubbling cry
> Of some strong swimmer in his agony.

—was plainly based on the following passage in the

wreck of the "Pandora" (*Shipwrecks and Disasters*, vol. iii, p. 129):

> Within a very few minutes of the time when Mr. Rogers gained the rock an universal shriek, which long vibrated in their ears, . . . announced a dreadful catastrophe. In a few minutes all was hushed except the roaring of the winds and the dashing of the waves. . . . The cries of men drowning were dreadful in the extreme, but died away by degrees as they became faint.

It would indeed be quite impossible to exceed the scrupulous particularity with which, even to the most trifling minutiae, Byron has drawn on these narratives, owing literally nothing to invention. In his account of the siege and capture of Ismail he has drawn in the same way, and almost to the same extent, on the Marquis Gabriel de Castelnau's *Essai sur l'Histoire ancienne et moderne de la Nouvelle Russie*. And this drudging industry was not more remarkable than the labour expended on successive editions of some of his poems, notably *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*, the *Hints from Horace*, and *The Giaour*.

What trouble composition sometimes cost him will be plain to any one who will turn to the record of the variants in stanza ix of the first canto of *Childe Harold*, and in cxxxiv of the fourth canto. How revision could at times transform his poetry is illustrated by the passage which every one knows in *The Giaour*, "He who hath bent him o'er the dead." The lines which now run:

> The first dark day of nothingness,
> The last of danger and distress,

(Before Decay's effacing fingers
Have swept the lines where beauty lingers,)
And mark'd the mild angelic air,
The rapture of repose that's there;
The fix'd yet tender traits that streak
The languor of the placid cheek;

originally ran:

The first dark day of nothingness,
The last of doom and of distress,
Before Corruption's cankering fingers
Hath tinged the hue where beauty lingers,
And marked the soft and settled air
That dwells with all but spirit there.

The line "Where cold obstruction's apathy," which occurs later, and originally appeared as "Whose touch thrills with mortality," illustrates what is often perceptible in Byron's variants. A reminiscence of Shakespeare's "cold obstruction" occurring to him as he corrected the proofs, suggested it; just as, in the apostrophe to the ocean in *Childe Harold*, the memory of a couplet in Campbell's *Battle of the Baltic* enabled him to transform

These oaken citadels which made and make
Their clay creator the vain title take,

into

The oak leviathans, whose huge ribs make, etc.

Again, the lines in *The Giaour*,

Yes, love indeed is light from heaven,
A spark of that immortal fire
With angels shared, by Allah given,
To lift from earth our low desire.

were evolved thus:

Yes / If } Love indeed { doth spring / descend / be born } from heaven,
A spark of that { immortal / eternal / celestial } fire.

The couplet in *The Bride of Abydos*,

> The evening beam that smiles the clouds away
> And tints to-morrow with prophetic ray.

took final form from

> And tints to-morrow with { a fancied / an airy } ray.
> And { gilds / tints } the hope of morning with its ray.
> And gilds to-morrow's hope with heavenly ray.

There is a variant in the description of the thunderstorm in the third canto of *Childe Harold* which, poor as it is, is certainly preferable to the ludicrous line for which it is substituted:

> The glee
> Of the loud hills shakes with its mountain-mirth,
> As if they did rejoice o'er a young earthquake's birth;

namely,

> As they had found an heir and feasted o'er his birth.

There is one characteristic of Byron's variants which is very significant: they rarely improve the rhythm, and were apparently seldom designed for that purpose. So incurably bad was his ear that occasionally they are, from this point of view, alterations for the worse, as here (*Childe Harold*, iii, lix):

> Wild but not rude, *aw*ful yet not *aus*tere,
> Is to the mellow earth as *aut*umn to the year.

In the MS. this was softened by reading—

> Rustic, not rude, sublime, yet not austere.

So in the *Siege of Corinth*, the dissonant and lumbering line,

> The vaults *beneath the mosaic stone*,

ran in the MS.,

> The vaults beneath the { chequered / inlaid } stone,

where, had "chequered" been chosen, the rhythm would have been faultless. In another passage of the same poem after three experiments he chooses the turn which is best indeed, but which in no way improves the rhythm:

> The wild dogs fled
> And left their food the unburied dead
> And left their food the untasted dead
> And howling left the untasted dead

but finally

> And howling left the unburied dead.

To a variant in the eighteenth stanza of the third canto of *Childe Harold* an interesting history is attached. Byron wrote the stanza in a lady's album just after he had composed it, and one of the couplets ran:

> Here his last flight the haughty eagle flew,
> Then tore with bloody beak the fatal plain.

This being shown to one Reinagle, an artist, he drew a pencil sketch of a chained eagle which was, however, represented as grasping the earth with his talons. The vignette was forwarded to Byron, who wrote in reply: "Reinagle is a better poet and a better ornithologist than I am; eagles and all birds

of prey attack with their talons and not with their beaks, and I have altered the line:

> Then tore with bloody talon the rent plain.

Carlyle's definition of genius as an infinite capacity for taking pains is certainly not refuted by what we know of Byron.

But the combination of a capacity for drudging industry with a genius and temper which seem scarcely compatible with the practice of so humble a virtue, is not the only anomaly in Byron's constitution. In three respects he bears a remarkable resemblance to a class of poets with whom he would, at first sight, appear to have nothing in common. Neither Virgil nor Horace in ancient times, neither Milton or Gray or even Tennyson in modern times, has been more indebted to preceding and contemporary literature. An extraordinary wide range of reading, a memory remarkable alike for its tenacity and its ready mastery over its acquisitions, and a not less remarkable power of assimilating and of reproducing in other forms what was thus acquired, are quite as characteristic of Byron as of the poets to whom we have referred. It may sound paradoxical to say that Byron owed more to reading and books than he owed to independent observation of nature and life; that what in his poetry was directly inspired by his own experiences and impressions bears a very small proportion to what was suggested to him by others; that, in all that relates to form, his poetry, so far from having any pretension to originality, is essentially imitative. And yet this is certainly the case. We have already remarked that

the least satisfactory part of Mr. Coleridge's commentary is its illustration of these very remarkable characteristics of Byron, and we shall therefore make no apology for dealing with them at some length.

Nothing could illustrate more strikingly Byron's method than *Childe Harold* and the Eastern tales. It is generally supposed that in the Childe Byron simply painted himself, and so in some touches and in certain details he undoubtedly did; but the character was plainly suggested to him by Madame de Staël's Lord Nelvil in *Corinne*, in whom every trait of Byron's hero is defined and described. In the fourth canto *Corinne* is followed very closely, as in the descriptions of the Coliseum and St. Peter's, and in the reflections on the ruins of Rome. Nearly the whole of two of the finest stanzas (clxxix, clxxx) in the apostrophe to the ocean is taken from the novel (i, iv):

> . . . Cette superbe mer, sur laquelle l'homme jamais ne peut imprimer sa trace. La terre est travaillée par lui . . . mais si les vaisseaux sillonnent un moment les ondes, la vague vient effacer aussitôt cette légère marque de servitude, et la mer reparaît telle qu'elle fut au premier jour de la création.

The famous stanza in Julia's letter, in the first canto of *Don Juan*, st. cxciv, "Man's love is of Man's life," etc., is little more than a translation of *Corinne*, xviii, v:

> Que les hommes sont heureux d'aller à la guerre, d'exposer leur vie, de se livrer à l'enthousiasme de l'honneur et du danger! Mais il n'y a rien au dehors qui soulage les femmes; leur existence, immobile en présence du malheur, est un long supplice.

The character of Conrad, in the *The Corsair*, was apparently concocted, as Alaric Watts pointed out, from that of Malefort Junior, in Massinger's *Unnatural Combat*, and Mrs. Anne Radcliffe's typical heroes. *The Giaour* is simply Mrs. Radcliffe's Schedoni in *The Italian*. In *Lara* Byron no doubt analyzes his own character; but, for the rest, the whole poem is concocted from Mrs. Radcliffe's *Italian* and *Mysteries of Udolpho*, and from Scott's *Marmion*. How closely Mrs. Radcliffe is followed will be apparent to any one who compares the combat between Lara and Otho, and that between Mrs. Radcliffe's Morano and Montoni in the second volume of the *Mysteries of Udolpho*. Compare, for instance, with Mrs. Radcliffe, the passage in section iv of the second canto of *Lara*, beginning

> "Demand thy life!" . . .
> For Lara's brow upon the moment grew
> Almost to blackness in its demon hue.

The Count then fell back . . . while Montoni held his sword over him and bade him ask his life. . . . He yielded at the interruption, but his countenance changed almost to blackness as he looked.

Indeed, we continually trace the influence of Mrs. Radcliffe's novels on Byron's poetry; he has borrowed from her hints, as Alaric Watts pointed out, for two of his most striking passages, the comparison of modern and ancient Greece to the features of the dead and the living:

Beyond Milan the country wore the aspect of a ruder devastation; and though everything seemed now quiet, the repose was like that of death spread over features which

retain the impression of the last convulsions (*Udolpho*, ii, 29). Compare with this, *The Giaour*, 68-98;

and the description of Venice at the beginning of the fourth canto of *Childe Harold:*

Nothing could exceed Emily's admiration on her first view of Venice, with its islets, palaces, and towers rising out of the sea . . . its terraces, crowned with airy yet majestic fabrics, . . . appeared as if they had been called up from the ocean by the wand of an enchanter (*Id.*, ii, 59).

> I saw from out the wave her structures rise,
> As from the stroke of the enchanter's wand.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> She looks a sea Cybele fresh from ocean,
> Rising with her tiara of proud towers
> At airy distance with majestic motion.

There can be little doubt that, in the remarkable poem entitled *Darkness*, Byron was greatly indebted, as Herr Kölbing and Mr. Coleridge have pointed out, to a once popular but long forgotten novel published in 1806, entitled *The Last Man, or Omegarus and Syderia*; but what neither Herr Kölbing nor Mr. Coleridge has noticed is that he was almost equally indebted to Burnet's *Telluris Theoria Sacra*,[1] which he had certainly read, and from which he has borrowed details of singular picturesqueness not found in the novel, for example, the lines:

> Ocean all stood still,
> And nothing stirr'd within their silent depths;
> Ships sailorless lay rotting on the sea, . . .
> They slept on the abyss without a surge;
> The waves were dead

—which are simply a paraphrase of, "Et quoad

[1] See particularly lib. iii, cap. xii.

mare, hoc dudum deseruerunt nautae, stagnum putidum sine motu."[1] The plot of *Werner*, "the characters, plan, and even the language," were taken, as he himself acknowledged, from the German's Tale in the *Canterbury Tales* by the Misses Lee; as the plot of *The Deformed Transformed* was borrowed mainly, also by his confession, from a long forgotten novel, entitled *The Three Brothers*, by one Joshua Pickersgill.

The indebtedness of Byron in *Manfred* to Goethe's *Faust*, the greater part of which Lewis translated for him, and to the *Prometheus* of Aeschylus, is of course notorious, and is duly noted by Mr. Coleridge. But what Mr. Coleridge does not notice is the influence exercised on it by the romance of *Ahasuerus*, by Southey's *Curse of Kehama*, by Schiller's *Robbers* and *Death of Wallenstein*, both of which were accessible to Byron in translations,[2] and by Maturin's *Bertram*, to say nothing of innumerable passages suggested by *Paradise Lost*. Nor has Mr. Coleridge noticed for how much of *Don Juan* Byron was indebted to Casti's *Novelle*, which, beyond all doubt, suggested the poem to him. He had been introduced to the *Novelle* by Major Gordon at Brussels, in 1816; and in a letter written from Geneva, not long afterwards, he says, "I cannot tell you what a treat your gift of Casti has been to me. I have almost got him by heart."[3] He began *Don Juan* about two years

[1] Lib. iii, cap. xii.

[2] See the English translation of the first, published in 1795, and Coleridge's well-known version of the second, published in 1800.

[3] Letters and Journals, iv, 217, *note*.

afterwards. *Don Juan* is full of reminiscences of the *Novelle*. The novel which brings us nearest to Byron's poem is the one entitled *La Diavolessa* (Novella iv). This suggested to him his hero.

> I'll therefore take our ancient friend Don Juan—
> We all have seen him, in the pantomime,
> Sent to the devil somewhat ere his time.

So Casti:

> Ma voi più volte, O Donne mie, vedeste
> Sovra le scene pubbliche e private
> Di don Giovan le scandalose geste.
> (St. xv.)

In Casti's story one Don Ignazio (who is his hero) and Don Juan wander over Spain in quest of licentious adventures, to meet afterwards in the infernal regions, whither, as we know from himself, Byron intended finally to conduct his hero. Ignazio, like Don Juan, was born in Seville, and

> Traced his source
> Through the most Gothic gentlemen of Spain.

> La nobil sua famiglia
> Drittamente scendea fin dai re Goti.
> (St. ix.)

Both are extraordinarily precocious and addicted to the same frailties, Julia, the wife of Don Jose, standing in the same relation to Don Juan as Ermenegilda, the wife of his friend, to Ignazio, the one, however, voluntarily, the other involuntarily. Ignazio, like Don Juan, is shipwrecked; and each hero is the sole survivor. It is quite clear that Byron modelled his style, not on Berni, as he implied, but on Casti. To Casti, then, undoubtedly belongs the honour of having suggested and furnished Byron

with a model for Don Juan. In point of distinction and merit, in brilliance, picturesqueness and power, there is, of course, no parallel between the two poets. To accuse Byron of plagiarism for the perfectly legitimate use of material or suggestion afforded by others would, we hasten to say, be as absurd as to bring a similar charge against Shakespeare for the use which he has made of Plutarch and Holinshed, or against Milton for the use which he has made of the ancients. As Swift well observes, "If I light my candle from another, that does not affect my property in the wick and tallow"; and of wick and tallow Byron had infinitely more than the majority of his creditors put together.

Byron's reading, if desultory, was unusually extensive and curious; and his memory, like that of Tennyson, extraordinarily assimilative and tenacious. To scholarship he had of course no pretension. The fact that, in his last years at school, we find him scribbling on the margins of his Xenophon and Greek plays the English equivalents for νέοι, σώματα, and χρυσός, is no doubt indicative of his acquaintance with Greek, for it does not appear that at a later time he made any effort to extend his knowledge of that language.[1] But with most of the Greek classics in translations—Latin, probably, as well as English—he was certainly familiar, as the ready propriety with which applications or reminiscences of passages from them spring to his pen

[1] In his "Detached Thoughts" (*Letters and Journals*, v, 436) he speaks of his classical attainments as being "in the usual proportion of a sixth-form boy." In those days boys were usually much more advanced in Latin than in Greek.

sufficiently shows. Of the *Prometheus*, as he tells us himself, he "was passionately fond"; and this, at least, he knew well in the original, as it was one of the Greek plays which "we read thrice a year at Harrow," adding, that "that and the *Medea* were the only ones, except the *Seven against Thebes*, which ever much pleased me." Many of the most striking of these reminiscences from Greek poetry have been duly noted by Mr. Coleridge, but he has not observed that stanza cciv in the Haidee episode in the second canto in *Don Juan*, "And now 'twas done," etc., is almost a translation from the *Hero and Leander* of the Pseudo-Musaeus, 279-283; the resemblance between

> Their priest was Solitude, and they were wed,

and

> Ἀλλὰ λέχος στορέσασα . . .
> Σιγὴ παστὸν ἔπηξεν,

being, with the other general resemblances, too close to admit of any likelihood of coincidence. That Byron read Latin fluently and habitually, and was well, if irregularly, acquainted with the Latin poets, there can be no doubt. We cannot enter into the question here, but will only add that for every illustration given by Mr. Coleridge a dozen could be adduced by any one who had happened to pay particular attention to this subject. In addition to Lucretius, Catullus, Horace, Virgil, and Ovid, whom he seems to have known well, he had read Tibullus, Lucan, Juvenal, Persius, Valerius Flaccus, Seneca, and Claudian, from all of whom he has borrowed. Wherever, indeed, in the less known Latin poets, or in modern Latin literature, anything particularly

felicitous occurs, the chances are that Byron was acquainted with it and has turned it to account. Thus the pretty description of a dimple by Terentius Varro, preserved by Nonius Marcellus:

> Sigilla in mento impressa Amoris digitulo
> Vestigio demonstrant mollitudinem

—which he probably found in Gray's *Letters*[1] (where it is wrongly attributed by West to Aulus Gellius) —he adapts, as he himself has noted, in *Childe Harold*:

> The seal Love's dimpling finger hath impress'd
> Denotes how soft that chin which bears his touch.

He quotes Shenstone's exquisite inscription, "Heu quanto minus est cum reliquis versari quam tui meminisse," Gray's exquisite Alcaic stanza, "Fons lacrymarum," etc., Cowley's "Nam vita gaudet mortua floribus" in the *Epitaphium vivi auctoris*, and the felicitous epigram of Amaltheus, "Lumine Acon dextro, capta est Leonilla sinistro," etc. Among the prose writers, Sallust, Livy, and Tacitus appear to have been his favourites; and scores of reminiscences from them may be found in his poems.

To pass from Byron's appropriations from the ancients to his appropriations from the moderns. He was so sensitive about being charged with plagiarism that he gave away, Mrs. Shelley tells us, Aikin's edition of the British poets for fear some English traveller should find it in his house and report at home his possession of it; and when, in the *Literary Gazette* for February and March, 1821,

[1] Gray's Works. Ed. Mitford. Vol. II, p. 137.

Mr. Alaric A. Watts very amply illustrated with what justice such a charge could be brought against him, he was greatly annoyed. "I think I now in my time," he wrote to Moore, "have been accused of everything." But, in another mood, he owned that, "when he had got a good idea" he was "not very scrupulous how he came into possession of it." And this was true. It is undoubtedly part of the duty of a "variorum" editor to point out these appropriations; and this Mr. Coleridge has to some extent succeeded in doing; so imperfectly, however, that we cannot but regret that he did not consult some one who would have assisted him to supply this deficiency.

Plagiarism, in the strict sense of the term, must be conscious and deliberate, but what may justly render an author liable to the charge of it may be either coincidence or unconscious appropriation. Coincidence is not, as a rule, likely to be the case with Byron, for his memory was almost as remarkable as his genius, and from his boyhood he was an incessant reader. "I read," he said, "eating, read in bed, and read when no one else reads." When he was little more than a child he found at Dr. Glennie's a complete set of the British poets from Chaucer to Churchill; "and I am," said Dr. Glennie, "almost tempted to say that he had perused them more than once from beginning to end." His poetry throughout is saturated with what he had thus acquired. Many of his reminiscences are no doubt unconscious. Such, for instance, would be his echo of Campbell's,

> The power of thought—the magic of a name,

in

The power of grace, the magic of a name;

of Burns's,

I saw thy pulse's maddening play,

in

The exulting sense, the pulse's maddening play;

of Scott's,

O for an hour of Wallace wight,

in

O for one hour of blind old Dandolo;

of Tickell's,

I hear a voice you cannot hear,

in

I hear a voice I would not hear;

of Young's,

Our heads, our hearts, our passions, and our powers

in

My joys, my griefs, my passions, and my powers;

of Coleridge's

Curse me with forgiveness,

in

My curse shall be forgiveness.

of Pope's,

Glory of the priesthood and the shame,

in

Tasso is now their glory and their shame.

The echoes, we may add, from Spenser—the minor poems as well as the *Faëry Queen*—of Young's tragedies, particularly the *Revenge*, and of Macpherson's Ossian, are innumerable. To Spenser's lines (*F.Q.* III, ii, 5):

And ever and anon the rosy red
Flash'd through her face, as it had been a flake
Of lightning through bright heaven fulminéd

—he seems to have owed a singularly beautiful image in stanza lxi of the first canto of *Don Juan*:

Her cheek all purple with the beam of youth,
Mounting, at times, to a transparent glow,
As if her veins ran lightning.

In the last line of *The Corsair* ("Link'd with one virtue, and a thousand crimes") we have one of his many reminiscences of a book which was a great favourite with him, Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*, "Hannibal, as he had mighty virtues, so he had many vices; unam virtutem mille vitia comitantur." In *Churchill's Grave*, a noble expression of Dante's (*Inferno*, xxxiii, 26-27) is laid under contribution:

Do we rip
The veil of immortality.
Il mal sonno
Che del futuro mi *squarciò il velame.*

We will now give a few examples of Byron's appropriations from more recondite sources, as they illustrate how keen an eye he had for anything which, being unusually felicitous, he could turn to account. Sir William Jones, in his *Essay on the Poetry of the Eastern Nations*,[1] observes that their similes are very just and striking, and gives as an instance, "The blue eyes of a fine woman bathed in tears compared to violets dropping with dew." This appears in Byron's stanzas, "I saw thee weep":

[1] *Works*, vol. x, 335.

The big bright tear
Came o'er that eye of blue;
And then methought it did appear
A violet dropping dew.

In his dedication to the *Rival Ladies* Dryden, speaking of the progress of the work, says:

When it was only a confused mass of thoughts, tumbling over one another in the dark; when the fancy was yet in its first work, moving the sleeping images of things towards the light, there to be distinguished and then either chosen or rejected by the judgement.

This reappears in *Marino Faliero*, I, ii, as

As yet 'tis but a chaos
Of darkly brooding thoughts: my fancy is
In her first work, more nearly to the light
Holding the sleeping images of things,
For the selection of the pausing judgment

In the *Bride of Abydos* there is a remarkable instance of Byron's tact in assimilation, whether the reminiscence be conscious or unconscious. On the line 179 in the first canto of the poem,

The mind, *the music breathing from her face*,

Byron has the following note:

This expression has met with objections. I will not refer to "him who hath not music in his soul," but merely request the reader to recollect, for ten seconds, the features of the woman whom he believes to be most beautiful, and if he does not comprehend fully what is feebly expressed in the above line, I shall be sorry for us both. For an eloquent passage in the latest work of the first female author of this, perhaps of any age, on the analogy (and the immediate comparison excited by that analogy) between painting and music, see Vol. III, cap. 10, D. l'Allemayne.

But what Byron does not mention is, that the expression has been taken, as Alaric Watts pointed out, directly from Lovelace:

> Oh could you view *the melody* of every grace
> And *music of her face*.[1]

We have another curious illustration in *Childe Harold*, Canto iii, st. xxii-xxiii:

> . . . The heart will break, yet brokenly live on.

> E'en as a broken mirror which the glass
> In every fragment multiplies, and makes
> A thousand images of one that was,
> The same and still the same the more it breaks.

This simile, Byron said, was suggested to him by a quatrain which Curran had once repeated to him, a quatrain which, as he must well have known, does not bear the smallest resemblance to the passage. It has been traced by M. Darmesteter to a passage in Burton, and by Mr. Coleridge to a passage in Carew's *Spark*, but the true source was almost certainly Donne, who suggested also the application. The passage occurs in his poem *The Broken Heart*, and runs:

> . . . Love, alas
> At one first blow did shiver it as glasse.
> . . . . . .
> And now as broken glasses showe
> A thousand lesser faces, soe
> My ragges of heart can like, wish and adore
> But after one such love can love no more.

In the same way he has appropriated a passage from one of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's letters

[1] *Orpheus to Beasts*, Works, Ed. Hazlitt, p. 38.

in *Don Juan* (Canto III, st. xviii). She writes, referring to the coalition between Newcastle and Pitt:

It puts me in mind of a friend of mine who had a large family of favourite animals, and not knowing how to convey them to his country house in separate equipages, he ordered a *Dutch mastiff*, *a cat* and her *kittens*, a *monkey* and a *parrot*, all to be packed up together in one hamper.[1]

> A *monkey*, a *Dutch mastiff*, a *mackaw*,
> Two *parrots* with a Persian cat and kittens
> He chose from several animals he saw
> A terrier too . . .
> He cag'd in one huge hamper altogether.

The remark in *Don Juan*, IV, st. iv:

> And if I laugh at any mortal thing,
> 'Tis that I may not weep

—looks very like a reminiscence of Richardson's *Pamela* (Letter lxxxiv):

It is to this deep concern that my levity is owing . . . I am forced to try to make myself laugh that I may not cry.

But he sometimes goes to more recondite sources, as in *Childe Harold*, III, st. xix:

> Shall we, who struck the Lion down, shall we
> Pay the Wolf homage?

which appears to have been suggested by a sentence in the famous pamphlet, *Killing No Murder*, attributed to Colonel Titus:

Shall we, who would not suffer the Lion to invade us, tamely stand to be devoured by the Wolf?[2]

It is not necessary and it would be tedious to

[1] To Lady Bute, Jan. 20, 1758, *Works*, Ed. 1803, Vol. v, 36-37.

[2] *Harleian Miscellany*, iv, 290 (ed. 1744).

multiply illustrations. It is sufficient that this characteristic of Byron—and, critically speaking, it is a very important one—has been illustrated.

II

Few critical problems would be more difficult to solve than to determine Byron's relative position among poets.

Of no man of genius can it be so truly said that he is of those whom Chapman admirably described as having

> Strange gifts from Nature, but no soul
> Infused quite through to make them of a piece.

His inspired power, his essential sincerity as a poet, lay partly in the intensity with which he felt and expressed the passions and realized all that in circumstance and situation appealed to them, and partly in what Matthew Arnold has so happily designated his Titanism. The moment he quits these spheres he becomes a rhetorician, but a rhetorician so eloquent and moving, so brilliant and impressive, that the note of falsetto is not at first sight discernible. We see his power, in quintessence, in such passages as the journey and death of Hassan; Alp's journey along the beach; the death of Selim; the stanzas on Waterloo; the falls of Velino; the thunderstorm; the apostrophe to Rome; the dying gladiator; the last two stanzas of the shipwreck, and innumerable other passages in which these and similar notes are struck. But his serious poetry has not only no unity, it has not even permeating enthusiasm. Ecstasy exhausted and in collapse, mere

talent succeeds to genius, the interstices between each effort of inspired energy being filled up by more or less successfully disguised falsetto.

In the other sphere, the sphere of satire and comedy, his masterpiece—and here his power is sustained — is *The Vision of Judgment*; while in *Don Juan* we have, what we have nowhere else, the true, full man in absolute and naked simplicity, a comprehensive illustration of his amazing versatility and dexterity, of his genius for comedy and satire—perhaps his most remarkable characteristic —as well as of all those qualities of sincerity which inform and vitalize his serious poetry.

Byron's insincerity—in other words, his rhetoric and falsetto—is most discernible in those parts of his poetry which are in execution most brilliant, and which are generally singled out for special commendation by his admirers. First would come his descriptions of nature and his affectation of being Nature's devoted worshipper. It may fairly be questioned whether Byron was ever profoundly moved by Nature, or whether he ever regarded her in any other light than a theme for rhetorical display. In his earlier poems all his descriptions are perfectly commonplace and of the order of Shenstone's, who seems, judging from the *Hours of Idleness*, to have been a favourite with him. In the first two cantos of *Childe Harold* his descriptions are mere rhetoric. The Morean sunset in the third canto of *The Corsair* is little more than a brilliant declamation. At last, in the third canto of *Childe Harold*, the note changes; but it changes because, to employ his own expression, Shelley "had dosed him with

Wordsworth." From this moment Nature became a favourite, for he saw from Wordsworth what capital could be made out of such a theme; and "description" being, as he himself boasted, "his forte," delineations of Nature fill thenceforward a very wide space in his poetry. Of their power and beauty there can be no question, but there can be as little question of the purely rhetorical quality of much of this part of his work. Not, however, of all of it, for affectation passes at once into inspired sincerity the moment he deals with such phases of Nature as respond to his own moods. He "loved her," he tells us, "best in wrath"; and in her wrath and her awe-compelling forms of sublimity and grandeur she took possession of him and made him her prophet. There is no note of falsetto, or, if there appears to be such a note, it is only in clumsiness of expression, when his themes are the falls of Velino, or the thunderstorm in the Alps, or the elemental wastes of mountain or of ocean, or the ravages of death and time.

His falsetto becomes at once apparent when, in wholesale plagiarisms from Wordsworth, he adopts Wordsworth's metaphysical philosophy; because it is quite evident that, so far from believing in it, he did not even comprehend it. He saw how happily it lent itself to effective rhetoric, but he did not see how incongruous was the essential materialism of his own conception of life and nature with conceptions as essentially transcendental. When he writes—

> I live not in myself, but I become
> Portion of that around me . . .

And thus I am absorbed, and this is life.

. . . . . .

Are not the mountains, waves, and skies a part
Of me and of my soul, as I of them?

. . . . . .

Not a beam, nor air, nor leaf is lost
But hath a part of being, and a sense
Of that which is of all Creator and defence

—we instinctively feel that it is what the Greeks so happily called *parenthyrsos*.

It is in these parts of his poetry that his adaptations and appropriations from other poets are most frequent and palpable, notably from the Pseudo-Ossian, from Beattie's *Minstrel*, from Wordsworth and Coleridge. But he often goes much further afield. It is well known that one of his favourite books was Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*; and there can be little doubt that he turned passages in it to good account more than once in *Childe Harold* (for instance, in Canto II, st. xxv) in describing the pleasures and solaces of Nature.

To walk among orchards, gardens, bowers, mounts and arbours, artificial wildernesses, green thickets, arches, groves, lawns, rivulets, fountains, and such like pleasant places . . . betwixt wood and water, in a fair meadow, by a river side . . . to disport in some pleasant plain, run up a steep hill, or sit in a shady seat, must needs be a delectable recreation. (*Anatomy*, part ii, § ii, m. 4.)

Such parallels may, of course, be merely accidental coincidences; but there can be no doubt—and it is on this only that I wish to insist—that Byron, in describing Nature in her calmer aspects, where there was nothing to arouse passion, and in expressing

sympathy with her in such aspects, invariably drew both his descriptions and his sentiments from books.

It is precisely the same with his brilliant descriptions of masterpieces in the plastic arts—the Venus de Medici, the Laocoon, the Apollo Belvidere. Now we have it on the authority of Rogers that Byron was, like Scott, without any feeling for the fine arts. In his letter to Murray, dated April 26th, 1817, he does, indeed, express himself with some enthusiasm about what he saw in the galleries of Florence, but he observes of the Venus de Medici that it is "more for admiration than love." We turn to his description, and find the mood and tone with which it is assayed and executed the very reverse of what he says his real feelings were. In truth, his description is little more than an eloquent paraphrase of the famous passage at the beginning of the first book of Lucretius, the passion-inspiring voluptuousness of the work being especially, and indeed solely, dwelt upon; while he dovetails into it a reminiscence of a passage in Young's *Revenge* (v, ii)—a tragedy evidently well known to him, as he borrows from it more than once elsewhere:

> Where hadst thou this, Enchantress? . . .
> E'en now thou swimm'st before me. . . .
> Who spread that pure expanse of white above,
> On which the dazzled sight can find no rest,
> But, drunk with beauty, wanders up and down?

Not the Apollo Belvidere itself, but Milman's noble Newdigate was plainly the model and inspiration of the magnificent description of that statue, though Byron may also have drawn, as Milman certainly did, on the very remarkable description of the statue

in Isaac Disraeli's *Flim-flams* (vol. iii, ch. 44)—a work well known to Byron.

Keats, with characteristic insight, once described Byron as "a fine thing in the worldly, theatrical, and pantomimical way"; and this description, with some modification, almost always applies to him when he attempts what he attempts, for example, in *Manfred*. That work may indeed be taken as a comprehensive illustration both of his falsetto and of what redeems that falsetto from contempt. The drama as a whole is mere fustian, a chaotic concoction from what has been suggested by other poets, with a substratum of the impressions really made on him by the scenery of Switzerland, recorded in his journal to Mrs. Leigh.

He was no doubt anxious to have it supposed that Manfred was drawn from himself, and that Manfred's crimes and remorse had their counterparts in his own; and this Goethe was induced to believe.[1] But beyond a generic resemblance in certain superficial qualities, Manfred has no more resemblance to Byron than he has to any other human being. He is partly a poor copy of Goethe's Faust, with touches of Aeschylus's Prometheus and Milton's Satan, partly of Beattie's Edwin and Shelley's Alastor, partly of Schiller's Moor in *Die Räuber*, to which Byron had access either in a French version or in the English translation of 1795,[2] partly of Southey's

[1] See his letter to Knebel, October, 1817.

[2] In the journal to Mrs. Leigh (*Letters and Journals*, iii, 356) he speaks of reading "a French translation of Schiller." The reminiscences of William Tell in *Manfred* are obvious; and this, and not *The Robbers*, may be what he refers to.

Ladurlad when under the curse, partly of Mrs. Radcliffe's Schedoni, and partly of Ahasuerus.

And as is the protagonist—a thing of shreds and patches—such is the whole drama. Resolved into its constituent parts, the opening scene, the machinery of Spirits, the incantation, the scenes with the Chamois Hunter, the soliloquies and their surroundings, the intervention of the Abbot, and Manfred's relations with him—there is no portion of it which cannot be traced to pre-existing poems or fictions. The drama has neither unity, soul, nor motive. Indeed, it is part of the falsetto that for intelligible motive is substituted juggling mystification, just as we find in *Lara*. In truth the motive, or what does service for it, appears to be to send curiosity on a quest after the secret of "the all nameless hour," the solution of which is, so it is insinuated, that Astarte was Manfred's sister, and that remorse for an incestuous union with her, coupled with the conviction that the sin was inexpiable, is the chief cause of his torture. But, as is usual with Byron's falsetto, the vigour of the rhetoric in the descriptions and soliloquies half disguises it. Every one must be arrested by the eloquence of the soliloquy which opens the second scene of the first act, by the impassioned appeal to Astarte, and by the impressive picture of the Coliseum. What is true of *Manfred* is true of the other metaphysical dramas. Byron was no philosopher, though he delighted to pose as one, and in all these works he illustrates what Goethe so truly said of him, that so soon as he began to reflect he was a child.

