INTER ARMA

EDMUND GOSSE

INTER ARMA

OTHER WORKS BY
MR. EDMUND GOSSE

Northern Studies. 1879.
Life of Gray. 1882.
Seventeenth-Century Studies. 1883.
Life of Congreve. 1888.
A History of Eighteenth-Century Literature. 1899.
Life of Philip Henry Gosse, F.R.S. 1890.
Gossip in a Library. 1891.
The Secret of Narcisse: a Romance. 1892.
Questions at Issue. 1893.
Critical Kit-Kats. 1896.
A Short History of Modern English Literature. 1897.
Life and Letters of John Donne. 1899.
Hypolympia. 1901.
Life of Jeremy Taylor. 1904.
French Profiles. 1904.
Life of Sir Thomas Browne. 1905.
Father and Son. 1907.
Life of Ibsen. 1908.
Two Visits to Denmark. 1911.
Collected Poems. 1911.
Portraits and Sketches. 1912.

INTER ARMA

BEING ESSAYS
WRITTEN IN TIME OF WAR

BY

EDMUND GOSSE, C.B.

OFFICIER DE LA LÉGION D'HONNEUR

LONDON
WILLIAM HEINEMANN
1916

London : William Heinemann, 1916.

TO

THEIR EARLIEST READER

HAROLD COX

THESE ESSAYS ARE CORDIALLY

INSCRIBED

I have to express my best thanks to Messrs. Longmans, the publishers of the *Edinburgh Review*, for their courteous permission to reprint these Essays, all of which have appeared in the pages of that periodical.

E. G.

PREFACE

It is probable that when the terrific storm, which is now blowing through almost every country of the world, has subsided, and when we experience the full results of a cataclysm so unparalleled, the movement of the European mind during the war may become a subject of philosophic curiosity. On August 1, 1914, we were wakened out of an opiate dream of prosperity and peace, a dream in which the images of life recurred as on a kind of zoetrope, with a lulling uniformity of repetition. So it was, so it had been, so it would ever be, the only possible change being that everybody must grow richer, that life must become more luxurious, and that the orb of moral and intellectual experience must wheel ever more and more hugely around a secure and radiant society. And then, with a stage suddenness, Berlin unmasked itself, and the self-sufficiency of Europe was shattered.

Between our old sleepy quietude and the inconceivable and immeasurable novelties which await the world when all this chaos is harmonised again there lies a period of storm, a sort of belt or stratum, dividing the life we knew from the life which we cannot yet so much as conjecture. At first, many of us thought that literature would hold no part in this sphere of tempest, that in

company with the arts and sciences it would withdraw from public view, and reappear only on the wings of peace. But as a matter of fact it has been with us, patently, from the first, and is now present more than ever. Only it has changed its aspect and its character; it has largely modified its range of subjects. But the habit of writing, of expressing emotion in letterpress, has reached a point in the history of mankind at which we may expect almost any other form of action to recede before it. We have discovered in the course of the present crisis that the first thing people want to do is to fight, and to prepare for fighting, but that the next thing is to write and to arrange for writing to be printed.

The character of what has been written since the war began has differed in proportion with the differences of temperament in the men and women who have written it. But I think we may notice one element of uniformity. No one has been able to speak, at all events no one has succeeded in being listened to, who has not in some direction or another been intensely affected by the vast sequence of events in the course of the war. This has been no time for piping lullabies out of the top windows of the ivory tower. It is noticeable that a thrill of personal excitement in the author is necessary if he is now to reach an audience at all. Even those who think themselves justified in setting their own academic prejudices and mechanical opinions against the great unity of the nation's purpose, even these men, whose action is irritating to us, exact our attention because they are excited. The war affects them violently,

although, as we firmly believe, wrong-headedly. They are not indifferent, and it is indifference which in this belt of storm is utterly excluded. We cannot fail to note that the current literature of the neutral nations has absolutely ceased to interest the Allies, even when it discusses our political situation. Its Laodicean lukewarmness excludes it from our attention. We cannot read anything which does not vibrate with the energy of the moment.

But the man of letters who is torn from his customary province, whatever that may be, and who is drawn by his emotion into the whirlpool of the hour, cannot change his nature, and that emotion has to be expressed in terms of his own intellectual habits. He must be careful not to allow his zeal to drag him into employments where he will be, not only of no use, but perhaps, in his small way, an encumbrance. The author, untrained in military affairs, who is led by his ardour to criticise the conduct of the allied generals in the field, is apt to cut a sorry figure. At best, he is like the clown in the circus, who gives directions after the grooms have carried them out. At worst, he increases the public confusion and adds his atom to the distraction of disorganised opinion. It is, perhaps, best for him to pursue his accustomed lines of study, allowing all his thoughts and views to be saturated by the passionate interest he takes in the war, and so react, in his own way and to the extent of his own powers, against the satiety and lassitude which the extraordinary prolongation of the struggle inevitably produces.

There is an excellent reason why those who write with some seriousness and care should continue during the war to be careful and serious. It has hardly been enough observed that we have sent out for our national defence in this war a soldiery far more widely and deeply educated than has ever been the case before. This is true of our French allies even more fully than of ourselves, while from my personal knowledge I can testify that the Russian soldiers expressly desire not to have "light literature" or the ephemeral forms of fiction sent out to them, but crave a supply of solid and thoughtful, even of instructive books. Every author who has for many years held the ear of the public, within however confined a circle, must be aware of a curious, and an affecting, fact. A large proportion of those who habitually read him, and whose minds have become attuned to his, are separated from him by leagues of sea, and are occupied in noble and unprecedented service.

To attempt to instruct such readers in a duty which they understand in far better detail than he does would be ridiculous. But in the weariness of the interminable campaign their minds revert to the mental occupations of their old life. It appears that they have, often, much leisure, and books are forwarded easily and safely to their camps. As a matter of fact, the booksellers tell me that there has been of late a remarkable export of books to our troops. I have consented to the republication of these essays, which have appeared successively in the *Edinburgh Review*, because they

represent the direction of my own thoughts under the excitement and anxiety of the war, and because I hope that some of those readers who have so long been indulgent to me in peace, may consent to renew their conversations with me during this indescribable interval of tempest. I offer them such a *causerie* as might occupy a little of our time if I was fortunate enough to meet them face to face. And let us exchange our passing impressions now, for when peace comes we shall all have other things to think of.

EDMUND GOSSE.

March 1916.

CONTENTS

WAR AND LITERATURE

WAR AND LITERATURE

WAR is the great scavenger of thought. It is the sovereign disinfectant, and its red stream of blood is the Condy's Fluid that cleans out the stagnant pools and clotted channels of the intellect. I suppose that hardly any Englishman who is capable of a renovation of the mind has failed to feel during the last few weeks a certain solemn refreshment of the spirit, a humble and mournful consciousness that his ideals, his aims, his hopes during our late past years of luxury and peace have been founded on a misconception of our aims as a nation, of our right to possess a leading place in the sunlighted spaces of the world. We have awakened from an opium-dream of comfort, of ease, of that miserable poltroonery of "the sheltered life." Our wish for indulgence of every sort, our laxity of manners, our wretched sensitiveness to personal inconvenience, these are suddenly lifted before us in their true guise as the spectres of national decay; and we have risen from the lethargy of our dilettantism to lay them, before it is too late, by the flashing of the unsheathed sword. "Slaughter is God's daughter," a poet said a hundred years ago, and that strange phrase of Coleridge's, which has been so often ridiculed by a slothful generation, takes a new and solemn significance to ears and eyes awakened at last by the strong red glare of reality.

But it is impossible, after recovery from the first violent shock to our attention, that we should be able to preserve a philosophical attitude in daily life. United as we happily are, purified as our large conceptions of duty must become under the winnowing fan of danger, it is scarcely within the power of those of us who do not enjoy the signal privilege, the envied consecration, of actual fighting—it is hard for those who are spectators, however strenuously set in heart to share the toils and sufferings of their luckier and younger brethren—not to turn, by instinct, to the order of ideas with which we are, or until now have been, each one of us, particularly engaged. The artist cannot help considering how the duration of war will affect the production and the appreciation of pictures and statues and music, since, however wide and deep the desecration of harmony may go, these things must eventually rise again and reappear above the welter. The man of science has to put his investigations and his experiments on one side, yet the habit of his brain is too ingrained to enable him to forget the relations of knowledge to life, or to lose the conviction that scientific development must proceed the moment that the arresting violence of war is relaxed. And the lover or student of pure literature needs accuse himself of no levity if his mind, also, strains forward with anxiety, and compares with our own cataclysm the catastrophes of former times. The present pages will contain some observations, not on what is called " the literature of war," but on the effect of war upon the lives of men of letters.

At the outset of the great contest, the attention of all civilised nations was fixed upon the martyrdom of Belgium, and the destruction of her premier university by the impious Uhlans gave the sympathy of the world a special acuteness. A sort of spasm of rage passed through the hearts of all cultivated persons at the news, at first received with utter incredulity, but soon confirmed, of the wanton sack of Louvain. From the purely educational point of view, though the anger caused by this act could not be excessive, the regret might be. The English and French newspapers, in their righteous indignation, spoke of Louvain as they might of Oxford or Paris. But, for eighty years past Louvain has not been one of the State universities of Belgium; its educational importance has not approached, nor been on the same lines as, that of Ghent, or even of Brussels. Louvain, which in the later middle ages was the centre of Flemish learning, has never really recovered from the fate which befell it at the close of the eighteenth century. It has been carried on unofficially, as a Catholic centre of teaching, by the personal efforts of the bishops, although it is true that in comparatively recent years other faculties than that of theology have been represented in it. The real horror of the crime at Louvain was æsthetic rather than educational. The library was far richer than the newspapers have reported; the burning of its MSS.—they included, I believe, an inedited correspondence of Erasmus—permanently impoverishes the history of the country. Of the artistic value of the buildings destroyed—the Church of St.

Pierre, the Clothmakers' Halles of 1317—the only consolation we can have is to know that these glorious relics were already very largely "restored." So far as pictures are concerned, one of the most important early Flemish masters, Dierik Bouts, seems to be almost wiped out. A circumstance which should not be overlooked, surely, is that these outrages on history and art were perpetrated, not by ignorant savages, but by highly-educated officers amply instructed in the spiritual value of the objects which they sacrificed to their vanity and frenzy.

But, however deeply we regret the abominable destruction of works of art, the paralysis of living intelligence is an even more serious matter. For a long while past the astonishing development of the Belgian mind, as displayed in a triple literature, has been watched in Germany, and noted by German professors, with patronising envy. It has been observed, first with surprise and then with annoyance, that a little country no larger than a Teutonic province, tucked into a corner between the sea and two great powers, a country without a dominant language, without a decisive capital, a mere political expression, has since 1880 ventured to display, in defiance of the menacing shadow of Germany, an intellectual activity, French, Flemish and Walloon, in which German *kultur* has found no place. It has not been agreeable to the professors of Berlin to be obliged to admit that the greatest poet of Europe at the opening of the twentieth century is unquestionably the noble Emile Verhaeren, a Fleming

of the Antwerp district, writing consistently in French. It has not been to their taste to watch the advance of Maeterlinck, of Camille Lemonnier, of Eugène Demolder, writing in French, or of the less known and perhaps less brilliant, but numerous and enthusiastic, new school of authors, composing ardently in Flemish and even to some extent in Walloon.