It is when we compare the dramas with *The Vision*

of Judgment and *Don Juan*, and with such poems and such passages in poems as found their inspiration in what sincerely moved him, that we measure the distance between Byron the rhetorician and Byron the poet, between degrees of talent and the pure accent of genius. A large proportion, perhaps two-thirds, of Byron's poetry resolves itself into the work of an extraordinarily gifted craftsman, with a rhetorical talent as brilliant and plastic as Dryden's, working on the material furnished by an unusually wide experience of life, by sleepless observation, and by a marvellously assimilative and retentive memory, incessantly if desultorily adding to its stores. No English poet, not Ben Jonson, not Milton, not Gray, not Tennyson, owed more to reading than Byron, or had a mind more stored with acquired knowledge.

But let us not mistake. Whatever deduction may result from discrimination between what is original and what is derivative, between what is sound and excellent and what is unsound or of inferior quality in Byron's work, the truth remains that he occupies, and for ever must occupy, a place of extraordinary distinction in our literature. Shakespeare excepted, his versatility is without parallel among English poets. There is scarcely any form or phase open to the poetic art which was not attempted by him, or any theme capable of poetic treatment which he did not handle. There is not a note characteristic of the poetry of the eighteenth century, or of the early nineteenth century, which he does not strike. He was the disciple of Dryden and Pope; he was the disciple of Shenstone and Gray, of Beattie and the

Pseudo-Ossian; he was the disciple of Scott and Wordsworth; at last he had even, as *Aristomenes* shows, a touch of Keats. He drew largely on Aeschylus and Milton; he drew largely on the Old Testament. He identified himself with Dante, and, catching his inspiration, has enriched our literature with a poem worthily recalling much of what is most moving and most noble in the *Divine Comedy*. He has identified himself with Tasso, and re-expressed all that thrills and melts us in the *Canzoni* to Alphonso, and to Lucretia and Leonora. With equal facility and success his marvellously plastic genius assimilated also that species of poetry which lies at the opposite extreme of Italian art; and the mock-heroic of the Pulci, of Ariosto, and of Casti will, in point of humour and pathos, of wit and eloquence, bear no comparison with that of their English imitator. In the dramas generally, but more particularly in the historical dramas, the influence of Alfieri is plainly perceptible.

But if Byron's versatility is illustrated by the heterogeneity of the sources of his works, it is illustrated still more strikingly by those works themselves. Since Shakespeare, as Scott justly observes, no English poet has shown himself so great a master in the essentials of comedy and in the essentials of tragedy. In his comedy, it is true, there is no refinement, no geniality, and much that is brutal and gross; in his tragedy large deductions have to be made for insincerity and falsetto. But all that comedy, at least in its less refined, all that tragedy, at least in its less exalted, aspects can excite, will be for ever at the command of a master whose name

instantly calls up *Beppo*, *The Vision of Judgment*, the first, thirteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth cantos of *Don Juan*, many passages in the earlier narratives and Eastern tales, *The Prisoner of Chillon*, the episodes of the shipwreck, and the death of Haidee.

His range in composition is indeed extraordinary. He was a brilliant disciple of the school of Pope in *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*, and in the *Hints from Horace*; the superior of Scott in a species of poetry peculiarly characteristic of the modern romantic school, in which, till his appearance, Scott reigned alone; the originator, in *The Corsair*, *Lara*, and the Oriental tales, of a new species of epic; the originator, in *Cain* and in *Heaven and Earth*, of a new and most striking species of drama, and in *Manfred* of a species which had, with the exception of a work unknown to him, Marlowe's *Faustus*, no prototype or counterpart in our literature. *Sardanapalus*, to say nothing of *Marino Faliero* and *The Two Foscari*, may be below contempt as a drama, but it is a splendid exhibition of dramatic rhetoric. As satire in mock-heroic, *The Vision of Judgment* has neither equal nor second in European literature. Inferior in quality as his lyric poetry is to that of many of his predecessors, and to that of many more of his contemporaries and successors, it would be impossible to name any poet in our language out of whose work an anthology so splendid and multiform could be compiled.

To pass to his masterpieces; *Childe Harold* and *Don Juan*, regarded comprehensively, are perhaps the two most brilliant achievements in the poetry of the world, and they are achievements which have

nothing in common. Each moves in a sphere of its own, as each exhibits powers differing not in degree merely, but in kind. *Childe Harold* is a superb triumph partly of pure rhetoric and partly of rhetoric touched with inspired enthusiasm. In *Don Juan* we are in another world and under the spell of another genius. The sentimentalist has passed into the cynic, the moralist into the mocker. We are no longer in the temples and palaces of poetry, but in its profane places and meaner habitations. The theme now is not Nature in her glory, but humanity in its squalor; not the world as God made it, but as the devil rules it. For the series of splendid pageants, for the raptures and sublimities of its predecessor, has been substituted, in broad, free fresco, the tragic farce into which man's lusts and lawlessness, madness and follies, have perverted life. It was into this mock-heroic that Byron, disengaging himself from all that vanity had induced him to affect, and from all that his cleverness and command of rhetoric had enabled him to assume, poured out his powers in sheer and absolute sincerity—the Titanism which was of the very essence of his genius, the scorn and mockery, the wit, the persiflage, the irony, "the sense of tears in human things," the brutal appetites, the more refined affections of which he was still, in some of his moods, susceptible.

Don Juan is admirable alike in conception, in range, in expression. To give unity to a work which blends all that amuses and entertains us in *Lazarillo de Tormes*, *Gil Blas*, the *Novelle Amorose*, and Horace Walpole's *Letters*, much of what impresses and charms us in the *Odyssey* and the *Aeneid*, which

has all the cynicism of La Rochefoucauld and Swift, all the callous levity of the worst school of our comedy, and yet subdues us with a pathos which has now the note of Ecclesiastes and now the note of Catullus—this indeed required a master-hand. The unity of the poem is the unity impressed on it by truth, by truth to nature and truth to life, for Byron in writing it did but hold up the mirror to himself and his own experiences.

"What an antithetical mind!" (he himself wrote after reading certain letters of Burns)—"tenderness, roughness, delicacy, coarseness, sentiment, sensuality, soaring and grovelling, dirt and deity, all mixed up in that one compound of inspired clay."

Such, in fact, was Byron himself, and such is this poem, the glory and the shame of our poetry. But if much is to be forgiven to one who loves greatly, something may be forgiven to one who hates rightly. The justification of *Don Juan* is its ruthless exposure of some of the most despicable characteristics of the English people: the ubiquity of hypocrisy, the ubiquity of cant; immorality masking as morality, and ceremony as religion, for the vilest purposes, the one to make capital out of the frailties and lapses of those who are at least sincere, the other as a means for dignifying almost every form which moral cowardice and moral vanity can assume.

In its execution *Don Juan* deserves all the praise which Byron's most extravagant admirers have heaped on it. Never was our language so completely clay in the moulder's hands. Whatever he has to express seems to embody itself spontaneously in the complicated form of verse which he has chosen.

With a skill and ease which, in our literature at least, are unrivalled, he has blended every extreme in nature and life, in style and tone, without producing the effect either of incongruity or even of impropriety. *Don Juan* has little enough in common with the *Odyssey*, and yet in some respects it recalls it. In both poems the similitude which at once suggests itself is the element so closely associated with the action of both—the sea. A freshness, a breeziness, a pungency as of the brine-laden air of beach or cliff seems to pervade it. Over the spacious expanse of its narrative, teeming with life and in ever-changing play, now in storm and now in calm, roll and break, wave after wave in endless succession, the incomparable stanzas on whose lilt and rush we are swept along.

The importance of Byron in English poetry is not to be estimated by ordinary critical tests; it is not by its quality that his work is to be judged. The application of perfectly legitimate criteria to his poetry would justify us in questioning whether he could be held to stand high even among the "Dii minores" of his art; it would certainly result in assigning him a place very much below Wordsworth and Shelley, and even below Keats. Of many, nay, of most of the qualities essential in a poet of a high order, there is no indication in anything he has left us. Of spiritual insight he has nothing; of morality and the becoming, except in their coarser aspects, he has no sense. If the beautiful appealed to him, it appealed to him only in its material expression and sentimentally as it affected the passions. Of no poet could it be said with so much truth—and how

much does that truth imply!—that he had not "music in his soul." Turn where we will in his work, there is no repose, no harmony; all is without balance, without measure, and, if we accept *Don Juan* and *The Vision of Judgement*, without unity. At his worst he sinks below Peter Pindar; at his best his accent is never that of the great masters. A certain ingrained coarseness, both in taste and feeling, which became more emphasized as his powers matured, not only made him insensible of much which appeals to the poet as distinguished from the rhetorician, but is accountable for the jarring notes, the lapses into grossness, and the banalities which so often surprise and distress us in his poetry.

As an artist, his defects are equally conspicuous. In architectonic he is as deficient as Tennyson. *Childe Harold*, as well as all his minor narratives, simply resolve themselves into a series of pageants or episodes. Some, notably the *Giaour*, are little more than congeries of brilliant scraps. No eminent English poet, with the exception of Browning, had so bad an ear. His cacophanies are often horrible; his blank-verse is generally indistinguishable from prose; and his rhythm in rhymed verse is without delicacy, and full of discords. Every solecism in grammar, every violation of syntax and of propriety of expression, might be illustrated from his diction and style. Nor is this all. His claim to originality can only be conceded with much modification in its important aspects, and with very much more modification in the less important.

These are large deductions to make; and yet Goethe placed Byron next to Shakespeare among

the English poets; and in fame and popularity, by the consentient testimony of every nation in Europe, next to Shakespeare among Shakespeare's countrymen, he still stands. Such a verdict it is much more easy to understand than to justify. To his countrymen Byron's flaws and limitations will always be more perceptible and important than they will be to the people of the Continent; while, in all that appeals to humanity at large, his work will come more nearly home on the other side of the Channel than that of any other English poet except Shakespeare; and necessarily so. Byron's poetry originally was not so much an appeal to England as to Europe. His themes, his characters, his inspiration, his politics, his morals, were all derived from the Continent or from the East. England was little more than the incarnation of everything against which he reacted, at first with contempt and then in fury. The trumpet-voice of the world of the Revolution and of the revolt against the principles of the Holy Alliance, it was on the Continent that he found most response. And there indeed he can never cease to be popular. The laureate of its scenery, the rhapsodist of its traditions, the student and painter of almost every phase of its many-sided life, the poet of the passions which burn with fiercer fire in the South than in the colder regions of the North, he neither has nor is likely to have, with the single exception of Shakespeare, an English rival across the Channel.

The greatness of Byron lies in the immense body and mass of the work which he has informed and infused with life, in his almost unparalleled versatility, in the power and range of his influential

achievement. Youth and mature age alike feel his spell, for of the passions he is the Orpheus, of reflection the Mephistopheles. There is not an emotion, there is scarcely a mood, to which he does not appeal, and to which he has not given expression. Of almost every side of life, of almost every phase of human activity, he has left us studies more or less brilliant and impressive. He had, in extraordinary measure, nearly every gift, intellectually speaking, which man can possess, from mere cleverness to rapt genius; and there was hardly any species of composition which he did not more or less successfully attempt. In his inspired moments what Longinus sublimely observes of Demosthenes may with the strictest propriety be applied to his eloquence, "One could sooner face with unflinching eyes the descending thunderbolt than stand undazzled as his bursts of passion, in swift-succeeding flash on flash, are fulmined forth."

As Goethe and Wordsworth were the Olympians, so he was the Titan of the stormy and chaotic age in which he lived; and his most authentic poetry is typical of his temper and attitude. He has impressed on our literature the stamp of a most fascinating and commanding personality, and on the literature of every nation in Europe he has exercised an influence to which no other British writer except Shakespeare has even approximated. Among his disciples and imitators in Germany are to be numbered Wilhelm Müller, Heine, Von Platen, Adalbert Chamisso, Karl Lebrecht, Immermann and Christian Grabbe. How deeply he has impressed himself on the genius of France is sufficiently testified by the poetry of

Lamartine, Victor Hugo, Casimir de la Vigne, and Alfred de Musset. The most brilliant of the modern poets of Spain, Espronceda, is little more than his echo. In the Netherlands he has found imitators in Willem Bilderdijk, Isaac de Costa, Jakobus Van Lennep, and Nicolaes Beets. On the poetry of Russia he has exercised wide and deep influence, as we need go no further than Poucshkin and Lermontoff to see.[1] Such is the intrinsic power and attraction of a great part of his poetry that he will always be a favourite—if not in the first rank of their favourites—with his countrymen; and, although no purely critical estimate would place him on a level with at least five, if not more, of our poets, yet it must be admitted that, next to Shakespeare, he would probably be most missed.

[1] See Otto Weddigen's excellent monograph, *Lord Byron's Einfluss auf die Europaischen Litteraturen der Neuzeit.*

THE COLLECTED POEMS OF MR. WILLIAM WATSON.[1]

THE appearance of an edition of the collected poems of Mr. William Watson, carefully revised, with important alterations and additions, and comprising many new pieces, will be hailed joyfully wherever poetry is appreciated. Mr. Watson's reluctance to sanction any complete edition of his works has long been regretted by his many admirers, who have hitherto had to content themselves partly with the numerous booklets, often most difficult to procure, in which the poems originally appeared, and partly with the very imperfect collection published in 1899. These are now superseded by the present two volumes, which are not only within the reach of everybody, but which contain all that a most discriminating editor thinks best representative in the former miscellanies of Mr. Watson's work, Mr. Watson himself assisting by a final revision of each poem selected.

It would not perhaps be too much to say that Mr. Watson's reputation has hitherto been, like that of Matthew Arnold in his earlier days, somewhat

[1] *The Poems of William Watson.* In two volumes. (John Lane, The Bodley Head. London and New York.)

esoteric, and there can be little doubt that the reason for this has been his refusal to consent to what happily he has at last been induced to sanction. The publication of these volumes, by giving the general public easy access to writings which could only be known to them fragmentarily, and which they were not likely to go out of their way to seek, cannot fail to enlarge Mr. Watson's sphere of influence and fame; and I heartily trust—for no influence could be more salutary, no fame more worthy to be universal—that this will be the case. To many thousands of his contemporaries he is probably, at present, best known by poems most of which stand in the same relation to those on which his fame will rest as Mrs. Browning's Italian tirades stand to *Aurora Leigh* and the Portuguese sonnets. But it is time that, to some at least of these thousands, he should be known as these volumes reveal him. To Mr. Watson himself such considerations are probably a matter of profound indifference. Like Arbuscula in Horace, he can say *satis est equitem mihi plaudere*, and of the "equites" he will always be sure—as sure, I venture to think, in his grave a century hence as he is sure of them to-day.

No one could go through these two volumes without being struck with the amount of work of the permanence, of the classical quality of which there can be no question. To begin with, they are a very treasury of jewelled aphorisms as profound and subtle, often, in wisdom and truth as they are consummately felicitous in expression. Take for instance:

Song is not Truth, not Wisdom, *but the rose*
Upon Truth's lips, the light in Wisdom's eyes

—that is immortal. Or take again such an exquisite triplet as this:

The wonder of the sweetness of a rose,
The wonder of the wild heart of a song,
Shall shame man's foolish wisdom to the close.

And how unforgettable in their several ways are the following:

And set his heart upon the goal,
Not on the prize;

or

And evermore the deepest words of God
Are yet the easiest to understand;

or

Not in vague dreams of man forgetting men,
Nor in vast morrows losing the to-day.

Nor can a sonnet so superb as the following perish except with the language in which it is written; it is a gem without a flaw:

MELANCHOLIA.

In the cold starlight, on the barren beach,
Where to the stones the rent sea-tresses clave,
I heard the long hiss of the backward wave
Down the steep shingle, and the hollow speech
Of murmurous cavern-lips, nor other breach
Of ancient silence. None was with me, save
Thoughts that were neither glad nor sweet nor brave,
But restless comrades, each the foe of each.
And I beheld the waters in their might
Writhe as a dragon by some great spell curbed
And foiled; and one lone sail; and over me
The everlasting taciturnity;
The august, inhospitable, inhu nan night,
Glittering magnificently unperturbed.

Among the many memorable reflections with which

the contemplation of human life has inspired poets perhaps nothing more impressive has found expression than this:

> So passes, all confusedly
> As lights that hurry, shapes that flee
> About some brink we dimly see,
> The trivial, great,
> Squalid, majestic tragedy
> Of human fate.

When can *The Unknown God* cease to appeal, or *The Dream of Man* to appal with its tragic wisdom? When can that gem of workmanship *The Father of the Forest* lose its charm, or the *Ode in May* its pathos? Nor is it too much to say that *The Tomb of Burns*, *Wordsworth's Grave*, *In Laleham Churchyard*, *Shelley's Centenary*, will come to be linked indissolubly with the memory of those they celebrate, so clairvoyant is the sympathetic insight into the very essence of what each poet was in temper, in genius, in expression.

It is remarkable that when Mr. Watson's poetry directly invites comparison with the poetry of preceding masters his equality always, his incomparable superiority often, becomes instantly apparent. He has, of course, no pretension to be regarded generally as a rival of Wordsworth; but how dwarfed and undistinguished is Wordsworth's *At the Grave of Burns* when placed beside *The Tomb of Burns*! There is nothing again in Wordsworth's *Ode to the Skylark* which will bear comparison with the couplet in *The First Skylark of Spring*:

> O high above the home of tears,
> Eternal Joy, sing on!

No one would dispute that in conception, evolution, and finish of style Gray's *Installation Ode* is not altogether unworthy of the poet of *The Bard* and *The Progress of Poesie*; and yet how immeasurably superior to it is the *Ode on the Day of the Coronation of King Edward VII*! It was a bold thing to challenge comparison, not as an imitator but as a rival, with the *Ode to Autumn*, and to have produced a poem which, if not comparable to Keats's masterpiece, the world will be almost as loth to lose. The delicious little lyric *Night* has enriched our language with an exact counterpart, as distinguished from an imitation, of one of the most exquisite of Platen's lyrics, *Reue*, just as in the second and third staves of *England My Mother* we have the note of Goethe. And this leads me to remark on one of Mr. Watson's most striking and most distinguishing characteristics. The disciple of Wordsworth and Matthew Arnold, confessedly and even ostentatiously so, and drawing into his poetry much of the essence of theirs, he is never an imitator. Modest and reverent, it is yet with the air of a kinsman proudly conscious of independence that he seems to stand in their presence and hold communion with them. And this is his attitude towards all his great predecessors. Preeminently an elaborate and unwearied artist in expression, with all the *curiosa felicitas* of Milton, of Gray, of Tennyson, he attains distinction, not as they attained it, by making his diction mosaic work, rich in felicities culled from the classics of the ancient and modern world, but by new combinations and nice and happy subtleties of his own. Mr. Watson will indeed have little to fear from the revelations of

"Variorum editors," the detectives whom Tennyson, with too much of the air of "a guilty thing surprised," regarded and denounced so wrathfully. It has often been said that one of the tests of a classic is the amount of his contribution to what is quotable, his power of crystallizing thought and sentiment in finally felicitous expression. It may be doubted whether the diction of any modern poet will yield so large a percentage of what cannot fail to pass into this currency. Such as:

> The eyes that looked through life and gazed on God.
>
> The mystery we make darker with a name.
>
> And doing nothing never do amiss.
>
> The God on whom I ever gaze,
> The God I never once behold.
>
> Now touching goal, now backwards hurled,
> Toils the indomitable world.

In nothing, perhaps, is Mr. Watson's originality so striking as in his treatment of Nature. When we remember what Wordsworth, what Coleridge, what Shelley, what Keats, what Tennyson, what Rossetti, what Matthew Arnold, what innumerable minor poets, here and here only rising to distinction, have, during the last century, contributed to this branch of poetry, we might well have despaired of hearing a new and distinctive note. But without for a moment recalling, save here and there in a stray accent, any of these poets, there will be found within these two volumes a wealth of charm and power and beauty absolutely independent of all that had anticipated it in preceding artists. What Coleridge said of Wordsworth is very exactly applicable to Words-

worth's most original disciple. He noted in Wordsworth's poetry "the perfect truth of nature in his images and descriptions, as taken immediately from nature and proving a long and genial intimacy with the very spirit which gives the physiognomic expression to all works of nature." It is so with Mr. Watson. Nature is always with him whether in magically felicitous imagery as

> Sidney, that pensive Hesper-light
> O'er Chivalry's departed sun,

or in simple cameo-picture of some quite commonplace a scene:

> Where, on the tattered fringes of the land,
> The uncourted flowers of the penurious sand
> Are pale against the pale lips of the sea;

so, again,

> Gorgeously the woodlands tower around,
> Freak'd with wild light at golden intervals,

or where he interprets her speech to man, as in *Autumn* or the *Hymn to the Sea*—a poem in which he catches her elemental harmonies.

No discriminating critic could doubt that there are more elements of permanence in Mr. Watson's poems than in those of any of his present contemporaries. The most prodigally endowed of living poets to whom long life, nay probably immortality, will be secure by a drama which is the radiant incarnation of enthusiasm and music, by lyrics in which some of the noblest notes of Coleridge and Shelley were heard again, and by innumerable poems which are among the miracles of plastic and musical expression, will have infinitely more to fear

from sifting time. Enthusiasm without wisdom, and aestheticism without ethics and spirituality, are like Ariel without Prospero. And Mr. Swinburne's genius has been a very Ariel—an Ariel, indeed, turned Puck—and most malodorous and noisome have been the abysses into which his Puck has occasionally beguiled him; and even when the guidance has been into less unlovely haunts—into flowery pleasaunces and wildernesses of heather—of what avail have been the excursions? "Art for Art's sake" is always a perilous creed, and a strange Nemesis sometimes awaits its votaries.

Mr. Watson has certainly been fortunate in his editor. In an introduction which is a model of good taste and discrimination the editor explains the principle on which the poems have been selected. The intention has been to make them comprehensively representative of Mr. Watson's work. For this reason early poems which their author, with characteristic scrupulousness, long refused to reprint have been included. Thus we have *The Prince's Quest*, interesting, as the editor remarks, "because it takes us back to a beginning which is rather curiously unprophetic of Mr. Watson's subsequent development." Unprophetic it indeed is, for it is a purely aesthetic study after the manner of Keats and Morris. It stands in something of the same relation to Mr. Watson's maturer work as *The Lovers' Tale* stands to Tennyson's. But it is a poem of great beauty and of singular interest, and well deserves a permanent place in Mr. Watson's works. A few other examples also of his early work are given. With what admirable judgement the editor has ex-

ercised his discretion in selection will be apparent to anyone who will re-read in the original booklets the poems marked in the index of these volumes with asterisks and those which are unasterisked and included. For my own part, the only surprises felt have been the rejection of *Three Eternities*, *Love Outloved*, and *God-seeking* in *The Prince's Quest, and other Poems*. It is easy to see why the *Dedication to the Dream of Man* should have been excluded, but in itself it is a charming poem. It is a pity, perhaps, that *The Jubilee Night in Westmorland* should not have been reprinted, because of the fine lines contrasting the Queens Elizabeth and Victoria. But against the exclusion of one poem, *Hellas, hail!* all lovers of poetry will protest, must protest; it is one of Mr. Watson's very best lyrics. How noble are the following stanzas:

> Thou, in this thy starry hour,
> Sittest throned all thrones above.
> Thou art more than pomp and power,
> Thou art liberty and love.
> Doubts and fears in dust be trod:
> On, thou mandatory of God!
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Nor, since first thy wine-dark wave
> Laughed in multitudinous mirth,
> Hath a deed more pure and brave
> Flushed the wintry cheek of Earth.
> There is heard no melody
> Like thy footsteps on the sea.
>
> Fiercely sweet as stormy Springs
> Mighty hopes are blowing wide:
> Passionate prefigurings
> Of a world re-vivified.

Dawning thoughts that, e'er they set,
Shall possess the ages yet.

From the volume *For England* room might have been found for *Lamentation*, and I wish the concluding lines could have pleaded successfully for *Metamorphosis*. Of the twenty-four poems now first appearing in book-form, *Leavetaking*, *The Venusberg*, *In City Pent*, and *The Guests of Heaven* are perhaps the most striking. The first is exquisite:

Pass, thou wild light,
Wild light on peaks that so
Grieve to let go
The day.
Lovely thy tarrying, lovely too is night.
Pass, thou wild heart,
Wild heart of youth that still
Hast half a will
To stay.
I grow too old a comrade; let us part:
Pass thou away.

But to nothing in these volumes will Mr. Watson's admirers and critics turn with more interest and curiosity, not perhaps unmingled with apprehension, than to the revision of the text. As fastidious an artist as Petrarch and Milton, as Gray and Tennyson, it might have been expected that much of what is familiar to us in the old texts would disappear. We all know what havoc Wordsworth made of some of his best poetry and De Quincey of some of his best prose, and how even Tennyson in his latter days more than once corrected for the worse. But Mr. Watson is happily in the prime of life, and of the very numerous alterations and additions made by him there is scarcely one which those who have

his old texts by heart could regret. The file has been busy everywhere, but the poems most extensively altered are *The Dream of Man*, *The Hope of the World*, *Domine*, *Quo Vadis? Lakeland Once More*, and the first part of *The Prince's Quest*. Of great improvements in his best-known poems the following may be noted as among the most striking. For the flat and feeble line in *Lacrymae Musarum*

> Bright Keats to touch his raiment both beseech

are substituted:

> Keats, on his lips the eternal rose of youth,
> Doth in the name of Beauty that is Truth
> A kinsman's love beseech;

and in the same poem, the lines

> And what is Nature's order but the rhyme
> Whereto in holiest unanimity
> All things with all things move unfalteringly,
> Infolded and communal from their prime?

are substituted for

> Whereto the worlds keep time.
> And all things move with all things from their prime.

In *The Father of the Forest* the only blemish is removed—the historical error representing Edward I dying in the hostile land—the poet presumingly supposing that Burgh-upon-Sands was in Scotland, and so "And eased at last by Solway strand," a better line, takes the place of "And perished in the hostile land." So, again, of Henry II and Becket, "Him *whose lightly leaping words*," supersedes "That with half careless words."

Many most felicitous corrections improve the the rhythm of *Lakeland Once More*. In *The Dream*

of Man "And aeons rolled into aeons" most happily takes the place of "And the aeons went rolling"; "the rapture of striving" the tamer "boon of longing"; and "I have read interpreted clear" yields place to "my soul hath deciphered clear"; while four powerful lines are added in the body of the poem. To *The Hope of the World* a prose note succinctly summing the argument is added. In *Laleham Churchyard* there is a most judicious omission of the last two stanzas of the earlier editions, and in *The Ode to Traill* the somewhat flat introductory stanza is excised, while many excisions add to the terseness and power of *Domine, Quo Vadis?*

The examples which I have cited—it is not necessary to extend them—are very far indeed from illustrating completely the scrupulous care with which this most conscientious of artists has revised his work. And he will have his reward—the reward due to one who has maintained a great tradition. As he sought his models so he learnt his creed in other and better schools than the schools of to-day. His communion has been with those great men who are in the true sense of the term the aristocrats of art, men in whom loyalty to the best of which they were capable was the law of being—who would have regarded disloyalty to such an ideal with something of that horror with which the early Christians contemplated the sin which shall never be forgiven. It is this which, in an age when every species of barbarism, vulgarity, and charlatanism are corrupting morals, taste, and art, in an age when men of real genius, glorying in the applause of the mob, see nothing derogatory in dedicating to the hour what

with the hour will perish, enables us to boast that we have still one true Classic, if only a minor one, lingering among us.

The limitations of Mr. Watson—and the sphere in which his genius moves is a comparatively narrow one—are not only analogous to those of Gray and Matthew Arnold, but have the same origin. Like theirs his lot has been cast in an age of decadence and transition, when poets, deriving neither nutriment nor enthusiasm from their surroundings, have perforce to fall back on art and on themselves for the impulse and inspiration which their brethren of a happier day found in the world without them. From Gray went up the cry:

> For not to one, in this benighted age,
> Is that diviner inspiration given,
> That burns in Shakespeare's or in Milton's page,
> The pomp and prodigality of heaven.

From Matthew Arnold:

> The wingèd fleetness
> Of immortal feet are gone,
> And your scents have shed their sweetness,
> And your flowers are overblown,
> And your jewell'd gauds surrender
> Half their glories to the day,
> Freely did they flash their splendour,
> Freely gave it, but it dies away.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Pluck no more red roses, maidens,
> Leave the lilies in their dew;
> Pluck, pluck cypress, O pale maidens,
> Dusk, O dusk the hall with yew.

And in both, unpropitious surroundings, after first comparatively stunting, finally blighted and withered

up all the poetic power within them. Matthew Arnold, commenting on the scantiness of Gray's production, accounted for it by saying that he "was a born poet who fell upon an age of prose," when "a sort of spiritual East wind was blowing." His own was a similar lot and a similar fate. But the poet of *Thyrsis* and *The Scholar Gipsy* had at least the advantage of being born in the summer and of living in the autumn of a glorious era. It is the lot of the poet of *Wordsworth's Grave* and of *Lacrymae Musarum* to have been born in its winter. As he himself puts it:

> Fated among Time's fallen leaves to stray
> We breathe an air that savours of the tomb,
> Heavy with dissolution and decay,
> Waiting till some new world-emotion rise.

Nor was it mere modesty which induced Mr. Watson to write:

> Not mine the rich and showery hand, that strews
> The facile largeness of a stintless Muse.
> A fitful presence, seldom tarrying long,
> Capriciously she touches me to song,
> Then leaves me to lament her flight in vain
> And wonder will she ever come again.

All that he owes to his age is all that constitutes his limitations—the tumult, indignation, and depression which find such turbid expression in his political sonnets, the dissonant levity, so miserably conspicuous everywhere, which finds expression in what is perhaps his worst poem, *The Eloping Angels*, and the ignoble pessimism which vents itself in *The Hope of the World*. To the want of inspiration from without it is no doubt due that Mr. Watson has,

like Gray, produced no ambitious work; to the misfortune that his lot has been cast in

> This modern life
> With its sick hurry, its divided aims,
> Its heads o'ertaxed, its palsied hearts,

its "light half beliefs in casual creeds," its "sick fatigues and languid doubts," the fact that his poetry resolves itself into mere lyric, having neither gospel nor ethics, having neither unity nor creed, with nothing in it to inspire us, with little in it to console us. To the same lack of genial inspiration from without is also no doubt to be attributed that over-solicitude for distinction in style which, if it often results in the felicities to which I have referred, has occasionally the fatal effect either of falsetto or of sophistry, in other words the substitution of originality in expression for originality in conception. This, however, is comparatively rare in him, much rarer than in Tennyson, but, though rare, significant. In spite of noble passages, the least successful of his ambitious poems because the most strained, seems to me *Lacrymae Musarum*, being sometimes a most unhappy combination of symbolic parenthyrsus and flat prose, which, in one passage, at least, borders on the grotesque, I mean the picture of Tennyson's reception by his brother poets:

> Proudly a gaunt right hand doth Dante stretch
> . . . . . .
> Coleridge, his locks aspersed with faery foam
> . . . . . .
> And God-like spirits hail him guest, in speech
> Of Athens, Florence, Weimar, Stratford, Rome.

Still it is almost redeemed by the superb addition:

Keats, on his lips the eternal rose of youth,
Doth in the name of Beauty that is Truth,
A kinsman's love beseech.

So strained indeed is the style that when we come upon the lines:

Dead is Augustus, Maro is alive,
And thou, the Mantuan in this age and soil,
With Virgil shall survive,

the sudden collapse into commonplace positively startles and shocks us.

Mr. Watson, like all men of genius as distinguished from men of mere talent, has taken his own measure, and how conscious he is of being hampered by the Zeit-geist, he has himself pathetically and exquisitely expressed. He is addressing the skylark:

Two worlds hast thou to dwell in, Sweet,—
  The virginal untroubled sky
And this vext region at my feet.—
  Alas, but one have I!

To all my songs there clings the shade,
  The dulling shade of mundane care.
They amid mortal mists are made,—
  Thine, in immortal air.

My heart is dashed with griefs and fears;
  My song comes fluttering and is gone.
O high above this home of tears,
  Eternal joy, sing on!

. . . . . .

But I am fettered to the sod,
  And but forget my bonds an hour.

In a beautiful passage in the Odyssey Calypso is represented as about to rebuke the minstrel for the

persistent sadness of his strains, but Telemachus explains to her that a poet is not responsible for his inspiration; whether for joy or for sorrow he must sing as the spirit prompts. And so it must always be with a true poet. A poet who is an imitator and a man of talent is quite independent of his age and of his surroundings. He is wretched or joyous to show he has wit. He can make equal capital out of faith or out of agnosticism. It matters little to him in what direction the streams of contemporary tendencies are running. As Vanessa said of Swift, he can write beautifully about a broom-stick. But the poetry of imitation and of talent, however brilliant, will pass away, or at least lose its vogue, with the generation which produced it. Five characteristics have always been peculiar to all great poetry. It is rooted in life, in the life of the individual, and in the life of the age: it is harmonious in the strictest and most comprehensive sense of the term; it appeals through the senses and the imagination to the spiritual and moral nature of man: and it suggests infinitely more than it directly expresses. Such poetry can only be the result of inspiration, of inspiration rarely bestowed, and possible only, so it would appear, under propitious conditions in the history of nations. The last of the dynasty to whom we owe this, the most precious inheritance of mankind, was Wordsworth. But poetry may be of classical quality without being great poetry; Sappho is not Pindar, and Pope is not Wordsworth, but both Sappho and Pope will live as long as Pindar and Wordsworth. The quality of poetry, the extent to which the elements of influential permanence enter into it depend far more

on the age than on the individual, on the conditions which have nourished, inspired, and moulded the poet, than on the poet himself. Had men gifted and tempered like Collins and Gray lived and worked, not in the deep valley between the heights of Renaissant England on the one side, and the heights of the Revolutionary era on the other, but on either of these elevations, their achievement would have been infinitely greater.

To Mr. Watson's poetry with its limited and unambitious range, its comparatively few notes, its persistent threnody, its joyless agnosticism, its thin and uncertain ethic, the critics of the future will probably point, and point mournfully, as a striking example of a most rare and fine genius struggling with malign and depressing conditions. As he himself writes, contrasting his note and tone with Chaucer's:

> Blandly arraigning ghost! 'tis all too true,—
> A want of joy doth in these strings reside;
> Some shade, that troubled not thy clearer day,
> Some loss, nor thou nor thy Boccaccio knew;
> For thou art of the morning and the May
> I of the Autumn and the eventide.

THE POETRY OF MR. GERALD MASSEY

MORE than half a century has passed since a volume of poems, falling into Landor's hands, so entranced him that he wrote a letter to a leading London newspaper, proclaiming the appearance of a poet whom he rapturously compared now to Keats, now to "a chastened Hafiz," now to the Shakespeare of the sonnets when the sonnets are at their best. Singling out a poem on Hood, "How rich and radiant," he said, "was the following exhibition of Hood's wit":

> . . . His wit? a kind smile just to hearten us,
> Rich foam-wreaths on the waves of lavish life,
> That flasht o'er precious pearls and golden sands.
> But there was that beneath surpassing show!
> The starry soul, that shines when all is dark!—
> Endurance that can suffer and grow strong,
> Walk through the world with bleeding feet and smile!

And he comments on the "rich exordium" of the same poem:

> 'Tis the old story!—ever the blind world
> Knows not its Angels of Deliverance
> Till they stand glorified 'twixt earth and heaven.

Then turning to the lyrics and quoting:

> Ah! 'tis like a tale of olden
> Time long, long ago;

When the world was in its golden
  Prime, and love was lord below!
Every vein of Earth was dancing
  With the Spring's new wine!
'Twas the pleasant time of flowers
  When I met you, love of mine!
Ah! some spirit sure was straying
  Out of heaven that day,
When I met you, Sweet! a-Maying,
  In that merry, merry May.

Little heart! it shyly open'd
  Its red leaves' love-lore
Like a rose that must be ripen'd
  To the dainty, dainty core;
But its beauties daily brighten,
  And it blooms so dear;
Tho' a many Winters whiten,
  I go Maying all the year.

"I am thought," he says, "to be more addicted to the ancients than to the moderns . . . but at the present time I am trying to recollect any Ode, Latin or Greek, more graceful than this." In many pieces, he continues, "the flowers are crowded and pressed together, and overhang and almost overthrow the vase containing them," and he instances the "Oriental richness" of such a poem as *Wedded Love*.

Of the poet in whose work he found so much to admire, and in which he discerned such splendid promise, Landor knew no more than that "his station in life was obscure, his fortune far from prosperous," and that his name was Gerald Massey. Had he known all he would indeed have marvelled. Whatever rank among poets may finally be assigned to Mr. Gerald Massey, and we may be quite sure that he will stand higher than some of those who at

present appear to have superseded him, there can be no question about three things—his genius, his singularly interesting personal history, and the gratitude due to him for his manifold services to the cause of liberty and to the cause of philanthropy. If he has not fulfilled the extraordinary promise of his youth, he has produced poems instinct with noble enthusiasm, welling from the purest sources of lyric inspiration, exquisitely pathetic, sown thick with beauties. His career affords one of the most striking examples on record of the power of genius to assert itself under conditions as unfavourable and malign as ever contributed to thwart and depress it. But even apart from his work as a poet, and the inspiring story of his struggle with adverse fortune, he has other and higher claims to consideration and honour. He is probably the last survivor of that band of enthusiasts to whose efforts we mainly owe it that the England of the opponents of all that was most reasonable in Chartism, the England of the grievances and abominations which Chartism sought to remedy, the England of the Report on which Ashley's Collieries Bill and of the Report on which his Address on National Education were based, the England of the opponents of the Maynooth Grant, of the persecutors of Maurice, was transformed into the England of to-day. His revolutionary lyrics have done their work. The least that can be said for them is, that they are among the very best inspired by those wild times when Feargus O'Connor, Thomas Cooper, James O'Brien and Ernest Jones were in their glory. Of their effect in awakening and, making all allowance for their intemperance and extravagance, in educating

our infant democracy and those who were to mould it there can be no question. How vividly, as we listen to a strain like this, do those days come back to us:

Fling out the red Banner! the Patriots perish,
  But where their bones whiten the seed striketh root:
Their blood hath run red the great harvest to cherish:
  Now gather ye, Reapers, and garner the fruit.
Victory! Victory! Tyrants are quaking!
  The Titan of toil from the bloody thrall starts,
The slaves are awaking, the dawn-light is breaking,
  The foot-fall of Freedom beats quick at our hearts!

If lines like the following had a message for those days which they have not for us, we can still feel their charm:

'Tis weary watching wave by wave,
  And yet the tide heaves onward:
We climb, like Corals, grave by grave
  That have a path-way sunward.

. . . . . .

The world is rolling Freedom's way,
  And ripening with her sorrow.
Take heart! who bear the Cross to-day
  Shall wear the Crown to-morrow.

And the truth of what their author wrote of these poems many years later few would dispute:

Our visions have not come to naught
  Who saw by lightning in the night:
The deeds we dreamed are being wrought
  By those who work in clearer light.

So heartily and fully did Mr. Massey throw himself into the life of his time that all that is most memorable in our national history during the most stirring years of the latter half of the last century is

mirrored in his poetry. There is scarcely any side from which he has not approached it, from politics to spiritualism. To the cause of Chartism he was all that Whittier was to the cause of the Abolitionists on the other side of the Atlantic. Of the Russian War he was the veritable Tyrtaeus. It is impossible even now to read such a poem as *New Year's Eve in Exile*, and such ballads as *England Goes to War*, *After Alma*, *Before Inkermann*, *Cathcart's Hill*, *A War Winter's Night in England*, without emotions recalling those that thrilled in that iron time, when:

> Out of the North the brute Colossus strode
> With grimly solemn pace, proud in the might
> That moves not but to crush,

on fields

> of the shuddering battle-shocks
> Where none but the freed soul fled,

in homes

> Where all sate stern in the shadow of death.

In *Havelock's March* the heroes of the Indian Mutiny found a laureate as spirited and eloquent as Tennyson, whose *Defence of Lucknow*, which appeared many years afterwards, was certainly modelled on Mr. Massey's poem. Ever in the van of every movement making for liberty, he pleaded in fiery lyrics the cause of Italy against Austria; and, of all the tributes of honour and sympathy Garibaldi received, he received none worthier than the poems dedicated to him by his young English worshipper. He extended the same sympathy to the Garibaldi of Hungary, and his *Welcome* to Kossuth, when he

visited England in 1851, if it does no great credit to its author as a poet, is at least proof of the generous enthusiasm which inspired it. But the passionate sympathy which he expressed for the friends of liberty was equalled by the vehemence of the detestation which he expressed for its enemies. And preeminent among those enemies he regarded the "hero" of the *coup d'état* and the founder of the Second Empire. We must go back to the broadsides of Swift to find any satire equalling in intensity and concentrated scorn the poems in which he gave vent to his contempt for Louis Napoleon, and his indignation at the friendly reception accorded to him by England in 1853. Take two stanzas of one of them:

There was a poor old Woman once, a daughter of our nation,
Before the Devil's portrait stood in ignorant adoration.
"*You're bowing down to Satan, Ma'am,*" said some spectator, civil:
"*Ah, Sir, it's best to be polite, for we may go to the Devil.*"
Bow, bow, bow,
We may go to the Devil, so it's just as well to bow.

So England hails the Saviour of Society, and will tarry at
His feet, nor see her Christ is he who sold Him, curs'd Iscariot,
By grace of God, or sleight of hand, he wears the royal vesture;
And at thy throne, Divine Success! we kneel with reverent gesture,
And bow, bow, bow,
We may go to the Devil, so it's just as well to bow.

Or take three stanzas from *The Two Napoleons*:

One shook the world with earthquake—like a fiend
He sprang exultant—all hell following after!
The *other*, in burst of bubble and whiff of wind
Shook the world too—with laughter.

The *First* at least a splendid meteor shone!
  The *Second* fizzed and fell, an aimless rocket;
Kingdoms were pocketed for France by one,
  The other picked her pocket.

. . . . . .

That showed the Sphinx in front, with lion-paws,
  Cold lust of death in the sleek face of her,—
This the turned, cowering tail and currish claws,
  And hindermost disgrace of her.

Worthy of Swift, too:

He stole on France, deflowered her in the night,
Then tore her tongue out lest she told the tale.

And

Our ghost of Greatness hath not fled
At crowing of the Gallic Cock!

But if in his poetry he has been the ally of those who have furthered the cause of liberty and humanity in the field and in politics, he has been an ally as loyal to those who have furthered it in other capacities. When the bigots hunted down Maurice, he addressed brave words of comfort to him; *Bradlaugh's Burial* is in praise of a martyr of more doubtful character perhaps, but it strikes the same note. In the ringing lyric of *Stanley's Way*, we have a tribute to heroism in another form. The fine poems on Burns, Hood, and Thackeray could only have come from one who had the sympathy and insight of kinship, and so could pierce at once to the essence of each, and the work of each. No one indeed can go through the two volumes of Mr. Massey's poems without being struck with what struck George Eliot when, as she made no secret, she drew the portrait of their author in Felix Holt—

the innate nobility of the character impressed on them. Whatever may be their defects as compositions, and it may be conceded at once that they are neither few nor small, they have never the note of triviality. Instinctively as a plant makes towards the light, the poet of these poems makes towards all that appeals and all that belongs to what is most virtuous, most pure, and most generous in man. In some he kindles sympathy for the wrongs and miseries of the poor by giving pathetic voice to them; in others he pleads for the victims of injustice and oppression in his own and in foreign lands. Here he calls on the patriot, there on the philanthropist to be true to trust and duty. No poet has painted more vividly or dwelt with more fervour on the virtues which have made us, as a people, what we are at sea, on land, in the home. Who can read unmoved such ballads as *The Norseman*, *Sir Richard Grenville's Last Fight*, which appears to have suggested Tennyson's *Revenge*, and *The Stoker's Story*, such a lyric as *Love's Fairy Ring* and *Wedded Love*, the poem so much admired by Landor? As his heart went out to the heroes and martyrs of the revolutions of the middle of the last century, and his sympathetic insight enabled him to discern and interpret what so many of his contemporaries were blind to—the nobility and greatness underlying the foibles of Burns, the buffooneries of Hood, and the cynicism of Thackeray—so wherever the beautiful or "aught that dignifies humanity" has found expression, whether on the heights of life or in its valleys, he has ever sprung to greet it with readiest and sincerest homage. All this gives an attractiveness to his

poetry quite irrespective of its merits as mere poetry, just as in human features there is often a beauty and a charm which is simply the reflection of moral character.

There was little in Mr. Massey's early surroundings to promise either such traits as these, or such poetry as they informed. The story of his life is no secret, and a more striking illustration both of the independence of genius, when thrown on itself—for he had neither education nor sympathy—and of its irresistible energy—for everything combined to thwart and depress it—cannot easily be found.

His father was a canal boatman of the ordinary type, supporting on ten shillings a week, in a wretched hovel, a numerous family. A little elementary instruction at a penny school, to which his mother sent him, was all the education he ever received. At eight years of age he was working in a silk mill, from five in the morning to half-past six in the evening, for a weekly wage beginning at 9*d.* and rising to 1*s.* 3*d.* Here he experienced all that Elizabeth Barrett so powerfully and pathetically denounced in a poem which nine years later brought indignant tears into the eyes of half England, *The Cry of the Children.* From this cruel servitude the poor child was released by the mill being burnt down, and in some touching reminiscences of those dismal days he tells how he and other children stood for many hours in the wind and sleet and mud, watching joyfully the conflagration which set them free. But he had only exchanged one form of toil for another quite as ill-paid and more unwholesome. This was straw-plaiting. The plaiters, having to work in a marshy district with

constitutions enfeebled by confinement and want of proper food, fell easy victims to ague. Young Massey was no exception, and for three years he was racked, and sometimes quite prostrated, by this disease. At these times and when his father was out of work the sufferings of the family were terrible. It was only by unremitting drudgery, so miserable was the wage each could earn, that the wretched cabin which sheltered them and the barest necessities of life could be secured. They were more than once literally on the verge of starvation. At one dreadful crisis they were all down with the ague, with no one to assist them, and unable to assist each other. Well might Mr. Massey say, "I had no childhood. Ever since I can remember I have had the aching fear of want, throbbing in heart and brow." It was these experiences which inspired the touching poem, *Little Willie* and *The Famine Smitten*, and the "Factory-bell" in *Lady Laura*. But the lad, thanks to his mother, had been taught to read, and in his scanty leisure committed many chapters of the Bible to memory, and eagerly devoured such books as he could get at, among them the *Pilgrim's Progress* and *Robinson Crusoe*, which he took, he tells us, for true stories.

So passed the first fifteen years of his life. In or about 1843 he came up to London, where he was employed as an errand boy. And now an eager desire for knowledge possessed him, and he devoured all that came in his way—history, political philosophy, travels, everything, strangely enough, but poetry, going without food to buy books, and without sleep to read them. Sometimes in and sometimes

out of employment, a waif and a stray, his only solace in this dismal time was his passion for information. Then social questions began to interest him. His own bitter experiences naturally led him to brood over the wrongs and grievances against which the Chartists were protesting, and which they were seeking to remedy. He attended their meetings and, inflamed not only by what he heard there but by what he had himself seen and suffered, as well as by the sympathetic study of the writings of English and French republicans, immediately threw himself heart and soul into the cause. At last poetry awoke in him, inspired, he tells us, not by politics but by love. His first volume, *Original Poems and Chansons*, was published in 1847 by a provincial bookseller at Tring, his native place. This was succeeded three years later by *Voices of Freedom and Lyrics of Love*, a very great advance on the crude work of the preceding collection. Meanwhile, though as poor as ever and amid surroundings as sordid and dismal as they could well be, his prospects had in some degree brightened. He was beginning to feel his way with the pen. He started, and became the editor of, a cheap journal for working men, half of which was written by himself and the other half by them. But this coming to the ears of the employers on whom he depended for his daily bread, and who were not likely to regard with much favour the propaganda of which it was the medium, he was continually turned adrift by being dismissed from such situations as he could manage to scramble into. At last he fought his way to his proper place, and found he could rely on his pen at all events for a livelihood,

if only a bare one. He became a regular and valued contributor to the principal socialist journals, such as the *Leader*, Thomas Cooper's *Journal* and the *Christian Socialist*. This brought him into connection with his earliest friend Thomas Cooper, and subsequently with Charles Kingsley, who had just written *Alton Locke*, and with F. D. Maurice. Nor was this all. Dr. Samuel Smiles, ever helpful and ever quick to recognize merit, had been greatly struck by some of the lyrics in these publications and in the volume of 1850, and, hearing the young poet's history, wrote an eloquently appreciative review of both in a magazine long since defunct but in those days very popular. He welcomed the advent of a new and true poet "who had won his experience in the school of the poor, and nobly earned his title to speak to them as a man and a brother, dowered with 'the hate of hate, the scorn of scorn, the love of love'"; and, dwelling on the fact that the maker of poems so full of power and beauty was only twenty-three years of age, prophesied, if fortune was kind, a splendid future for him.

Fortune was not kind and was never going to be kind, but in Mr. Massey's next volume, published in 1854, appeared most of the poems on which his fame must mainly rest—*The Ballad of Babe Christabel with other Lyrical Poems*. From this moment his reputation was made. The volume passed through edition after edition and became the subject of eulogies so unmeasured that they may well have turned a young poet's head. But they did not turn the head of this poet. In a modest and manly preface prefixed to the third edition he deprecated the

homage which had been, he said, prematurely paid him. "Some of the critics have called me a 'Poet': but that word is much too lightly spoken. I know what a poet is too well to fancy that I am one yet; I may have something within which kindles flame-like at the breath of Love, or mounts into song in the presence of Beauty: but, alas! mine is a jarring lyre. I have only entered the lists and inscribed my name —the race has yet to be run." Referring to the political poems he was, he said, half-disinclined to give them a place in the volume, so averse was he "to sow dissension between class and class and fling firebrands among the combustibles of society." "But," he added, "strange wrongs are daily done in the land, bitter feelings are felt, and wild words will be spoken." Then he went on to say that his aspiration was to become the poet of the masses, to brighten and elevate the lives of those whose toils and sufferings, whose miseries and darkness he had himself shared. "I yearn to raise them into lovable beings. I would kindle in their hearts a sense of the beauty and grandeur of the Universe, call forth the lineaments of Divinity in their poor, worn faces, give them glimpses of the grace and glory of Love and of the marvellous significance of Life, and elevate the standard of Humanity for all." And to these aims he was nobly true, as innumerable poems were to testify, poems which if they have not always intrinsically the quality of poetry of a high order and which endures, went home influentially to hundreds of thousands in times when such appeals were of incalculable service to society.

When this volume was passing through the press

the Crimean War had broken out, and, during its progress, the young poet found his themes in what it inspired. The spirited ballads, in which he told the story of England's truth to herself and to her heroic past in that conflict, and in which just before he had deplored and denounced her apostasy from both in her recognition and welcome of Louis Napoleon, were collected and published in 1855, under the title of *War-waits*. Then came the Indian Mutiny and another series of ballads in which the heroism of his countrymen and the achievements and virtues of one of the noblest and purest of England's sons were commemorated: these were also collected and re-published in 1860 under the title of *Havelock's March*. Nine years afterwards the regular sequence of his poetry and his serious life as a poet ceased with *A Tale of Eternity and other Poems*.

With Mr. Massey's subsequent career and occupations I am not here concerned. In 1890, as his poems had never been collected, he was prevailed on to allow a selection of such as he thought most worthy of preservation to be made, and they appeared in two volumes under the title of *My Lyrical Life*. In a very modest preface he re-introduces himself to a generation which he assumes has forgotten him, and to which his poems will be "as good as MS." For himself, he says, they "may contain the *flower*, but the *fruit* of my life is to be looked for elsewhere by those who are in sympathy with my purpose." The enormous labours, "the fruit" to which Mr. Massey refers, his *Book of the Beginnings*, his *Natural Genesis* and the like—the value of these must be estimated by those competent to estimate it. It is with

the "flower" and the flower-time of Mr. Massey's life that I am here concerned and seek to interest others, with the poet and enthusiast to whom Ruskin wrote:

> I rejoice in acknowledging my own debt of gratitude to you for many an encouraging and noble thought and expression of thought, and my conviction that your poems in the mass have been a helpful and precious gift to the working-classes (I use the term in its widest and highest sense) of the country, that few national services can be greater than that which you have rendered.

The history and career of Mr. Massey can never be separated from his work as a poet, and taken together they form a record which surely deserves to live. Of the services to which Ruskin refers I have already spoken.

In considering his work as a poet I do not propose to deal with it critically, to balance its merits and shortcomings, and to enter into any discussion about his relative place among the poets of his time. I wish to dwell only on its beauties, on its very real beauties, and to invite the attention of all for whom poetry has charm to the two little volumes "which are as good as MS."

The Ballad of Babe Christabel is one of the richest and most pathetic poems in our language, sown thick with exquisite beauties; as here:

> In this dim world of clouding cares,
> We rarely know, till wildered eyes
> See white wings lessening up the skies,
> The Angels with us unawares.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Through Childhood's morning land, serene
> She walked betwixt us twain, like Love;

While, in a robe of light above,
Her guardian Angel watched unseen.

Till life's highway broke bleak and wild;
Then, lest her starry garments trail
In mire, heart bleed, and courage fail,
The Angel's arms caught up the child.

Her wave of life hath backward roll'd
To the great ocean; on whose shore
We wander up and down to store
Some treasure of the times of old.

And this:

We sat and watched by Life's dark stream
Our love-lamp blown about the night,
With hearts that lived as lived its light,
And died as died its precious gleam.

And this:

With her white hands clasped she sleepeth; heart is hushed and lips are cold
Death shrouds up her heaven of beauty, and a weary way we go,
Like the sheep without a shepherd on the wintry Norland wold,
With the face of day shut out by blinding snow.

O'er its widowed nest my heart sits moaning for its youngling fled
From this world of wail and weeping, gone to join her starry peers;
And my light of life 's o'ershadowed where the dear one lieth dead;
And I'm crying in the dark with many fears.

All last night she seemèd near me, like a lost belovèd bird,
Beating at the lattice louder than the sobbing wind and rain;
And I called across the night with tender name and fondling word;
And I yearned out through the darkness, all in vain.

Heart will plead, "Eyes cannot see her: they are blind with
tears of pain,"
And it climbeth up and straineth for dear life to look, and hark
While I call her once again: but there cometh no refrain,
And it droppeth down and dieth in the dark.

As long as a shaft, as cruelly barbed as any that Fate holds in its quiver, flies to its aim, will *The Mother's Idol Broken* find response:

Ere the soul loosed from its last ledge of life,
Her little face peered round with anxious eyes,
Then, seeing all the old faces, dropped content.
The mystery dilated in her look,
Which on the darkening deathground, faintly caught
Some likeness of the Angel shining near.

Full of wisdom and beauty is the poem *Wedded Love*:

We have had sorrows, love! and wept the tears
That run the rose-hue from the cheeks of Life;
But grief hath jewels as night hath her stars,
And she revealeth what we ne'er had known,
With Joy's wreath tumbled o'er our blinded eyes.

The kindred poems, *The Young Poet to His Wife*, *Long Expected* and *Wooed and Won* are full of rich beauty. *In Memoriam*, with its eloquent and impressive exordium, is a poem over which most of those who have been initiated in "the solemn mysteries of grief" will gratefully linger. How sunny are many of his lyrics, how full of grace! Take the following:

We cannot lift the wintry pall
From buried life: nor bring
Back, with Love's passionate thinking, all
The glory of the Spring.
But soft along the old green way
We feel her breath of gold:

Glad ripples round her presence play;
  She comes!—and all is told.

. . . . . .

She comes! like dawn in Spring her fame!
  My winter-world doth melt;
The thorns with flowers are all a-flame.
  She smiles!—and all is felt.

If a more charmingly touching lyric than *Cousin Winnie* exists in our language, where is it to be found?

It is impossible to go through these volumes without being struck with the felicities which meet us at every turn, now of thought, now of sentiment, now of expression. How happily, for example, are Hood's witticisms described as:

Rich foam-wreaths on the waves of lavish life,

and men in affliction as those

To whom Night brings the larger thoughts like stars.

How beautifully true and how originally expressed is this:

The plough of Time breaks up our Eden-land,
And tramples down its flowery virgin prime.
Yet through the dust of ages living shoots
O' the old immortal seed start in the furrows.

How happy this:

The best fruit loads the broken bough:
And in the wounds our sufferings plough
Love sows its own immortal seed.

Or:

Hope builds up
Her rainbow over Memory's tears.

How simple and true is the pathos here:

The silence never broken by a sound
We still keep listening for: the spirit's loss
Of its old clinging place, that *makes our life*
A dead leaf drifting desolately free.

And this too we pause over:

Who work for freedom win not in an hour.
The seed of that great truth from which shall spring
The forest of the future, and give shade
To those that reap the harvest, must be watched
With faith that fails not, fed with rain of tears,
And walled around with life that fought and fell.

And this:

The world is waking from its phantom dreams
To make out that which is from that which seems;
And in the light of day shall blush to find
What wraiths of darkness had the power to blind
Its vision, what thin walls of misty gray,
As if of granite, stopped its outward way.

This, too, was worth saying and is well said:

Prepare to die? Prepare to *live*,
We know not what is living:
And let us for the world's good give,
As God is ever-giving.

In *The Haunted Hurst, A Tale of Eternity* Mr. Massey struck a new note, and has produced a most powerful and original poem to which I know no parallel in poetry. It was occasioned and inspired by certain extraordinary experiences which he once had in a certain house where many years ago he resided, and which had the effect of converting him to Spiritualism. With the esoteric interest which it no doubt has for Spiritualists I have no concern, but its dramatic and poetic interest is so great that an account of it will probably be as acceptable to

those who have no sympathy with the creeds which it is designed to support and illustrate as to those who have. The physical fact on which it is founded was the discovery of a child's skeleton in the garden of the house occupied by the poet, the metaphysical fact the apparition of the materialized spirit of the self-destroyed murderer, who tells the story of the crime and of the punishment posthumously inflicted on him. The poem opens weirdly and vividly with a description of the phenomena commonly associated with so-called haunted houses, but here symbolic of the tragedy afterwards divulged:

> At times a noise, as though a dungeon door
> Had grated, with set teeth, against the floor:
> A ring of iron on the stones: a sound
> As if of granite into powder ground.
> A mattock and a spade at work! sad sighs
> As of a wave that sobs and faints and dies.
> And then a shudder of the house: a scrawl
> As though a knife scored letters on the wall.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> The wind would rise and wail most humanly,
> With a low scream of stifled agony
> Over the birth of life about to be.

At last "the veil was rent that shows the Dead not dead," and live figures define themselves; one:

> A face in which the life had burned away
> To cinders of the soul and ashes gray:
> The forehead furrowed with a sombre frown
> That seemed the image, in shadow, of Death's Crown.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> The faintest gleam of corpse-light, lurid, wan,
> Showed me the lying likeness of a man!
> The old soiled lining of some mortal dress.

the other:

> A dream of glory in my night of grief.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> She wore a purple vesture thin as mist,
> The Breath of Dawn upon the plum dew-kissed.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> The purple shine of violets wet with dew
> Was in her eyes.

And the first apparition tells its horrible story, the tragedy of its earthly life, the lust that led to murder and from murder to self-destruction.

> She was a buxom beauty!
>
> . . . . . .
>
> No demon ever toyed with worthier folds,
> About a comelier throat, to strangle souls;
> A face that dazzled you with life's white heat,
> Devouring, as it drew you off your feet,
> With eyes that set the Beast o' the blood astir,
> Leaping in heart and brain, alive for her;
> Lithe, amorous lips, cruel in curve and hue,
> Which, greedy as the grave, my kisses drew
> With hers, that to my mouth like live things clung
> Long after, and in memory fiercely stung.

One wild and stormy night, the shame of her sin having driven her from her home and friends, she rushes into her lover's house with her new-born child:

> Harsh as the whet-stone on the mower's scythe
> She rasped me all on edge; the hell-sparks flew,
> Till there seemed nothing that I dared not do.
> "Kill it, you coward!"

And the wretch murders the child, to perish afterwards, in the agonies of frenzy and remorse, by his own hand:

I fancied when I took the headlong leap,
That death would be an everlasting sleep:
And the white winding sheet and green sod might
Shut out the world, and I have done with sight.
Cold water from my hand had sluic'd the warm
And crimson carnage; safe the little form
Lay underground; the tiny trembling waif
Of life hid from the light: my secret safe.

But this was not to be. The panic horror of one awful moment was to become stereotyped for ever. He had made the child's grave in a chamber of which he had lost the key, and so exposed his crime —for the grave was open—to instant discovery. So:

The lost soul whirls and eddies round
The grave-place where the lost key must be found.
. . . . . .
He often sees it, but he cannot touch
It: like a live thing it eludes his clutch—
Gone, like that glitter from the eyes of Death,
In the black river at night that slides beneath
The Bridges, tempting souls of Suicides
To find the promised rest it always hides.

All this, as well as the Angel-form who acts as interpreter, reveals itself in clairvoyance to the poet, explaining the sounds heard in the house:

The liquid gurgle and the ring
Metallic, with the heavy plop and ping,
. . . . . The grinding sound
O' the grating door; the digging underground;
The shudders of the house; the sighs and moans;
The ring of iron dropt upon the stones;
The cloudy presence prowling near.

Sometimes, as here, with tragic power, and sometimes with infinite pathos, the poem explains and illustrates that what we call death is but life's continuance behind a veil which it is in the power of

some who are still in the flesh to uplift; that the impressions which the soul receives from earthly experience it retains long after the body is dust; that Heaven and Hell, with those who people them, are around us and in our midst, the barrier dividing them from us so thin that for some it scarcely exists.

Of all this the poem gives us many weird and most impressive illustrations; such as the story of the man who, seeing a woman, with a beautiful child in her arms, standing begging in a crowded London thoroughfare, placed in her outstretched hand—for he was touched with pity for the child—a golden coin, only to find it ringing on the pavement at his feet, and no woman or child any longer visible:

> He was one of those who see
> At times side-glimpses of eternity.
> The Beggar was a Spirit, doomed to plead
> With hurrying wayfarers, who took no heed,
> But passed her by, indifferent as the dead,
> Till one should hear her voice and turn the head.
> Doomed to stand there and beg for bread, in tears,
> To feed her child that had been dead for years.
> This was the very spot where she had spent
> Its life for drink, and this the punishment.

In sentiment, in imagery, and in expression there is much in this original and powerful poem over which no reader can fail to pause. Never have the genesis and progress of evil in the human soul been more subtly and terribly described and analyzed than in the Fifth Part, and if we are not prepared to accept every article in the creed of this poem we can at least understand the wisdom and force of such lines as these:

If those blind Unbelievers did but know
Through what a perilous Unknown they go
By light of day; what furtive eyes do mark
Them fiercely from their ambush of the dark;
What motes of spirit dance in every beam;
What grim realities mix with their dream;
What serpents try to pull down fallen souls,
As earth-worms drag the dead leaves through their holes.
. . . . How, toad-like, at the ear will work
The squatted Satan, wickedly at work.
. . . . . .
Till from some little rift in nature yawns
A black abyss of madness, and Hell dawns.

And how beautifully is the Divine guidance described as:

The magnet in the soul that points on through
All tempests, and still trembles to be true,

and as

A bridge of spirit laid in beams of light,
Mysteriously across a gulf of night.

Nor are the comments on the perversions of Christianity even now altogether superfluous, and very far indeed from profanity is the aspiration:

Forgive me, Lord, if wrongly I divine,
I dare not think Thy pity less than mine.

It is characteristic of Mr. Massey's cheerful optimism that a poem which begins so grimly, and that a theosophy which involves so much which is both sombre and awful should conclude with an assurance

That all divergent lines at length will meet,
To make the clasping round of Love complete;
The rift 'twixt Sense and Spirit will be healed
Before creation's work is crowned and sealed;
Evil shall die, like dung about the root
Of Good, or climb converted into fruit.

All blots of error bleached in Heaven's sight;
All life's perplexing colours lost in light.

I have indulged very freely in quotation, but I must find room for the following noble lines which conclude the sixth part:

Lean nearer to the Heart that beats through night;
Its curtain of the dark your veil of light.
Peace Halcyon-like to founded faith is given,
And it can float on a reflected Heaven
Surely as Knowledge that doth rest at last
Isled on its "Atom" in the unfathomed vast
Life-Ocean, heaving through the infinite,
From out whose dark the shows of being flit,
In flashes of the climbing waves' white crest;
Some few a moment luminous o'er the rest!

I have already said that I shall not presume to attempt any estimate of Mr. Massey's relative position among the poets of the Victorian era; if he has no pretension to rank among its classics, in the house of song there are many mansions. My purpose will have been fulfilled if I recall to a generation which, judging from popular anthologies and current literary memoirs, appears to have forgotten them, poems full of interest and full of charm.

MILTONIC MYTHS AND THEIR AUTHORS

I

THE posthumous fortunes of Milton form a curious chapter in literary history. First, prophecy was busy with his name, and prophecy, delivering itself in the person of a contemporary critic, one William Winstanley, thus pronounced: "John Milton was one whose natural parts might deservedly give him a place amongst the principal of our English poets, having written two Heroic Poems and a Tragedy, namely, *Paradise Lost*, *Paradise Regain'd*, and *Samson Agonistes*. But his Fame is gone out like a Candle in a Snuffe, and his memory will always stink."[1] For this verdict political prejudice was no doubt mainly responsible. But in 1750 Dr. Johnson was induced to write a preface and a postscript to a volume, the effect of which, had it attained legitimately the end at which it aimed, would have been, if not exactly the fulfilment, something not very far from the fulfilment of Winstanley's strange prophecy. In or about 1747 a Scotchman named Lauder, irritated at the failure of an attempt to introduce an edition of Arthur Johnston's Latin version of the Psalms into schools, in consequence of a contemptuous comparison instituted originally

[1] *Lives of the Most Famous English Poets*, p. 195.

by Pope between Johnston and Milton, determined, if possible, to blast Milton's fame.[1] This he sought to effect by accusing and convicting him of wholesale plagiarism. The fellow was a scholar, and in the course of his reading had explored the writings of the Scotch, Dutch, and English Latin poets of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, most of whom were very little known in England even to the learned. As much of this poetry was on sacred subjects, and had, like *Paradise Lost*, drawn largely on the Old Testament and on theological common-

[1] In a remarkable letter which appears to have escaped the notice of the historians of this affair, written to Dr. Birch, preserved among Birch's papers in the British Museum, and printed in *Anecdotes of Eminent Persons*, vol. i, pp. 122-128, Lauder attributes his infamous conduct to another motive: "You," he writes to Birch, "were the innocent cause of my offence, more than any man alive. I mean your Appendix to Milton's Life, where you relate an unparalleled scene of villainy as acted by Milton against King Charles I, who, in order to blast the reputation of that prince, the undoubted author of *Eikon Basilike*, stole a prayer out of Sir Philip Sidney's *Arcadia* and obliged the printer of the King's book, under severe penalties and threatnings, to subjoin it to his Majesty's performance, and then made a hideous outcry against his own action, merely to create a jealousy, as was observed just now, that if his Majesty was not the author of the prayers in that Treatise he was far less the author of the Treatise itself, which thing is believed by thousands to this day: Now, if that action when committed by Milton is without malignity why should it be deemed so criminal in me. . . . If this be the case, as you very well know it is, do you think I deserved so much to be reproached as I have been for acting by Milton as he acted by the King?" For this abominable charge there was, needless to say, no evidence whatever, as Birch himself admits when he relates the scandal. See Birch, *Milton*, vol. i, Introduction, p. xxxiii.

places, both in relation to incident as well as to doctrine and sentiment, there were necessarily many analogies and parallels to be found in it to Milton's epic. These Lauder industriously collected, and they were pointed out in a series of papers communicated to the *Gentleman's Magazine* between 1747 and 1749. The papers naturally attracted attention, and in 1750 they were collected, with considerable additions, and published in a volume, dedicated to the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge, entitled *An Essay on Milton's Use and Imitation of the Moderns in his Paradise Lost.*

The papers in the *Gentleman's Magazine* had disturbed and surprised Milton's many admirers, but the discoveries there made were nothing to what this volume revealed. In a few weeks the essay was the talk of every one to whom the name and fame of Milton were known, and the sensation made by it was extraordinary, as well it might have been. For it was here demonstrated that a poem which was the glory and pride of our literature, and had given an Englishman a place beside Homer and Virgil, was nothing but a compilation, an ingenious cento of fragments selected and dovetailed out of the writings of poets known only to the curious. The scheme and architecture of the poem, as well as the machinery and details of the first two books, including the debate in Pandemonium, had been stolen from the *Sarcotis*, an epic poem in five books, written about 1650 by Jacobus Masenius, a Jesuit professor in the college at Cologne. With wholesale plunderings from Masenius had been blended plunderings on a similar scale from the *Adamus*

Exsul of Grotius and from the *Locustae* of Phineas Fletcher. The description of the creation of the world, the scenes in Eden, and the account of the Fall had been concocted out of the *Creationis Rerum Poetica Descriptio* of Andrew Ramsay, the *Virgilius Evangelizans* of Alexander Ross, and Silvester's English translation of Du Bartas. The dialogue at the end of the fourth book between Gabriel and Satan had been translated from one of the tragedies of Johannes Franciscus Quintianus. The *Bellum Angelicum* of Frederic Taubmann, a professor in the University of Wittemburg, had supplied the shameless plagiarist with a great part of the sixth book; while the famous panegyric on marriage had been filched from the *Triumphus Pacis* of Caspar Staphorstius. Many other illustrations are given of these appropriations, and their supposed plumes are restored to a numerous rabble of obscure Latin versifiers. "And now," says Lauder in summary, "Milton is reduced to his true standard, appears mortal and uninspired, and in ability little superior to the poets above mentioned; but in honest and open dealing, the best quality of the human mind, not inferior, perhaps, to the most unlicensed plagiary that ever wrote."