This is an aspect of the war which, in our natural absorption in vaster interests and more directly material features, has not yet received attention in England. So lately as 1868, Taine, in a survey of intellectual conditions in the Low Countries, remarked with regret of the Flemings that " ils ne peuvent citer de ces esprits créateurs qui ouvrent sur le monde de grandes vues originales, ou enchâssent leurs conceptions dans de belles formes capables d'un ascendant universel." This was perfectly true before the great war of 1870; it was still true a decade later. But about the year 1880 a most remarkable effort was made by Belgium to redeem her peoples from intellectual sterility, and since that time no country of Europe has come forward in literature so rapidly as she. A generation, joyously greeted at home as " La Jeune Belgique," stimulated by the ideas which were stirred in close spectators of the last great war, yet protected, in a highly-prosperous country, from the actual miseries and denudations of that struggle, dared to inaugurate a literary revolution against the cut-and-dried theories of their elders, and found for the first time a fitting expression in verse and prose for the rich, full-blooded, highly-coloured genius of

Flemish life. In this movement, encouraged by the praise of Paris, undeterred by the sneers of Berlin, the pioneers were Max Waller, who died prematurely in 1889, and the admirable poet of Louvain, Albert Giraud, of whom I know not whether he is alive or dead. This exuberant school of writers, now as broad as Rubens in their joyous painting of life, now as exquisite as the traceries of their medieval architecture, had been, up to the summer of 1914, producing abundant work of a kind not exactly paralleled in any other country.

In the matter of speech, of course, the possession of a single language has been denied to the Belgians. Their poets and novelists have to take their choice between a tongue which is shared with France or one which is almost identical with Dutch. But their genius, taking different manifestations from individual minds, is yet national and peculiar to Belgium. It has been observed that the greatest Belgian writers of to-day are Flemings by birth, education and character; and even Maeterlinck, who has long inhabited France, alternately residing in Normandy and in Provence, is still a pure Fleming of Ghent in his dramas. There is no modern writer more national than Verhaeren, and to study his poems is to gain such an impression of "Toute la Flandre" as is to be found nowhere else. It should be interesting to note that when, in 1881, the "Jeune Belges," in a now-famous manifesto, announced their intention of creating a national literature, they were met with coarse ridicule in Germany, and recommended to stick to the prosy business of their trades. They

did not heed the warning, and in thirty years they have enriched their country with a fine harvest of masterpieces.

This literature of Belgium has now been trodden into the mud by the jack-boot of the Prussian. Let us not forget, in our legitimate indignation at the destruction of medieval relics, that Germany has committed in Belgium—to speak for the moment only of Belgium—a still greater crime against light and learning. We have to consider the conditions of mental life in this gallant and unfortunate country. It is a commonplace to say that Belgium is the battlefield of Europe; it is more, it is the graveyard of successive generations of Flemish aspiration. Since the sixteenth century, when its earliest civilisation was withered by the agitations of the Spanish invader, until the close of the war of 1870, when the assurance of its neutrality gave it at last a basis of hope and energy, Belgium never had breathing space. Sacked by the armies of Louis XIV, flung by the Treaty of Utrecht on to the pikes of Austria, overrun and annexed by the French in 1795, torn and tortured by European diplomacy in the days of Waterloo, not given, until 1830, the shadow of individual sovereignty, the insecurity of existence in Flanders and Brabant through all these centuries could but detach the minds of men from the creation of works of the imagination. Who writes great poems when the spectres of famine and fire are prowling round his homestead? After the last war all this was ended, as the Belgians thought, as all the rest of Europe, with one sinister ex-

ception, believed. The neutrality of Belgium, solemnly reasserted and confirmed, was a sacred basis for the intellectual life of the little admirable country to build upon. She was no longer so fragile, no longer so timorous, and she builded the beautiful structure which Germany has now cynically and brutally destroyed.

When we turn to the contemplation of our beloved France, we have not, we can never have, to endure so lamentable a catastrophe. However sorely tried, the genius of the French must recover from its momentary misfortunes, since it is an essential portion of the spiritual wealth of the world. As I write these pages, in the nightmare of events, with the reverberations of the combat stunning the sense by their rapid and violent development, I cannot tell how the fortunes of France may have brightened or darkened before this essay finds a reader. Much must be lost before anything is gained, and we must harden ourselves to remember with equanimity, what the Spanish proverb tells us, that often the best of acorns is munched by the worst of swine. But of the ultimate salvation of the genius of France, he would be a cowardly pessimist who should doubt for a moment. If the lovely provinces from Dunkirk to St. Jean de Luz, from Brest to Menton, were wholly overrun by barbarians, if everything we have honoured and delighted in were obscured, and if the lamp lay shattered in the dust, still the world would not despair for France. In the last hour the horn of Roland must sound from the dark gorge of Roncevaux, and angels must descend from heaven with vengeance

against the enemies of France and of God. In these dreadful times we may keep our spirits up by reading the *Chanson de Roland* once again.

But, for the moment, the splendid activity of the literature of France is at a standstill. It is poignant and yet irresistible to turn over the last books which came from Paris in those final weeks of July, books that fluttered on to one's table like unsuspecting sulphur-coloured butterflies fallen from a soft blue summer sky. I give myself the sad pleasure of naming the latest that came, and I cannot, in this emotional crisis, adopt the publicist's high impartiality. They are all the books of friends, of old and valued friends, workers serene and busy in their distinguished environment when July ended, and now out of touch and knowledge, vanished from the sight of affection, whirled like atoms of gold-dust in a sahara-storm of war. Let me name them, this final quartette of noble books that came to me from France. Here is the *Voix d'Ionie* of Francis Vielé-Griffin, " voix claire et parfaite et rieuse," a reissue in collected form of the recent poems, all on Greek subjects; of one of the most accomplished poets of the last generation; here is the *Un Voyage* of Jacque Vontade (" Fæmina "), the leading woman-essayist of contemporary France, author of that excellent *Soul of the English* which has been welcomed by so many responsive readers in this country; her last journey was made through Belgium, Holland, and Germany, and her new book, full of penetrating observation, is already a curiosity, since it contains the latest record of the life of central Europe, in its old un-

reformed condition, which literature will offer us. Here are two novels, the *Romaine Mirmault* of M. Henri de Regnier, and *Le Démon de Midi* of M. Paul Bourget (a double butterfly this, and a blue one), which I read and re-read with an emotion quite unrelated to their purely literary merit, because of the pictures they give of that *beau pays de France* which slumbered so unalarmedly in the shadow of its poplars only a few weeks ago.

The sentiment of confidence, of uninterrupted peace, is curiously spread over these four books, and unites them, in spite of their mutual unlikeness, in one haze of serenity. Here is the breathless hush before the tempest breaks. Peace breathes from out " Fæmina's " delicate and discriminating pages. In Belgium, recalling the shock of battles long ago, she asks " Comment discerner la moindre trace de ces forces cruelles dans la placide finesse, la bonhomie des visages? " Even in the towns of Germany, to the attention of this acute analyst of phenomena, " l'instinct de batailles et de meurtre s'est endormi, le cœur d'amour dure et veille, mêlé à l'atmosphere dont il approfondit la reveuse sérénité." Marvellous words whose publication preceded by a few days such a magnetic storm of treachery and loathing as the world had never seen before.

It is impossible to form at present any clear notion of what has become of the various elements of French literary life in this sudden dislocation of the entire social system. The young men went forth to fight; the older ones, and the women-writers — dispersed through the provinces, or active in benevolence at the

seat of war—almost immediately disappeared. But it is admissible to notice that the very first direct victim of the war was an eminent man of letters. In ordinary times, the death of Jules Lemaître would have attracted wide attention in every country of the world; in France columns in all the newspapers would have been devoted to his career and labours. Coming, as it did, but two days after the declaration of war, it was almost unnoticed even in Paris. But "without the meed of some melodious tear" so beautiful a figure must not be allowed to vanish. Lemaître had been in failing health for several months, and at last he had been persuaded to leave Paris, and retire to his native village of Tavers, on the north bank of the Loire, a few miles below Orléans. Here, in the calm of this delicious place, in the house where he was born, he was recovering serenity and health, when a newspaper announcing the declaration of war was put into his hands. He fainted at the shock, never recovered his senses, and died two days later (the 6th of August).

Jules Lemaître was, if not the greatest, certainly the most charming critic of his age. No mind more subtle than his has ever been directed to the interpretation of literature, and particularly of the drama. It cannot be doubted that his series of volumes called "Les Contemporains" did more than any other single work to formulate and regulate taste in Europe at the close of the nineteenth century; he began their publication when he was only twenty-five, and he continued it for ten years. Of his later books, his poems, his plays, his

enchanting lectures, his essays, this is not the place to speak, but posterity—if this war with savages should leave a place for posterity—will not forget them. Jules Lemaître, a typical Frenchman of the finest breed, bland and gracious, but with a capacity for sternness, was, like the Cardinal in *Henry VIII*—

> "a scholar, and a right good one,
> Exceeding wise, fair-spoken and persuading;
> Lofty and sour to them that lov'd him not,
> But to those men who sought him, sweet as summer."

The only previous catastrophe which can be compared with the present war, in its relation to the intellectual life, is that of 1870–1. To realise faintly what is now the condition of literature in France we ought to have before us the parallel of what happened then. But it is a curious fact that the French do not seem to have made any special record of this side of the matter; at all events, I have been unable, among the almost innumerable memoirs of the war of 1870, to find one which confines itself, or deals expressly with, the disturbance in literature and the fine arts. Lavisse has a very just remark about the condition in the autumn of that year; "Toute la vie de la France," he says, "se taisait." To break this silence, which still subsists, we must grope about among individual biographies, and bring forth such evidence as may be revealed, as it were under the breath of the speaker, or in an agonised aside. It has seemed appropriate, at this moment, to describe—and partly from unpublished sources—how the calamities which followed Sédan,

and particularly the siege of Paris, affected some of the most famous writers of the time. There can be no doubt that our brethren in France have suffered already, and will increasingly suffer, the same disabilities and injuries and sorrows. To know how the blow fell upon their fathers may help us a little to appreciate how it is falling upon them.

Some days before September 4, 1870, Victor Hugo broke the chain of his long exile, and came back to Paris, where he was met at the railway station by shouting crowds. He addressed a rather pompous proclamation to the German nation, of which, as was to be expected, the Prussians took not the slightest notice. Hugo then applied himself to bringing out a new edition of *Les Châtiments*, and it is worth noting that this was the principal, indeed the only, literary success of the season. There were sold 100,000 copies of these inflammatory and pathetic poems, which were distributed about as commodities rather than as books. By the end of October hawkers from ambulatory stalls were selling piles of *Les Châtiments* among pieces of cocoa-nut, flannel vests, and packets of chocolate. Victor Hugo gave the entire profits to the provision of cannon and ambulances; the principal pieces were recited, by leading actors and actresses, in the squares of Paris. His restlessness became great; he went to Brussels, back to Paris, made excursions to the provinces, even, for a short time, entirely unrecognised, lodged *incognito* in London. It is to be observed that Hugo wrote two large volumes during the height of the war—*L'Année*

Terrible, much overpraised by Swinburne, and *Actes et Paroles*, which is simply a collection of all the appeals, speeches, letters, and manifestos which he had written since the proclamation of the Republic. But neither was published until the war was well over. The revival of *Ruy-Blas* at the Odéon was hailed as marking the return of legitimate drama; we may notice that this took place in February 1872, eighteen months after the war broke out.

Most of the elderly authors were struck dumb with consternation, and either died before the Germans left France, or remained in a state of suspended animation. The Nestor of them all, Guizot, was just eighty-three when war was declared, and he was totally unprepared for it. He had been anticipating a sort of millennium, and suddenly all his optimism fell from him. He was at his country house in Normandy, and he took to his bed, a wise thing for a very old man to do. There, while he lay and rested, his energy slowly came back to him and, weak as he was, he determined to do what he could. He wrote two famous letters, one to Mr. Gladstone, the other to Samuel Wilberforce, Bishop of Winchester, fervently praying for the intervention of England. When no answer came, or lukewarm expressions of civility which were worse than none, energy once more seized the noble old Guizot. He rose from his bed and came up to Versailles, where he begged Thiers so insistently to convoke a synod of the Protestant churches that this was done, and Guizot presided. The vortex of things whirled him back to

Normandy, and there he endured the shock of the death of one friend after another, even at last that of his devoted daughter, Mme. de Cornelis de Witt. With intrepid persistency he contrived to finish the fourth volume of his great history of France, and his last written words were " Je laisse le monde bien troublé. Comment renaîtra-t-il? Je l'ignore, mais j'y crois. Dites-le, je vous prie, à mes amis; je n'aime pas à les savoir découragés." And his wonderful heroic optimism returned, even in the hour of dissolution, for, on the day he died (September 12, 1874), he lifted himself on his pillows, with shining eyes called his attendant to him, and whispered " Personne n'en est plus sûr que moi." What Guizot was so sure of was the revival of civilisation, the renewal of piety and pity. Shall we to-day be less confident than he?