With an alacrity which did him little credit, Dr. Johnson, whose prejudice against Milton is well known, heartily supported Lauder in his "discoveries," having indeed furnished him with a preface and postscript to his work. But the triumph of this infamous impostor was short-lived. In less than a year after the appearance of his work the Rev. John Douglas, afterwards Bishop of Salisbury, followed with a pamphlet, *Milton vindicated from the*

Charge of Plagiarism brought against him by Mr. Lauder, and Lauder himself convicted of several forgeries and gross impositions on the Public. Douglas showed how Lauder had, by an elaborate system of fraud and forgery, converted vague and general resemblances in the writings of these poets to the work of Milton into precise and particular, sometimes by suppressing the context, sometimes by dovetailing disconnected passages, sometimes by alterations more or less extensive, and sometimes by interpolations of his own. The exposure was complete, and the wretched man, covered with shame, wrote, at Johnson's dictation, a public letter to Douglas, fully acknowledging the fraud of which he had been convicted, and apologizing in the most abject terms for his villainy.

The impostures of Lauder have thrown into the shade the less criminal Miltonic "discoveries" of the Rev. Francis Peck, and yet in impudence he may fairly challenge comparison with the Scotchman. Peck, who is honourably known as an antiquary of some distinction, published in 1740 a substantial quarto, entitled *New Memoirs of the Life and Poetical Works of Mr. John Milton.* The volume contained many "important additions" to Milton's works, all of them discoveries for which the world was indebted to the industry and acumen of the Rev. editor. Among them was a drama which Mr. Peck rapturously placed beside *Samson Agonistes.* The history of this discovery is so interesting that we must leave Mr. Peck himself to tell it. Happening to be going through a collection of pamphlets published between 1640 and 1660 his attention was

directed to one entitled *Tyrannical Government anatomized: or a Discourse concerning evil Counsellors, being the Life and Death of John the Baptist. Presented to the King's Most Excellent Majesty by the author.* It was in prose, and was printed in the form of a dialogue in long paragraphs. Suddenly it flashed on the inspired discoverer that the prose might be verse, and that the verse might be Milton's, and in a very short time he was satisfied that Milton's it was. The spelling was Milton's, "the spirit of liberty breathing through it" was Milton's, and "who so likely as Milton to present it to the King?" He carried it, in rapture, to a learned friend, who, on inspecting it, found it was nothing more than a literal prose version of Buchanan's *Baptistes*. This was, as Mr. Peck owns, a great shock to him, but he bore up so wonderfully that the untoward revelation scarcely modified his original opinion. Slicing up the prose into blank verse and insisting that the translator was Milton, he had the effrontery to print it among Milton's poems, entitling it "the sixth of Mr. John Milton's nine celebrated poems." And Mr. Peck justified its ascription to Milton thus:

> I shall begin with owning that at first indeed I took this poem to be an original, but since find that it is only a translation from the Latin of Mr. George Buchanan. Yet I shall still make bold to call it Milton's own. And I think not improperly. For are not Dryden's *Virgil* Mr. Dryden's, Pope's *Homer* Mr. Pope's? Besides, this poem, I conceive, is more Mr. Milton's than either of those pieces are theirs. . . . Milton in translating Buchanan did no more than render so many of his own thoughts into English which, as it happened, Buchanan had with the

same elegance of style and the same turn of thinking wrote down in Latin about a hundred years before.

The following is a favourable specimen of the blank verse evolved with a little manipulation by Mr. Peck out of the prose, and pronounced to be "conclusively Miltonic":

But if you should read
Or teach the prophets oracles, and show
The track or steps of your own holy life,
Then your authority is stricken mute:
Then like dumb dogs that bark not here you fret
And fume about your sheep-coates; but the wolves
Which of you drive away? The wolves, sayd I?
You are the wolves yourselves that flay your flock
Clothed with your wool; their milk don't slack your thirst,
Their flesh your hunger.

Of a very different order to these pseudo-discoveries was the real and important discovery made by Mr. Lemon in 1823. It had long been known that Milton had completed a work containing a system of theology, and that the manuscript had been in the possession of his friend and pupil Cyriac Skinner. Beyond this nothing more was known about it, and it was supposed to have perished. But in the latter part of 1823, Mr. Lemon, then Deputy Keeper of the State Papers, discovered in one of the presses of the State Paper Office in Whitehall, a parcel inclosed in an envelope directed to "Mr. Skinner, Mercht." It contained, with other documents, a corrected copy of all the Latin letters to foreign princes and states written by Milton when Latin Secretary, together with a manuscript of 735 closely written small quarto pages, entitled *Joannis Miltoni Angli De Doctrinâ Christianâ, ex sacris*

duntaxat libris petitâ, Disquisitionum libri duo posthumi. This was the long-lost treatise, and how it found its way into so strange a depository can only be matter for precarious conjecture. Of its authenticity, however, there can be no question.

But Miltonic discoveries did not cease here. In the summer of 1868 the columns of the *Times*, and of other leading newspapers, became the arena of a very lively controversy. The late Professor Henry Morley announced that he had found a new poem by Milton containing fifty-four lines, and entitled *An Epitaph.* It was inscribed on a blank page of the first edition of the minor poems belonging to the British Museum, was signed, so it was alleged, "J.M., Ober 1647," and was, the Professor contended, in the handwriting of Milton himself. As the poem bore some resemblance to the Epitaph on the Countess of Winchelsea, and contained couplets which Milton might, as a boy, conceivably have written, and as, moreover, the handwriting was abnormally cramped owing to the exigencies of space, the ascription of the verses to Milton was at least worth discussion. But the bubble soon burst. It appeared, on due scrutiny, that the initials were not "J. M." but "P. M."; that the handwriting, making every allowance for its necessary variation from the normal type, was not the handwriting of Milton. The pronoun "its," though occurring only three times in the whole of Milton's voluminous writings, occurred three times in these fifty-four lines alone. There were, moreover, inaccuracies and cacophonies which would have been impossible to a scholar of Milton's accomplishments, and with Milton's fine

ear. And lastly, as I think Mr. Gerald Massey pointed out, the poem was full of very un-Miltonic plagiarisms from Crashaw.

Some fifteen years before Professor Morley "discovered" a poem which convicted Milton of being a plagiarist from Crashaw, a Mr. Brook Aspland discovered an inscription in a volume in the Bodleian which convicted him of being not merely an Arian but a downright and thorough-going Socinian. Mr. Aspland was, it seems, collecting material for a Life of Paul Best, the Unitarian Confessor, whose tract, *Mysteries Discovered*, was burnt by an order of the Long Parliament in 1647. To his unspeakable joy he found in a blank space of the tract a Latin note, written in "a clear and elegant Italian hand," headed "*De Redemptoris nostri Jesu Christi Personâ.*" To whom but to Milton could be ascribed—so argued rapturous Mr. Aspland—a Latin note in "a clear and elegant Italian hand" of the seventeenth century? Experts shook their heads, but Mr. Aspland remained unshaken, and Socinianism, greatly to the satisfaction of John Keble, annexed Milton.

But the most remarkable Miltonic "discovery" was made some four or five years ago, and perhaps impudence and credulity never went further. In a leading London newspaper appeared a poem purporting to be—so ran the words of the discoverer—"the last effort of the genius who gave to the world the greatest epic in the English tongue. . . . It was found among Milton's papers after his death, and was actually included in an incomplete Oxford edition of his works, of which but a limited number

were issued." It will be sufficient to give the first stanza, it would, indeed, be sufficient to give the first line:

> I am old and blind.
> Men point at me as smitten by God's frown,
> Afflicted and deserted of my mind,
> Yet am I not cast down.

"My lord," said a counsel to a judge who asked him why his client had not produced an important witness, "my client has several reasons for not producing that witness; the first is that he is dead, the second is——" "That will do," interrupted the judge, "you need not trouble us with the other reasons." To discuss anything which follows the first line of this poem would, as I need scarcely say, be equally superfluous. And yet the genuineness of this poem was emphatically maintained by more than one distinguished scholar, and gravely debated in the columns of several newspapers. It is not, indeed, unlikely that the gem would have formed the chief attraction of some new edition of Milton's poems had it not been pointed out that it was to be found in the *Treasury of American Song*, and had been written about 1848 by Mrs. Elizabeth Howell of Philadelphia.

And now we come to the last and most remarkable of these Miltonic discoveries. Mr. John Murray published some three years ago in two handsome volumes, "*Nova Solyma, The Ideal City: or Jerusalem Regained. An Anonymous Romance, written in the time of Charles I, now first drawn from obscurity and attributed to the illustrious John Milton.* With Introduction, Translation, Literary Essays and

a Bibliography, by the Rev. Walter Begley." The history of the work here translated is briefly this. It appeared, printed at London by John Legat in 1648, under the title of NOVAE SOLYMAE *Libri Sex.* There was nothing to indicate the authorship. On the contrary, a Latin couplet on the middle of the blank page facing the title informed the reader that all inquiry as to the authorship would be vain.

> Cujus opus, studio cur tantum quaeris inani?
> Qui legis et frueris feceris esse tuum.

In the following year the unsold remainder of the impression was published with a new title-page, adding to the old title the words *Sive Institutio Christiani*, (1) *De Pueritâ;* (2) *De Creatione Mundi;* (3) *De Juventute;* (4) *De Peccato;* (5) *De Virili Aetate;* (6) *De Redemptione Hominis;* and stating that it was sold by Thomas Underhill, in Wood Street. With this, all that is known about the book begins and ends. No reference to it, no indication that it has been so much as seen by any person except the writers of two brief manuscript notes in the British Museum copy, has as yet been discovered either in contemporary records or subsequently, till Mr. Begley gave it to the world. Its discoverer, for to that honour Mr. Begley is fully entitled, has certainly laid all students of the seventeenth-century literature and theology under very great obligations. About the Romance itself there cannot be two opinions; intrinsically as well as historically it is of singular interest and merit, the work of an accomplished and brilliant scholar, who, if not exactly a man of genius, was yet gifted and tempered as very few men who

are not geniuses are gifted and tempered. On a first and rapid perusal, indeed, any critic might be excused for being carried away with Mr. Begley's fascinating theory,—for imagining that in a work, which, with some deductions, would do no discredit to Milton, he had in his hands an experiment of the master's early manhood.

The *Nova Solyma* belongs to a species of fiction peculiarly characteristic of the seventeenth century, and it presents it in its most composite form. In such works as Bacon's *New Atlantis*, Campanella's *City of the Sun*, and, later, Harrington's *Oceana*, we have, as in More's *Utopia*, examples of the purely didactic romance; in Hall's *Mundus alter et idem*, and in Godwin's *Journey to the Moon*, phantastic extravaganzas of the Lucianic and Rabelaisian type. Other classes of these fictions found their original models in the *Satyricon* of Petronius, the *Golden Ass* of Apuleius, and, later, in the *Arcadias* of Sannazzaro and Sidney, and, blending prose and poetry, dealt with pastoral life, romantic adventures, love, the delineation of character and picturesque nature-painting, preserving however the didactic element by moral or political disquisitions and a large infusion of allegory. Such would be the *Argenis* and *Euphormionis Satyricon* of Barclay and the *Comus* of Erycius Puteanus. Into the composition of the *Nova Solyma* almost all these elements enter. As a didactic romance it closely recalls the *New Atlantis*; as a romance of adventure and sentiment and of mingled prose and verse, the *Argenis*; in its idyllicism and colouring, the *Comus*. And in structure, phraseology and style these works were

obviously its models. But a still closer resemblance, so far at least as didactic purpose is concerned, may be traced in it to a species of romance which appears to have been particularly popular during the seventeenth century, and which finds illustrations in such works as Johann Valentin Andreae's *Reipublicae Christianopolitanae Descriptio*, published in 1619, though here romantic incident is entirely subordinate to didactic purpose, or in such works as the *Eudemia* of Janus Nicius Erythraeus, 1637, which interweaving romantic stories and blending poetry with prose closely recalls the *Nova Solyma*.

But the themes, the theories, and the inspiration of the *Nova Solyma* are derived from the world of the Puritan revolution. Since the accession of Charles I speculations and disquisitions on ethical and scientific subjects, on politics, on government, on education, and, above all, on theology, had been gradually superseding the literature most characteristic of the Renaissance. Philosophers and politicians were engaged in formulating systems and in constructing ideal commonwealths. Pious fanatics were indulging in dreams of a Millennian time, when Jerusalem should be the centre of united Christendom, and the scattered tribes, gathered into Christ's fold, repossess, as His subjects, their old inheritance. The Jews were coming into prominence, and Menasseh ben Israel was beginning his indefatigable labours in the cause of his people. Just a year before the *Nova Solyma* was published he had attributed the Civil War to the anger of God at the treatment the Jews had so long experienced at the hands of the Christians, and in 1650 appeared

his *Spes Israelis.*[1] The theories of Comenius were engaging the attention of all who were interested in education, and, whether accepted or not, had brought home to intelligent citizens the importance of its efficient regulation. And these are the themes of the *Nova Solyma.* The author of it was plainly a Puritan enthusiast without the ordinary Puritan limitations; a man who, like Milton, was eminently a scholar and a humanist, as familiar with the polite literature of the ancient as of the modern world, as well as profoundly versed in divinity and theology; a man who, like Milton, entered intensely into the intellectual and spiritual life of his time, but who, unlike Milton, had little interest, so at least we should judge, in politics and in political controversy. It may be assumed with some confidence that he was a young man, and a young man of ardent passions but of ascetic ideals. No one can read the Romance without being struck with what is equally striking both in Milton and in Spenser, the union of a sensuousness which borders, and often more than borders, on the voluptuous with austere purity of sentiment and principle.

The work is partly in prose and partly in verse. The prose has little distinction, but the verse has much. The most remarkable experiment in hexameters consists of extracts from a supposed epic on the destruction of the Armada, cited to illustrate a

[1] See, for the whole question and of the Jewish movement at this time, Lucien Wolf's *Menasseh Ben Israel, Mission to Oliver Cromwell* and his *Crypto-Jews under the Commonwealth.* The first is published for the Jewish Historical Society of England and the other is reprinted from the *Jewish Chronicle.*

lecture on poetry. In addition to original poems and translations in the ordinary metres, the narrative is interspersed with lyrics, often of great beauty, in almost every form which these compositions have assumed both in classical and in post-classical poets, concluding with a multi-metrical marriage-song.

The plot in succinct summary is as follows. The Jews having at last been converted, a Millennian Jerusalem, Nova Solyma, has been established; an ideal city, glorious alike in surroundings, site, and architecture, its government an aristocratic republic, its achievements the realization of all that can be accomplished by a God-fearing, God-directed community, as alive to its temporal as to its spiritual interests. Its fame having come to the ears of two Cambridge students, the sons of a London merchant, named respectively Eugenius and Politian, they set out to visit it. Meeting at Palermo with one Joseph, the son of a Patriarch of the new city, a young man who was on his travels with a tutor and a servant, but who had been reduced to great straits by some brigands having robbed him of all he had, in addition to murdering his servant, they have little difficulty in persuading him to dismiss his tutor and to return as their escort to Nova Solyma. At this point the romance opens. On a beautiful spring day they enter the city. It chanced to be the anniversary of the Restoration, and a gorgeous pageant, the central figure of which is a young girl of surpassing loveliness, is passing through the streets. On her —she is, as is explained to them, the impersonation of Zion—the eyes of both the youths are riveted. Joseph, without, at the time, informing them that the

fair maiden is his sister, leads them to his home and introduces them to his father Jacob. Jacob is overjoyed at seeing his son again, and heartily accedes to Joseph's request that Eugenius and Politian should be the guests of the family. The old man enters into conversation with them, and pleased with some remarks which they had made about an act of graceful unselfishness on the part of two of his younger children, takes them into his confidence and explains the principle on which the children of Nova Solyma are educated. Politian and Eugenius now retire to rest; not, however, before discussing the charms of the daughter of Zion, with which it is quite clear that they have both been deeply impressed. The next day they learn, to their surprise, that she is the daughter of their host and the sister of Joseph. The narrative is then interrupted by a long allegorical episode, in the form of a dream, related by an elderly matron for the edification of the two sons of Jacob. This over, the main narrative is resumed by the sudden arrival of one Alcimus, the son of Joseph's tutor. The graceless youth, full of remorse for what he had done, confesses, to the amazement of Joseph, that having taken to a brigand life, he had been one of the band who robbed him, murdered his servant, and deprived him of his tutor, the tutor being his own father. To save his father's life he had, however, imperilled his own, the one redeeming point in the infamy of his conduct. Both Joseph and Jacob treat the culprit with very un-Miltonic indulgence. This incident, as well as the subsequent adventures of Alcimus, are, it may be added, related with great particularity of vivid detail, and, if written

by Milton, display powers of which he has nowhere else revealed even a glimpse. So ends the first book.

The greater part of the second book, which begins with a philosophical garden-party, is occupied with prolix disquisitions on religious, metaphysical, and scientific subjects, but introduces an essential part of the fabric of the Romance. This is the tragical love of Philippina, daughter of Sebastian, Duke of Palermo, for Joseph, whom she had met, under romantic circumstances, when on his travels. In her infatuation she had come, in male disguise and under the assumed name of Philander, to Nova Solyma in quest of the unsuspicious Joseph. The story is not unskilfully introduced. As Joseph, Politian, and Eugenius are entering the public hall in the market-place, they notice a young boy observing and following them at a distance. The object of his attention is plainly Joseph. Joseph accosts him, and asks him who he is and from what country he has come. The youth explains that he was an Italian, and having been forced into a betrothal with a lady whom he did not love, he had run away from home to find a lady whom he did love. He was, he added, alone and without friends, and he appeals to Joseph to protect him. Joseph very kindly arranges with a widow named Antonia to board the youth, and he is taken into her house. Among her boarders is a young man named Theophrastus, who is suffering from religious melancholia of a most distressing kind. He tells his story, which is not unlike that of the Man in the Iron Cage in Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, recalling also many of the cases cited in

Henry More's *Enthusiasmus Triumphatus*, and we have a long digression on witchcraft and demoniac possession. The book concludes with old Jacob's account of his conversion to Christianity, which is broken off by his summons to the Council of State.

The third book is occupied with an elaborate review of the colleges of Nova Solyma, and with the methods of education pursued there, which are very particularly described. Then comes a long disquisition on Rhetoric and Poetry, illustrated by three extracts from an epic poem on the Spanish Armada, composed by Joseph, entitled *Philippica*. This is followed by some remarks on the pernicious influence of prose romances,—another most un-Miltonic note,—and the attempt of the author of *Nova Solyma* to elevate and utilize such fiction by employing it as a vehicle for religious instruction. After a visit to the Gymnasium the two friends, Eugenius and Politian, return to Jacob's house, Politian discovering to his infinite concern that his friend is as desperately in love as himself with the Daughter of Zion. So ends the third book, promising well for the fourth. But we have to wade through two dreary lectures, one *De ortu et occasu Rerum*, evidently a college thesis pressed into the service of the work, and the other a long harangue on the origin of evil, before the action is resumed. And when resumed it takes a turn which is not a little surprising. The author, betraying a suspicious familiarity with the most unsavoury parts of the Romances of Petronius and of Apuleius, goes on to describe how the widow Antonia, mistaking Philander for what she appeared to be, a young man, falls desperately

in love with her, and urges her suit with such importunity, that had not Joseph, who had now been informed by messengers from the Duke of Palermo that Philander was no other than Philippina in disguise, intervened, a tragedy even more terrible than what actually occurred might have resulted. As it is, Philippina destroys herself with a dagger, and Antonia takes poison. This dismal scene over, the narrative resumes the story of poor Theophrastus, who is now worse than ever, and indeed on the point of death. The imperturbable Joseph, while waiting with Eugenius and Politian in an adjoining room for a summons to administer the last consolations to Theophrastus, improves the occasion by first breaking into iambic trimeter acatalectics on the Curse of Cain, and then settling into a long prose disquisition on the Fall of Man. At last the summons comes, the consolation is administered, and Theophrastus breathes his last.

The first part of the fifth book is retrospective, and is a narrative placed in the mouth of the unhappy Philippina's maidservant, telling how it was that her mistress met, and fell in love with Joseph; how Philippina's father, the Duke of Palermo, wishing her to marry the Duke of Parma, and discovering her passion for Joseph, caused Joseph to be kidnapped and imprisoned; how Joseph escaped by impersonating the Ethiopian servant who, appointed to guard him, had fortunately been seized with a fit and to all appearance fallen dead; how, at the instigation of Philippina's licentious stepmother, angry at Joseph's rejection of her immoral overtures, he was accused of the murder but acquitted, in con-

sequence of the supposed corpse reviving; and how finally he had made his escape, Philippina following him in disguise. All this certainly constitutes a most ingenious and interesting story, suggested partly by Montemayor's *Diana*, and partly by certain incidents in Sidney's *Arcadia*: but there is no touch of Milton's hand discernible in any portion of it.

After this the narrative again stagnates in discourses on the higher and lower love, on duelling, with hints for the attainment of a well-regulated mind, these themes being suggested by the discovery of an intended duel between Eugenius and Politian, both of whom had become distracted by their passion for the Daughter of Zion. The book concludes with a grotesquely irrelevant discourse in prose on the right use of money, another college thesis no doubt, and an equally irrelevant Ode to the Deity in verse. The sixth and last book opens with the return of Apollos, Joseph's long-lost tutor, who relates his adventures, among them a very lively account of an escape from pirates. This is succeeded by a ponderous continuation on the part of old Jacob of the discourse which his summons to the Council had interrupted, supplemented by an edifying homily from Joseph.

The main narrative is resumed by an account of the death of Alcimus, who, though forgiven, is full of remorse for the frailties of his youth. However, like his fellow sinner Theophrastus, he makes a good end, thanks to the pious administrations of Joseph. Apollos, who proves himself quite as long-winded as old Jacob, again interrupts the story by holding forth on the Sabbath, on public worship,

on prayer, on religious ritual, on fanatics, on the sacraments. And now things have to be set straight for those estimable young men Eugenius and Politian, who though they have the grace to be ashamed of their feuds on the subject of the Daughter of Zion, the fair Anna, "still find the flame of desire burning in their breasts." However, it luckily happened that Anna had a twin-sister Joanna, so like her that the one was scarcely distinguishable from the other. It was therefore, so naïvely argues the author, of little moment which went to which, so Anna is assigned to Politian and Joanna to Eugenius. The young ladies had not been consulted in this arrangement, but finding themselves betrothed to comely lovers, "soon began to feel love's ardent passion, and burned with mutual fires." The only cloud on the approaching festivity is the sudden and inexplicable collapse of Joseph in unutterable despair, which Apollos uncomfortably and somewhat unsatisfactorily explains as "God's doing and marvellous in our eyes." However, this is soon succeeded by an equally inexplicable ecstasy of joy, in which happy state the day appointed for the double marriage finds him. It is a day of civic pomp and glory, for it is the day of the annual festival in honour of the restoration of the city, besides being the anniversary of the day on which Politian's eyes first rested on his bride. "At a later hour the wedding festivals were continued in Jacob's house, and there Joseph distributed to the guests copies of a sacred wedding song he had recently composed." And with this wedding song, which finds expression in nine different metres, the Romance concludes.

To the second impression was appended what the author calls an "Autocriticon," apologizing for the many imperfections of the work, inviting criticism, and promising, if the public verdict should be favourable, to revise and continue what he had begun.

"The Author," so runs, in Mr. Begley's version, the concluding paragraph, "had a special desire, seeing that his work was such a novel and daring institute, to hear the judgements that others passed on his attempts before he bestowed further pains on them himself; for he is by no means unconscious how adverse the spirit or fate of this age is to any strict repression of the carnal life, or to any endeavour to bring into favour the higher spiritual faculties, as is here assayed. If it should turn out thoroughly distasteful to the public, he will not proceed further with a superfluous book. If it should meet with approbation, he will be encouraged to go on, and, paying due attention to what the critics may say of the present work, will proceed to bring this imperfect sketch into a more finished picture."

II

Such is the work which Mr. Begley would have us suppose was written by Milton, partly while he was still at Cambridge and partly during his residence at Horton, in other words between about 1628 and 1639, and which his friend Hartlib persuaded him to publish in 1648. It may be fully conceded that, on a superficial view, Mr. Begley's theory is a most plausible one. If Milton ever, as a young man, wrote a prose romance, *Nova Solyma* is, in some respects, just the sort of romance which we should have expected from him. We have his note in its mingled voluptuousness and purity, in its treat-

ment of the passion of love, and in its conception of the relation of that passion to physical and spiritual life. He has himself told us that he delighted in romantic fictions,[1] and we know that he was conversant with many of the works which have contributed to the plot and coloured the narrative generally of this romance. To its composition, but I say this with much reserve in reference to the verses, he was, of course, as a scholar, quite equal. But the moment serious scrutiny begins, the improbability of Milton having had any hand in it becomes at once apparent, and, as we proceed, improbability soon passes into impossibility. The arguments in favour of the Miltonic authorship simply resolve themselves into what I have just stated, into that and nothing more. The rest of the evidence, external and internal, against the Miltonic authorship is so overwhelming and conclusive that we feel the case closes before half of it is adduced.

In the first place there is absolutely nothing, either in contemporary or subsequent tradition, to connect this work with Milton. Milton has himself given us the fullest particulars about his studies and his writings, but has said nothing about his being engaged in this or in any similar fiction. His nephew, Phillips, has given an elaborate account of his occupations and a complete list of his writings, but is silent about it; Hartlib, to whom the Tractate on Education was addressed, though he mentions Sadler's *Olbia* and was himself the author of a political romance, is equally silent about it. No

[1] *An Apology for Smectymnuus*, Prose Works, ed. Bohn, p. 81.

rumour of Milton's association with such a work ever reached the restless and insatiable curiosity of Aubrey. There is nothing in Milton's collections bearing on it; there is no passage in his correspondence or in any of his voluminous writings which can be tortured into a reference to it. We have seen how elaborately it treats of education, and of the education of children; but in his Tractate to Hartlib, written in 1644, he distinctly says that he had not written on the subject before, and, what is still more remarkable, goes out of his way to say that in treating of education he "had not begun, as some have done, at the cradle, which might yet be worth many considerations."[1] And yet, according to Mr. Begley, he had this work in his desk to publish it four years later. Of such disingenuousness Milton was absolutely incapable. Nor was he a man to suppress what he had written. Is it credible that he would have given to the world in 1643 such inferior verses as the *In Quintum Novembris* and others of his *Juvenilia*, when he had in MS. such poems as abound in *Nova Solyma*, or that, in the very last year of his life, he would deliberately have put in the printer's hands a collection of his college exercises, the *Prolusiones Oratoriae*, and concealed the authorship of compositions which would have done him, as he must have well known, infinitely more honour as a scholar? Take again the *Autocriticon* appended to *Nova Solyma*. Is it credible that Milton in 1648, in all the stress of the work in which he was then engaged, could have meditated the continuation of such a romance? Nay, need we go any further

[1] *Tractate*, Prose Works, ed. Bohn, pp. 88 and 102.

than the appeal to public opinion? Imagine Milton, at any time in his life, deferentially assuring his readers that their verdict would decide whether he abandoned or whether he went on with what he had in hand!

But to pass from probabilities to facts. A comparison of Milton's known opinions and views on important subjects with those expressed in the Romance would alone be conclusive against Mr. Begley's theory. The theory and practice of education prescribed in *Nova Solyma* differ in many essential particulars from what is inculcated in the *Tractate*. The one is largely concerned with the training of young children, the other ignores it. The one subordinates intellectual to moral discipline, the other subordinates moral to intellectual. The one recognizes the importance of equipping young citizens for mercantile and mechanical pursuits, the other turns from such aims with aristocratic contempt. The one attaches the greatest importance to composition both in prose and verse, the other discourages such exercises. In *Nova Solyma* no stress is laid on the importance of mathematics and natural science as factors in education; in the *Tractate* they are especially prescribed and emphasized. It is quite clear that the author of *Nova Solyma* was familiar and in sympathy with the theories of Comenius. Milton distinctly and rudely tells Hartlib that he had not troubled himself to explore them. "To search what many Januas and Didactics more than ever I shall read, have projected my inclination leads me not," are his words.[1] Again;

[1] *Tractate*, Works, Bohn, p. 98.

Mr. Begley admits, what is indeed sufficiently obvious, that the author of *Nova Solyma* held Arian views. Whatever opinions Milton may have had in later life, and in later life he was undoubtedly an Arian, nothing is more certain than that in all his writings up to 1660 he was not only perfectly orthodox but spoke of Arianism with abhorrence. In his *Of Reformation in England*, he describes the Arians "as no true friends of Christ";[1] in his treatise of *Prelatical Episcopacy*, he describes them as "unfaithful expounders of Scripture";[2] in his *Animadversions on the Remonstrant's Defence*, he speaks of the necessity of restraining the Arians from "infecting the people by their hymns and forms of prayer."[3] In all his writings indeed, from the *Hymn on the Morning of Christ's Nativity* to his treatise on a Free Commonwealth published in 1660, his anti-Arianism finds most emphatic expression. This argument would alone be conclusive against the identity of the authorship of the *Nova Solyma* and of Milton's writings previous to 1660.

Take again the question of divorce and polygamy. The author of *Nova Solyma* is emphatic on the indissolubility of the marriage tie. If, he says, you make a mistake in wedlock you must abide by it, and to polygamy he is so adverse that he does not so much as recognize it.[4] Compare this with the theories and contentions in Milton's divorce treatises and with what he says in the Treatise on the Christian Doctrine: "It appears to me sufficiently established

[1] Works, Bohn, p. 9.
[2] *Id.*, p. 26.
[3] *Id.*, p. 60.
[4] *Nov. Soly.*, Bk. vi, ch. viii of Mr. Begley's version.

that polygamy is allowed by the law of God,"[1] and let us ask ourselves whether it is within the bounds of credibility that he would, in 1648, have deliberately published views so diametrically opposed to the views which, as is notorious, he was fanatically bent on disseminating. There are many other serious discrepancies on points which to Milton were of capital importance. One example will probably suffice. Milton, as is well known, and as he has himself elaborately argued in the Treatise on the Christian Doctrine, believed that after death both body and soul remained in a state of suspended vitality till the Day of Judgement.[2] "The grave," he says in one place, "is the common guardian of all till the Day of Judgement";[3] in another, "There is no recompense of good or bad previous to the Day of Judgement."[4] In *Nova Solyma* there is no such theory, the soul being represented as passing at once, on leaving the body, into Heaven.

We pass now to the evidence on which, as Mr. Begley justly observes, his case must chiefly stand or fall, and on which he naturally lays most stress —the evidence afforded by the Latinity. We must all be so grateful to Mr. Begley for the discovery of this most interesting work that it is with unfeigned regret that I am obliged to comment on the evidence and arguments with which he supports his theory with unpleasant frankness. A more amazing tissue of ignorance and audacious sophistry probably no critic has ever had to unravel than what we find in

[1] On the Christian Doctrine, Bk. i, ch. x, Sumner's Translation, p. 241.

[2] *Id.*, Bk. i, chap. xii.

[3] *Id.*, p. 290.

[4] *Id.*, p. 293.

Mr. Begley's dissertations and notes. Mr. Begley's method is to ignore the rich and voluminous Latin literature preceding and contemporary with Milton, to seize on peculiarities common to the Latinity of Milton's acknowledged writings and to that of *Nova Solyma*, and then proceed to the deduction that they could only have come from the same author. He has, for example, a special dissertation on the shortening of the "i" in "Britones" and its inflexions, pointing out that it occurs twice in Milton's Latin poems and in *Nova Solyma*, for the purpose of drawing as his corollary that those Latin poems and the *Nova Solyma* must have come from the same hand. As if it was not habitual in the Latin poetry of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries! It occurs six times in Tolmer's *Naumachiae*, twice in Cowley's *Plantarum Libri*, twice in Newton's *Encomia*; it occurs in Ascham's poem to Elizabeth, in Phineas Fletcher's *Locustae*, in May's supplement to Lucan, and in innumerable other Latin poems. Next we are treated to another "proof" in the shortening of the vowels "e" and "a" before "sp," "sc," "sm," and "st," while one instance from Buchanan is paraded as affording a parallel to the same extraordinary anomaly. Why, such licences are habitual, as Mr. Begley must or ought to know, in every British Latin poet of those times; at least twenty instances occur in Buchanan; there are twelve in a comparatively short poem like Fletcher's *Locustae*; there are six in the comparatively few Latin poems of Marvell; Cowley teems with them; and they are to be found by scores in the poems included in the *Deliciae Poetarum Scotorum*, and in the Anthology edited by

Lauder. Indeed, till Dawes, commenting on the well-known passage in Terentianus Maurus (*De Syllabis*, v. 1058 *seqq.*), formulated his canon, modern Latin poets do not seem to have been aware of the inadmissibility of this collocation in serious poetry. Mr. Begley's qualifications for discussing the subject may be judged from what he says in his note on p. 283 of his second volume. He actually asserts that this solecism in metre is found "seven times in Virgil," and "nineteen times" in Ovid. In Virgil there is exactly one instance, *Aen.* xi, 309, where it is explained by the caesural pause, if indeed the rest of the line is not spurious. The other two are in the *Culex* and the *Ciris*, the *Ciris* most certainly not being written by Virgil, the *Culex*, if written by him, being a very early work; and in both cases, it may be added, the text is unsound. Where it appears to occur in Ovid the text, as every scholar knows, is corrupt, there being only two instances which can be fairly cited against the canon, "olentia strigis," *Ep. Pont.*, II, x, 25, and "hebetare smaragdis," *Am.*, II, vi, 21, and there the right reading might be "maragdis," as one MS. in the other instance where the word occurs, *Met.*, II, 24, actually has, which leaves Ovid with exactly one instance.

Then we are treated to an elaborate dissertation on the form "Belgia" for "Belgium," one of Mr. Begley's "trump cards," to employ his own phrase. Can Mr. Begley possibly be ignorant that the form "Belgia" was the form ordinarily used by the Elizabethan and post-Elizabethan writers, being found not merely in Shakespeare and Marston, as he notes, but in Marlowe, in Greene, in Peele, in Lyly,

in Ben Jonson, in Donne, in Chapman, in Drayton, and in dozens of others? It is noticeable that, though Spenser in personifying Belgium in the *Faerie Queene* calls it "Belge," in his prose treatise he uses the form "Belgia."[1] Indeed, it is the exception to find it called anything else. Another astonishing piece of evidence which Mr. Begley presses into his service is what he calls "the Miltonic ūnĭcŭique" (!), citing the supposed occurrence of it in *Nova Solyma* and in Milton's epigram on Leonora, "Angelus unicuique suus, sic credite gentes." It is scarcely necessary to say that in both cases it is, what it always is in classical Latin poetry, a spondee, not a dactyl, the shortening of the "i" being a literal impossibility, as Mr. Begley must surely know. Another of Mr. Begley's "trump cards" is the repeated occurrence of the adverb "undequaque" in *Nova Solyma*, and its inclusion in the Cambridge Latin-English Dictionary, 1693, which, as Mr. Begley exultingly observes, "absorbed Milton's MS. collection," a word which is not classical, and which is not recognized "in the great Latin dictionaries of the present day." Because it is included in a Dictionary "which absorbed Milton's MS. collection," Mr. Begley circuitously argues that Milton must have been acquainted with the word. As it is of such frequent occurrence in *Nova Solyma* it would have been more to the point had Mr. Begley cited an instance of its use in Milton's somewhat voluminous Latin writings. Mr. Begley is evidently one of those comfortable scholars who rely on that which

[1] *View of the State of Ireland*, Todd's Spenser, 1 vol. ed., p. 517.

Turns no student pale,
But holds the eel of science by the tail.

If, instead of relying on dictionaries, he were conversant with the Latinity of the Renaissance and the succeeding age he would have known that it is of frequent occurrence. Linacre in his *De Emendatâ Structurâ* gives it a place among the compounds of "unde." It is found at least four times in Barclay's *Argenis* and *Euphormion*; it is a favourite word with Bacon, occurring twice in the *Praefatio* to the *De Augmentis* alone, and at least twice, probably oftener, in the body of the work; in Hobbes it occurs over and over again.

But to continue; of the fifteen "uncommon words" enumerated by Mr. Begley from the *Nova Solyma* we find exactly two in Milton's acknowledged writings, and these two, "quaestiuncula" and "stellula," of common occurrence in the Latin of the seventeenth century, the second occurring twice, and probably oftener, in Cowley alone, and the first simply as often as it is appropriate.

Mr. Begley's excursus and notes on the evidence to be adduced from identities in the Latinity of the *Nova Solyma* and in that of Milton's acknowledged writings are almost too ridiculous to be examined, and betray an ignorance of the characteristics of sixteenth and seventeenth century Latinity which is nothing short of astounding. Finding, for example, in the Armada fragment the repetition

Non *arma* Philippi
Arma minasque, etc.,

he tells us that this is "very Miltonic," and quotes two instances, one from *Elegy*, iii, 47, 48:

Serpit odoriferas per opes levis *aura* Favoni
Aura sub innumeris humida nata rosis,

and one from *Nova Solyma*:

Frustra recordor *oscula* et amplexus tuos
Oscula quae volucres diripuere notae.

But such repetitions are not only commonplaces in the ancient classical poets, as every scholar knows, but teem in the Latin poets of the Renaissance and post-Renaissance ages. We open Buchanan's *Elegies* almost at random and find (*Elegy* vii):

et *aurea* plectra
*Aurea*que hoc merito judice dicta Venus,

and again, *Elegy* iii:

et verbis *oscula* jungit:
Oscula dum jungit, etc.

But illustrations are superfluous. On a par with this is the following. "*Quin*, too, is often used in *Nova Solyma* at the beginning of a sentence, and the same practice occurs three or four times in Milton's youthful poems." As if "quin" does not constantly open sentences in the best Latin Classics where the style is colloquial! Why, even in the most serious compositions it is habitually used at the beginning of sentences by nearly all the writers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Nothing is more common. To give two examples which at once occur to us: in the first book of More's *Utopia* it opens sentences six times, and in the first book of Bacon's *De Augmentis* eight, its occurrence in this context being as relatively frequent in dozens of other writers! This will probably suffice to show the value of Mr. Begley's argument from analogies

of diction. Equally futile, it may be added, is the argument adduced from the alleged fondness of Milton for diminutives, and the unusually frequent use of them in the *Nova Solyma*. Diminutives were equally affected by dozens of writers, both in verse and prose, from Ausonius to Cowley; and Milton, unfortunately for Mr. Begley, in his own Latin poetry studiously avoids them, the only instances being, if I am not mistaken, "tenellus" (*El.* iv and vi), "novellus" (*El.* v), "catillus" (*El.* vi), "areola" (*Apol. de Rust.*), "capsula" (*In Salm.*), "gemellus" (*De Idea Plat.* and *Ad Joannem Rousium*), "fiscella" (*Epitap. Dam.*), "libellus" (*Ad Joannem Rousium*), diminutives, it may be added, of a very different order to those so commonly found in the *Nova Solyma*.

A comparison of Milton's Latin poems with the poems in the *Nova Solyma* is conclusive against identity of authorship. To go no further than poems which are in some respects parallel. The author of the hexameters on the Fifth of November and in the *Epitaphium Damonis* could not possibly have been the author of the hexameters in the *Philippica* and in the Hymn to the Higher Love. The norm of the rhythm in Milton's best hexameters is Ovidian, of those in *Nova Solyma*, Virgilian or rather Claudianic. Again, in Milton's Alcaics and in those of *Nova Solyma* there are essential differences; nor, with the exception of the conventional metres, is there the remotest analogy between Milton's metres and those employed in the Romance.

Mr. Begley attempts—and it is not a creditable stratagem—in supporting his theory, to throw dust

in the eyes of unlearned readers by representing Milton as pre-eminent among the Latin poets of the seventeenth century, and as therefore being alone competent to produce the poems in *Nova Solyma.* The truth is that as a Latin poet Milton is hardly in the front rank of the Latin poets of his age.[1] To go no further than Great Britain. In fluency, flexibility, and skill, he is far inferior in hexameters to Henry Anderson, to Alexander Ross, to Andrew Ramsay, to Alexander Boyd, to Phineas Fletcher, and to May; in Elegiacs to David Hume and Arthur Johnston; in Lyrics to Robert Boyd, to Crichton, to Barclay, and even to Cowley.[2] And these poets are typical of scores of others only slightly inferior

[1] His Latin verses have most serious defects. The habitual shortening of vowels before "sc," "st," and "sp," is a fault which he shares in common with his contemporaries; but the shortening of "a" in "paruere" (*Sylv.* ii, 165), the shortening of "is" in "sentis" (*Sylv.* vii, 3), and of "es" in "alipes" (*El.* ii, 14); the use of "surdeat" (*El.* vii, 90), a word which does not exist in Classical Latinity, the use of "ocellus" instead of "oculus," where an image of terror is associated with it (*In Quintum Novembris*, 145), the use of a dative after "supereminere" (*El.* vii, 61) and "licent" in the sense of "licet" (*El.* vi. 53); the violation, no less than eighteen times in forty-nine lines, of the rule which requires in choliambics an iambus in the fifth foot, are great flaws. See Bishop Wordsworth on Milton's Latin poetry, *Classical Review*, vol. i, p. 136, and Landor, *Southey and Landor*, Works, Ed. 1868, vol. ii, pp. 171-173.

[2] Dr. Johnson, and no one in this matter, for it is not a question of niceties, could be a more competent judge, considers Cowley and May to be superior in Latin verse to Milton. "If the Latin performances of Cowley and Milton be compared (for May I hold to be superior to both), the advantage seems to lie on the side of Cowley."—Life of Cowley, *Works*, Murphy, vol. iii, p. 156.

to them. It may be safely said that between 1621 and 1648 there were many and very many scholars in Great Britain quite competent to produce the verses in *Nova Solyma*. But Milton, judging from what he has left us, was not. Of the metres employed in the Romance which are also employed by Milton he has, it may be added, left no examples distinguished by analogous characteristics, while of at least fourteen of them he has left no examples at all. And what applies to the verse applies to the prose. If Milton wrote *Nova Solyma* he must by Mr. Begley's own admission have written it at, or shortly after, the time he composed the *Prolusiones Oratoriae*. Whoever will take the trouble to compare the Latinity and prose style of these exercises with the Latinity and prose style of the Romance, even where the similar exercises in it invite comparison, will at once recognize not merely the improbability, but the impossibility of supposing that they could have come from the same pen.

Nor are the poems in the *Nova Solyma*, as Mr. Begley contends, in any way original or Miltonic compositions. The *Philippica* is plainly modelled on Fletcher's *Locustae*; the Hymn to the higher love as well as the *Canticum Sacrum* quoted on p. 296 of vol. ii are simply echoes of the many expanded imitations of Virgil's Sabian hymn to Hercules, to be found in Vida and many other Christian Latin poets. Indeed, they are plainly modelled on Vida's *Hymni De Rebus Divinis*. The numerous lyrics are modelled partly on Buchanan's and partly on the *Poemata Sacra* of Georgius Fabricius, who has, if I am not mistaken, anticipated almost every variety of metre

employed in the Romance, and with the influence of whose lyrics its lyrics are simply saturated.

Mr. Begley's case, indeed, breaks down on every point. The metrical peculiarities which he cites as instances of Milton's careful study of Virgil find, without exception, far more striking illustration in the hexameters of Vida and Sannazarius and of innumerable other Latin poets of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In the parallels and analogies with which his volumes are loaded, he confounds what are mere commonplaces in the writings of Milton's contemporaries with what was peculiar to Milton himself, and as corroborative testimony they simply amount to nothing.

How, then, stands the case? While there is not an iota of external evidence to warrant the ascription of the Romance to Milton, the internal evidence is as conclusive as it is possible for such evidence to be against any such assumption. The author, whoever he was, was a young man of the Puritan persuasion, who was an excellent classical scholar, conversant with the Latin and English romances current in his time, well read in divinity and philosophy, with not much originality, and saturated with the Latin poetry and prose of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. And can we doubt, nay, have we not testimony, that many such young men were to to be found both in Scotland and in England at the time this Romance was written?

I repeat, we are indebted to Mr. Begley both for the discovery of a work of singular interest as well as for having presented it in a most attractive shape. His translation, whatever exception may sometimes

be taken to its renderings of the original, is lively and pleasing. His prolegomena, dissertations and notes, are full of curious and entertaining information. What is to be regretted is that so much allowance should have to be made for defects, probably due to the necessity for a sophistical defence of a preconceived theory absolutely untenable.

LONGINUS AND GREEK CRITICISM [1]

I

IN all the history of literature, there is surely nothing so extraordinary as the fortunes of this treatise. The silence of antiquity about a work so brilliant, so original, and so essentially unlike anything in extant Greek criticism, and about a writer who produced, as he himself tells us, other treatises, presumably of a similar kind, and who must, therefore, have been a man of note among his contemporaries; the difficulty involved in ascribing it to him; the difficulty involved in ascribing it to anyone else; the homage paid so unsuspiciously for upwards of two centuries and a half to the critic to whom it had been so confidently assigned; his sudden dethronement at the beginning of the present century, and the relegation of the treatise to anonymity; the strange vicissitudes through which its reputation has passed; its enormous popularity between about 1674 and 1790; the comparative oblivion into which it seems to have fallen during the revolutionary

[1] (1) *Longinus on the Sublime.* The Greek Text, edited after the Paris Manuscript, with introduction, translation, facsimiles, and appendices. By W. Rhys Roberts, M.A., Cambridge: at the University Press.

(2) *Longinus on the Sublime.* Translated into English by H. L. Havell, B.A. With an introduction by Andrew Lang. London, Macmillan and Co.

period; the increasing favour with which it is beginning to be regarded now; the voluminous critical literature which has gathered round it, not merely in the form of editorial exegesis and commentary, but in the form of independent disquisitions, monographs, and translations; the extraordinary influence which it has, in different degrees and at different periods, exercised on men of letters and on popular *belles lettres*; the not less extraordinary indifference with which, though the delight of scholars, it has been, and still is, treated by the Universities and by those who regulate liberal education in England — all this gives the *Treatise on the Sublime* a unique place in literary history and invests it with curious interest. And its importance is equal to its interest. With the single exception of the *Poetics* it has probably had more influence on criticism, both directly and indirectly, than any work in the world.

The high appreciation in which it has been held by every civilized country in Europe is sufficiently indicated by the number of editions and translations through which it has passed.

The *editio princeps* appeared at Basle in 1554; in the following year Paulus Manutius issued a second edition at Venice; then came a third with a Latin version at Geneva, and in 1612 a fourth at the same place. An English scholar of some distinction, whose name is well-known to students of our drama, Gerald Langbaine, followed with an edition printed in 1636 at Oxford, and twice reprinted before 1651. Then came, between 1643 and 1694, editions at Venice, at Bonn, at Saumur, at Utrecht, among them

memorable one of Tollius. In 1710 John Hudson, a respectable scholar, who succeeded Hyde as Bodley's librarian, issued an edition, based on that of Tollius, which was four times reprinted, and in 1724 Zachary Pearce an edition of which there were no less than seven issues between 1724 and 1773. Wetstein edited in 1733 an edition at Amsterdam, which was in 1751 and 1763 reproduced at Glasgow, and in 1756 at Frankfort; to say nothing of editions by Tannegui Lefevre, by Le Clerc, by Heinecken, by Gori, by Morus, by Robinson, by Schlosser, by Bodoni, culminating in 1778 in the epoch-making work of Toup, twice reprinted within a few years. Nor has the nineteenth century been less fruitful in its scholarly tributes to the elucidation of the "Libellus vere aureus," as Casaubon enthusiastically called it. For between the appearance of Weiske's edition in 1809 and that of Professor Rhys Roberts there have been at least ten. Scarcely less numerous have been the translations.

To say nothing of the nine versions in Latin, it was translated into Italian by Pinelli in the seventeenth century, by Gori in the eighteenth, Gori's version having been reprinted by most of the chief presses in Italy, and by Fiocchi, Accio, Tipaldo, and Canna in the last century. Boileau may be said to have naturalized it in France, and between 1674 and 1780 probably no book in *belles lettres* was so frequently reprinted as his version. But Boileau is not the only French translator. In 1775 Boileau had a successor in Lancelot, and Lancelot has had successors in M. Pujol and in Professor Vaucher. The Treatise has never been so popular in Germany

as in Italy, France, and England, and yet it has appeared in German at least four times, in 1737, in 1774, in 1781, and in 1895. Into Dutch it has been three times translated, into Spanish three times. It has appeared also in Portuguese, in Swedish, in Polish, in Russian, and in Modern Greek.

But in no country have translations been so numerous as in our own. The first to present the work in an English dress was William Hall, a friend of Hobbes and a distinguished Cambridge scholar. Hall's version, which is dedicated to Whitelock, was published in 1652. Though somewhat too free, and frequently inaccurate, it is racy and vigorous, and on the whole superior to any version—and I have compared them all—anterior to the present century. The next version, by one J. Pulteney, which appeared twenty-eight years afterwards, was from the French of Boileau. Then came in 1698 an anonymous translation published at Oxford, and purporting to be from the Greek, with which however it has as little concern as its less pretentious predecessor. The name of this person's successor, Leonard Welsted, will be familiar to the readers of the *Dunciad*.

> Flow, Welsted, flow, like thine inspirer, beer,
> Though stale, not ripe, though thin, yet never clear,
> So sweetly mawkish and so smoothly dull,
> Heady, not strong; o'erflowing, through not full.[1]

Welsted professes to translate from the Greek; it is perfectly plain that if he has travelled further than the French it has only been to the Latin; his version, both in point of style and in point of scholarship, is in truth below contempt. It is mortifying to know

[1] Book iii, ll. 170-4.

that what would probably have been the most important contribution to the literature of Longinus in the eighteenth century has been lost. We learn from Oldisworth's notice of Edmund Smith, inserted in Johnson's *Life* of that unhappy scholar, that Smith had completed a translation of the *Sublime*, and was proceeding with an elaborate commentary, a part of which he had finished.[1] Smith, though a man of depraved and dissipated character, was an excellent classic, besides being well versed in English, Italian, French, and Spanish, and it was, we are told, his intention to illustrate his author's remarks on the virtues and vices of style by examples drawn from writers in all those literatures. In 1739 appeared the most popular of all the English translations of Longinus. This was the work of William Smith, afterwards Dean of Chester, a very accomplished man, who also translated Thucydides. It is little more than a loose paraphrase of Zachary Pearce's Latin version, just then greatly in vogue, and has no pretension to exact scholarship. But, addressed to "the mere English reader," it gave that reader exactly what he wanted. Indeed it may be said of it, as was said of Pope's *Homer*, that it has every merit except that of fidelity to the original. We must, however, do Smith the justice to acknowledge that as a rule, thanks no doubt to Pearce, he renders the general sense and drift even of the most difficult passages with some approach to correctness. Wherever *belles lettres* were studied Smith's version became a standard book, and it would not perhaps be too much to say that he made Longinus an English classic.

[1] See *Life of Smith*, Johnson's Works, Ed. Murphy, vol. iii, 498-499.

The seven editions through which his work passed between the date of its appearance and the end of the century sufficiently attest its popularity. But the success of Smith did not deter another scholar from aspiring to rival him, and in 1751 a Fellow of Saint John's College, Oxford, one Thomas Weales, issued proposals for a new translation with notes and a commentary,[1] though the project seems to have collapsed. But Weales had many other more fortunate successors. Longinus found another translator at Dublin in 1821 and another at Oxford in 1830, both anonymous.

Six years afterwards appeared the first translation which has any pretension to exact scholarship, that, namely, by William Tylney Spurdens. Spurdens, of whom I know nothing more than what can be gathered from his book, tells us that it was his ambition to do for the Treatise what Twining had done for Aristotle's *Poetics*. He is very far from being Twining's equal, either as a scholar or as a critic, but he produced a work for which all students of Longinus had reason to be grateful. His translation is on the whole excellent, and if his scholarship is not unimpeachable it seldom leads him far astray, and he often catches, as few translators have done, the nerve and spirit of his original. His dissertations, commentaries, and notes are full of instruction and interest, and deserve far more attention than they appear to have received from his successors. It is difficult to account for the neglect into which this useful book has fallen. Spurdens was followed in 1867 by Mr. T. R. R. Stebbing, and Stebbing in

[1] Rawl. MSS. J, fol. 5, in the Bodleian Library.

1870 by Mr. H. A. Giles. But the long dynasty of those who paid the sincerest of all tributes to an ancient master did not close here. In 1890 Mr. H. L. Havell published a version which may fairly be said to supersede all its predecessors, not simply because it is based, as no other had been based, on a sound text, but because it is in itself at once scholarly and popularly attractive. Lastly comes Professor Rhys Roberts, of whose work I propose to speak presently.

The influence of a poem or of a work of fiction is not always to be measured by its popularity, but the popularity of a purely didactic treatise is a fair criterion of its power. No one but a serious reader would be likely to take up Longinus, either in the original or in a translation, and it may be safely said that very few would be likely to lay him down without being in some degree, and perhaps unconsciously, affected by what they read. What Swift observed of books generally, that they give the same tone to our mind as good company gives to our air and manners, is particularly applicable to this treatise. It is essentially noble; it is inspiring, it is elevating, it is illumining; it taught criticism a new language, it breathed into it a new soul. In estimating, therefore, the influence which it has exercised on modern literature we should greatly underrate the importance of that influence if we submitted it to definite tests. We must take into consideration the immense vogue which its bibliographical record proves it to have had, and the silent effect which it must inevitably have had.

The Treatise was first brought into prominence

by Boileau and the French critics towards the end of the seventeenth century. Before that time it had not travelled beyond the libraries of scholars. Its very existence was unknown to the world till Robortello printed it in 1554, for the supposed reference to it by John of Sicily, a commentator on Hermogenes, who lived about the beginning of the thirteenth century, is too vague and ambiguous to warrant any certain conclusion to the contrary. Even after it had been printed and reprinted it seems to have attracted no notice popularly, either in England or in France. No allusions are to be found to it in our Elizabethan writers. It was plainly unknown to Ascham, to Sidney, to Meeres, to Webbe, to Puttenham, and even to Ben Jonson. Nor during the first half of the next century did it make any way. Milton, indeed, in his *Tractate on Education*, gives Longinus a place among those philosophers and rhetoricians who should be studied as models of expression. But it may be doubted whether he was familiar with him. He never, if we are not mistaken, quotes him, nor can we find any certain indication either in his poems or in his prose-writings of knowledge of the Treatise. That Milton should not have been attracted by a work so noble is certainly surprising, and it is just possible that he may have been indebted to it for the hint of two of his sublimest passages. The comparison of Satan to the sun shorn of his beams may have been a reminiscence of the comparison of the Homer of the Odyssey to "a sinking sun whose grandeur remains without its intensity,"[1] and the sublime image in the line

[1] *De Sublim.*, ix, 13.

Dark with excessive light thy skirts appear,

may be a reminiscence of a passage in the seventeenth section, Τίνι γὰρ ἐνταῦθ' ὁ ῥήτωρ ἀπέκρυψε το σχῆμα; δῆλον ὅτι τῷ φωτὶ αὐτῷ.

By what means has the orator concealed the figure? clearly by the very excess of light.[1]

Though Hobbes had paid special attention to rhetoric, and even published a treatise on it,[2] he makes no mention of Longinus; and though Butler has, in more than one poem, ridiculed the fashionable cant about Aristotle and Greek criticism, he does not make the faintest reference to the *Treatise on the Sublime*. But the moment Boileau's version appeared in 1674 attention was at once turned to this neglected critic, and, in less than three years, the name of Longinus was on the lips of every man of letters on both sides of the Channel. Boileau's preface to his translation was admirable, and appealed equally to the general reader and to the scholar. Here, it said in effect, is a critic even greater than Aristotle, here a master at whose feet every man of taste should be proud to sit. All that constitutes the charm and power of the Treatise could not, indeed, have been interpreted with more eloquence and discrimination.

No doubt the association of Longinus with a controversy which made a great noise at that time contributed to his celebrity. Charles Perrault and his faction, who, in the contest between the Ancients and Moderns, led the attack against the Ancients, had lately been speaking very disrespectfully of

[1] *De Sublim.*, xvii, 2.

[2] This appeared as a supplement to his abstract of Aristotle's *Rhetoric*.

Homer and Pindar, and Boileau, in some Reflections appended to a sixth edition of his translation—"Réflexions Critiques sur quelques Passages du Rhéteur Longin"—brought Longinus to their rescue, and to the rescue of their brethren.

Thus Longinus at last took his place with Aristotle at the head of criticism. Fénélon, indeed, even preferred him to the master who had so long reigned without a rival.

The parallel which Fénélon draws between the *Rhetoric* and the *Treatise on the Sublime* expresses so exactly the estimate formed of the work in France, besides indicating the nature of the effect which it had on French literature, that it may be well to transcribe the most important portion of it. It is to be found in the first of his *Dialogues sur l'Eloquence*:

> Je ne crains pas de dire qu'il [Longinus] surpasse à mon gré la Rhétorique d'Aristotle. Cette Rhétorique, quoique très belle, a beaucoup de préceptes secs et plus curieux qu'utiles dans la pratique . . . Mais le Sublime de Longin joint aux préceptes beaucoup d'exemples qui les rendent sensibles. Cet auteur traite le sublime d'une manière sublime; . . . il échauffe l'imagination, il élève l'esprit du lecteur, il lui forme le goût, et lui apprend à distinguer judicieusement le bien et le mal dans les orateurs célèbres de l'antiquité.

Not less enthusiastic is Rollin, who insists that Longinus should be made a text-book wherever rhetoric is taught, and speaks of the Treatise as that "admirable traité," which is "seul capable de former le goût des jeunes gens."[1] Between the end of the

[1] *De la Manière d'Enseigner et d'Etudier les Belles Lettres*, vol. ii, p. 69. He draws largely on Longinus throughout the work.

seventeenth and the middle of the eighteenth century allusions to Longinus and quotations from the *Sublime* abound in French literature; and the influence which he exercised may be judged from the frequency with which we find his characteristic sentiments, as well as direct references to him, appearing and reappearing in sermons and in *Eloges*.

In England he became equally influential. Walton, in his *Reflections on Ancient and Modern Learning*," says that, with Demosthenes, Tully, and Quintilian, he was studied by all who would write finely in prose.[1] Dryden, who pronounced him to be "undoubtedly, after Aristotle, the greatest critic among the Greeks," confessed himself to be his disciple. "Aristotle," he says, in his *Apology for Heroic Poetry*, "and his interpreters, and Horace, and Longinus, are the authors to whom I owe my lights." And no author is more frequently quoted by him. Whoever would understand how much Dryden owed to Longinus would do well to turn to the preface to *Troilus and Cressida*, to the preface to the *State of Innocence*, and to the *Apology for Heroic Poetry*. To Addison he was "that great critic"; and the care with which he had studied him is abundantly clear from the frequency with which he quotes and appeals to him. The germ, and indeed more than the germ, of the most eloquent papers Addison ever wrote, those on the pleasures of the imagination, was derived from the twenty-fifth section of the *Sublime*.[2] Indeed, all Addison's

[1] See second edition of *Reflections*, p. 23.

[2] See particularly the second paper, *Spectator*, No. 412.

criticism, and particularly his aesthetic, is coloured by the Treatise. Pope's lines are well known:

> Thee, bold Longinus! all the Nine inspire,
> And bless their critic with a poet's fire;
> An ardent judge who, zealous in his trust,
> With warmth gives sentence, yet is always just;
> Whose own example strengthens all his laws,
> And is himself that great Sublime he draws.[1]

There is nothing, it is true, in Pope's *Essay on Criticism* which he may not have borrowed from other sources than Longinus, and it is scarcely necessary to say that he probably could not construe a sentence of the Greek, but two English translations were at his service; and we may therefore fairly presume that when he expressed himself as he did in the lines just quoted, he expressed himself sincerely. It is perhaps rather in the tone of the *Essay* than in particular reminiscences that the influence of Longinus is discernible.[2] In the treatise on the *Bathos, or the Art in Sinking in Poetry*, the joint production of Pope and Swift, we have testimony of another kind to the popularity of our author, and certainly a curious commentary on the use to which a word seriously retained in the text may be applied.[3]

[1] *Essay on Criticism*, iii, 675-680.

[2] The parallels between the *Essay* and the Treatise appear to be: part i, 67-73, 84-91, 94-99, 134-135, 138, 150-155; part ii, 233-236, 243-246, 299-300, 318-321. The couplet in the *Temple of Fame*, describing Homer:

> A strong expression most he seem'd to affect,
> And here and there disclosed a brave neglect,

was plainly suggested by a similar remark in section xxxiii.

[3] See the commentators on the words εἰ ἔστιν ὕψους τις ἡ βάθους τέχνη in section ii.

But the cult of Longinus had now passed into a sort of cant, and we find Swift writing in his *Rhapsody on Poetry*:

> A forward critic often dupes us
> With sham quotations *peri hupsous*,
> And if we have not read Longinus
> Will magisterially outshine us.

But worthier homage was paid him, both then and afterwards, than that offered by fribbles and criticasters. The noblest passage, or perhaps it would be more correct to say the one noble passage, in Akenside's *Pleasures of Imagination*, is little more than a paraphrase of the thirty-fifth section of the *Sublime*,[1] while another fine passage in the third book is the expansion of a remark in the second section.[2] Throughout Akenside's poem we frequently indeed catch the note of Longinus. That Young had read him is clear from his *Conjectures on Original Composition*, where he quotes him,[3] and there can therefore be little doubt that what appear to be reminiscences of the Treatise in the *Night Thoughts* are not simply accidental, or derived from other sources. Take the following lines in Night IX. Pagan tutors taught, he says:

> That mind immortal loves immortal aims:
> That boundless mind affects a boundless space:
> That vast surveys and the sublime of things
> The soul assimilate, and make her great:
> That, therefore, heaven her glories, as a fund
> Of inspiration, thus spreads out to man.

[1] From l. 151, "Say, what was man," to l. 221, "close the scene," in book i.

[2] Cf. Longinus, ii, 2, compared with Akenside, book iii, 535 *et seqq.*

[3] Works, ed. 1774, vol. iv, p. 321.

This is little more than a summary of section thirty-five of the Treatise; and of that section, as well as of the forty-third, we are constantly reminded in *The Relapse* (Night V) and *The Infidel Reclaimed* (Night VII). In his *Resignation* (Part II, st. 46), he has in the couplet:

> Nothing is great of which more great,
> More glorious is the scorn—

little more than translated part of the opening sentence of section two of Longinus: εἰδέναι χρὴ διοτι, καθαπέρ κἀν τῷ κοινῷ βίῳ οὐδὲν ὑπάρχει μέγα, οὗ τὸ καταφρονεῖν ἔστι μέγα—"you must know that, just as in common life, nothing can be considered great which it is held great to despise."

That Goldsmith was a student of Longinus is plain from his Essays. He ranks him among "the most approved classics," and frequently quotes him;[1] and if the remarks on luxury and corruption in the *Traveller* and the *Deserted Village* need not be attributed to any reminiscences of the *Sublime*, they recall very closely similar remarks in the last section of it.

When Johnson was engaged on the *Lives of the Poets*, he set himself, as he has himself recorded, to read Longinus, and though he never, so far at least as I can discover, directly quotes him, he often, and very unmistakably, recalls him.

In his *Academic Discourses*, Sir Joshua Reynolds, if I recollect rightly, only once mentions Longinus; but, whether consciously or not, there is scarcely one of them in which he does not recall and recall closely

[1] See particularly the Essays on the *Cultivation of Taste* and on *Metaphors*.

the *De Sublimitate*. There is the same noble conception of the character and functions of art, of its relation to the divine, of its relation to nature, of the spirit in which its study should be approached and pursued. There is the same union of the critic and the enthusiast. He speaks of Michael Angelo precisely as Longinus speaks of Homer. His definition of the sublime, and his criteria for testing it, are identical with those of the Greek critic. If Reynolds had not studied Longinus with the greatest care and with the greatest sympathy, we can only assume that experience, reflection, and genius, operating on similar temperaments, had conducted both these critics independently to the same truths, and inspired them to express themselves in the same language. Longinus, for example, is speaking here:

> These arts in their highest province are not addressed to the gross senses, but to the desires of the mind, to that spark of divinity which we have within, impatient of being circumscribed and pent up by the world which is about us. Just so much as our Art has of this, just so much of dignity, I had almost said of divinity, it exhibits: and those of our artists who possessed this mark of distinction in the highest degree acquired from thence the glorious appellation of Divine.[1]

While in the remarks which he makes about the sublime in the Fourth Discourse, that "it impresses the mind *at once* with a great idea: *it is a single blow*; the Elegant, indeed, may be produced by repetition, by an accumulation of many minute circumstances," we have precisely what Longinus

[1] Discourse XIII (conclusion).

has expressed with so much more force and eloquence in the first section of his work:

> Similarly, skill in invention and the due order and disposition of material we see emerging by degrees not out of one or even out of two things, but out of the whole weft of a composition, whereas Sublimity, flashing out at the right moment, scatters like a thunder-bolt everything before it, and displays in an instant the whole power of the speaker.