Alexandre Dumas *père* was in the precise situation in which it would be most unfortunate for an old man to be discovered by the thunderbolt of ill-fortune. Worn out with his colossal work, extravagant in his whole conception of life, Dumas had made no species of provision for the future, and was immediately and completely ruined by the war. He retired to his son's house at Paris, where he fell into a sort of stupor. He was utterly tired out, and when those around him asked whether it would not rouse him from his gloom to write a little, the old novelist replied, " Oh! no, never again." Almost his last words were: " They say I have been a spendthrift. But I came to Paris with twenty francs, and," pointing to his last piece of gold

on the mantelpiece, "I have kept them. There they are!" He died on December 6, in the darkest hour of the defeat of the army of the Loire and the recapture of Orléans. The German occupation of the country made it impossible to give his body public burial till February 1871, when the family took the coffin to Villars-Cotterets, his birthplace. When the death of Dumas was officially announced to the French Academy a thing happened which had not happened since the great Revolution—the election of a successor could not take place because only thirteen of the Academicians could be communicated with, no election being valid unless more than twenty take part in it.

The behaviour of individual men of letters, of the elder generation, depended, of course, upon their temperament. Jules Janin, who had just been made an Academician, in the room of Sainte Beuve, gave way to the counsels of despair; he abandoned literature, his friends, and the world. With a pet parrot in a cage as sole companion, he withdrew to his châlet as soon as the Germans approached Paris, and came forth no more. Littré, on the other hand, displayed an admirable calm. When the enemy threatened Paris in September 1870, Littré proposed to remain, but his friends obliged him to retire to Bordeaux, where Gambetta, in January, contrived to found a chair of history and geography for his support. He sat, as a republican, as Deputy for the Seine in the National Assembly, and although he was unable to speak in public, the Government availed themselves to their great advantage of his

vigorous and weighty reports. Littré was not merely a prince among linguists, but an independent and liberal thinker, who kept up the courage of others by wise and prudent counsel. A different fate attended a different man when Jules Sandeau, who had long been the petted librarian of the imperial palace of St. Cloud, was doomed to watch the conflagration of both palace and library. He was suddenly turned adrift with a pension of two thousand francs a year. Sandeau was perhaps the earliest of the great French writers to return to work, for he published his last and worst novel, *La Roche aux Mouettes*, before the close of 1871.

Younger men, who were nevertheless too old to be sent out to fight, suffered more than their elders or juniors, and doubtless will always, in like occasion, suffer most. The instance of Flaubert is tragic in the extreme. He had always looked upon war with detestation, and to the last he refused to believe that it was imminent. Flaubert thought that the whole of Europe should be ruled by one beneficent tyrant, specially preoccupied with the protection of art and letters. When the Germans entered France, he was at Audemer, feeding his soul with the husks of empty hope and vain illusion. When Rouen was occupied he was seized with hysteric frenzy, and gathering together all his books, his letters, his manuscripts, he burned them. Prussian soldiers were billeted on his house, and as they entered, Flaubert collapsed in a fit of epilepsy which was the worst he had ever endured, and which threatened at first to be fatal. They moved him to Paris, and he

recovered a measure of health; it is characteristic that even in his anger and his despair, literature never ceased to occupy the thoughts of Flaubert. But it took a sombre colour of its own, quite unlike any aspect with which it had faced him before. He wanted to write novels about Sédan, and dramas about the occupation of Normandy. He proposed to add a second part to *L'Education Sentimentale*, bringing it down to date. He wandered among the smoking ruins of the Commune, murmuring "Quelles brutes! quelles brutes!" and rehearsing the sentences in which he would immortalise their crimes.

Théophile Gautier, too, had always dreaded every form of political and military disturbance. His attitude is perhaps the most pathetic that we discern, possibly because its pathos was so obvious at the time. Gautier, the most beloved writer of his age, a glowing exponent of the pure spirit of beauty, not to be thought of in connexion with darkness or ugliness or dejection, "being," as Swinburne said of him, "so near the sun-god's face," had suffered cruelly in previous distractions, and particularly in those of 1848. He was a gorgeous heliconian lepidopter to whom a drop of rain was ruin. Poor Gautier, when the Prussians formed round Paris, said—

"If I knew an honest Turk who loved French verses, I would settle in his house at Constantinople: in exchange for a few sonnets to the glory of the Prophet, I would beg for a dish of pilaw to eat, a tchibouck to smoke, a

carpet to lie down upon, and I would try to forget that I was born into the races of the West, those races that murder and burn and steal, and then turn and say 'I am civilisation!'"

Presently, he longed to lie down, not on a carpet but on the pavement of the street, and die. There was a legend that he "retired into his tower of ivory," but Gautier had no such retreat. He was assailed by the blackness of poverty, and Du Camp describes meeting him during the siege, dragging his limbs, prematurely old, his magnificent eyes veiled under their puffed eyelids, and answering, when asked how he was, "Saturated with horror!"

A group of some of the most interesting men of letters in France had been in the habit of dining together at the Café Brébant, and it appears from diaries of the time, and particularly from the Journal of Edmond de Goncourt, that they kept up this practice through the siege and well on into the excesses of the Commune. Here Renan, Paul de St. Victor, and Berthelot were constant attendants, and others, now less famous, who enjoyed some private means and were not entirely dependent on their pen for a dinner. We have strange glimpses of their melancholy symposia: St. Victor wailing out his apocalyptical visions of Death on the pale horse galloping over the fields of France, Renan throwing his arms up to heaven and quoting long passages of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, Goncourt cynically exciting the others to fury by his ironies, Berthelot

losing himself in ingenious theories of what chemistry might do to annihilate the German army with explosives and miasmas hitherto undreamed of by mankind. Across this lugubrious company we see passing the strange figure of Zola, occupied with the plan of a series of novels, "an epic in ten volumes," on the life of a modern family of France—a scheme which worked itself out eventually, in many volumes more than ten, as the famous "Rougon-Macquart" series. But Zola, who was much younger than the rest, is the only one of these men of letters who is displayed to us as continuously involved in literary ambition. For the rest, the horrible months, the interminable, desolated, mutilated months, were mere tracts of intellectual wilderness.

In this desert there were some oases of confidence and courage. It is, indeed, curious to note the apparent contradictions which we meet with in the records of that time. On one hand we seem to see a complete paralysis of social order and habit; on the other, within the same stricken city of Paris, life appears following its usual course with singular docility. In contrast to the attitude of Gautier and Flaubert, we must observe that of Gaston Paris, who had just been elected to the Chair of Romance Languages at the Collège de France, and who had announced his first lectures for the autumn and winter of 1870. He was urged to abandon them, but he refused, and, wonderful to relate, they were largely attended. A distinguished French writer, who was a youth at that time, and an auditor of these lectures, tells me that the noble calm of Gaston Paris,

his serene enthusiasm for learning, and his skill in illustrating by medieval examples the unconquerable genius of France, had a miraculous effect in comforting and strengthening young men through those sinister weeks of depression.

The conditions of life during the war of 1870–1 are reflected in several books which are little known in England, and which have a vivid and poignant interest for us to-day. The poet and academician, Victor de Laprade, published in 1872 a volume written " Pendant la Guerre," which is well worthy of resuscitation. Laprade, however, gives the provincial and not the Parisian point of view, and his observations were made in Lyons, where, having suffered heavily under the Empire for the independence of his political utterances, he was living at the outbreak of the war in honourable seclusion. But a still more valuable work—and that, perhaps, which gives the very best impression of the mental disturbance caused by the agitations of hope and fear during the invasion—is *Une Famille pendant la Guerre*, which consists of letters supposed to be written, and doubtless in the main really written, from country villages in different parts of the invaded provinces during the whole time that the Germans were in France. This book was written by a young woman of great penetration of mind, whose name was Boissonas. It was not printed until 1873, when it enjoyed a wide success, but it has long been out of print. It would be a very useful step for some publisher now to take to reissue these admirable impressions.

The bewilderment of spirit, the species of hallucination into which intellectual people, doomed to inaction, fell is well illustrated by an incident which I owe to my valued friend, his Excellency the French Ambassador in Washington. It refers to Sully Prudhomme, who was the youngest hope of French poetry when the war broke out in 1870. Sully Prudhomme had greatly desired to fight, but the state of his health made it impossible. He remained in Paris, a prey almost to despair. Gaston Paris, who was Sully Prudhomme's greatest friend, told M. Jusserand that during the siege of Paris the poet was crossing the Place St. Augustin when he lost his way. He asked a man to guide him and was shown his direction, but falling again immediately into a lugubrious reverie he lost it before leaving the Place. He was obliged to ask his way once more, but unfortunately he did so of the very man he had asked originally, who had stopped there watching the odd movements of the poet. This man, now assured that all was wrong, called out "A spy! a spy!" A crowd gathered, two gendarmes hurried up, and Sully Prudhomme was hustled very roughly a long way off to the Hôtel de Ville. Once there, explanations were easy, and full apologies were tendered to the already-famous author of *Les Epreuves* and *Les Solitudes*. The authorities courteously asked what they could do to express their grief at so wretched a mistake. "Only this," Sully Prudhomme replied; "let me go back to the Place St. Augustin arm-in-arm with the same two gendarmes who brought me hither."

Sully Prudhomme was one of the few pure men of

letters in whom the creative imagination was not paralysed during the war. He wrote a little sheaf of pieces called *Impressions de la Guerre*, which belong to the spring of 1871, and these bear upon them, in their imperfection, signs of the intense and painful agitation of the author's mind. As often occurs in like occasions, the emotion in the poet's brain was too violent and too immediate to allow of due artistic expression. At such times, little is effective in poetry save the denunciations of unmeasured anger. But some of Sully Prudhomme's tender fancies are very pathetic. He addresses the blossoms which sprang from the battlefields of the north of France in the April of 1871: he reproaches these *fleurs de sang* with their careless beauty—

" O fleurs, de vos tuniques neuves
Refermez tristement les plis :
Ne vous sentez-vous pas les veuves
Des jeunes cœurs ensevelis ?

A nos malheurs indifférents,
Vous vous étalez sans remords :
Fleurs de France, un peu nos parents,
Vous devriez pleurer nos morts."

Somebody, in the course of 1871, ventured to rally Victor Hugo on the relaxation of his zeal for the form of government which he had so long and so enthusiastically recommended. The poet admitted that the Commune had, for the time at least, taken away his appetite for republics. Much more positive injury was done to art and literature by the Gardes Nationaux than by the Germans, and this is a fact which must

ever be galling to French self-respect. We may almost set against the crime of Louvain the destruction of the Library of the Louvre, the old Bibliothèque du Roi. Under the Commune the thirty volumes of the Trésor de Noailles, the seven hundred volumes of the Gillet and Saint Genis collections, perished by fire. The wretches poured petroleum on the book-shelves, and soaked the bundles of priceless manuscripts; then they set flame to the whole and fled. Out of the neighbouring windows of the Louvre, the custodians gazed with blanched faces, and asked one another "Will it be our turn next?" According to a story which lacks confirmation, the blowing-up of Notre Dame had been decided upon by the Communard Government, and was only prevented by the exertions of the young poet, Verlaine, who had been made Chef de Bureau de la Presse. These were not times in which the intellectual part of Paris could keep calm from one hour to another.

During the siege, it is not too much to say that every brain was occupied with the nightmare caused by lack of food. This alone made mental concentration impossible. There is no more curious evidence remaining than is given in some verses written by Victor Hugo, in a balloon-epistle, on January 10, 1871. It may not be poetry, but it is amazingly vivid—

> "Nous mangeons du cheval, du rat, de l'ours, de l'âne.
> Paris est si bien pris, cerné, muré, noué,
> Gardé, que notre ventre est l'arche de Noé;
> Dans nos flancs toute bête, honnête ou mal-famée,
> Pénètre, et chien et chat, le mammon, le pygmée,
> Tout entre, et la souris rencontre l'éléphant."

Prussia, the gigantic tigress, held Paris in her claws, and was biting the great palpitating heart of France, and the form her death-stroke took was starvation. There was no exaggeration in Hugo's catalogue of foods. One night, at Brébant's, what was called a roast saddle of mutton was served to the men of letters. It was admirably cooked, but a waiter admitted that it was really the side of a Newfoundland dog. The hypersensitive Renan, who had swallowed a mouthful, turned green and rushed from the table; the rest, more philosophical, decided that whatever the mutton might be zoologically, it was delicious; and they finished the "saddle." Ingenious ideas about food and cooking more and more absorbed their thoughts as the siege progressed.

The element of noise, again, recurs incessantly in the memoirs of the war, and this produced in the minds of sensitive and imaginative persons a perpetual agitation. The constant riot of explosions and detonations, rumblings and tramplings, made all effort to sustain thought impossible. The attention was at every moment terrified and distracted. Again, Paris was burning on both sides, "l'éternel incendie" of St. Cloud was followed by the endless conflagration of Auteuil. The artillery of the Germans, and then that of the Versaillais, shook the houses to their foundations in perpetual earthquakes, so that pictures and bric-à-brac had to be put in cellars, while books were shaken off their shelves, and lay in dog's-eared heaps along the floors. It was not until the fall of the Commune and the resumption

of something like steady government, that Paris began to recover from these distracting conditions, and accordingly it is not until after June 1871 that we begin to find literature reasserting itself, and pushing frail shoots up from under the deep layer of dust and scoria that the war had spread over it.

Then it was that, as Théodore de Banville has assured us, Gautier, who had been lying on his bed every day from morning to night, dozing, and reading over and over again the same classic verses, woke up in his narrow bare bedroom in the Rue de Beaune and began to write *Emaux et Camées* once more. Then it was that Flaubert, over whom the cataclysm seemed to have passed without altering an iota in his character or habits, brought out the MS. of *La Tentation de Saint Antoine* and became absorbed in its elaboration. But it was not until December that Edmond de Goncourt—who may be taken as the purest type of the normal man of letters, entirely devoted to the profession of literature, but not, like Flaubert and Gautier, detached from all other interests—that Goncourt was able to settle his mind to the fabrication of a novel. We may say that the war caused a suspension in France of all literary composition of the higher kind during sixteen or seventeen months.

But it is important to observe that this was a suspension, not a determination. On the face of a history of French literature in the nineteenth century the war of 1870–1 makes scarcely a scar. Even in the biographies of men of letters it is discovered only as a

halting-place, not as a break in continuity. A long illness or a voyage round the world would compete with the war of 1870–1 in the mark it might make on the continuous production of a French poet of that age. Those who had private resources withdrew very carefully to their shelters, and sucked their paws like bears till the long winter of their discontent was over. In many cases the war stored up their talents, and concentrated their powers. In particular, it intensified their capacities. People who had loved the fatherland coldly in times of piping peace, blew the coals of their hearts up into a living flame, and the enchantment of France reasserted itself. When the enemy was gone, they took up their work, on the old lines, but with threefold and fourfold zeal. The temper of French imaginative literature is clearly displayed in a fine series of sonnets by Sully Prudhomme, written some years later, called *La France;* space does not lend itself here to long quotation, or I would print in this connexion that which begins : " Vous qui, des beaux loisirs empruntant les beaux noms." Germany strove to quench the inner flame on the altar of French genius, and she hardly succeeded in extinguishing for the moment a few candles at the church-door.

When we turn to conditions in our own country, we must remember that the effect of such a war as we are conducting is not comparable with that produced in France by the invasion of 1870. If we were, indeed, to be successfully invaded, the entire outlook of literature in England would be modified to a degree which

it is now useless to attempt to foresee. We have a solemn confidence in our navy, and we do not allow ourselves to imagine so great a calamity as its defeat. There is, therefore, no reasonable fear of such a catastrophic cessation of all literary activity as was produced in France early in the month of August, 1914. But the absorption of interest, concentrated on the action of the Allies and on nothing else, had the effect of closing down as immediately, although not so violently or completely, the traffic in books in London. In Paris, during the first weeks of this war, new works by popular authors which had been selling in very large numbers, died finally and suddenly. For instance, the novel by M. Paul Bourget—*Le Démon de Midi*, of which I have spoken—had been selling at the rate of several hundreds a day. After the declaration of war, as I am told, not one single further copy was bought. If we take into consideration the fact that August and September are the months during which the sale of books in England is normally at its lowest, it may be that the decline, though rapid, was not abrupt. A country whose soil is not in imminent danger must always be slower to realise its position than a country actually invaded.

Nor has anything yet happened which should completely cut off the stream of current literature. It will be to the interest of the publishers, even at a greatly diminished profit, to keep that stream flowing as long as they can, in order to float upon it the works which they have paid for, printed and bound, ready for the autumn season which they expected. Of these it is

reasonable to expect that a great many will in due course succeed in being issued, and that every attempt will be made to secure for them what distracted attention a public exercised in other directions can possibly be induced to spare. It is even conceivable that a certain animation of the book-trade may display itself in the late autumn, and an appearance of vitality be evident. How it is to be evinced in a world from which the publisher's advertisement and the book-review have alike vanished, it is rather hard to say. But what we must really face is the fact that this harvest of volumes, be it what it may, will mark the end of what is called "current literature," for the remaining duration of the war. There can be no aftermath, we can aspire to no revival. The book which does not deal directly and crudely with the complexities of warfare and the various branches of strategy, will, from Christmas onwards, not be published at all.

Authors, therefore, if they have not the privilege of fighting, or of otherwise taking active part in the defence of our country, will be subjected to the most painful restrictions. They will have to breathe, as well as they can, in a Leyden jar of neglect and oblivion. When the mountains and the heritage of Esau were laid waste by the dragons of the wilderness, we are told that those who feared the Lord spoke often one to another. In the coming days of drought and discomfort, while so much active benevolence is distributed, the authors of England will be drawn more and more to one another, and must organise, without fussiness

or self-advertisement, more and more effective schemes of mutual help. Young writers, in particular, will be sure to suffer, and those branches of literature which are most delicate, admirable and original will be attacked suddenly, and for the time being fatally. For the rubbishy romance, "without a dull page from cover to cover," and for the popular essay made up of daisy-chains of commonplace reflection, we need feel no regret. The silencing of these importunate babblings will be a public benefit. But the writer who, at the outset of what promised to be a brilliant career, was concentrating the intensity of his energies, without thought of gain, on the production of works of positive merit—he deserves and he must receive from those who value the intellectual wealth of the nation, all the succour that can be spared to him. For he also is a patriot who dedicates his imagination to the glory of his country.

October 1914.

The Effect of the War on Literature

Watching the great war is like looking through a kaleidoscope, the pattern of which changes at every touch. The essay printed above was written at our darkest moment, when the long army of the Germans was sweeping upon Paris with what seemed to be an uncontrollable fury. Through the mercy of God that fury was presently controlled by a feat of arms on the part of the army of the Allies which I believe that history will regard as little less than miraculous. The

situation at the close of September may be held to account for a tone which might not unfairly be regarded as too gloomy. It was not that I doubted of the issue, but that I thought it only too probable that for the time being French civilisation would be swept out of existence, as that of Belgium has in effect been swept, and that the intellectual life of England, by a reverberation of sympathy, would be hardly less completely disorganised. In glancing over what I then wrote I see that I carried too far the analogy of France in 1870–1. Then, undoubtedly, a paralysis fell upon the literature of France, from which it did not recover till the Germans consented to withdraw from the soil of France.

In turning to probable conditions in our own country, however, I was not even then tempted to suppose that the effect of the war could approach what we saw in France in 1870, or what I feared we were about to see in England. I said, as firmly as I could, that I saw no reasonable fear of such a catastrophic cessation of all literary activity in England as was unquestionably produced in France in August 1914. But I admit that I expected—and I know that many capable observers expected with me—that what is called "current literature," that is, the publication of books not dealing directly with the war and the issues arising from it, would cease for the remaining duration of the struggle. I prophesied, in groundless forebodings, "there can be no aftermath, we can aspire to no revival." It is a positive luxury to look back on those words and to admit with the deepest satisfaction that they were un-

founded. After months of magnificent effort in other and far more essential directions it is, I think, wonderful to observe not how much, but how little, the intellectual energy of the nation has been either depressed or disconcerted. It is, perhaps, interesting to note what the general result has been.

For one thing, the literary favourites of the public, who were expected to relapse into utter silence, like songbirds in August, have with scarcely an exception continued to express themselves. Even the professors, instead of sulking because no one any longer cared about Greek prosody or the botany of Central Africa, have ventilated their patriotism with great vivacity in a perfect hailstorm of pamphlets. The Pamphlet, which had almost ceased to be a branch of literature except in the hands of Mr. Balfour, has taken a new and even an unprecedented lease of life. There was nothing to equal it in the days of Tractarian Oxford, and to find a parallel we must go back two hundred years to the days of the Bangorian Controversy. The perfidy of German militarism is inexhaustible, and the exposure of it has inspired an incalculable number of paper-bound octavos. The activity of the poets, too, has far exceeded all previous human computation. No earlier war, in any country, has inspired such a whirlwind of verse. I remember being told by Robertson Smith that at one time the living poets of Arabia numbered one thousand and two, but that was in an age of peace. The war-poets of England must number far more than that. This redundancy of verse shows

that the war has not disturbed our literary ambition as a race.

The poems and the pamphlets are short. Of long books on subjects neither military nor political I confess that the output does seem to be comparatively scanty. But when in Paris almost all the serious reviews ceased to appear, and when the solitary survivor, the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, shrank to the dimensions of a tract, I did not find our graver periodicals affected. The *Journal of Egyptian Archæology* continues to enlighten us, although bombs may any morning be dropped upon Beersheba; Mr. Russell calmly goes on distinguishing Sensation from Imagination in the pages of the *Monist*. These particular magazines are beyond my grasp, but I take a solemn satisfaction in their appearance. While gentlemen of the highest erudition continue to discuss *Newton's Hypotheses of Ether and Gravitation* I feel that I should bemean myself if I despaired of the Republic. The recent publication of a work on *Homogeneous Lineal Substitutions* cheered me more than any amount of attacks on the horrors of Prussianism, because I felt that so long as such abstruse productions could find their market in England our confidence in Lord Kitchener and Sir John Jellicoe must be absolutely unruffled.

So far, then, the effect of the war on literature seems to me mainly to have been a winnowing away of those interests which have never been very firmly rooted in our habits. That is to say, there has no doubt been a great reduction of the reading which was carried on,

if we may say so, for reading's sake. There is a tremendous difference between the class that takes up a book because it must be doing something and the class that would rather be reading than doing anything else. The former departs when its interests are distracted; the latter continues until its very existence is attacked. The former returns to its light and broad allegiance the moment that the pressure of outer excitements is removed. The latter, if once uprooted, floats disconsolate and is not easily refixed. That the purely intellectual energies of the country, which six months ago I too readily believed would cease to act in literary form, have not been radically disturbed is, I think, plain from a multitude of signs. Bodies engaged in organised intellectual effort, such as the British Academy, the Academic Committee, and the Bibliographical Society, have not suspended their labours nor their meetings. I believe that in many of these instances there were propositions and suggestions of faint heart, but that in almost all these were rejected, and surely with a wise instinct of patriotism.