But to pass from Reynolds to one of the most accomplished critics of the eighteenth century: Hurd —who remarks incidentally that Longinus was one of the three most popular critics of that time, the others being Bouhours and Addison—had studied him with great care, and frequently quotes him. Kame's chapter on Grandeur and Sublimity, in his *Elements of Criticism*, is little more than a paraphrase of Longinus. Fielding, to turn to popular men of letters, was one of his most enthusiastic admirers; and as he appears to have been a good classical scholar he had no doubt practised what he preached when he said "No author is to be admitted into the order of critics until he hath read over and understood Aristotle, Horace, and Longinus in their original language.[1] In his novels he makes frequent references to him. Readers of Sterne will remember the characteristic tribute which that facetious writer pays to the great critic.

By none of our classics was he studied more carefully than by Gibbon, who has, in his *Journal*, given an elaborate account both of the impressions which the *Sublime* made on him, and of the difficulty he

[1] *Covent Garden Journal*, No. 3; *Works*, x, p. 7.

had in mastering it in the original. He expresses his astonishment that "a work worthy of the best and freest days of Athens" should have been the product of an age so corrupt and degenerate as that in which Longinus lived.

"Till now," he says, "I was acquainted only with two ways of criticising a beautiful passage, the one to show by an exact anatomy of it the distinct beauties of it, and whence they sprung; the other an idle exclamation or a general encomium, which leaves nothing behind it. Longinus has shown me that there is a third. He tells me his own feelings upon reading it, and tells them with such energy that he communicates them. I almost doubt which is most sublime, Homer's battle of the gods or Longinus' apostrophe to Terentianus upon it."

The ninth section Gibbon pronounces to be "one of the noblest monuments of antiquity." The Treatise produced a similar effect on Fox when a boy at Eton. He told Colton that he was so idle that he should probably have made no progress in Greek, had he not happened to take up the *De Sublimitate*. He found such charms in it that he never rested till he could read it with a fluency which "enabled him to derive more pleasure from the remarks on Homer than from Homer himself."[1]

[1] Colton's *Lacon*, vol. ii, p. 88. An interesting illustration of the way in which Longinus has influenced public men, and coloured oratory is afforded by Grattan's famous *Character of Chatham*. Speaking of his eloquence he said "it was not like the torrent of Demosthenes or the splendid conflagration of Tully, but he rather lightned on the subject, and reached the point by the flashings of his mind, which, like those of his eye could be felt, but could not be followed"; plainly a reminiscence—partly of *Subl.* xii, "Demosthenes may be compared

That a work which has filled so important a place in the history of our literature, which has been so influential, and which has had so many authoritative testimonies to its great value as a text-book in criticism, should not only have no place in the curricula of our universities, but be practically unknown to them, is surely matter for surprise. It is, I fear, one of the many melancholy illustrations of what has been so often deplored, their indifference to literary as distinguished from philological studies. Let us hope that Professor Rhys Roberts's edition will have the effect of directing the attention of the universities to what is so well worth their attention, and what ought long ago to have taken its place with the *Poetics* at the head of every course in Literae Humaniores.

II

Till the beginning of the present century no one had questioned the authenticity of this Treatise, or doubted that—to quote Gibbon's words—"the Sublime Longinus had, in the Court of a Syrian Queen, preserved the spirit of ancient Athens." But in 1808 a discovery was made which appeared to indicate that if the Sublime Longinus preserved that spirit it was not as the author of the *De Sublimitate*.

to a thunder-bolt or flash of lightning. Cicero may be likened to a widespread conflagration which rolls over and feeds on all around it," and partly of sect. xxxiv, where it is so magnificently said of Demosthenes, "it would be easier to meet the lightning flash with unflinching eye than to gaze unmoved when his impassioned eloquence is fulminating out flash on flash."

While Weiske was passing through the press an edition of the Treatise on which he had been long engaged, he was informed by Jerome Amati, the librarian of the Vatican, whom he had employed to collate the Longinian MSS. in that library, that the title of one of them threw doubt on the authorship of the work. Instead of attributing it to Dionysius Longinus, as the other MSS. did, it attributed it to "Dionysius or Longinus," the title running Διονυσίου ἢ Λογγίνου περὶ ὕψους. This naturally led to a careful scrutiny of the existing codices, and the result was corroboration of a surprising kind. The Paris codex, which appears to be the archetype of the rest, and is at least four centuries and a half anterior to any of them, had indeed Dionysius Longinus on the title-page of the Treatise, but in the index, inserted after the *Physical Problems* of Aristotle, which fill the greater part of the MS., it is also ascribed to Dionysius or Longinus. On further investigation it was discovered that the same alternative was given in another MS., numbered 985 of the Bibliothèque Nationale. Nor was this all. In a third codex, in the Laurentine Library at Florence, though the old title ascribing the work to Dionysius Longinus was still discernible on the first page, the cover bore the title *Anonymous on the Sublime* (Ἀνωνύμου περὶ ὕψους), a deduction no doubt, on the part either of the copyist or of the owner, from the uncertainty implied in the Parisian codices.

It soon, too, became apparent that the ascription of the work to the historical Longinus received no corroboration either from Robortello, the first editor, or from Manutius, the second; Robortello simply

ascribed the work, as most MSS. had done, to Dionysius Longinus, without any attempt at identifying him, and Manutius, following Robortello, had been equally silent on the subject of identification, observing, however, in a Greek epistle prefixed to his edition, that the writer was a Greek, and "one of the ancients who were of very high repute." It is not till we come to the third editor, Portus, that we find the author of the work positively identified with Longinus of Palmyra, Portus not indeed stating this, but silently prefixing to his edition Suidas' notice of the Palmyrene, and a short account of him by Eunapius. From this moment it had been taken for granted by every one that Longinus of Palmyra and the Longinus to whom the manuscripts, with the hesitating exceptions referred to, ascribed the Treatise, were the same man.

On investigation difficulties of all kinds began to present themselves. Whoever was the author of the Treatise, one of his names was Dionysius. But the name of Dionysius had never been associated with that of Longinus of Palmyra. Where he is not spoken of simply as Longinus, and whenever his full name has been given, as it has been given by Suidas and Photius, he is called either Cassius Longinus or Longinus Cassius; no one has called him Dionysius. Of the writings of the Palmyrene we have a somewhat full account. Suidas has given a list of them, probably of the greater part of them. Porphyry, Libanius, John of Sicily, and later scholiasts have referred to other writings of his, but no one has mentioned this Treatise or any work which might be taken for it.

We know from the *Sublime* itself that the author had written a treatise on Xenophon, two treatises on composition, and had either written or intended to write a treatise on the passions, but none of these works appear among those attributed to Longinus. Of the works of the Palmyrene several fragments remain, including a large portion of a *Manual of Rhetoric*, so that a comparison may be made between the style, the diction, the vocabulary, and the characteristics generally of the author of the *Sublime* and of the historical Longinus. To this subject I shall return, merely remarking at present that a comparative study of them has, in the opinion of some critics, furnished conclusively proof that the author of the fragments was not the author of the Treatise, and, in the opinion of no critic, confirmed or even strengthened the case for the affirmative.

Again, the presumption is much more in favour of the Treatise belonging to the end of the last century A.D. than to the age of Claudius and Aurelian. It was suggested by a book written in the Augustan age: of the many authors quoted or referred to not one lived later than the first century A.D. The contempt which Longinus notoriously had for his contemporaries may account satisfactorily for his not mentioning any of them in the way of praise, but that, when dealing with the vices of style and tone, with ψυχρότης (affectation), with τὸ ῥωπικόν καὶ τὸ κακόζηλον (trumpery bedizenment), with τὸ ἀνθηρόν (the florid style), with παρένθυρσος (false sentiment), of which they would have furnished far more striking examples than any he cites, he should have been equally silent about them, is, to say the least, strange. We might

reasonably have expected to find some reference, if not to the work of Quintilian and to the *Dialogue on Oratory*, at least to the writings of Dionysius of Halicarnassus, of Demetrius of Alexandria, and above all to those of his immediate predecessor, Hermogenes, but not a syllable is said about any of them.

There is surely not much difficulty in reconciling the account given in the last chapter of the Treatise of the state of the world and of society, with what would, if we make a little allowance for rhetorical exaggeration, apply to the world and the surroundings of the historical Longinus.[1] But it would, no doubt, be much more applicable to the age of Augustus and his immediate successors. The whole chapter reminds us not only of the passionate dissatisfaction and recalcitrance which find expression in the eighty-eighth chapter of the *Satyricon*, and in the elder Seneca's preface to the first book of the *Controversiae*, but more particularly of the remarks which Tacitus makes at the beginning of the *His-*

[1] The point on which most stress has been laid by those who contend against the late authorship of the Treatise is the clause which speaks of the world's peace (ἡ τῆς οἰκουμένης εἰρήνη), which they contend would not apply to the times of Longinus, and could only apply to the Augustan period. To this two answers may be given. If Longinus wrote the Treatise, it was probably written early in his career, and though the remark could not possibly apply to the time succeeding the accession of Maximin, it might apply, if we allow for rhetoric, to the immediately preceding period. But probably there is no necessity for pressing the word—it is a mere euphemism for the despotic power of Rome, a world-wide tyranny, "pax" in the Tacitean sense of the term.

tories, when he associates the disappearance of great geniuses with the peace which succeeded the battle of Actium and the subsequent extinction of liberty. Still closer is the parallel with the Dialogue on Oratory, in which a similar lament over the decline of eloquence attributes that decline to the moral degradation involved in contented servitude and in social corruption. Indeed the whole chapter glows with a moral and political enthusiasm which it is much more natural to associate with a contemporary of Lucan and Tacitus than with a contemporary of Plotinus and Porphyry. It is certainly not the note of the third century, nor, as Vaucher remarks, will any analogy to this dissatisfaction with the literature of their time be found in any of the writers of that age who have discussed and criticised that literature, neither in Lucian nor in Maximus Tyrius, neither in Aristides nor in Philostratus. Such, then, is the evidence on which the ascription of the work to Longinus of Palmyra rests, and such are the difficulties involved in ascribing it to him.

Assuming for a moment that these difficulties are insuperable, and that Longinus of Palmyra could not have written the Treatise,—who did? There is no necessity for wearying ourselves by reviewing the innumerable theories which have accumulated round this subject. Weiske's baseless hypothesis that it belongs to Dionysius of Pergamus, "mentioned by Strabo," may be consigned to the same limbo as the equally baseless hypothesis of Schoel that it belongs to Dionysius of Miletus, a disciple of Isaeus. It might be assigned with equal reason to Dionysius of Phaselis. The theory which ascribes

it to Dionysius of Halicarnassus is, if not equally baseless, at least as improbable. The evidence in favour of it literally begins and ends with the fact, that the writer of the Treatise tells us that he had composed two treatises on composition, and that Dionysius has left one treatise on composition and promised to write another. The oratorical style of Burke does not differ more essentially from the characteristic style of Addison than the style of the *De Sublimitate* differs from that of the treatises of the Halicarnassian. In genius and temper the two men have nothing in common. Dionysius of Halicarnassus is a pure critic of the secondary order, little better indeed than a grammarian. It is with composition, and with composition only, that he concerns himself. That sublimity in a writer is "the echo of a great soul"—to quote the *De Sublimitate*—that "as all dim lights are extinguished in the blaze of the sun, so when sublimity is present rhetorical artifices become invisible," that work which is full of faults may be superior to work which is flawless—are remarks of which Dionysius was, we feel, absolutely incapable. A great history, a magnificent oration, a noble or pathetic poem, an inspired apologue, were to him mere exercises in rhetoric, the results of the mechanical application of mechanical rules. A critic was one who knew those rules and who had to decide whether they had been followed. No one, he observes, will get to the end of Polybius, for he has a faulty arrangement and a bad style.[1] Of Pericles's magnificent funeral speech in the second book of Thucydides all he has to say in his critique on

[1] *De Comp.*, iv, Ed. Reiske, vol. v, p. 30.

Thucydides—and he gives a chapter to saying it—is, that it is out of place in that book and might have been delivered with more propriety by some one else in the fourth book, over those who were killed at Pylos.[1] Sappho's superb Ode to Aphrodite, for the preservation of which, however, we are indebted to him, elicits only a few frigid remarks about its skilful and graceful texture and the tact with which the vowel sounds are managed.[2] His insensibility to the beauty of the *Phaedrus*, and to all that constitutes its interest and its charm, is not less conspicuous.[3] We would ask any one whether it is conceivable that the critic who commented on Sappho's Ode to Aphrodite as Dionysius has done, and the critic who commented on the other ode by the same poetess as the author of the *De Sublimitate* has done, could be the same man; whether the cool and composed arbiter and anatomist who measured and dissected Thucydides, Plato, and Demosthenes, in the Dissertation to Tubero, in the Epistle to Pompey, and in the *De Admirandi Vi*, could possibly be identified with the enthusiast to whom they were very demi-gods, and whose homage expressed itself with almost dithyrambic fervour.

But even supposing these difficulties could be explained by assuming that the *De Sublimitate* was a work of his fervid youth, and that it was his intention in his other treatises to confine his criticism strictly

[1] *De Thucyd. Hist. Jud.*, xviii, and cf. his remarks on the same speech, *Ars Rhet.*, ix, and cf. Longinus on Thucydides.

[2] *De Comp.*, xxiii.

[3] See his extraordinary criticism of it in the Epistle to Gnaeus Pompeius.

to form and expression, one discrepancy alone would surely be conclusive against the claims of Dionysius. Nothing is more emphatically dwelt on in the *Treatise on the Sublime* than the hopelessly degraded state of literature and the almost total extinction of really great writers. But Dionysius, at the beginning of his treatise on the Attic orators, dwells with equal emphasis on the remarkable revival of ancient eloquence which his times had witnessed, and even discerns the promise of a second golden age.[1]

The strangest theory of all is that of Professor Vaucher, which ascribes the Treatise to Plutarch. For Professor Vaucher every student of Longinus must have the profoundest respect. His *Etudes Critiques sur le Traité Du Sublime*,[2] published in 1854, is the most valuable contribution which has ever been made to the study of Longinus and to the problem presented by this treatise, not so much directly as collaterally. It is, therefore, greatly to be deplored that he should have wasted so much erudition in supporting a theory so obviously, so preposterously extravagant. Plutarch, witness the comparison of Aristophanes and Menander, the *De Audiendis Poetis*, and the comparison between Demosthenes and Cicero, was no more capable of writing the *Treatise on the Sublime* than Eckermann was capable of writing the *Laocoon*, or Boswell the *Apology for Poetry*. His criticisms, where they are

[1] Compare sect. xliv of the *De Sublim.* with chaps. ii and iii of the *De Orat. Antiq.*

[2] *Etudes Critiques sur le Traité du Sublime et sur les Ecrits de Longin*, Geneva, 1854.

not compiled, are the mere records of his personal predilections. Principles he has none: criteria and standards he has none. In a word, a more essentially uncritical critic never gossiped about poetry and oratory. Professor Vaucher is, it is evident, uneasily aware of all this, and, taking care not to appeal to any of his protégé's extant writings as testimony of his ability as a critic, very judiciously falls back on the titles of critical disquisitions, or disquisitions presumably critical, which have perished.

Professor Vaucher's arguments are on a par with his hypothesis. He notices a general resemblance between the style of Plutarch and the style of the Treatise; that is to say, that both are highly figurative; that both blend the rhetorical with the conversational; that both have apparently taken a tinge from the study of Thucydides, Demosthenes, and Philo-Judaeus; that both abound in quotations; that both are fond of certain particles, adverbs, and turns of speech; that in both are to be found several synonyms for elevation of style (ὕψος), and seventy-seven words not common, and in some cases rare, in other writers. He also observes that both authors agree in praising Thucydides, and in thinking very little of Timaeus; that both have a very high opinion of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides; that both are enthusiastic admirers of Plato, and often quote him, and that neither of them holds up Gorgias of Leontium as a model of style.

With their judgements on the orators Professor Vaucher does not proceed so smoothly. The high praise given to Hyperides in the *De Sublimitate* finds no response in Plutarch, and with regard to

Demosthenes it may be sufficient to quote Professor Vaucher's own words: "Ce grand nom de Demosthene reparaît souvent dans les œuvres morales de Plutarque, qui rapporte une foule de ses pensées, de ses traits d'éloquence, de ses triomphes de tribune, tantôt les mêmes que signale l'auteur du περὶ ὕψους tantôt différents."[1] When we remember how Demosthenes is regarded in the *Sublime* we can quite understand the pang which that "tantôt différents" must have cost Professor Vaucher. But enough. Had it not been for the respect due to the industry and learning of Professor Vaucher I should not have paused to discuss, for one moment, so absurd a theory.

III

And now let us see whether the difficulties in the way of ascribing this Treatise to the great critic who so long had the credit of it are insuperable, or whether, after all, the balance of probability does not incline, or at all events slightly incline, in his favour.

The exact date and place of the birth of Longinus are not known, but there can be no doubt that he was born about A.D. 213. His mother, Phrontis, was a Syrian, and there was a tradition that he was born at Emesa. It is more likely that he was born at Athens, where his uncle, who was a rival of Philostratus and Apsines of Gadara, taught rhetoric. Neither the name nor the nationality of his father is known. He tells us himself that, when a youth, he

[1] *Etudes Critiques sur le Traité du Sublime*, p. 111.

travelled about with his parents, and, visiting many countries and many cities, had become personally acquainted with some of the most illustrious men of the day.[1] At Alexandria he attended the lectures of Ammonius Saccas and of Origen the Platonist, and among the friends he made there were Plotinus and Amelius. At what other places he stayed and studied is not recorded, but it is not unlikely that he visited Rome. He returned to Athens probably about A.D. 235. Whether his uncle Phronto died before his nephew set out on his travels or afterwards is uncertain, but in any case he made him his heir. The near relative and heir of one of the most distinguished professors in Athens was not likely to want pupils, and we are not surprised therefore to learn that his time was soon so occupied with teaching that he had no leisure for writing. The subjects which he taught were rhetoric and philosophy. He rapidly rose to eminence in both, but as he had little sympathy with Neo-Platonism, then so greatly in the ascendant, he devoted himself as a teacher principally to the first. Not that he ever abandoned his philosophical studies, for he continued, as a writer, to contribute largely to such subjects, and they fill a wide space in the list of his published works. The most distinguished of his pupils was Porphyry, and to Porphyry's biographer, Eunapius, we owe a vivid account of the position occupied by Longinus at Athens.

"Longinus was a kind of living library and walking museum (*βιβλιοθήκη τις ἦν ἔμψυχος καὶ περιπατοῦν μουσεῖον*), and had been appointed to give critical instruction on

[1] *Fragment* v.

classical literature. With him Porphyry received the very perfection of training, attaining, like his master, the summit of excellence in philology and rhetoric. For, in such studies, Longinus was by far the most distinguished of all the men of those times. No unfavourable judgement on any classical writer was allowed to hold good before Longinus had given his opinion, but his opinion when given was without appeal."[1]

We have no means of knowing at what date and for what reason Longinus quitted Athens and went to the East. But he settled at Palmyra, then under Odenathus and Zenobia, the capital of an empire which extended from the Euphrates to the frontiers of Bithynia, including Egypt, and which threatened to become formidable even to the Romans. Zenobia, like Christina of Sweden, our own Elizabeth, and Mary Queen of Scots, delighted in literature and in the society of scholars, and what Salmasius, Ascham, and Buchanan were to them Longinus became to the Queen of Palmyra. The premature death of Odenathus deprived Zenobia of a wise counsellor, and, unhappily for herself, her friends, and her kingdom, she began to indulge in the wildest dreams of feminine ambition. Rome should have a rival in Palmyra, and Caesar in herself. She increased her armies; she sought alliances with neighbouring States, conferred on herself the title of Empress of the East, and prepared to defy the Romans. In the director of the studies of her leisure hours she found something more than a critic and philologist. Longinus became her confidant and her adviser, encouraged and assisted her in her mad conflict with

[1] *Porphyrii Vita.*

the Romans, dictated, or inspired, the letter in which she defied Aurelian, and, on the fall of Palmyra, paid the penalty for his devotion to his royal mistress by her treachery and Aurelian's vengeance.[1] The woman had triumphed over the heroine, and she tried to save herself by attributing what she now acknowledged to be crime and folly to the evil counsels of Longinus. His execution was immediately ordered. He met death with cheerfulness and constancy, consoling and encouraging others whom Zenobia had similarly betrayed.

It will be seen that all which can now be recovered of the biography of Longinus is too scanty to give us any very definite picture either of the man or of his career. But five things stand out clearly. By the universal consent of his contemporaries and successors he was one of the greatest critics of antiquity. We have already seen what Eunapius says of him. Porphyry calls him, in one place, the critic of critics (κριτικώτατος), in another the first of critics (τὸν ἐν κρίσει πρῶτον ὄντα), and up to the present time considered so (καὶ ὑπειλημμένον ἄχρι νῦν). His greatness as a critic had passed into a proverb, and "to judge as Longinus would do" (κατὰ Λογγῖνον κρίνειν) was a synonym for a correct judgement, just as "you are writing this not as a Longinus would do" (οὐχ ὡς κριτικὸς Λογγῖνος, ταῦτα γράφεις), was a synonym for the opposite. Secondly, he thought very little of the writers of his time and was always upholding the ancient classics. Porphyry describes him as being of all men most addicted to contradiction (ἐλεγκτικώτατος), and as systematically opposed to almost every-

[1] Gibbon, vol. ii, pp. 19 *seqq.*

thing that his contemporaries thought (τὰ τῶν σχεδὸν πάντα τῶν καθ' αὐτὸν διελέγξας), and he gives him the nickname of a "lover of the ancients"[1] (φιλαρχαῖος). Thirdly, he had no taste for the mysticism and metaphysical extravagances of the Neo-Platonists, but confined himself to Plato, whom he expounded, not as Plotinus and Porphyry expounded him, but in a manner which provoked Plotinus to say of him that he was not a philosopher but a man of letters (φιλόλογος μέν ὁ Λογγῖνος φιλόσοφος δὲ οὐδαμῶς). To this it may be added that tradition, his own fragments, and the titles of his lost treatises unite in showing that he was a devoted student of Plato. Fourthly, everything seems to point to the fact that he was not only a scholar, and a scholar of attainments very uncommon with professors of rhetoric, but that he was a man of affairs and of the world. He could never have filled the place which he did fill at the court of Zenobia had this not been the case. Fifthly, what we know from Zosimus and Vopiscus about the circumstances under which the letter to Aurelian was written, about the letter itself, and above all about the closing scene of his life, places it beyond doubt that he possessed, in a degenerate age, a soul worthy of Socrates and Demosthenes. Lastly—and this surely ought especially to be noted and emphasized—that he had Oriental blood in his veins. That all these are characteristics which we should

[1] See Ruhnken's correction of the reading in Porphyry's *Life of Plotinus*, p. 116, in which he had been anticipated by Fabricius; possibly the old reading is the right one, see Vaucher, *Etudes Critiques*, pp. 27 and 283, and the word is not an epithet for Longinus, but the title of a treatise.

expect to find in the author of the *De Sublimitate*—for unmistakably and deeply are they impressed on it, no one can deny: and they are characteristics which can hardly be said to distinguish, and which most assuredly are not united in, any other claimant.

And now let us see what can be advanced in answer to the chief objections raised to the Longinian authorship. Amati and others contend that there is no proof that Longinus was ever called Dionysius, which is true—but deny the possibility of such a combination of names as Dionysius Cassius Longinus, which is absurd. Nothing was commoner than for Greeks who had obtained the privilege of Roman citizenship to adopt the gentile and family names of the patron who had obtained it for them, while retaining their own. Thus, to go no further than Cicero, we find Aulus Licinius Archias and Quintus Lutatius Diodorus; and although it was commoner for the Greek name to stand as the agnomen, its position was sometimes reversed, as in the case of the historian Dio Cassius.[1] In the third century this was particularly common. It may, therefore, be assumed, with a high degree of probability, that the name of Longinus was Dionysius, and that, obtaining—possibly through the influence of the young Roman to whom the *Sublime* is addressed—the privilege of citizenship by means of one of the Cassian family, he adopted the names of his patron.

But, it may be urged, the Treatise is, before the

[1] For ample information on this point, see Henricus Cannegieterus, *De Mutata Romanorum Nominum sub Principibus Ratione*, and the exhaustive note of Reimarus in his edition of Dio Cassius, vol. ii, pp. 1534-5.

tenth century, nowhere attributed to him. To this it may be replied that the only catalogue of his writings which has come down to us, namely, the notice in Suidas, is confessedly incomplete, ending with the words "and many others" (καὶ ἄλλα πολλά), which may not only cover the *Sublime* but the other lost treatises. Nor must we forget that the scribe of the Paris archetype, in assigning the Treatise to Longinus, must have had authority for doing so, and it seems to us far more reasonable to suppose that in the unmistakable reference in John of Sicily to the passage about Moses, in the ninth section of the *Sublime*, he was following, not a tradition originating from a conjecture of the Paris copyist, but an independent tradition.[1] It is, moreover, quite possible to attach far too much importance to the alternative title found in the Paris manuscript, and its supposed confirmations. That title, we must remember, is found only in the index, and is not in the handwriting of the copyist of the Treatise. The second manuscript, in the Bibliothèque Nationale, agrees exactly with the Codex Vaticanus 285, which is probably a transcript of it, and neither of them can reasonably be cited as independent testimony;

[1] In his Commentary on Hermogenes, John of Sicily observes that Longinus and Demetrius, Ἑλλήναν οἱ ἄριστοι, had agreed with the Christians in their admiration of Moses—"God said let there be light and there was light," a plain though misquoted reference (for he substitutes τόδε for φῶς) to the ninth section of the *Sublime*. But, as the date of John of Sicily was the twelfth century, and that of the Paris manuscript the tenth, no importance, says the anti-Longinus party, can be attached to the passage; besides, they add, Longinus may have quoted it somewhere else.

while in the manuscript at Florence the title Ἀνώνυμος is given only on the cover, the title at the top of the first page—for traces of it are distinctly visible—being the old one.

All, then, that this evidence amounts to is, that the writer of the index in the Paris manuscript, for some reason, doubted the authorship of the Treatise, attributing it to one of the two most distinguished critics known to him, namely, Dionysius of Halicarnassus and Longinus; that the next copyist of the Treatise reproduced the alternative title, and was followed by a third, and that this led, not unnaturally, to the Florentine manuscript being tampered with. In a word, this evidence simply resolves itself, so far as can be ascertained, and so far as is in the highest degree probable, into a doubt expressed by a single individual of whom nothing is known.

The fact that the Treatise was suggested by a work written in the Augustan age, and refers to no writers subsequent to that age, surely presents little difficulty. Caecilius, the author of that work, was one of the classics of criticism, and nothing, therefore, could be more natural than that Longinus and Posthumius should, even at the distance of more than two centuries and a half, be studying and discussing him. In not referring to later writers he was only following the custom of authors of rhetorical treatises, who very properly confined their illustrations and references to writers of classical repute. If I am not mistaken, there is not a single reference to a post-Augustan writer either in Hermogenes or in Apsines, either in Demetrius or in Aphthonius.

This brings us to the last point. The remains of Longinus which are undoubtedly genuine have, it is alleged, no resemblance in any of their characteristics of style to those of the *Sublime*, and yet among them are fragments bearing on literary criticism and a considerable section of a *Treatise on Rhetoric*. We may begin by remarking that arguments based on analogies of style will sometimes lead to very erroneous conclusions. What analogy could there have been in this respect between those dialogues of Aristotle which Cicero praises for the "golden flow of their diction,"[1] and the works of Aristotle which have come down to us? What reasonable doubt can there be that Tacitus was the author of the *Dialogue on Oratory*, and yet what could possibly be more unlike the style of the *Agricola* or of the *Histories* and of the *Annals*? If our criterion of the genuineness of Carlyle's *French Revolution* and *Latter-Day Pamphlets* were derived from any analogy drawn from his *Essay on Mathematics* and his *Life of Schiller*, we should certainly arrive at a very absurd result.

And now, putting aside for a moment the *Treatise on Rhetoric*, let us see of what the remains of Longinus the Palmyrene consist. We have a portion of a letter to one Marcellus giving an account of contemporary philosophies; a short extract from a letter to Porphyry asking him to send him some books and come and visit him; another short extract from some letter or treatise protesting against the opinion that the soul was corporeal and perish-

[1] "Flumen orationis aureum fundens Aristoteles."—*Acad. Prior.* xxxviii, and cf. *De Fin.* i, 5.

able; and lastly, three extracts about metre from a commentary on Hephaestion, the authorship of the first of which is simply assumed from the fact that Longinus is known to have been an authority on metre and prosody, the authorship of the two last from the fact that they are ascribed to him in marginal notes on the manuscripts, written in Latin by a modern hand! Of the *Treatise on Rhetoric* it may suffice to say that it originally formed part of the text of Apsines, from which it was disengaged by the sagacity of Ruhnken. But where it begins and where it ends, what may still belong to Apsines and what to Longinus, has only been determined, and can only be determined, by mere conjecture.[1]

[1] The circumstances of its discovery are singularly interesting. In 1765 Ruhnken was reading the *Rhetoric* of Apsines when he was struck, he tells us, with a sudden change in the style, which began to remind him strongly of the style of the *De Sublimitate*. Continuing his reading he came upon a passage which he remembered to have seen cited by Maximus Planudes and John of Sicily, and cited as belonging, not to the Τέχνη ῥητορική of Apsines, but to the Τέχνη ῥητορική of Longinus. In great delight at having recovered a work by Longinus which was supposed to have been lost, he announced that it was his intention to edit it. But to the surprise of every one he did nothing of the kind, nor could any one get him to say where he believed the Longinus portion to begin and end. On that subject he maintained an obstinate, and perhaps discreet silence, to the end of his life. Wyttenbach told Bast that Ruhnken attributed to Longinus the whole portion extending from p. 709 to p. 720 in the Aldine edition of Apsines. Spengel, Walz, and Egger give him much more—from p. 707 to p. 726—in the Aldine. Finckh would reduce him to even narrower dimensions than Ruhnken is reported to have done. Meanwhile, all the confirmation of these conjectures rests on an

It is, therefore, surprising, nay more, amusing, to find Professor Vaucher gravely tabulating the words in these fragments, for the purpose of ascertaining which of them appear and which do not appear in the *De Sublimitate*; instituting elaborate comparisons between the style, the diction, the characteristics generally of these scanty and most questionable relics with those of the Treatise, and then proclaiming that the Longinus of the one could not possibly have been the Longinus of the other. There is no conclusion, however preposterous, at which criticism could not arrive if Professor Vaucher's method were applied to such materials as the materials to which Professor Vaucher applies it. These fragments are, in truth, too meagre, too irrelevant when genuine, too unauthenticated when analogous, to make any comparison with the *Sublime* of the smallest use. I have no wish to appear paradoxical, but I cannot but think that, such dim and fitful light

Abstract of the *Rhetoric* of Longinus, discovered at Moscow about 1782, and on a manuscript in the Laurentian Library at Florence, containing twenty-four notes on rhetoric, derived, as the title of the manuscript indicates, from the *Rhetoric* of Longinus. The chief value of the Abstract is that, if it does not confirm Ruhnken's conjecture that the treatise of Longinus, or rather a portion of it, had got mixed up with the treatise by Apsines, it makes the theory highly probable, because much of it corresponds in a remarkable way with the portion of Apsines restored, through Ruhnken's conjecture, to Longinus. But the manuscript at Florence is anything but conclusive. Short and scanty as it is, it contains much which is not found either in Apsines or in the Abstract at Moscow. It will be seen, therefore, how little confidence can be placed in arguments drawn from the phraseology, the style, or even the general character of this most rickety and unsatisfactory relic.

as they do cast on the subject, flickers in favour of the claims of Longinus to the authorship of the Treatise.

The fragment, for example, numbered vii in Weiske, vindicating the immateriality of the soul, has, particularly at the conclusion, quite the note of the *De Sublimitate*. Professor Vaucher has himself drawn attention to a very remarkable parallel passage in the *Rhetoric*. In the Treatise (sect. ii) the author finely calls "beautiful words the very light of thought" (*φῶς γὰρ τῷ ὄντι ἴδιον τοῦ νοῦ τὰ καλὰ ὀνόματα*): in the *Rhetoric* we find *φῶς γὰρ ὥσπερ τῶν ἐννοημάτων τε καὶ ἐπιχειρημάτων ὁ τοιοῦτος λόγος*. The citations from Proclus, Eusebius, John of Sicily, and others, included by Professor Vaucher among the fragments, show how large a space literary criticism of a parallel kind to that found in the *Sublime* filled in the writings of Longinus. We learn, for instance, that he was the author of a series of literary discourses known as *οἱ φιλόλογοι* or *αἱ φιλόλογοι ὁμιλίαι*, which must have been very voluminous, as the twenty-first book of it is cited. Walz and others have suggested that the *De Sublimitate* may have formed a part of these discourses. This conjecture is certainly supported by John of Sicily, who, in an unmistakable reference to the passage in the third section of the *Sublime* treating of bombast, observes: "But about these things Longinus speaks with more precision in the twenty-first book of his *φιλόλογοι*."[1]

It is, also, at least significant that Longinus had written works dealing particularly with those authors who are cited most frequently in the *Sublime*, four

[1] Commentary on Hermogenes. See Vaucher, *Etudes*, p. 306.

on Homer, two on Plato, commenting, as the citations given by Proclus and Olympiodorus show, more on his style than on his philosophy, and one on the *Meidias* of Demosthenes, an oration from which a striking passage is quoted in the *De Sublimitate.*

On a general review of the evidence, then, it may be contended that, if the arguments urged against the claims of Longinus to the authorship of the Treatise cannot be conclusively refuted, they can, if examined impartially, be seriously shaken, and that we are still very far from having reached such a degree of probability as would justify us in withdrawing his name from the title-page of the Treatise.