A friend of mine in Paris, an author of high repute, who has given up everything else to devote himself humbly to the aid of the wounded, wrote to me last year that "The man of letters cuts a poor figure in these times." In France, it is evident, he makes no great show outside the columns of the newspapers, where writers like MM. Alfred Capus, G. Hanotaux, Maurice Barrès, and the late Comte de Mun have kept since the war began at a very noble level. But France

is too deeply wounded, with the long gash in her side, to write many books yet or to read them. In England, although we are very angry, zealous, and devoted, there is not the material disturbance which the actual presence of an enemy in the land must cause. The publications of the Pipe Roll Society continue, and the Geological Survey of Scotland pursued its petrological observations even when there were German submarines bobbing at the mouth of the Mersey. It is partly because the inhabitants of this country have a genius for keeping calm in trying circumstances, and partly because the circumstances have not yet become, and we earnestly hope will never become, so trying as to overwhelm all the lifelong and instinctive interests of non-combatants. The novel, that petted Cinderella of literature, is thoroughly well able to look after itself. I waste no anxiety over it. The novelists have always been the first to profit by prosperity and the loudest to scream at adversity. But even the novelists, led by Mrs. Humphry Ward, Mr. E. F. Benson, and the author of *Sinister Street*, seem to be doing as well as could be expected.

On the slippery path of predicting what will happen to English literature after the peace I will not be so rash as to set my foot. But while the war proceeds, and especially as the vehemence and onset of it are damped down by the inevitable exhaustion of the enemy, we may expect to see all that is genuine and sincere in literature and science hold its own. No brilliant effusion of talent, no exploration of new fields, can be expected or even desired. But we shall, I think,

see a quiet persistence along the old paths, and we may be comforted by the disappearance of a good deal that was merely histrionic. The self-advertising mountebank will grow tired of standing on his head in the empty market-place. We may probably hear very little more about "vorticists." But those branches of learning and letters which do not depend upon advertisement, but pursue their own labours for the love of them, are likely to be less affected by the torment of war than we were prepared to believe when first it thundered upon us out of a sky which seemed to be, relatively, not less blue than usual.

April 1915.

THE UNITY OF FRANCE

THE UNITY OF FRANCE

We are all of one mind in admiring, and often with an admiration bordering upon amazement, the magnificent temper in which the heroic French nation has faced its stupendous hour of trial. But there is a danger that the nature of the national fortitude should be misapprehended in this country, and as a fact much has been hastily said on this subject in the English press which is not founded on a close study of recent history. From every point of view it is unjust and unseemly to proclaim our surprise at the heroism of the French, and to assume that the calm of the population, and its confidence, and its unity, are due to a sudden miracle supernaturally brought about by the act of mobilisation in August 1914. To assert this, and to talk, as too many English publicists have done, of a New France, created at the moment of the declaration of war on purpose to resist the advances of Germany, is not merely, in my opinion, to state a matter of history incorrectly, but it is to do a grave injustice to the intelligent evolution of French sentiment. The France which is now so gallantly fighting with us and with the rest of the Allies to prevent the triumph of Teutonic evil is simply the France which has long been in preparation for a life-struggle with the powers of darkness.

Those who detested France and had every spiritual and material reason for depreciating her values continued to repeat, with nauseous iteration, that she was in full decadence, and that her race was eaten out to the core by the white ants of social disorder. The disputes of radicals and moderates, of socialists and reactionaries, of anti-militarists and clericals, were pointed to with glee as the evidences of ethical chaos in a bewildered people, and events like the Caillaux trial and its result saddened the best friends of France as much as they were exulted over in Berlin. What has not been understood has been the superficial character of these symptoms. The pretended levity of Paris was all on the surface, and even there, if the exotic elements were eliminated and the action of the parasitic population removed, there was little for a formalist to condemn or even reprove. What in the charming gaiety of the French might seem, in face of the most painful contingencies of the moment, to be frivolous, was thrown like a gauze veil over the harsher lines of life. This complaint of the levity of France is one of the poorest excuses which dulness can make for its own want of amiability. No one has put the matter more vividly than Voltaire when he says: "Il me semble que la vertu, l'étude et la gaieté sont trois sœurs quil ne faut point séparer." For our own part, so far from reproaching France with her frivolity, we should be inclined to regret the increasing seriousness of the national countenance, which of late years has seemed less and less ready to break out into those ripples of laughter which have always fascinated the nations.

Yet, if France has of late laughed less, her smile has on occasion been more beautiful than ever.

There is more reason in the objection that has of recent years been brought against the French people for an apparent want of internal harmony and evenness in its treatment of political and social aims. In the ardent struggles of French thought during the last two decades, it has, indeed, been sometimes difficult to trace that continuity of purpose which should be the aim of public life. The constant disturbances, the angry wranglings, the battles royal between Labour and the Army, the Church and the Republic—these have often, we admit, been depressing to those of us who have loved France best. It is very difficult for eyes that watch, however benevolently, another nation from a distance, to avoid misapprehension of developments which are unfamiliar in their kind. But reflection will persuade us that even the social agitations which have so often bewildered us in recent French politics were founded on generous instincts. They were conducted in the interest, often, no doubt, in the mistaken and even the perverted interest, of equity and justice. They were exasperating in their form, and they led to deplorable episodes, but in their essence they were not ignoble. At the basis even of their irregularities it was always possible to trace a zeal for first principles and the universal rights of man, no less than for the emancipation of intelligence and for the progress of civilisation. Even the crisis of Dreyfusism, which saddened and bewildered the rest of the world, and in some of its features presented an

aspect of unrelieved distress, even this melancholy affair revealed marvellous examples of high civic courage. It is not too much to say, that after all these years it is the intrepidity of the combatants, far more than their confused and squalid struggle, which remains vivid to us when we look back on the dismal swamp of Dreyfusism.

We do well, therefore, to protest against this talk of a New France, risen, like a phœnix out of the funeral pyre of the old, for the instant purpose of combating the arrogance of Prussia. The France of to-day is splendid, but its effort is not miraculous; it has long been prepared for by the elements of its ancient and continuous civilisation. Those who watched the nation closely before the outbreak of this war have no cause for surprise, though much for gratulation and thankfulness, in the evolution of national character; it is welcome, but it is no more than we expected. For fifteen years past it has been impossible for an unprejudiced and perspicacious observer to fail to see that France has been gathering her moral forces together, simplifying her political attitude, preparing without haste for concerted action. The superficial agitations in the social life of the country have been vastly exaggerated and seriously misunderstood by foreign observers. It is evident that in Germany, with the brutal superficiality of a race equally hostile and unimaginative, they were seized upon with alacrity and grotesquely overestimated. It seems important to meet the calumnies of foes and the bewilderment of friends by a statement of the unbroken essential tradition of France.

The importance of cultivating an intellectual and moral unity in the thought of France was insisted upon by Renan so long ago as at his entrance into the French Academy thirty-six years ago. If there is anything with which we may venture to reproach our admirable French friends, or certain of the most ardent of them, it is with their recent ungracious attitude towards this eminent man. It is true that in this matter England has no right to adopt an attitude of reproof, so long as a section of our press and people continues to attack one of the noblest of living patriots—a great statesman, a great philosopher—in accents of virulent ingratitude. The fact that Renan is discovered, by a recent publication, to have corresponded civilly with his brother Hebraist, David Strauss, has been sufficient to draw down upon him absurd and ignorant charges of having his "spiritual home in Germany," and has been used to revive the idle and malignant gossip of Edmond de Goncourt in his too-famous *Journal*. It seems impossible to make the flightier part of a population, already somewhat upset in nerves by the terrific events of the last few months, realise that knowledge is not necessarily approval, and that the sternest reprobation of the political crimes of a country can exist side by side with an appreciation of special work done by private hands in a particular department. But France will certainly recover her recognition of the value of Renan, and England, in a parallel case, will not always continue churlish to one of the most devoted of her servants.

It is well to remember what, in that beautiful *Discours*

de Réception (April 3, 1879), Renan said to the Academicians. "Où est donc votre unité, Messieurs? Elle est dans l'amour de la verité." He dwelt, in language which has singularly the accent of to-day, upon the radical error of Teutonism. His words deserve to be recalled to memory, so strikingly do they foreshadow the moral stigma which events have fastened upon Germany. Renan said, while entreating the Academicians to support and to unify the ancient and beautiful culture of their own race—

"Vous vous inquiétez peu d'entendre annoncer pompeusement l'avènement de ce qu'on appelle une autre *Kultur*, qui saura se passer du talent. Vous vous défiez d'une *Kultur* qui ne rend l'homme ni plus aimable ni meilleur. Je crains fort que des races, bien sérieuses sans doute, puisqu'elles nous reprochent notre légèreté, n'éprouvent quelque mécompte dans l'espérance qu'elles ont de gagner la faveur du monde par de tout autres procédés que ceux qui ont réussi jusqu'ici. Une science pédantesque en sa solitude, une haute société sans éclat, une noblesse sans esprit, des gentilhommes sans politesse, ne détrôneront pas, je crois, de sitôt, le souvenir de cette vieille société française si brillante, si polie, si jalouse de plaire."

Nothing could be more pointed, while the reproach is pressed in the great writer's best style of prelatical irony, and the only objection to it is that the arrow is too delicate to pierce the thick hide of the Boches. But here we have a Frenchman of genius, so long ago as

1879, coming forward as what M. Paul Margueritte, in a fine phrase, calls "le champion de l'Esprit contre la Bestialité armée." It was a reminder to France that she had not lost the attention of the world, and could only lose it if, by frittering away her genius in internal dissensions, she forgot to preserve the tradition of her intellectual and moral greatness. Renan urged the France of his day, the France of thirty-six years ago, not to be intimidated by the truculence of her eastern rival, not to endeavour to compete with her mechanical and material culture, but to cling to all that was refined, sympathetic, and inspiring in the unbroken tradition of the ancient genius of France.

Those who have watched a little closely the movement of affairs in France cannot but have observed the increasing tendency towards energy of action among young men. There has been a steady development in this direction. The French, whose life had tended to run in very conventional channels of practical movement, have enlarged their borders in every direction that leads to individual activity. The cultivation of games, which took a strong upward line from the year 1900 onwards, has proceeded so rapidly and so uniformly that when the war broke out last year there was scarcely a country village which did not possess its clubs of football and tennis. Cricket has continued to be a mystery not to be penetrated by the Gallic mind, but the other physical exercises—and with the addition of much more horse-riding and fencing than are customary at present in this country—have extended their influence over the mind

as well as the body of young France to a degree which must not be underrated. Games played with energy and spirit extend the sentiment of responsibility, and it is obvious that in this sphere they have had a directly beneficial effect upon French character, the defect of young France at the close of the nineteenth century having evidently been its inability, or lack of opportunity, to assert initiative in conduct. One of the earliest advocates of football remarked, with a pleasing *naïveté*, " Les fautes commises se paient directement, soir par une chute, soit par la perte de la partie on de l'assaut engagé. Il en va de même dans la pratique des affaires : une erreur d'exécution entraîne pour son auteur un préjudice direct." It is not too much to say that the liberty of action which young Frenchmen have insisted upon since the opening of the present century has had an extraordinary effect on their ability to form a rapid and firm decision.

In our opinion it was the crisis of 1911 which enabled the French to take advantage of all the reviving energy of their race and tradition. The country had arrived at a point when all depended upon a shock to its nervous system. Agadir came, and it pulled the whole youth of France together in a sudden splendid unity of purpose. The writer of these lines asks to be forgiven if he refreshes his memory by turning to notes which he made at that moment. From a Paris, somnolent in the gloom of August, and inhabited apparently only by a population of Germans and Americans, from Paris slumbering in a haze of cosmopolitan indifference and representative of

nothing at all, he came to a beautiful house in the heart of Burgundy, a hospitable house of great antiquity, shadowed, as by a rock in Palestine, by the bulk of a famous basilica. Here was France indeed, without the least admixture of the tourist or the restaurant, the brasserie transferred from Berlin or the bar that pretended to be in New York. Here were gathered, in various generations, a group of people representing, in contrast and in harmony, the sentiments of French intelligence. If I may complete my indiscretion, I will name, as those who led the delightful revels, two men whose influence on younger minds has asserted itself through the length and breadth of France, my admirable friends, M. Paul Desjardins and the resuscitator of the medieval *Tristram and Iseult*, M. Joseph Bédier.

There was something theatrical in the suddenness with which, in the midst of our enchanted talks under the spreading branches of another "Tree of Taine," there fell upon the studious company there assembled news of the German aggression in Morocco. Suddenly the unfamiliar name of Agadir appeared before us, a sinister inscription written right across the north-eastern sky. For a little while, it will be remembered, war seemed imminent, at all events it seemed so to us in that burning silence. And now, it was of the deepest interest to me to feel the pulse, as it were, of the Frenchmen round me, elderly, middle-aged and young, and so to judge of their temper. With held breath, questioning and listening, I seemed privileged to apply my ear to the actual auscultation of a fragment of the heart of France. In

the echoes of talk which I took down at that moment, I find the key-note of "calmness" prominent. A certain idealism which lies a little below the surface of every thinking Frenchman was brought up to light by the shock, and lay there ready to meet without undue agitation whatever the next weeks or days might bring forth. There was no boasting; that was particularly notable to one who could remember the shouts of "À Berlin!" in 1870. There was anxious, but not undignified inquiry of the solitary Englishman, "Will England be with us?" to which in his ignorance he could only reply, "I hope so and I think so."

Very vivid in my memory is a walk on one afternoon of that week of suspense, a walk taken in the Cuyp-like golden atmosphere of the illimitable stubble-fields of the Yonne, in going without an aim, in returning with the vast church, like a ship at sea, towering on the horizon for a goal. My companion, one of the wisest of men, spoke gravely, almost fatalistically, of the immediate future. He mourned the nonchalance and negligence of the official class, the bureaucracy of France, so little alive to the great movements of the age. He lamented the passion for cities, the *polimania*, which drained the country districts of their richest blood. But his own faith was staunch and well grounded; he was persuaded that the crisis would awaken a universality of patriotism, a flood in which all the social scum would disappear, as before a stream of wholesome waters. And he said, with a stoic reserve, "If we are doomed to disappear before the barbarian, we can at least die with

dignity, fighting to the last, and—surely, surely!—without the disgrace of internal dissension and private reproach." As we came near to our home, and the western light flashed in the windows of our great abbey-church, which might have been the symbol of the unshaken State, the diapason of our talk closed full on the notion of Union,—France drawn together in the battle for existence along a serried line of consistent defence.

That particular cloud, as every one knows, evaporated and left the sky of Europe comparatively clear. But the lesson of Agadir was not forgotten. It made itself felt in many ways throughout the year 1912, when a change in the general tone of the press could scarcely fail to be observed. One very curious phenomenon was the reaction against the excess of intellectualism, which, it is now easy to see, had been a main cause working towards the division of French thought into warring camps. It was now that a leader of the old school exclaimed, " La réaction est très forte, plus forte que je n'aurais cru, contre Auguste Comte, Taine et Renan," and this because those eminent oracles of a preceding generation had underrated the value of composite energy, and had encouraged too unstintedly the freedom of individual enterprise. Very remarkably there began to assert itself among the intelligent youth of France a new kind of abnegation, which prompted them to resign what had seemed their most valued privilege, the right to pursue abstract speculation to its utmost limits. It was now that M. Maurice Barrès dared to exclaim, " La raison, quelle pauvre petite chose à la surface de

nous-mêmes," and that a prophet still less expected, M. Paul Bourget, found it possible to declare that " L'intellectualisme, c'est la forme la plus dangereuse de l'individualisme." It was at this time in the summer of 1912 that the " Enquête sur la Jeunesse " of the *Revue hebdomadaire* revealed so remarkable a consensus of opinion that duty, without distinction of party, must be the watchword of all that was youthful and vigorous in the effort of France.

A year later than the Agadir incident, one of the soundest and wisest minds of the elder generation, one which had for more than one generation been brought singularly close to the consciences of the young, summed up the evidences which he saw before him of the condition of France. I quote these eloquent words of M. Emile Faguet (in July 1912), because their existence refutes, as well as any document could, the fallacy of a New France, arisen without previous warning, at the shock of August 1914. He wrote—

" Il ressort que la génération qui suit—d'assez loin—celle des hommes de mon âge (M. Faguet was born in 1847) est énergique, sainement passionnée, curieuse, chercheuse, inventeuse et éprise d'action; qu'elle *va de l'avant* sans étourderie, ni témérité, mais avec un très bel élan d'espérance et de foi; qu'elle ne dissimule ni les dangers qui nous menacent, ni les défauts nationaux, ces autres dangers, ni la grandeur de la tâche qu'elle a devant elle ou plutôt à laquelle elle a déjà mis la main; mais qu'elle n'est qu'excitée par ces dangers

et ces difficultés et que, sans le chercher avec un dilettantisme puéril, elle *accepte* de tout son cœur de vivre dangereusement."

We believe that the opinion expressed in these eloquent words was eminently just, and we insist upon this in defiance of much that in the intervening months occurred to sadden and perplex the lovers of France. We are convinced that, in direct contradiction to the squalid evidences of things said and done, and of much dirty linen washed in public by the newspapers, there was a wide and essential resuscitation of intelligence, activity, and probity throughout all classes of French society, and that it was this which made preparation for the wonderful manifestation in the face of the enemy. What was, however, emphatically lacking in this advance of national energy was precisely unity. It must frankly be acknowledged that over the surface of the energy of France there was lacking this enamel of a definite common purpose. This absence of national unison was particularly formidable in matters of religion and of labour.

No doubt, in looking back over the past four or five years, the most menacing phenomenon in French social life has been the apparent triumph of anti-militarism. This had become a leading principle in that system of *solidarité ouvrière* from which so much future prosperity was expected. There had grown up a strange tradition that to suppress the army was to suppress the greatest of the enemies of the human race, international war.

This found expression in axioms which a few months have proved ridiculous, but which were accepted with solemnity and approval. It is hardly conceivable that so recently as 1912 a leader of labour in France could enunciate, with the loud approbation of his audience, the formula " Puisque les gens qui s'égorgent sont des soldats, pour qu'on ne s'égorge plus, il faut qu'il n'y ait plus de soldats ! " The socialist dream of a universal strike against war was developed in the revolutionary newspaper, *La Guerre Sociale*, by M. Gustave Hervé, who, with the courage of a fanatic, was ready to affront derision, imprisonment, and even the menace of death in support of his views. According to the large school of labour of which M. Hervé was the mouthpiece, the only practical method of preventing war was to intimidate governments, and force them to settle their quarrels peaceably, by declaring a general strike and insurrection immediately upon any threat of hostilities. When it became evident to the rulers of France that it was necessary, if the existence of the country was to be maintained, to be prepared to resist the redoubtable enemy on the eastern frontier, the attitude of " la solidarité ouvrière " on this question of a war-strike became the most perturbing of problems.

If the working classes of France had carried out their scheme—and it is perhaps little remembered that it was not until July 29, 1914, in connection with the proposed mass meeting of the C. G. T. in the Salle Wagram, that the syndicalist leaders abandoned their plan for a huge revolutionary strike—it is as certain as anything can

be that France would have been helpless against the attack of the invader. Fortunately, the brain which had formulated the scheme was the first to be convinced of its futility. M. Gustave Hervé, of whom many hard things have been said, is before all else a sincere and reasonable man; even in his violence he pauses to consider his logical position; and he has the real intellectual courage which admits its own mistakes. The anti-militarist movement, of such exceeding peril to the heart of France, began about 1906, and M. Hervé put himself at the head of it. "Plutôt l'insurrection que la guerre" was voted almost unanimously at a great meeting in Nancy, and the Germans, hard by, rubbed their hands silently in exultation. Ingenious arrangements were proposed and accepted by the French labour leaders for rapid action to paralyse the mobilisation of the army, if France were to deliver an ultimatum to a foreign power.

It is not conceivable that any large number of French artisans would have lent themselves in serious earnest to so treacherous and contemptible a manœuvre. But there was great danger in the state of mind revealed by the mere academic discussion of such a scheme. It was quite enough to disturb the consciences and weaken the energies of tens of thousands of workmen. Fortunately, it was the fiery candour of M. Gustave Hervé himself which provided an antidote for the poison which he had distributed. Of course, the whole efficiency of the general strike project depended upon its being loyally carried out by the socialists of other nations.

The French proletariat was to shake hands with German labour over the vainly-raging guns and helmets of a couple of paralysed War Offices. But M. Hervé, with a subtlety which his feverish temper would hardly have led us to expect, was watching the attitude and weighing the words of the German "comrades" at the international congresses. In 1912 he became privately convinced of their absolute hypocrisy, and in spite of all their assurances of confraternity he perceived that they meant to betray the cause of socialism at the last moment in the interests of their master's imperial policy. He saw that their dream was to impose on the conquered nations of the rest of Europe the socialistic theories of Germany. We may reflect, with what philosophy we may, on the revelations which reach us from every point, of the degree to which the individual conscience of the German citizen has allowed itself to grow honeycombed with perfidy.

A highly theatrical incident was the murder of Jaurès, on July 21. He was killed by a crazy fanatic at the very moment when he had returned from a visit to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, to whom he had gone to entreat him to beg Russia to make a last effort at conciliation in order to avoid the horror of a great war. He argued that it was better to break off the alliance with Russia than to engage France in such a struggle. The position of Jaurès at the head of the socialists of the country gave a peculiar significance to this stupid crime, and for a moment the universal question was would his supporters revenge his death by some violently

unpatriotic act? But France was too sober, too perspicacious, for such folly. It became apparent at once that the death of Jaurès would change in no degree the political unison of parties. The *Guerre Sociale* expressed the universal opinion when it said, next morning, " Jaurès has failed to secure peace; it is for us at least to secure the country from invasion." That night mobilisation began all over the face of France, and not a socialist or syndicalist voice was raised to interrupt it. Next day, in spite of his years and his infirmities, M. Gustave Hervé, the arch-antimilitarist, put his own services unreservedly at the disposal of the country in an eloquent open letter to the Minister of War.

What sealed the peace of parties at this thrilling moment, and testified to the greatness of the national sentiment, was the attitude of the body which had stood at the opposite extreme of the political line, and had fought with ceaseless energy against the inroads of socialism. On August 1, M. Maurice Barrès, the president of the League of Patriots, wrote a letter to Mademoiselle Jaurès, in which he spoke of the murder of her father the night before as having cemented all French hearts in union. His words will be remembered in history, for their echoes were far-reaching: " L'union est déjà faite de tous les Français "; this is the " union sacrée " which has reigned ever since, and has created in France that magnificent fund of fortitude and steady hope which makes her the wonder and envy of the world. The principle of unity was gained, and it is therefore of lesser importance to note that the original enthusiasm

was too brilliant not to be a little tarnished by time. Already in October 1914 the strain was making itself felt about the clerical question. The Ligue des Patriotes fretted under the yoke which bound it to its profane neighbours. Already M. Maurice Barrès could not resist the temptation to announce that if France was to be victorious it must be under the banner of St. Vincent de Paul, of St. Louis, of Pascal. Already M. Gustave Hervé recalled the merits of Voltaire, of Diderot, of Kléber, of Desaix; and murmured his horror of an "envahissement catholique." It was the old, old story, and much to be deplored, but these differences were on the surface, and it was too late for there to be any fear that they could disturb the depths of the holy union of Frenchmen. The transient affectation of anti-militarism had faded away like a wisp of vapour in the glare of national peril.