In bringing this long, and I fear wearisome, discussion to a close I cannot forbear adding, that the responsibility for its necessity lies with Professor Roberts. His book will, I hope, become a text-book at the Universities, but nothing can be more inadequate and unsatisfactory than that portion of the Prolegomena which deals with the important question discussed here. The claims of Longinus are assumed to be so baseless and untenable that they are not even debated; and yet, with singular inconsistency, the work is attributed to him on the title-page.

IV

The contributions of the Greeks to literary criticism, or at all events such contributions as have come down to us, are, it must be owned, exceedingly dis-

appointing. It might have been expected that a people by whom the fine arts had been carried to such perfection, and in whom philosophical inquiry and dialectics had developed such rare powers of analysis, would have left masterpieces in literary criticism worthy to stand beside their masterpieces in creative art. But this is not the case. From the very beginning, criticism seems to have fallen into inferior hands. Its earliest representatives were the second Rhapsodists, men who blended recitation with interpretation and commentary. Of these men we have a lively and contemptuous picture in the *Ion* and in Xenophon's *Symposium*. "Do you know greater fools than the Rhapsodists?" asks one of the characters in Xenophon's dialogue. "No, by Heaven, I do not!" is the reply.[1] Whether they ever committed their criticisms, which were mostly concerned with Homer, to writing, does not appear, but, if they did, we know enough of them to know that their exact modern analogies would probably be the critiques of the late Mr. Gilfillan, and of Christopher North at his worst. Nor were matters much improved when criticism was represented, as it next was, by the philosophers. In their hands it chiefly confined itself to allegorizing and rationalizing Homer, and to discovering in him symbolic anticipations of particular truths, theological, moral, and physical, of which the interpreter was himself the prophet. Such was the employment of Anaxagoras, Stesimbrotus, Metrodorus of Lampsacus, and Euhemerus.

[1] Οἶσθα τι οὖν ἔθνος, ἔφη. ηλιθιώτερον ῥαψῳδῶν;—οὐ μὰ τον Δι.—*Sympos.*, iii, 5.

In the Periclean age the criticism which has its counterpart in our popular press found, no doubt, voluminous expression. What *Punch* and the weekly reviews are to us, Aristophanes and the poets of the Old Comedy were to Athens. Before this irresponsible tribunal was dragged every prominent candidate for literary fame. How he fared depended partly on the personal prejudices of his censor, partly on the clique or faction to which he belonged, and partly to what could be got out of him in the way of amusement. We have excellent and no doubt typical specimens of this criticism in the *Frogs*, in the *Acharnians*, in the *Thesmophoriazusae*, and in the fragments of Antiphanes and Epicrates. Of the systematic treatises on criticism produced during the Periclean age not one remains, and, judging from the remarks quoted from them, the loss is not to be regretted.

No greater calamity has befallen letters than the fact that Plato gave to metaphysics and politics what he might have given to criticism in its application to the fine arts. Scattered up and down his writings are passages in which may be found the germs of the profoundest truths on which philosophical criticism rests. He was the first to discern and maintain that the fine arts are modes of imitation—that what they represent is not the particular and accidental, but the universal and essential, and that the breath of their life is divine inspiration, without which they are of no avail. But, like our own Ruskin, Plato was wilful and fanatical, and his most elaborate contributions to literary criticism express opinions so contradictory to what he has maintained elsewhere and are so

singularly unintelligent and perverse that they might almost be mistaken for irony.

Whether criticism advanced under the other disciples of Socrates we have no means of judging. We know that Crito and Simon wrote treatises on poetry and on the beautiful, Simmias a treatise on the epic, and Glauco a dialogue on Euripides. Of Plato's own disciples the most distinguished, after Aristotle—we are speaking, of course, of criticism—was Heraclides of Pontus, the author of several treatises, the loss of one of which, a treatise on poetry and the poets, is for many reasons greatly to be regretted. The criticism of pre-Alexandrian Hellas culminated in Aristotle and in his most distinguished disciple Theophrastus, of whose once voluminous critical writings all that remain are a few short fragments, and one entire work.

Aristotle concerned himself with criticism, not because of any special aptitude and taste for such studies, but simply because, as a department of human knowledge, it was comprehended in his survey. He brought to it what he brought to everything else, a most powerful and logical intellect, subtle discrimination, immense erudition, and a mania for methodizing; and he brought nothing else. In all the finer qualities and instincts of the critic, in all that is implied by aesthetic sensibility, he was more signally deficient than our own Johnson. He narrowed and reduced criticism to an exact science; but such principles in the theory of rhetoric and poetry as are capable of precise definition and direct application he deduced and fixed for ever. Thus the *Poetic* and *Rhetoric* are in some respects the most precious

contributions which have ever been made to criticism; in others, and especially to modern readers, disappointing even to exasperation. How far Aristotle was original, and how far indebted to his predecessors and contemporaries, is a question which cannot be answered now. The germ of much in his *Poetic* he certainly owed to Plato, and his *Rhetoric* had been preceded by numerous treatises issuing from the schools of Athens, of Sicily, of Pergamus, and of Rhodes. We know, for example, that in his definition of rhetoric he had been anticipated by Corax and Tisias; that he was original neither in his method nor in his analysis, and that by far the greater part of his practical precepts had long been commonplaces. Aristotle either directly, or through his disciples, left his mark on every department of criticism. In his recension of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, in the commentaries on Homer, Hesiod, and other classics, and in the *Didascaliae* compiled under his directions, he initiated studies which were to occupy the chief attention of critics during several generations.

With the Alexandrian age Greek criticism may be said to have entered on its third stage. It passed out of the hands of dilettants and of philosophers into those of pedants and grammarians, and confined itself almost entirely to philology and antiquities. To the Alexandrian scholiasts our debt is certainly a considerable one, and, had they confined themselves to the sphere in which they were qualified to excel, our gratitude would have been without reserve. But unfortunately they did not. They confounded what should be distinguished. They mistook the means

of exegesis for the ends; and they taught others to make the same capital mistake. Criticism ceased to be associated with its higher functions, either being directed entirely to such points as are of interest to mere grammarians and philologists, or dissolving itself, as Bacon puts it, "into a number of idle, unwholesome, and, as I may call them, vermiculate questions." In the long list of critical treatises composed during the Alexandrian age it is remarkable that there is, I believe, not one which certainly indicates that the treatment of the subject was other than either philological or historical. So completely, indeed, was the distinction between criticism in its higher aspects and in the sense in which these scholars understood it lost, that, though Crates of Pergamus denied that a grammarian was a critic, and maintained that grammar was subordinate to criticism, he confined the term to illustrative commentary.

On critical literature these men left an indelible impress. They became the founders of a dynasty which has remained unbroken to the present day, and which has its representatives wherever letters have been studied. When Swift facetiously traced to Aristarchus the pedigree of those critics whom his friend Pope described as possessing every accomplishment except spirit, taste, and sense, and whom he has himself delineated with so much truth and humour in the *Tale of a Tub*, he may have been unjust to that particular scholar, but he was certainly not unjust to most of that scholar's disciples. There was always a tendency in the Greek mind to frivolousness, to attach undue importance to trifles, to

peddle with nice distinctions, and to waste itself on the mere exercise of ingenuity. While Greece was in her glory all this had been kept in check, for a great community makes great citizens, but the extinction of their national life, and the loss of everything which was involved in it, threw the Greeks on themselves, and developed this their innate infirmity. What before was a tendency now became a habit, and soon grew into a distinguishing characteristic.

In nothing is this more conspicuous than in criticism. Of its degeneracy during the Alexandrian age we have just spoken; its degeneracy in the ages succeeding is equally apparent. And this degeneracy is the more striking when we compare it with what Rome produced between about B.C. 60 and A.D. 120—the brilliant treatises of Cicero, the *Ars Poetica* and two epistles of Horace, the *Dialogue on Oratory*, the great masterpiece of Quintilian, works in some cases and in some portions as severely technical as the treatises of Demetrius and Hermogenes, but impressed with the stamp of a large and liberal intelligence, and pregnant with energy and life. Of this there is nothing discernible in what the Greeks of that age have left us. In the treatises of Dionysius, the contemporary in early life of Cicero, we are in the class-room of a professor of rhetoric, mechanically imparting what has been mechanically acquired; we are in the dissecting-room of a philological anatomist. There lies the composition—a history it may be, or an oration, or occasionally a poem. Every bone, every nerve, every artery is traced out and laid bare, everything is demonstrated but what constitutes its charm,

everything discovered but the secret of its life. There appears to be no sense of anything which cannot be submitted to precise analysis, and which cannot be defined as legitimate deductions from the application of conventional canons. Of the principles of criticism, of the philosophy of taste, of the philosophy of the beautiful, of the relation of Nature to Art and of Art to Nature, of the influence exercised by individual temperament and social and historical conditions on the activity of a literary artist, not a word is said. The masterpieces of Homer, of Thucydides, of Plato, of Demosthenes, are contemplated merely as models of composition.

But within this contracted sphere the analytical subtlety displayed is indeed extraordinary. It is seen in its perfection in the two treatises of Dionysius on Composition and on the Attic Orators, in the *De Inventione* and the *De Formis Oratoriis* of Hermogenes, and, above all—for the work is a model of terseness and lucidity, and, a little peddling excepted, of good sense—in the *De Elocutione* of Demetrius.[1] However much we may regret the purely scholastic character of these works, criticism would have been poorer for their loss, for of their kind they are classics.

[1] It is extraordinary that this admirable treatise should not have found a modern editor; it is perhaps the best practical manual on composition ever written; even a popular translation of it would be most useful and entertaining, for it is as applicable to the various forms of composition in English as it is to those in Greek. [Since this was written the Treatise has been translated and edited as a companion volume to his edition and translation of the *Treatise on the Sublime* by Dr. Rhys Roberts.]

But, if we except the treatise of Hephaestion on metres, which has, however, nothing but a technical value, the *De Sublimitate*, and an essay to which we shall presently refer, this cannot be said for the numerous other contributions to criticism which have survived from the first, second, and third centuries. It would be absurd to dignify with this name the loose and desultory observations of Plutarch, which are exactly on a par with those of Strabo. Lucian has some excellent remarks scattered up and down his works, particularly in the *Lexiphanes*, in *The Teacher of Orators*, and in the *How History Should be Written*, but his place is among satirists rather than among critics. Apollonius Dyscolos, and Aelius Herodianus were mere grammarians. Apsines, like the Anonymi before and after him, simply thrashes the straw. But one writer, at the end of the first and the beginning of the second century A.D., deserves particular notice. Egger has drawn attention to the remarkable example of philosophical criticism which is to be found in one of the orations of Dion Chrysostom [1]—the *Olympicus*. Pheidias is there represented as explaining how he formed the conception of his great statue, the Olympian Zeus. Tracing Art and Religion to the same source—Divine Truth—Dion dwells on the close alliance between them, as embodiments of divine ideas, ideas innate in man's soul. He then goes on to compare the plastic arts with poetry, and contrasts as well as laments the limitations necessarily imposed on the sculptor with the freer scope of the poet. It contains, it will be seen, the germ of Lessing's

[1] *Orat.*, xii. *Works*, Ed. Arnim, vol. i, 155 *seqq.*

thesis in the *Laocoon*, and it is written with extraordinary enthusiasm and eloquence. Of all the critiques which have come down to us from antiquity, this, and this alone, has the note, or something of the note, of the work at which we have now arrived.

The *De Sublimitate*, like the *Poetic* of Aristotle, has not reached us in its entirety. About nine hundred lines, or more than a third of it, have been lost, but as the lacunae are occasional, and occur, with the exception apparently of a few words, in the body of the work, they are comparatively unimportant, and in no way obscure either its method or its scope. The author addresses it to a young Roman, apparently his pupil, who had been studying with him a treatise on the sublime written by Caecilius of Calacte. Both of them had found it most unsatisfactory. It had neither shown how the sublime could be attained nor had it even defined what the sublime is, to say nothing of other serious defects. At the request of the pupil the master had, out of kindness and respect for a desire of knowledge, been persuaded to give his views on the subject, and he exhorts his fellow-student—for so he courteously regards him—to join in an investigation which should, with both of them, have truth, and truth only, for its object. "For he answered well"—the reference is to Pythagoras—"who, when asked in what qualities we resemble the Gods, declared that we do so in benevolence and truth."[1] With this charming prelude the treatise opens.

We may begin by remarking that "sublimity,"

[1] Chap. i, 3.

in the Greek sense of the term, and as it is employed here, is by no means synonymous with "sublimity" in the English sense of the term, though it has some affinity with it. It is here used, partly as a synonym for a technical term in rhetoric, and partly perhaps in a sense peculiar to the writer. Among the various species or styles of composition, which the ancient critics have distinguished and defined, is one which appears under different names but with a common character—this is the "grand" or "magnificent" style. It is described by Aristotle and defined by Demetrius as "magnificent," or "befitting a great man" (μεγαλοπρεπής); by Cicero under the title of "grandiloqua"; by Dionysius under the title of a style blending the characteristics of the "harsh" (αὐστηρόν) and the "polished and elegant" (γλαφυρόν), and by Hermogenes as indicative of "greatness" (μέγεθος). Caecilius appears to have been the first to apply the term ὕψος, "height" or "elevation," to it, though the adjective corresponding to ὕψος, *i.e.*, ὑψηλός, had already been used by Dionysius to describe it.[1] In this treatise the word which gives it its title signifies all that was included in the qualities indicated by these technical terms, and, to judge from what may be gathered from the extant analyses of them, much more besides. Its elasticity, indeed, perplexed Gibbon and was ridiculed by Macaulay. If we take our stand on two remarks, and on what may be deduced directly from them, we shall have the key to the meaning of "sublimity" as here interpreted; it is a certain "loftiness and excellence in expression"

[1] ὑψηλὴ δὲ καὶ μεγαλοπρεπὴς οὐκ ἔστιν ἡ Λυσίου λέξις.—*De Lysiâ Jud.*, xiii, 10.

(ἀκρότης καὶ ἐξοχή τις λόγων ἐστὶ τὰ ὕψη),[1] it is "the echo of a great soul" (ὕψος, μεγαλοφροσύνης ἀπηχήμα).[2] It thus includes all that expresses grand conceptions in magnificent language, all that can with the power of words exalt and thrill the mind, excite in the affections, and especially in the nobler affections, passionate sympathy, and, whatever be the apparel, simple or ornate, exquisite or homely, all that invests with distinction, dignity and grandeur whatever is embodied and represented. This is the sublime.

The first question discussed is, whether the sublime can be reduced to rule, or whether rather it is not innate and a pure gift of nature. This leads to some interesting remarks on the relation of Art to Nature and of expression to inspiration. Their relations, it is maintained, are precisely those which, according to Demosthenes, exist between good fortune and good counsel. Good fortune is undoubtedly the first of blessings, and good counsel only the second; yet, if the second without the first may be quite useless, the first without the second may be useless too. At this point occurs the first lacuna, and we find ourselves in the middle of a discussion of the false sublime (in other words, bombast), what is called parenthyrsus (παρένθυρσος), and frigidity (ψυχρότης). The first is an affectation of an enthusiasm which is not felt, the language of passion without the thing itself, mere tumidity; the second is the display of passion where no passion is required, or of passion in excess where it ought to be subdued. The third is puerility (τὸ μειρακιῶδες), conceited affectation, the perpetual straining after preciosity and fine writing,

[1] *De Sublim.*, i, 3. [2] *Id.*, ix, 2.

of all literary vices the "most ignoble" and the "direct antithesis of the sublime"—exactly the sentiment of Anatole France, "Gardons-nous d'écrire trop bien, c'est la pire manière qu'il y ait d'écrire." And, he adds in words which are only too applicable to much of our own current literature, "All improprieties in literature spring from one common cause, the rage for novelty in the expression of ideas, which is simply a craze with most of the writers of the present day."

We fear that Mr. R. L. Stevenson occasionally, and his disciples generally, would have had short shrift from this critic.

From the false he passes to the true sublime. After observing that it is with the sublime as it is with the common objects of life, that nothing should be held really great which it is a mark of greatness to despise, such as riches, honours, distinctions, and "any of those things which have the superfine pomp and trappings of the stage about them"; so, he continues, it should be with literary compositions,—we should be careful not to allow ourselves to admire those which it would be creditable to us to despise. And then, in a very noble passage, he furnishes us with the real test of the sublime:

> If we feel our souls lifted up, filled as it were with joy and pride, as though we had ourselves originated what we read; if it inspires us with lofty thoughts, suggests to us more than it expresses, brands itself on our memories, and gains rather than loses by repeated perusals and study, then we may be sure the Sublime has expressed itself.[1]

[1] *De Sub.*, vii.

It was on hearing this passage that the great Conde exclaimed in rapture, "Voilà le sublime! Voilà son véritable caractère!"[1] The author goes on to say—perhaps no better definition of what must constitute the supreme standard of taste could be given—that true sublimity is that which pleases all and pleases always:

> For when men of different pursuits, lives, aspirations, ages, languages, hold identical views on one and the same subject, then that verdict, which results, so to speak, from a concert of heterogeneous elements, gives us unshaken confidence in the object of our admiration.[2]

From these general remarks the Treatise proceeds to enumerate the sources of the sublime. They are five. The first and most important cannot be acquired by art, and is, like the second, the gift of nature, the power of forming grand conceptions (τὸ περὶ τὰς νοήσεις ἀδρεπήβολον); next comes vehement and inspired passion (τὸ σφοδρὸν καὶ ἐνθουσιαστικὸν πάθος). Then the three which are the result of art, the due formation of figures, both those of thought and those of expression (ποῖα τῶν σχημάτων πλάσις); noble diction, comprising the choice of words, the use of metaphors and elaboration of language (γενναία φράσις), and lastly, dignified and elevated composition (ἡ ἐν ἀξιώματι καὶ διάρσει σύνθεσις).[3]

[1] Dugald Stewart, *Works*, vol. v, p. 381.

[2] *De Sub.*, vii, 4.

[3] I cannot but think, in opposition to the editors and commentators, that σύνθεσις here means, not what it generally means, simply composition, but the combination of all the qualities just specified in the general composition of the work, so that it may be paraphrased as *tout ensemble*, "general

It is in dealing with the first of these sources that the great note of the Treatise is struck, namely, that grandeur in composition and style can neither be simulated nor induced. It must be in the soul of the artist, the expression of the man himself. To write nobly we must think, we must feel, we must live nobly. It is not possible, says this great critic, that men with mean and servile ideas and aims prevailing throughout their lives should produce anything which is admirable. In a passage which might have been written by Ruskin he thus accounts for the degradation of art and literature:

The love of money, a disease with which we are all of us now insatiably infected, and the love of pleasure, make us their slaves—or rather, I should say, plunge us, body and soul, into the abyss of degradation: the one a malady that dwarfs men, the other a malady that makes them ignoble. Nor, on reflection, can I discover how it is possible for us, if we honour so highly, or, to speak more correctly, make boundless wealth a God, to guard our souls from the entrance of those evils which are inseparable from it. For wherever wealth is immoderate and unrestrained, extravagance, in close conjunction, follows it, so to speak, step by step; and as soon as the former opens the gates of cities and houses the latter straightway enters in and dwells there. And after a while these two build nests in the lives of men, as philosophers have expressed it, and very soon propagate, breeding charlatanry and vanity and luxury, no bastard progeny of their parents, but quite legitimate. Should these children of wealth be allowed to come to maturity, they speedily beget inexorable tyrants in the soul, insolence, lawless-

effect." It is precisely Horace's "totum." Cf. *Ars Poet.*, 34, 35, "Infelix operis summâ quia ponere totum Nesciet."

ness, and shamelessness. And so it will be, necessarily, that men will no longer lift up their eyes, or have any regard for fame, but the complete ruin of such lives will gradually be wrought, the nobler faculties of the soul pining and fading away, and becoming despicable. . . . What wastes and consumes the geniuses of the present age is the apathy in which, with few exceptions, we pass our lives, merely working and striving to get applause and pleasure, never to do what is useful and what would secure the praise which is worth having and worth our effort.[1]

Thus, all that constitute the vitality, the power, the glory of literature are enervated and corrupted at their very source. No one is in earnest, no one is serious. What is wanted can be obtained, the perfection of cleverness and trifling, brilliant speeches, pretty poems, charming disquisitions—all, in fact, that slaves and fribbles of parts and accomplishments are likely to demand and competent to supply. And is this, he asks in scorn, what poetry, what oratory, what criticism have come to? The only salvation lies in getting back to the demi-gods of happier times—*οἱ ἰσόθεοι ἐκεῖνοι*, to Homer, to Thucydides, to Plato, to Demosthenes, and in making them our companions, our guides and teachers, our standards, and our touchstones. For, as he beautifully says:

The Priestess of Apollo, when she approaches the tripod, is inspired by the divine vapour exhaling from the rift beneath it, so from the great natures of the men of old there are borne in about the souls of those who emulate them, as from sacred caves, what we may describe as

[1] *De Sub.*, xliv.

effluences, so that they who seem little likely to be possessed are thereby inspired, and become great with the greatness of others.[1]

We should live as in their presence. We should ask ourselves, when writing, how would Homer, or Thucydides, or Plato, or Demosthenes have expressed themselves, and what would be their verdict, if we submitted what we were writing to them.

Such was the spirit in which the author of this Treatise approached the study of the Old Masters, a study as profound and minute as it was passionately sympathetic; and from this study were derived his criteria of literary excellence. These criteria are not infallible. If the Treatise has not been interpolated—which is, by the way, extremely likely,[2] —they sometimes produced, or at least were compatible with, most unsatisfactory results. But they revealed to him and enabled him to reveal to others the real secret of literary immortality, of genuine greatness, of genuine excellence, and they furnished him with a very Ithuriel's spear for the detection of

[1] See *De Sub.*, xiii, 5. There is no indication that Ben Jonson was acquainted with Longinus, but there is a close parallel to this passage in his *Discoveries*, Section *De Stylo et optimo scribendi genere*: "Such as accustom themselves and are familiar with the best authors shall ever and anon find somewhat of them in themselves, and in the expression of their minds, even when they feel it not, and be able to utter something like theirs which hath an authority above their own."—*Works*, Ed. Cunningham, vol. iii, 411-412.

[2] It is difficult to suppose that the author of the rest of the Treatise could have written some of the stupid remarks about the *Odyssey* in sect. x, and the criticism of the noble simile in *Iliad*, xv, 624-628, in sect. x.

their counterfeits. No false note escapes him; he has no mismeasurements. Apollonius, who never trips, is separated from Homer, who is often tripping, and badly tripping, by the impassable barrier which divides talent from genius. The all-accomplished Hyperides may be proved categorically to unite innumerable virtues to which Demosthenes has no pretension: but Demosthenes remains without equal or second: "Bacchylides and Ion," he observes, "are faultless and in the polished school eminently elegant and beautiful, while Pindar and Sophocles often become unaccountably dull (σβέννυνται ἀλόγως) and fail most deplorably. But would anyone in his senses regard all the works of Ion put together as an equivalent for the single drama of the *Oedipus*?"[1]

The four sections[2] in which the author discusses whether the palm should be given to works which are without flaws and defects, but deficient in grandeur, or to works which are marked by grandeur but full of faults, and whether, in estimating comparative excellence, we should prefer quantity to quality, or quality to quantity, are of singular interest. There is certainly nothing more noble in criticism than the passage in which, while maintaining the superiority of the faulty sublime to faultless mediocrity, he deduces the reasons for such preference from the innate nobility of man, from the instinct which attracts him to the "thoughts beyond the reaches of his frame," to immensity and grandeur. Of the pellucid streamlet, he says, which quenches our thirst, of the tiny, clear, burning flame which our hands have

[1] Sect. xxxiii, 20-25. [2] Sect. xxxiii—xxxvi.

kindled, we gratefully avail ourselves, for they are of use. But our admiration is reserved not for what is serviceable, but for what expands and thrills our souls,—for the stupendous phenomena of nature, for the overwhelming magnificence of mighty rivers and of ocean, for the great luminaries of heaven, though so often overshadowed, for the awe-compelling splendours of the rock-belching desolating Etna.[1]

And so he goes on to say, that what constitutes the superiority of a writer who possesses sublimity to a writer who has every gift and accomplishment without sublimity,—in other words, what measures the distance between Homer and Apollonius, between Demosthenes and Hyperides, between Plato and Lysias—is in no way affected by the absence or presence of errors and blemishes. When sublimity is present, they are mere spots on the sun. When sublimity is absent, of what concern in the absence of the sun is the absence of the spots? All other qualities, he continues in his enthusiasm, prove their possessors to be men, but sublimity raises them near the majesty of God. Immunity from errors relieves from censure, but sublimity alone excites admiration.[2]

There is much more in this most suggestive and we may truly say inspiring Treatise over which every critic would gladly linger. It would have been a pleasure to dwell on the many other admirable critical canons which it has laid down, and on its equally admirable illustrations of them; on the judgements passed in it on the great classics, at once so

[1] Sect. xxxv. [2] Sect. xxxiii.

discriminating and so eloquent; on the parallels between Demosthenes and Hyperides, and Demosthenes and Cicero; on the magnificent criticism of the *Iliad*, and the sublime comparison of Homer to the sun and to the sea; and above all, on the general characteristics of one who may be described as an almost ideal critic alike in aim, in method, in culture, in temper. But it would be superfluous to comment on what must be obvious to every student of this noble Treatise.

That a work which has been so influential, and which has had so many authoritative testimonies to its great value as a text-book in criticism should not only have no place in the curricula of our Universities, but be practically unknown in their schools, is surely matter for very great surprise. Let the hope be indulged that Professor Rhys Roberts's edition, which, with all its deficiencies, has at least the merit of being sound and helpful, will have the effect of removing this reproach: for a reproach it is.

THE TRUE FUNCTIONS OF POETRY

BESSERN sollen uns alle Gattungen der Poesie: es ist kläglich, wenn man dieses erst beweisen muss; noch kläglicher ist es wenn es Dichter giebt die selbst daran zweilfeln.—"Every kind of poetry ought to improve us; it is deplorable if this has to be demonstrated, it is still more deplorable if there are poets who themselves doubt it."[1] So wrote Lessing. Matthew Arnold also was never weary of telling us that we ought to conceive of poetry worthily, to conceive of it, that is to say, as capable of higher uses and called to higher destinies than those which in general men have, at least in modern times, hitherto assigned to it; and that to this end we must in conceiving of poetry accustom ourselves to a high standard and a strict judgement. Let us not forget that the distinction between poets of the first order and poets of the secondary order is not a distinction in degree but a distinction in essence. As Browning expresses it,[2] "In the hierarchy of creative minds it is the presence of the highest faculty that gives first rank, in virtue of its kind, not degree; no pretension of a lower nature, whatever the completeness of development or variety of effect, impeding the precedency of the

[1] *Hamburgische Dramaturgie*, Jan. 26, 1768.

[2] *Essay on Shelley*, printed in Furnivall's *Bibliography* of Robert Browning, p. 18.

rarer endowment though only in the germ." Let us then in conceiving of poetry conceive of it as represented by those whose title to pre-eminence no one would dispute, the authors, say, of the Psalms, Isaiah, Pindar, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Virgil, Dante, Spenser, Shakespeare, Milton, Goethe, Wordsworth. Let us ask ourselves what ends poetry, as represented by them, is designed to serve, what gospel it delivers to us, what truths it opens out to us, what lessons it teaches us. And in this inquiry we have the good fortune to be assisted by excellent guides. If the poet is the interpreter of God to mankind, the critic is the interpreter of the poet to individual men. For what Bacon observes of studies is, in a great measure, true also of poetry, "it teacheth not its own use," and especially at that time in our life when it may be of most use to us. To how many of us did the study of such works as Sidney's *Defence of Poesie* and Wordsworth's two prefaces come as a revelation. How inadequately and imperfectly was Shakespeare's message to mankind understood till it found an interpreter in Coleridge, and in those who have since lighted their torches from his! How dim in the eclipsing radiance or under the mighty shadow of Christianity, as we choose to express it, had grown that gospel, it, too, divine, which finds its embodiment in the *Odyssey*, in Pindar, in Aeschylus, in Sophocles, till in our own time Matthew Arnold and others, re-interpreting, re-illumined it. Who of us can forget the hour when Carlyle's burning words made the *Divine Comedy* become articulate to us, and revealed to us what solace, sustainment, and inspiration might be found in its stern gospel?

These, surely, are the poets, these the critics who will teach us best the true functions of poetry, teach us to understand that the chief office of poetry is not merely to give amusement, not merely to be the expression of the feelings, good or bad, of mankind, or to increase our knowledge of human nature and of human life, but that, if it includes this mission, it includes also a mission far higher, the revelation, namely, of ideal truth, the revelation of that world of which this world is but the shadow or drossy copy, the revelation of the eternal, the unchanging and the typical which underlies the unsubstantial and ever-dissolving phenomena of earth's empire of matter and time. It was this function of poetry which was indicated by Matthew Arnold when, with so much subtle truth, he defined it as "the application of ideas to life," and it was with this conception of it that he pronounced its future to be immense, and prophesied that, as time went on, mankind would find an ever surer and surer stay in it.

Here then let us, for a while, take our stand; let us say of poetry that it is "the application of ideas to life." But, as in thus describing it, we are really using technical language, I must ask you to bear with me while I explain a little more fully what we mean by "ideas," and what also was meant by "that world of which this world is the shadow or drossy copy." It was the habit of the ancients to clothe and convey truths in symbolic fictions, and pre-eminent among those who have chosen such media stands Plato. Plato, speaking in the person of Socrates, fables, as we all know, that there are two worlds, the material world, the world of matter,

which is perceptible by the senses, but which is purely phenomenal, having no real existence, perpetually decaying, perishing, changing, the mere wax on whose ever-melting matter form is eternally impressing itself to be eternally obliterated. The other is a world not perceptible by the senses, perceptible only by νόησις, pure intelligence, the world of form, of ideas, of essence, and this is the world of what really not phenomenally exists, the world of what *is*. Eternal are those ideas, self-existent and uncreate, the only real entities. What exists in the world of matter, in the world perceptible by the senses has only a sort of quasi-existence, exists only in so far as it reflects or participates in those real essences, is a mere copy, and not merely a perishable copy but a wretchedly imperfect copy or image of the divine, eternal and perfect archetypes *there*.

> The One remains, the many change and pass;
> Heaven's light for ever shines, Earth's shadows fly.

Here on earth are fleeting objects reflecting dimly and brokenly Beauty, Justice, Truth, but *there* is Beauty itself, Justice itself, Truth itself, "clear," as Plato puts it, "as the light, pure and undefiled, not daubed with human colouring nor polluted with human fleshliness and other kinds of mortal trash." Now, how comes it to pass that we in this world have any perception of what the senses could never have revealed to us: how comes it that, when we see the Good, the True, and the Beautiful, we recognize them, recognize them in the faint and dim copies which is all we have here, in this poor world, of their Divine originals, and not merely recognize them, but are instinctively attracted to them. Why, be-

cause we have seen the originals, have been in communion with the Good and the True and the Beautiful; because our souls, before they became imprisoned in these walls of flesh and corrupted with matter, were denizens of the world of Reality, of the world of which this world is but the shadow, of the world of essences and forms:

> Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting;
> The soul that rises with us, our life's star,
> Hath had elsewhere its setting
> And cometh from afar.
> Not in entire forgetfulness,
> And not in utter nakedness,
> But trailing clouds of glory do we come
> From God who is our home.

And hence, too, come

> Those first affections,
> Those shadowy recollections,
> Which, be they what they may,
> Are yet the fountain-light of all our day,
> Are yet a master-light of all our seeing,
> Uphold us, cherish us;

come

> Those echoes from beyond the grave,
> Recognized intelligence.

In that world what we can see now only brokenly and by glimpses, by glimpses only in our highest moments, in "our seasons of calm weather," we saw steadily, habitually, and in perfection, saw not in drossy semblance but in essential integrity. There, too, man's soul, in harmony with the harmonies of Heaven, not only heard but vibrated in unison with them, understanding that music which, as Sir Thomas Browne puts it, sounds intellectually

in the ears of God—the music of the spheres, the music of the ordered Universe. And this is the meaning of Shakespeare's famous lines:

> There 's not the smallest orb which thou beholdst
> But in his motion like an angel sings,
> Still quiring to the young-eyed cherubins;
> Such harmony is in immortal souls;
> But whilst this muddy vesture of decay
> Doth grossly close it in, we cannot hear it.

But we hear it sometimes, as Browning's Abt Vogler, in his ecstasy, heard it; and then with him we come to understand how

> There shall never be one lost good; what was shall be as before,
> The evil is null, is naught, 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.

But to return to Plato. In one celebrated passage[1] he compares the estate of man on earth to that of dwellers in an underground den, who, from childhood upward, have had chains on their legs and their necks, and who are sitting with their backs to the light, unable to move by reason of their shackles, and can see nothing save the shadows of things passing before them on a wall in front. In another place[2] he describes the earth as being far larger and more beautiful than is generally supposed, "the surface being above the visible heavens,"—I give a paraphrase of the passage—"while we who think we occupy the upper parts really dwell in a mere cavity, being pretty much in the position of men

[1] *Republic*, vii, *ad init.* [2] *Phaedo Steph.*, p. 109.

living at the bottom of the sea, or like frogs round a marsh. Surrounded we are by a dull and heavy atmosphere, through which we ignorantly suppose the stars to move: round us are clefts and sands and endless sloughs of mud." But, could we come to the surface, as fish come to the surface of water, what a wondrous world would meet our eyes—a world whose mountains are of precious stones, our emeralds, and sardonyxes, and jaspers being but chips from them—a sun ever-shining, never dimmed.

> All that is most beauteous imagined there,
> In happier beauty, more pellucid streams,
> An ampler ether, a diviner air,
> And fields invested with purpureal gleams,
> Climes which the sun who sheds the brightest ray
> Earth knows is all unworthy to survey

—the world, in fine, of the unfallen soul where, as Plato expresses it, are "Temples and sacred places in which the Gods really dwell, and the denizens of this radiant world hear the voices of the Gods, and receive their answers, and are conscious of them and hold converse with them"; and they see, continues Plato, "the sun, moon, and stars, as they really are, and their other blessedness is of a piece with this."