All this was not a new revelation. It was the inevitable result of the long training which the French spirit had undergone, and in particular of the awakening of the national conscience which followed the crisis of 1911. If it be not thought too fantastic, I would venture to suggest, as in some degree an inspiring cause, the growing admiration which attended the memory of that noble woman, Eugénie de Guérin, who, for half a century after her death in 1848, was scarcely known in France, but whose memory, since the opening of the twentieth century, has been more and more widely cultivated. The influence of such a character as hers, when it is found to contain the mysterious quality of

arresting the attention of posterity, is capable of being far more extensive than we readily imagine. Eugénie de Guérin, whose life was the most monotonous and secluded, the most humble and self-abnegating which can be conceived, has nevertheless, by sheer force of character and appropriateness to the occasion, become a sort of intellectual and moral Jeanne d'Arc to the latest generation in France. They find in her exactly the qualities which adorn and protect the virility of the French nation to-day. Her courage, her faith, her reverence, her intensity of love for the fatherland, her passion for domesticity, and her sense of the dignity of a rural round of duties, point her out as a guardian saint of France to-day. No one has with a more tender generosity insisted upon the sublimity of those whom the world despises, and upon the genuine confraternity of souls.

There may seem to be something fantastic in passing from the shadowy figure of Eugénie de Guérin to the solid and violent presence of Charles Péguy, but no one who examines the signs of the times will be shocked at the transition. Every great national crisis produces, or should produce, a symbol or legend which sums up the sentiment of the circumstances. A man who has walked on a level with his compeers, exciting the affection of some, the hatred of others, and the complete indifference of the vast majority, suddenly becomes, for no very apparent reason, the centre of an almost superstitious attention. He is what gamblers call a luck-piece; his existence seems to be bound up with the

universal weal; nay, even his death may be the sign of his redoubled importance. Such a mascot France has discovered in the person of Péguy, who was killed during the battle of the Ourcq, at the village of Plessis-l'Evêque, near Meaux, on September 5, 1914. To a far greater extent than the loss of any other man of intellect or art, the death of Péguy has affected the spirit of France. A legend has grown up around his name, a legend which illuminates it like the *skin-lika* in Bulwer's famous story, accompanying the human form and transfiguring it with a supernatural luminosity. It is necessary that we should try to discover why Péguy has become a part of the Unity of France.

He was of peasant race, and his forebears were vine-growers in the Beauce. But they fell into great poverty, and while his grandmother, who could neither read nor write, earned a few pence by taking a farmer's cows to grass, his mother lived by mending old chairs and hiring them out to worshippers in the cathedral of Orleans, " Personne mieux que Péguy n'a pratiqué la pauvreté," says his biographer, but he was not content to endure its disadvantages. Early he showed remarkable aptitude for study, and his career in the Ecole Normale was so brilliant, that he seemed destined for the chair of a professor. But, when he was seven years old, while his mother was mending her chairs in the cathedral, the boy was already dreaming of Jeanne d'Arc, and secretly in his heart he never ceased to nourish the romantic ambition of fighting for France, not with a bayonet, for he was an anti-militarist socialist, but with

his brain and his will. He "took to writing," as we say, not, I think, because he had a very strong vocation, but because this was the simplest way in which a young man, without material advantages, could indent his character and his conscience upon contemporary opinion. From an obscure and unimpressive journalist, and a poet who rarely did justice to his own emotion, Péguy has become one of the heroes of French tradition, and the centre of a legend. It is worth while to investigate the reason.

In 1896, when he was five-and-twenty years of age, he published his first book, *Le mystère de la charité de Jeanne d'Arc*. He used to say that he should go on writing about Jeanne d'Arc if he lived to be a hundred. In this first volume, which attracted but a limited attention, but is now revived or discovered in a somewhat unthinking enthusiasm, Péguy exhibits a personal sentiment which is widely characteristic of France to-day, but is with great difficulty comprehended by an English mind. He was what we should call a complete sceptic, that is to say he had no belief in any of the traditions or dogmas of revealed religion. As he grew older, he became more of a believer, but always a heretical one. He protested that heresy was the life-blood of religion, and that faith died in the arms of orthodoxy. He was a secular mystic, and there was only one point upon which he coincided with the rest of the religious world, but this happened to be of the very essence of Gallic faith. He believed, without a shadow of incredulity, in the divine mission of France as the elder daughter of God and

sublime mother of the nations, and in the indissoluble unity of Frenchmen. His design was to carry out in the twentieth century the sacred labour of Jeanne d'Arc.

In February 1900 Péguy began to publish, in a very modest way, a sort of periodical miscellany, called *Les Cahiers de la Quinazine.* In this magazine he not merely printed his own lucubrations, but those of others with whom he found himself in more or less close sympathy. One among these friends was destined to immediate celebrity, M. Romain Rolland, whose *Jean Christophe* began to appear in the *Cahiers.* By a curious revolution of the kaleidoscope, while one of these friends has become the symbol of patriotism, the other, tormented by the oddities of individualism, has lost the confidence of all Frenchmen, and is fain to live in exile. The contrast is remarkable; while M. Rolland, distracted by the ingenuities of a too-subtle imagination, has lost his hold on reality, Péguy owes his transcendent fame to the fact that, more decidedly than perhaps any other man, he determined to go straight for general political truth, without the smallest concession to *amour-propre,* and understood that, in the hugest contingencies, "but one thing is needful."

His biographer, M. André Suarès, who strikes one as more ardent than judicious, claims for Péguy that he is "the Carlyle of France, infinitely better than the other, more true, more free and more human." These parallels are sometimes unlucky, and one wonders which of the writings of the English (or Scotch) Carlyle M. Suarès is familiar with. Carlyle is at present suffering in this

country from a general, and it must be said a deserved, unpopularity, due in great measure to his total inability to see the trend of German *Kultur*. He recommends, with lamentation and invective at our blindness in not accepting it, a tendency which has at last been revealed to us in all its abominable brutality. Carlyle's writings have become unpalatable to us, because we find them running counter to our sober experience, and outrageous to our national conscience. But in the case of Péguy, it is precisely the fact that the events of the war have proved him to be completely in harmony with the sentiment of France which has led to his universal acceptance. Moreover, whether we disapprove of Carlyle or not, he was a writer magnificent in exactly the directions where Péguy, who lacks conciseness and wanders into endless repetition, is weak. Both writers are austere, both adopt the camel's-hair clothing and the wild honey of the desert; each has the recklessness of the professional satirist. But here the parallel ceases. With the harshness of Péguy there mingles a tenderness unknown to Carlyle.

The poetry of Charles Péguy has been so little read in this country that I may be permitted to quote a sonnet, on Sainte Geneviève, as patron and guardian of Paris, in which the temper of his mysticism is seen at its best. He is rarely, it must be confessed, so concise as this—

" Comme elle avait gardé les moutons à Nanterre,
On la mit à garder un bien autre troupeau,
La plus énorme horde ou le loup et l'agneau
Aient jamais confondu leur commune misère.

Et comme elle veillait tous les soirs solitaire
Dans la cour de la ferme ou sur le bord de l'eau,
Du pied du même saule et du même bouleau
Elle veille aujourd'hui sur ce monstre de pierre.

Et quand la nuit viendra qui fermera le jour,
C'est elle la caduque et l'antique bergère,
Qui, ramassant Paris et tout son alentour,

Conduira d'un pas ferme et d'une main légère
Pour la dernière fois dans la dernière cour
Le troupeau le plus vaste à la droite du père."

The attitude of Péguy, a satirist, a spirit of anger and reproach, yet recognised in this time of extreme crisis as the very symbol of the holy unity of France, throws a light upon the whole situation. Our claim that what we see so magnificently produced before us, for the healing of the nations, is not a New France, miraculously created, but the old France welded together and passed through the fire of affliction, is not affected by the fact that there are now and again breezes in the Chamber, or that the newspapers yelp at one another, or that the inevitable tongue of pessimistic slander wags in Parisian drawing-rooms. These are accidents on the surface of manners, and they only show that time brings, in the long suspense, a certain light forgetfulness. But some movement of troops, some machination of the cunning and treacherous enemy, some reverse of one of the Allies, has but to intervene, and these storms in the conversational teapot are forgotten in a moment, and all is " union sacrée " once more. It is very difficult for a foreigner, not accustomed to the easy persiflage and enchanting provocation of French talk, not to be

deceived into taking seriously what is no more than the traditional Gallic habit of disputation.

It is more difficult still to decide whether the harmony which now reigns through all strata of French society, and is a national strength more valid than triple walls of brass, whether this is or is not to be durable. In other words, when victory comes at last, and the forces of Teutonic crime are disarmed, will the social grades continue to live at home in unity, or shall we see break out again the guerrilla warfare of royalist and republican, of intellectual and activist, of socialist and reactionary? That, of course, is beyond the power of any prophet to decide. Posterity has a most provoking way of settling matters in such a way as to contradict the safest formulas of the philosophers. But we may confidently believe that the fortune which has led France through so many strident centuries will not abandon her in the twentieth. No doubt, when the danger is removed, the instinct which holds back every man from an expression of opinion which might offend his neighbour will be relaxed. Somebody has said that Frenchmen must argue with one another, to pass the time, as an alternative to playing chess. But we may be allowed to doubt whether, after this prodigious lesson, the nation will ever again repeat the levity of Boulangism or the bitterness of the Dreyfus *affaire*.

Some things we may vaguely see, without presuming upon prophecy. Crude anti-militarism has shown itself to be a transient folly, and it will be a very long while before that nonsense will be repeated. If mutual con-

fidence between the nations should be resumed, new aspirations after universal peace may be developed, but they will hardly come in our time. France will doubtless feel that, for a couple of generations at least, the treacherous brute is prowling at her eastern frontier, and anti-militarism will be the last thing in the world to dream of. The fatuous love of the human race first and one's own country next, has always been a will-'o-the-wisp to lead certain speculative French minds a dance over the swamps. This will be quite absent in the future, and the irritation which it caused at home will be removed. A calm military patriotism, universally accepted, will be a source of constant practical unity. The events of the present vast war must diffuse throughout French society those qualities of abnegation, discipline, and honour on which the late M. de Mun laid such stress until the very hour of his departure.

The name I have just quoted recalls a very touching episode in the unity of France. It seemed as though the deaths of two great opposing leaders of thought were necessary to seal in blood the pact of parties. We have seen that, at the very moment when war broke out, Jaurès, the head of the extreme socialists, was murdered; on October 5, exhausted by his laborious anxiety, the Comte de Mun, leader of the Catholic party, was found dead in his bed. A phrase written next morning by the most violent of his opponents sheds a flood of light on the temper of France. M. Gustave Hervé, celebrating M. de Mun in the *Guerre Sociale*, declared, " Qu'importe qu'il aimât la France autrement que nous, et pour des

raisons opposées, puisque qu'il l'aimait autant que nous." At that moment of complete national reconciliation, M. de Mun was mourned as respectfully and even tenderly by the extreme socialists, as by those practising royalist Catholics whom he had courageously represented through his long and strenuous career.

The intellectual basis upon which the splendid unity of France is built has no exact parallel elsewhere in the world of to-day. Without derogating in the smallest degree from the signal merits of our own national system, or of that of our other allies, it can hardly be questioned by any impartial observer that we see in France the riper results of a more consistent and a more complicated civilisation than is presented by any other country. The French possess in a higher degree than their neighbours the habit of dealing on broad lines with series of abstract ideas. Nothing is more striking in conversation with very young Frenchmen than the enfranchisement of their intelligence and their habit of dealing rather with general principles than with individual cases. This faculty of intelligence has had a great deal to do with the blessed unanimity of French opinion, a unanimity of the highest importance to the world in general, since in our sacred common resistance to the brutality of German arrogance it is the noble apostolate of France which leads the intelligence of the Allies. And in this connection we may ponder over the words spoken by M. Eugène Lamy at the annual public séance of the French Academy (November 25, 1915)—

" Une inspiration plus haute leur révéla que les plus décisives paroles devenaient vaines si la France était battue, que pour un peuple la source du génie national est l'indépendance, que les espèces les plus nobles n'enfantent pas en captivité, que la race française, surtout pour être féconde, a besoin de sa spontanéité souveraine. Or, une race étrangère prétendait envahir non seulement notre sol mais notre intelligence, soumettre aux déformations de son dressage notre autonomie, écraser notre génie sous le marteau-pilon de sa culture. Ils comprirent que si cette violence l'emportait, ils n'auraient plus de continuateurs."