We must not, as I need scarcely say, press these myths too closely. We must not understand them literally, but we must accept them as it was designed we should accept them, as allegories, as parables. And they symbolize, as we must all feel, immortal truths, so intelligibly and clearly, that when we say, fancifully, that the keys of this world of Ideas are in the hands of the poet, and that it is his chief mission

to unlock and reveal this world of Ideas, we are using language which everyone will understand. But two quotations, one from Shakespeare and one from Wordsworth, may form an appropriate transition from the rarified region in which we have been wandering with Plato, to that more familiar region in which criticism is more at home. And they will show us at the same time how short is the distance from figurative to literal truth in these matters. Wordsworth describes the poet's highest mood, and the poet's highest capacity and mission, as

> The gift
> Of aspect more sublime: that blessed mood
> In which the burden of the mystery,
> In which the heavy and the weary weight
> Of all this unintelligible world
> Is lightened: that serene and blessed mood
> In which the affections gently lead us on,
> Until the breath of this corporeal frame,
> And e'en the motions of our human blood
> Almost suspended, we are laid asleep
> In body and become a living soul:
> While with an eye, made quiet by the power
> Of harmony and the deep power of joy,
> *We see into the life of things.*

"We see into the life of things": that is it, almost you will observe the exact expression of Plato, while in that "eye made quiet with the power of harmony" we are brought still nearer to him. Now let us turn to Shakespeare's famous lines:

> The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,
> Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven;
> And as imagination bodies forth
> The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
> Turns them to shapes.

He seems to be translating, even to minute points of technical phraseology, the very language of Plato: and neither Shakespeare nor Wordsworth—of that we may be almost sure—had Plato's myth in their mind when they were thus expressing themselves. And so it will always be with essential truth, whether it speak indirectly in symbols or outright in plain speech, whether it be draped in gorgeous fictions or embodied in baldest aphorism: no variety of vesture can disguise it.

It is curious and interesting to note how the notion of the functions of poetry which we are thus tracing up and defining in relation to Platonism, has repeated itself age after age, often without any reference to the doctrine of Ideas, without any conscious reference to Platonism at all. Let us take first Bacon's famous definition of poetry:

> Poesy is a part of learning which being not tied to the laws of matter may at pleasure join that which Nature hath severed, and sever that which Nature hath joined. It is feigned history, and the use of this feigned history hath been to give some shadow of satisfaction to the mind of man in those points wherein the nature of things doth deny it, the world being in proportion inferior to the soul, by reason whereof there is agreeable to the spirit of man a more ample greatness, a more exact goodness than can be found in the nature of things. . . . And therefore poetry was thought to have some participation of divineness, because it doth raise and erect the mind by submitting the shows of things to the desires of the mind, whereas reason doth buckle and bow the mind unto the nature of things.[1]

[1] *Advancement of Learning*, bk. ii.

We have it there. "Truth narrative and past," writes Sir William Davenant in his deeply interesting *Prefatory Letter* to Hobbes, "is the idol of historians who worship a dead thing, and truth, operative and by effects continually alive, is the mistress of poets who hath not her existence in matter, but in mind."[1] We have it there. It was this, this association of poetry with the ideal and the typical, not exactly indeed in the sense in which we have been speaking of the ideal and the typical, but in a sense cognate to it, which made Aristotle say that poetry was more philosophical and important, as being more universal and essential than history.[2]

Coleridge, in a striking passage in the *Biographia Literaria*,[3] has finely applied to the poetic faculty what Sir John Davies in his *Nosce Te-ipsum* has said of the soul:

> She turns
> Bodies to spirit by sublimation strange,
> As fire converts to fire the things it burns,
> As we our food into our nature change.
>
> From their gross matter she abstracts the forms
> And draws a kind of quintessence from things,
> Which to her proper nature she transforms
> To bear them light on her celestial wings.
>
> Thus doth she, when from individual states
> She doth abstract the universal kinds,
> Which then, re-clothed in divers names and fates,
> Steal access through our senses to our minds.

And here I cannot but quote what Browning expresses so eloquently in his *Essay on Shelley*. The poet, he says:

[1] *Works*, Fol. Ed., p. 5. [2] *Poetic*, ch. ix. [3] Chap. xiv.

Is impelled to embody the thing he perceives, not so much with reference to the many below, as to the one above him, the supreme Intelligence which apprehends all things in their absolute truth, an ultimate view ever aspired to if but partially obtained, by the poet's own soul. Not what man sees, but what God sees—the *Ideas* of Plato, seeds of creation lying burningly in the Divine Hand—it is toward these that he struggles. Not with the combination of humanity in action but with the primal elements of humanity he has to do. . . . He is rather a seer than a fashioner, and what he produces will be less a work than an effluence.[1]

And there are two other characteristics which essentially associate themselves with this conception of the highest office of poetry. The one is the old doctrine of the Greeks, so frequently insisted on by Plato, that the poetical faculty, when genuine, is innate, the immediate gift of Heaven, simple inspiration (μανία), holy madness, having as an impulsive power no connection at all with art, not to be learnt, nor in any other way than by divine transmission to be attained. And so Plato speaks of the poet as ἔκφρων καὶ ἔνθεος, bereft of reason but filled with divinity; he is a seer, he is a prophet; he discerns in the light of inspiration; he speaks for, he is the interpreter of, Divinity. Of the full meaning of the message he is charged with he may be ignorant. In the *Apology* Socrates is represented as questioning poets as to the meaning of their poetry, and finding that any bystander could give a better explanation of what the poets meant than the poets themselves. "Then I knew," he says, "that not by wisdom do

[1] *Essay on Shelley*, p. 20.

poets write poetry, but by a sort of genius and inspiration; they are like diviners or soothsayers, who also say many fine things, but do not understand the meaning of them."[1] To the same effect speaks Shelley:

> Poets are the hierophants of an unapprehended inspiration: the mirrors of the gigantic shadows which futurity casts upon the present: the words which express what they understand not: the trumpets which sing to battle and feel not what they inspire, the influence which is moved not, but moves.[2]

The other is a remark which first found direct expression in Strabo,[3] I believe, but which embodied a sentiment pretty generally held by the ancients, namely, that a man could not be a good poet who was not first a good man, "himself," as Milton commenting on this remark observes, "himself a true poem, a composition and pattern of the honourablest things." Of the truth of this there can be no question. "The greatest poets," says Shelley, "have been men of the most spotless virtue, of the most consummate prudence, and if we would look into the interior of their lives, the most fortunate of men." Shelley himself is not, for many obvious reasons, in the first rank of the world's poets, but suffused as his poetry is with moral and spiritual enthusiasm,

[1] *Apology*, xxii, Jowett's version. See too on this subject *Phaedrus*, 245, 265; the *Ion* passim; and the very remarkable passage in the *Timaeus* beginning *μεμνημένοι γὰρ τῆς τοῦ πατρὸς ἐπιστολῆς*, marg. p. 71-72.

[2] *A Defence of Poetry*, concluding paragraph.

[3] *ἡ δὲ ποιητοῦ ἀρετὴ συνέζευκται τῇ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, καὶ οὐχ οἷόν τε ἀγαθὸν γενέσθαι ποιητὴν μὴ πρότερον γενηθέντα ἀγαθόν.*—Strabo, 1, 2, 5.

in one most important respect it has their note, and whatever were his infirmities and errors, of his essential goodness there can be no question. "I call Shelley," says Browning, in the essay which I have already quoted, "a moral man because he was true, simple-hearted, and brave, and because what he acted corresponded to what he knew; so I call him a religious mind because every audacious negative cast up by him against the Divine was interpenetrated with a mood of reverence and adoration." This is indeed the fact.

I have been indulging, too freely perhaps, in quotations, but I must crave leave to give two more, and let Ben Jonson and Milton sum up for us what were anciently believed to be among the chief prerogatives and functions of the poet. "If," says Ben Jonson, the passage is in his *Dedication of the Fox* to Oxford and Cambridge:

> If men will impartially and not asquint look towards the offices and functions of a poet, they will easily conclude to themselves the impossibility of any man's being a good poet without first being a good man. For the poet is said to be able to inform young men to all good disciplines, inflame grown men to all great virtues, keep old men in their best and supreme state, or, as they decline to childhood, recover them to their first strength, to come forth the interpreter and arbiter of nature, a teacher of things *divine* not less than human, a master in manners that can alone, or with a few, effect the business of mankind.

And in thus expressing himself Ben Jonson is but expressing the common opinion of antiquity on the nature of the poet's office, on the high duties to

which the poet is called, is but expressing what Aristophanes,[1] what Cicero,[2] what Ovid,[3] what Horace[4] have, in celebrated passages, expressed almost in the same terms. In a vein even loftier than this has Milton in that noble passage in the second book of *The Reason of Church Government urged against Prelacy,* interpreted for us the true functions of the poet:

> Poetical abilities, wheresoever they be found, are the inspired gift of God, rarely bestowed, but yet to some (though most abused) in every nation; and are of power beside the office of a pulpit to imbreed and cherish in a great people the seeds of virtue and public civility, to allay the perturbations of the mind, and set the affections in right tune, to celebrate in glorious and lofty hymns the throne and equipage of God's almightiness, and what he works and what he suffers to be wrought; to sing victorious agonies of martyrs and saints, the deeds and triumphs of just and pious nations, to deplore the general relapses of kingdoms and states from justice and God's true worship. Whatsoever in Religion is holy and sublime, in virtue amiable or grave, whatsoever hath passion and admiration in all the changes of that which is called fortune from without, or the wily subtleties and refluxes of men's thoughts from within—all these things with a solid and treatable smoothness to point out and describe.[5]

In its highest aspects, then, poetry is essentially didactic, but didactic in the most exalted sense of the term. A poet does not, indeed, teach as a philosopher teaches, that is, directly and formally. He

[1] *Frogs*, 1009-1014, 1029-1036. [2] *Pro Archia*, viii, 18, 19.
[3] *Fasti*, vi, 5 *seqq*. [4] *Epist.* II, i, 126 *seqq*.
[5] *Works* (Bohn), vol. ii, p. 475.

has first to remember that in expression he is an artist, and that he must satisfy the requirements of art, and that if he fails to satisfy those requirements, he fails in what should be his primary aim. He must appeal to the sensuous and emotional nature of man, he must be successful in innumerable ways in which no didactic purpose can enter. The moment he preaches, or poses as a moralist, he ceases to be a poet. This is the great mistake and defect of Wordsworth. So subordinate, in a great work of art, is its spiritual and moral significance to its aesthetic, that while the second is the result of conscious effort, the first is probably, and very often purely, unconscious on the part of the artist. The moral must either be implicit in the subject or necessarily deduced from it. "If," said Goethe to Eckermann, "there be a moral in the subject it will appear, and the poet has nothing to consider but the effective and artistic treatment of his subject. If a poet has a high soul, his treatment will always be moral, let him do what he will."[1]

Poetry teaches as life and nature teach; a great poet is necessarily a teacher by virtue of the profundity, purity, and comprehensiveness of his insight. His creations are, in Plato's noble phrase, *φαντάσματα θεῖα καὶ σκιαὶ τῶν ὄντων*—divine phantoms and shadows of realities; and so Goethe, with no less truth than beauty, speaks of poetry as a veil woven of the morning fragrance and the sun's lightness from the hand of truth:

> Aus Morgenduft gewebt und sonnenklarheit
> Der Dichtung Schleier aus der hand der Wahrheit.

[1] *Conversations with Eckermann*, Oxenford Ed., Bohn, p. 226.

Without disputing the title of Pope's *Rape of the Lock* and *Essay on Man*, or Crabbe's *Borough* and *Tales of the Hall*, or Cowper's *Task*, or Goldsmith's *Deserted Village*, or Gray's *Elegy*, or innumerable works in rhythm or metre such as all literatures abound in, to a distinguished place in poetry, we must yet feel that there are some properties or qualities of poetry regarded, as we have just seen it regarded by Jonson and Milton, which are not present in such poems. We must, too, have the same feeling with regard to many works which deservedly enjoy a very high reputation as poetry, to Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, to Byron's *Childe Harold* and *Don Juan*, for example, on the one hand and for some reasons, to Keats' *Eve of Saint Agnes* and William Morris' *Earthly Paradise* on the other hand and for other reasons—we must feel that they are separated from poetry of the first order by differences not simply of degree but of kind.

And this is indeed the case, and it is well for us to understand that this is the case. We have so abused the name of poetry, so prostituted and degraded it by light and frivolous and even by scandalous and immoral uses and associations, that, as a name, it has almost ceased to have any serious significance. A loose and careless notion that its chief end is to please, and loose and careless habits of abandoning ourselves to its mere aesthetic charms and to the attractions of its sensuous and superficial graces, have all contributed to the same result. But if poetry is to be to us what it is of power to be, what it ought to be, and what if faith and hope are to be kept alive it must be, we must go back to the old conception

of it, when men believed that inspired poets were the prophets and messengers of God. We must seek in it what men sought, and found in it, when Aristophanes could say, "Children have the schoolmaster to teach them, but when men grow up the poets are their teachers";[1] when Aristides the orator could say that "they were the common tutors and teachers of all Hellas"; when Horace found in Homer a sounder and clearer moral philosopher than either Chrysippus or Crantor, and our own Milton in Spenser, that "sage and serious poet who I dared be known to say was a better teacher of truth than Scotus or Aquinas." We must not accustom ourselves to think of poetry as illusion, still less to understand by it what Pater and his school tell us we are to understand by it, namely, "all literary production which attains the power of giving pleasure by its form as distinct from its matter," but to have quite other notions of what is to be understood by it. And here I cannot but protest against an altogether unwarrantable perversion of Aristotle's theory of tragedy, for which Professor Butcher in what is unfortunately a text-book in our Universities appears to be mainly responsible. We are told that Aristotle "attempted to separate the function of aesthetics from that of morals," that "he made the end of art reside in a pleasurable emotion," that he says "nothing of any moral aim in tragedy." The fifth, the thirteenth, and the twenty-fifth chapters of the *Poetic* amply and absolutely refute such an hypothesis. On nothing does Aristotle lay more stress than on the moral function of tragedy, as his

[1] *Frogs*, 1055-56.

very definition of tragedy shows. He maintains, indeed, that the end of poetry is pleasure, but he is careful to add that it must be the proper pleasure, and, implicit in the proper pleasure, is moral satisfaction.[1]

Very felicitously does Shelley say that poetry is "the record of the best and happiest moments of the happiest and best minds, the interpenetration of a diviner nature through our own, redeeming from decay the visitations of the divinity in man." In its excellence and majesty it is the incarnation of ideal truth, the "breath and finer spirit," as Wordsworth puts it, "of all knowledge." It is, therefore, its august prerogative, not indeed to supply for us the place it supplied in ancient Greece, the place of theology, but to stand to theology in the same relation as Sapience in Spenser's sublime fiction stands to the Divinity—

> The sovereign darling, the consentient voice,
> Clad like a queene in royal robes most fit
> For so great power and peerless majesty.
> And all with gems and jewels gorgeously
> Adorned, that brighter than the stars appeare,
> And make her native brightness seem more cleare.[2]

True it is, as we must all feel, that man's state would indeed be forlorn, if his only lantern were the lantern of traditional dogma, or if his horizon were bounded by what the senses or by what reason can reveal—forlorn, indeed, would he be without these "lords of the visionary eye." Breath is not life, nor is what *seems* what *is*. Slaves as we are of the

[1] See particularly chap. xxvi.

[2] *Hymn to Heavenly Beauty*, 184-189.

senses, we call the visions of poetry illusions, but are they not the only realities? "You admire that picture," said an old Dominican to Rogers at Padua, as they stood contemplating a picture of the Last Supper in the refectory of the Convent. "I have sat at my meals before it," said the old man, "for seven-and-forty years, and such are the changes that have taken place among us—so many have come and gone in that time—that when I look upon the company there, upon those who are sitting at that table, silent as they are, I am sometimes inclined to think that we and not they are the shadows." And the old man was right, right in a far deeper meaning than he meant or knew, piercing to the very core of the relation in which truth embodied in poetry stands to the truth of what, let us hope, we falsely call reality. Well did Tennyson say, as according to his son he did: "Poetry is truer than fact."[1]

In the *Convito*[2] Dante tells us that there are four senses in which poetry is to be taken, the literal, the allegorical, the moral, and the anagogic or mystical, and it is the last which is concerned with its highest mission. In poetry of the secondary order these elements exist in singularity, or, at most, enter imperfectly into its composition, in great poetry, assuming their fullest proportions, they are blended

[1] *Life*, vol. ii, 129.

[2] "Le scritture si possono intendere e debbonsi sponere massimamente per quattro sensi. L'uno si chiama litterale . . . il senso allegorico secondo che per li poeti è usato. Il terzo senso si chiama morale. . . . Lo quarto senso si chiama anagogico cioè sovra senso."—*Convito, Trattato Secondo*, cap. i.

and fused. It is so with the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, with the *Aeneid*, with the *Divine Comedy*, and with the epics of Spenser and Milton; it is so with the great Attic tragedies and with the dramas of Shakespeare; it is so with the lyrics of Pindar and with the poems most characteristic of Wordsworth.

Poetry, in its transcendental activity, is the revelation of the infinite and invisible in the finite and seen, in its ethical activity the sublimation of man's human duties and obligations; of his conscience and impulses at once the legislator and inspiration, of his passions and cares the solace and tranquillity; in its aesthetic activity it turns all things to loveliness and music. Delivering "authentic tidings of invisible things," it is the voice of that peace "subsisting at the heart of endless agitation"; it is the eye

> With which the Universe
> Beholds itself and knows itself divine.

And, therefore, it is in its transcendental and ethical aspects that poetry is most precious and furthering, and so the Greeks felt. Who can forget the lines in Hesiod?

> εἰ γὰρ τις καὶ πένθος ἔχων νεοκηδεῖ θυμῷ
> ἄζηται κραδίην ἀκαχήμενος, αὐτὰρ ἀοιδὸς
> μουσάων θεράπων κλεῖα προτέρων ἀνθρώπων
> ὑμνήσῃ· μακαράς τε θεοὺς οἳ Ὄλυμπον ἔχουσι,
> αἶψ' ὅγε δυσφρονέων ἐπιλήθεται, οὐδὲ τι κηδέων
> μέμνηται· ταχέως δὲ παρέτραπε δῶρα θεάων.[1]

(For if anyone having grief in his newly-stricken soul, pines with sorrow in his heart, and a minstrel, the henchman of the muses, chants the glorious deeds of the men of old time, and the blessed Gods whose home is in Heaven, straightway he

[1] *Theogony*, 98-102.

forgets his sorrows and remembers not his griefs, so quickly beguiled are they by the gifts of the goddesses of song.)

Of all the evils which can befall poetry, the worst are to link it with sensuality and obscenity, to constrain its heavenly voice to express or attempt to consecrate the grosser instincts and appetites of man's mortal nature, and to link it with pessimism. To link it with pessimism is to repeat the horrid crime of Mezentius, to bind the living to the dead; to link it with sensuality and obscenity is blasphemy in the most repulsive form which man's blasphemy can assume.

Perhaps nothing can illustrate more strikingly the difference between ancient and modern conceptions of the functions of poetry than the attitude of contemporary criticism towards such poetry as the poetry of Keats on the one hand and that of Wordsworth on the other. Of the first no one can deny that the eulogies of Matthew Arnold, now commonplaces which need not be repeated, express nothing further than literal and measured truth, and that when Tennyson said that there "was something of the innermost soul of poetry in almost everything Keats had written," he said what every discriminating critic of poetry would concede. But is the corollary of this the superiority of the poetry of Keats to the poetry of Wordsworth, his admission into the ranks of the lords of his art? Are we to say of a poet whose most characteristic work may be described as Othello describes Desdemona

> Thou art so lovely fair and smell'st so sweet
> That the sense aches at thee—

are we to say of the poet of the *Ode to Autumn*, the Odes *To a Nightingale* and *On a Grecian Urn*, of the *Eve of Saint Agnes*, and of the sonnet "Bright Star," etc., that he has enriched poetry with contributions more precious than the *Ode on the Intimations of Immortality*, the *Ode to Duty*, *Laodamia*, *Tintern Abbey*, the best of Wordsworth's lyrics and sonnets? Compare the note of:

> What care, though striding Alexander past
> The Indus with his Macedonian numbers?
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Julia leaning
> Amid her window-flowers,—sighing,—weaning
> Tenderly her fancy from his maiden snow,
> Doth more avail than these; the silver flow
> Of Hero's tears, the swoon of Imogen,
> Fair Pastorella in the bandit's den
> Are things to brood on with more ardency
> Than the death-day of Empires—

with this note:

> Live, and take comfort. Thou hast left behind
> Powers that will work for thee: air, earth, and skies,
> There 's not a breathing of the common wind
> That will forget thee: thou hast great allies:
> Thy friends are exultations, agonies,
> And love, and man's unconquerable mind—

or the note of:

> "Beauty is truth, truth beauty"—that is all
> Ye know on earth and all ye need to know—

with the note of:

> Stern Lawgiver! yet thou dost wear
> The Godhead's most benignant grace
> Nor know we anything so fair
> As is the smile upon thy face:

Flowers laugh before thee in their beds
And fragrance on thy footing treads;
Thou dost preserve the stars from wrong,
And the most ancient heavens through thee are fresh and strong—

or the note of:

Still, still to hear her tender-taken breath
And so live ever—or else swoon to death—

with the note of:

E venni dal martirio a questa pace.

Keats, with his magical faculty of presentation and expression, his unerring artistic tact and bewitching power of piercing into the innermost soul of sensuous beauty, to represent it in a thousand forms of loveliness and radiance, has been the very Lorelei of modern poetry, and has done more than any of the divine brotherhood to which he undoubtedly belonged to vindicate, in the judgement at least of inferior disciples and critics, the disastrous separation of aesthetic from ethic and metaphysic. It is not difficult to understand what Ruskin meant when he said that "he dare not read Keats," or to apply Newman's lines to what is most entrancing in his work:

Cease, stranger, cease, those piercing notes,
The craft of Siren choirs;
Hush the seductive voice that floats
Across the languid wires.

Music's ethereal fire was given
Not to dissolve our clay,
But draw Promethean beams from Heaven
And purge the dross away.

It cannot, therefore, be urged too insistently that

we must go to poetry, not for what poetry of this kind can give us, not for what much poetry of a high order of artistic and aesthetic merit does not contain and appears to have no concern with;—we must go to it in its higher manifestations, go to it for illumination and furtherance spiritually and morally.

When we rise to a conception of what should constitute the education of our citizens, which partly owing to the narrow esotericism of our scholastic systems, and partly in consequence of the necessarily preponderating claims of scientific and technical instruction, we have not yet done, then poetry will come to fill the same place in our systems of civil culture as it filled in that of the Ancients. Then, for the barren and repulsive word-mongering and phrase-splitting which too often represents what is supposed to constitute the only serious method of dealing educationally with it, we shall have the counterpart of what Plato has described for us in the *Protagoras*:

When the boy has learned his letters and is beginning to understand what is written, as before he understood only what was spoken, they put into his hands the works of great poets, which he reads at school: in these are contained many admonitions, and many tales and praises and encomia of ancient famous men which he is required to learn by heart, in order that he may imitate or emulate them, and desire to become like them. Then, again, the teachers of the lyre take similar care that their young disciple is temperate and gets into no mischief; and when they have taught him the use of the lyre, they introduce him to the poems of other excellent poets who are the lyric poets; and these are set to music and make their

harmonies and rhythms quite familiar to the children's souls, in order that they may learn to be more gentle and harmonious and rhythmical, and so more fitted for speech and action.[1]

We shall employ poetry, the best poetry, as an instrument of moral and political discipline, making its study as delightful as profitable. And then we shall perhaps understand what Xenophon meant when he made Nikeratus say, "My father, anxious that I should become a good man, made me learn all the poems of Homer by heart; for if any of us, he said, wants to become a prudent ruler of his house, or an orator, or public servant, let him know Homer well";[2] what Plutarch meant when he said that poetry must initiate us in philosophy;[3] what the Roman anecdotist meant, when he said that poetry was of more benefit to the young than all the lectures of the Greek philosophical schools, and even attributed to its influence the virtues of Camillus and Fabricius;[4] what Lord Chatham meant when he wrote to his nephew at Cambridge.[5]

[1] *Protagoras*, p. 326, Jowett's version. And with what Plato says about the importance of poetry as an instrument of education should be compared the excellent remark of Quintilian, *Inst. Orat.*, I, viii. See also Lucian, *Anacharsis*, 21, 22.

[2] *Symposium*, cap. iii, 5.

[3] ἐν ποιήμασι προφιλοσοφητέον.—*De Aud. Poet.*, cap. i.

[4] Valerius Maximus, ii. 1-10.

[5] *Letters to Thomas Pitt*, pp. 6-7; cf. with this Shelley, *A Defence of Poetry*. "Homer embodied the ideal perfection of his age in human character: nor can we doubt that those who read his verses were awakened to an imitation of becoming like to Achilles, Hector and Ulysses: the truth and beauty of friendship, patriotism, and persevering devotion to an object were unveiled to the depths in these immortal creations."

I hope you taste and love Homer and Virgil—you cannot read them too much; they are not only poets, but they contain the finest lessons we can learn, lessons of honour, courage, disinterestedness, love of truth, command of temper, gentleness of behaviour, humanity, and, in one word, virtue in its true signification: drink as deep as you can of these divine springs.

The Greek custom of training the young to commit to memory as much as possible of the writings of classical poets cannot be too much commended, nor can there be a greater mistake than to substitute the writings of minor and inferior poets, on the supposition that they will be more intelligible and attractive. The full meaning, it is true, of what is learned will not be understood, nay perhaps little more than the sensuous charm of harmonious numbers, and what is most obvious in significance will appeal; but, as the application of heat brings out the characters of some forms of secret writing, so life's progressive experience will decipher wisdom and beauty and power where almost all that attracted before were the graces of style and the music of rhythm. On this subject I cannot refrain from quoting a singularly beautiful passage from Newman:

Let us consider how differently young and old are affected by the words of some classic author such as Homer or Horace. Passages which to a boy are but rhetorical commonplaces, neither better nor worse than a hundred others, which any clever writer might supply, which he gets by heart and thinks very fine, and imitates, as he thinks, successfully, in his own flowing versification, at length come home to him when long years have passed and he has had experience of life, and pierce him as if he

had never heard them with their sad earnestness and vivid exactness. Then he comes to understand how it is that lines, the birth of some chance morning or evening at an Ionian festival or among the Sabine hills, have lasted generation after generation for thousands of years, with a power over the mind and a charm which the current literature of his own day, with all its obvious advantages, is utterly unable to rival.[1]

Not till we link the serious study of the best poetry of the best nations and pre-eminently that of Ancient Greece and England with all such studies as bear directly on religious, on moral, and on political culture, shall we be adequately fulfilling the educational responsibility which the changed conditions under which we are now living, have entailed upon us.

But, regarding the question from this point of view, we must distinguish. No one can doubt that our confused and inadequate definitions of poetry, at once springing from, and leading to confused and inadequate notions of its nature and its aims have arisen from our not distinguishing between its higher and lower manifestations, between its functions as the greatest of the world's poets conceived them and its functions as poets of a secondary order have conceived them. As long as we accustom ourselves to place loosely in the same category and to label with the common name of "poetry" the *Prometheus Bound* and the *Rape of the Lock*, the Odes of Pindar and the Odes of Prior, the *Attis* of Catullus and the *Ode on the Intimations of Immortality*, our conception of what constitutes, or should constitute, "poetry," from an educational point of view, is not likely to be

[1] *Grammar of Assent*, p. 78.

sound and furthering. I am here pleading that poetry, as a medium of civil culture and discipline should, both in elementary and advanced education, have far more importance attached to it than is attached to it at present, that in this respect it should be to us what it was to the ancient Greeks. It can never hold that place until we distinguish between its interest, value and charm aesthetically and in relation to art, and its value and power spiritually and morally in relation to theology and ethics. The only instance known to me, in modern times, of an attempt to assign it such a place in education is John Wesley's association of the *Faerie Queene* with the Old and New Testament in the course of study drawn up by him for theological students.

It is no paradox to say, that to the properly directed study of the best poetry we must now look, at least mainly, for the guidance, illumination and solace which we shall seek in vain elsewhere. The creeds and codes which have no collateral security in rational ethics and in what the inspired insight of "sage and serious poets" has revealed, are daily losing their efficacy and are indeed hard upon dissolution. In their very constitution there is a fatal flaw predestining them to destruction, for, in that constitution, not only is no distinction drawn between fiction and truth, in other words between the symbol and what is symbolized, but more importance is attached to the first than to the second. It is here that poetry comes to the rescue, for in poetry the distinction is clear; what is symbolized is everything—the kernel, what is symbol is separable and nothing—the husk.

In every stage, therefore, of education, in the

nursery, in the schoolroom, at the Universities, it would be wise of us to apply poetry to far more serious uses than those to which it is commonly applied. It should fill, I repeat, the same place in our system of education as it filled in that of the ancient Greeks, and become the chief medium not merely of aesthetic but of religious and moral discipline.

APPENDIX.

See page 210.

PROFESSOR ROBERTS is, on the whole, to be congratulated on his work as an editor and translator, for, if in the first capacity, he cannot claim distinction, he possesses, in a high degree, competence, and if, as a translator, he is at times perhaps unnecessarily periphrastic, he is often happy and almost always trustworthy and vigorous. Of his scholarship, it may be said that it is "magis extra vitia quam cum virtutibus," cautious, sober, and sure-footed, but never brilliant. Thus, if it does not actually break down at what may be called crises, it almost always disappoints. Wherever a real difficulty occurs, the chance is always, that it will either be adroitly avoided or be left in perplexing ambiguity. Such is the plight in which *ἔνθεν ἑλών* in section xxxv (4) is left, and *δαπανῶν* in section xliv (11). The retention of the absurd *βάθους* at the beginning of the second section, as well as the rambling indecision of the note is an illustration of the same infirmity. Similar weakness is displayed in the choice of readings, such as the rejection of Bentley's certain and brilliant emendation *ἀπαστράπτει* in section xii and the adherence to the untenable *ἐπέστραπτει* of the Paris manuscript; or again, the rejection of the Paris *ᾐθῶν* and the adoption of Tollius' conjecture, *εἰδῶν*, though no one could put the case for *ᾐθῶν* better than Dr. Roberts has done. Nor is Dr. Roberts' scholarship, sound though it generally be, impeccable. In section i, *ἀθρόαν ἐνεδείξατο δύναμιν* is not, as the context shows, "displays the power

(of an orator) *in all its plenitude*," but "all at once," "at a stroke." In section viii, γονιμώταται is rather "most fertile" or possibly "most genuine," certainly not "principal," and the words which follow προϋποκειμένης ὥσπερ ἐδάφους τινὸς κοινοῦ ταῖς πέντε τάυταις ἰδέαις τῆς ἐν τῷ λέγειν δυνάμεως would be better turned "a natural faculty of expression being assumed to underlie these five varities as . . ." than "beneath these five varieties there lies . . . the gift of discourse," which is not only bald, but inadequate. To translate τόπος in xvi and in xvii as "place," is entirely to miss the meaning. Again, ἦθος in section xxix cannot mean "delineation of character," and the note on this difficult and important word is most inadequate. In section xxiii, the rather difficult word δοξοκοποῦντα is very loosely rendered as "impress" in the translation, and explained quite wrongly in the note, nor can ὁλοσχερῶς in section xliii possibly mean "in massive images," but "generally" *summatim*, or ἀμέλει "for instance."

In the *locus vexatissimus* in section xvii, καὶ πως παραληφθεῖσα ἡ τοῦ πανουργεῖν τέχνη τοῖς κάλλεσι καὶ μεγέθεσι . . . δέδυκε, etc.—a passage most inadequately dealt with by Dr. Roberts—it is to say the least very doubtful whether παραληφθεῖσα τοῖς κάλλεσι can possibly mean "when associated with beauty," nor does his alternative proposal, "when introduced by" much mend matters. Toup's conjecture παραλειφθεῖσα and Ruhnken's proposal to read παρακαλυφεῖσα and to take τοῖς κάλλεσι with δέδυκε, both of which Dr. Roberts omits, might have been considered, and should certainly have been mentioned. Nor is he more successful with the difficult passages which closes section x, where by misinterpreting the plain meaning of μεγέθη and inserting ἐς on his own authority, he gives a totally wrong impression of the meaning of the whole passage.

But the capital defect of Dr. Roberts as an editor and interpreter does not lie here. Surely the first duty of a commentator on a Greek critic should be to explain the exact meaning of Greek critical terms; what, for example, to go no further than this treatise, were the precise or modified significations of *δεινότης*, of *γλαφυρός*, of *ἀφελεία*, of *ψυχρότης*, of *ἀδρός* and *ἀδρεπήβολος*, of *ζῆλος*, and *κακόζηλος*, of *διαίρειν* and the terms derived from it, of *ἄνθος* and *ἀνθηρός*, of *ἦθος*, and the like. This can only be done by careful deduction and illustrations from the Greek critics with the collateral interpretation afforded by the Latin. All that represents this in Dr. Roberts' work is a very meagre glossary, correct as a rule, so far as it goes, but too indeterminate and jejune to be of much use to serious students. In one respect, Dr. Roberts may be praised without reserve, and that is in his rigid conservatism and in his refusal to corrupt his text with unnecessary conjectural emendations, such as Tucker's absurd *ὁ Μῶμος αὐτοῦ* for *ὅμως αὐτὸ* in section xxxii, and his almost equally ridiculous *εἰδυλλικῶς* for *ἡδὺ λιτῶς* in xxxiv. He has thus uttered a silent protest against the most odious and mischievous pest now epidemic among inferior classical editors. His translation may fairly be pronounced to be the best which has yet appeared in English, for it is as a rule both spirited and accurate.

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