Continuation ! That is the keynote of French unity. The spiritual treasure which has been handed down by an unbroken line of ancestors must be guarded and transmitted at all hazards and in spite of all sacrifices. Few expressions have been more widely repeated in France this year than the saying attributed to a soldier in the trenches, who at the moment when an assault on the enemy was ordered, cried out, " Debout les morts ! " It is the dead, the dead of ten centuries of vicissitude and glory, who rise at this moment to fight with their living brethren for their heritage of humanity and liberty and light against the dark genius of Prussian slavery and tyranny. The memory of Valmy is frequently invoked in the course of existing affairs, and it is a glorious one, but national feeling is far more unanimous in 1915 than it was in 1792, and General Joffre has a more majestic task before him than fell to the

lot of Dumouriez. When M. Hervé dines with the Abbé Colin, chief of the Catholic party in Lorraine; when the ultra-socialists are reconciled with M. Briand; when the bishops have put the whole of their wonderful organisation at the service of the state for the collection of gold and the subscriptions to the "Emprunt de la Victoire"; when priests are everywhere calling for rifles; when the influence of M. Bergson and of M. Barrès permeates all intellectual society without encountering the smallest hindrance; when the *sans-patrie*, as they used to be called, exhibit an enthusiasm not exceeded by any Bonapartist or Royalist—then we may say that the Germans, who have blundered in so many things, have at least done one thing completely, they have soldered together in one impenetrable mass the fighting energies of France.

Let us not perversely look for mysterious phenomena in connection with the splendid effort of the French, nor pretend that circumstances have called up out of chaos the phantom of a new France. There has been no "miracle," even in the victory of the Marne; no intervention of supernatural powers unknown to the country of so many heroes of intellect and action. It is needless, even, although seemly and gracious, to invoke, as Péguy did, the memorial figures of Jeanne d'Arc and Ste. Geneviève. If we treat them as symbols, as faces of heroines long dead who shine down from the heavens—well and good. But let us not involve ourselves in admitting a breach of the spiritual continuity with the past. Above all, let us put far behind us the

impious suggestion of a punishment brought down upon the head of France for her sins and frivolities. What we really see, and should forbid ourselves to permit to be obscured, is a natural revival of the ancient virtues characteristic of France in all her higher moods, recovering themselves after the shock of treacherous attack, and shining with unequalled brightness precisely because of the unparalleled volume and force of that attack. The unity of the nation is the expression of a store of vitality long amassed for this very purpose of defence in time of sorest need. In the sight of the whole world, France has proved herself, by the splendour of her unity, capable of the sternest energy, the most heroic devotion. But the resuscitation of her intelligence, her activity and her probity, should be to us who stand at her side subjects of admiration, not of astonishment.

January 1916.

THE DESECRATION OF FRENCH MONUMENTS

THE DESECRATION OF FRENCH MONUMENTS

It is well said, in the official report of the Sous-Secrétariat d'État des Beaux-Arts on the injuries done by the German invasion to the cities of France, that these cities have suffered "in their flesh and in their spirit." In other words, they have had to endure a double tribulation in the death, outrage, or other personal misery of their population, and in the destruction of those ancient buildings which were their heritage and their pride. All who are acquainted with French provincial life must be aware of the jealous enthusiasm with which the inhabitants of the principal country towns regard their local monuments. The municipal council may be as anti-clerical as it pleases; its individual members are no less proud of their cathedral than any abbé or *archiprêtre* could be. The spiritual life of the town revolves around the edifice which links it to a distant and glorious past, which encourages the combative pride of the population, and which even the peasants vaguely recognise as something dignified and of personal value to themselves.

In the present war there has been produced an element of destructive force which is, in its main essence, new

to history, and which is excessively sinister. We are accustomed to that vague stupidity of destruction which is inevitably connected with the necessities of strategy. No general can endanger his safety or change his plan of attack because a beautiful building stands in the way. It is obvious that such æsthetic sensitiveness would be absurd and even blameworthy. Works of art must take their risk like human beings, if they have the misfortune to find themselves crushed in the embrace of conflicting armies. But in the campaigns of 1914–15 we find a new force working in the ingenious brains of the German invaders. We find clear evidence of their determination, lucidly planned in advance, to destroy peaceful and beautiful towns which offered no resistance, simply because they were beautiful and were of the nature of spiritual assets to the opponent. The existence of this diabolical ingenuity of desecration has been very generally perceived in the case of Belgium, where the deliberate assassination of Louvain and Malines excited the horror of the whole civilised world. In France the same outrages have been perpetrated, but, with the exception of Reims, these seem as yet to have attracted less, or less definite, sympathy in England.

Against these acts, whether in France or in Belgium, no protest has been raised either in Germany or Austro-Hungary. On the contrary, the servile and pedantic art-critics of the Central Empires have gloried in the humiliation of the artistic wealth of their neighbours. They have displayed the savage insensitiveness of which

Heine prophesied. It seems to be no more than just to insist that, while more harrowing and more imminently pathetic details of human suffering pour in upon us, we should yet not forget to execrate the results of the fury of the disciplined Teutonic hordes on the treasures of French art. It is to be remembered that in the case of a country so sensitive, so highly cultivated, so elegantly educated as France, the historical monuments take a leading part in sustaining the national independence. They foster that due pride and resolution which support the national grandeur. It was with the definite intention of humbling their enemy in his tenderest susceptibilities that the Germans, armed by all the ingenuity of their science, coldly executed the destruction of Louvain and of Reims. It is impossible that the world of art can ever forget the crimes committed against it by these professorial vandals, and I think it well to put on record, as plainly as the shifting history of the passing hour will permit, the actual facts with regard to the desecration of French monuments. I have striven to exaggerate nothing, but to disengage from the often vague and always distracted testimony of survivors what is approximately the real state of affairs.

The crime committed against the incomparable cathedral of Reims has awakened throughout the world an indignation only equalled and scarcely surpassed by the horrors of Louvain. It is noticeable that there was a difference of attitude in the two cases. At Louvain, amid the appearance of unbridled frenzy, a

perfectly cool calculation spared the one central building which might be a future asset to a victorious Germany. At Reims a parallel calculation was concentrated on the humiliation of France by the desecration of that "Bible in stone" which was the peculiar glory and joy of every thoughtful Frenchman. To German *kultur*, Louvain might yet be something, Reims must ever be nothing, and on the German system of complete contempt for all things not Teutonic, to smash and burn the cradle of French patriotic sentiment was an amusing as well as a laudable feat. With the horrible erudition which makes their barbarity the more sickening, the Germans were well acquainted with the value, the beauty, the singularity of the great royal treasure-house at Reims. It was knowing all this, and armed with tiresome disquisitions and monographs, that they quietly resolved on a complete devastation of the cathedral. The conversation of the Saxon commander with the Mayor of Reims is preserved, and is an appalling record of callous pedantry.

The national sentiment about Reims, as the cradle of French sovereignty, was first recognised, or rather was revived, ninety years ago when the government decided on the coronation there of Charles X. An alternative proposal had been that the ceremony should take place at St. Denis, and if this had prevailed it is probable that Reims would have remained no more sacred than other French cathedrals. We gather that its artistic value had been greatly neglected since the occupation of the city by the Allies in 1814, when much damage,

not of a structural kind, was done to several of the noble churches of Reims. As soon as the coronation was decided upon, a work of restoration was begun in feverish haste, with the result that by May 1825 the cathedral became much what it remained until the Commission of 1875 worked the will of Viollet-le-Duc upon it. The young Victor Hugo attended the ceremony, fired with enthusiasm for the essentially Gothic style of the church. In a letter to his wife (May 28, 1825) he wrote—

"Charles and I spent a quarter of an hour gazing at the arch of a single doorway; we should need a year to see and to admire the whole. The interior, as they have arranged it, is much less beautiful than it was in its ancient nudity. They have painted the old granite blue, and have loaded the austere sculpture with gold-leaf and tinsel. However, they have not repeated the mistake they made at St. Denis, the ornaments are gothic like the cathedral, and everything, except the throne, which is of the Corinthian order (how absurd !) is in good taste. The general effect is pleasing to the eye, and the more one reflects on the proportions of the structure, the more one sees that the best possible has been done. As it is, this decoration shows the progress of romantic ideas; six months ago they would have turned the old church of the Franks into a Greek temple."

The sentiment of a whole nation for the miraculous building, the Rose of the Kings of France, has been

steadily growing during these ninety years, and it is not surprising that the outrages of September 1914 have awakened a greater rage and disgust than almost any other act of the invader. These feelings have found expression in a multitude of forms—in the poetry of M. Paul Fort, from which I shall quote in a subsequent essay; in the prose of M. Pierre Loti's *La Basilique-Fantôme;* in the exhibition of innumerable paintings and photographs of the fane as it stood before last year and of its present lamentable and mutilated state. For this reason, I shall dwell less on the actual detail of damage done to the cathedral than it would otherwise be needful to do, but rather concentrate attention on matters of less importance which have been more neglected. In particular it is well to record briefly the exact history of the devastation.

It was on the 4th of September that the huge advancing wave of German invasion, making straight for Paris from Charleroi and Mézières, broke on the light hills of the Haute Champagne and paused in the Rémois. From an eminence outside they playfully threw a few bombs at the cathedral, and smashed a little old glass. Then they occupied Reims, professing great veneration for the antiquities of the city, and they placed their own wounded in the nave of Notre Dame, as a special sign of the immunity of the church itself. They stayed in Reims eight days, doing no particular harm, but on the 12th, when they evacuated the city, the bewildered inhabitants saw the soldiers heap up great masses of straw within the cathedral. The Germans pretended

that this straw was to form beds for the wounded, but at the same moment all the wounded were removed, and the straw left. Already a sinister suspicion was awakened in the minds of some of the inhabitants. The attitude of the invaders had changed, and for the present nothing more was said about the cathedral having been "annexed to the German Empire." After the defeat on the Marne, the general in command arrested eighty-one of the principal citizens as hostages, marched them off, and issued a proclamation that if anything was done by the inhabitants unpleasing to the German authorities, the hostages would immediately be executed, and on the return of the Germans "the city would be entirely or partially burned, and the inhabitants hanged." A facsimile of this atrocious poster, which would otherwise be almost incredible, has been circulated by the French government. Having given Reims this foretaste of their "frightfulness," the Germans evacuated the city in the evening.

On the morning of the 15th the bombardment began, at first vaguely, doing little harm. The great church was not hit until the 17th. But on the morning of the 18th shells began to fall with more and more precision and effect, aimed directly and continuously at the cathedral. By the fall of the light, a serious chipping of the sculpture and of the corners of the masonry was visible. The 19th of September 1914, however, is the red-letter day of Hunnish vandalism. Exactly one hundred years before, the atrocious fanatic of Coblenz, J. J. von Görres, had fiercely urged his countrymen—

in the *Rheinische Merkur*, which Napoleon called *la cinquième puissance*—to " reduce to ashes that basilica of Reims, where Klodovig was crowned, where was founded the empire of the Franks, false brethren of the noble Germans." " Burn that cathedral," Görres had shrieked; and now at last his prayer was heard. All through that dreadful 19th of September the shells fell in a continuous rain upon the almond-shaped centre of ancient buildings round the cathedral and the Hôtel de Ville. The celebrated Gothic house, No. 57 rue de Vesle, was one of the first objects to be entirely destroyed, but as the day went on most of the houses of the Place Royale, the Quartier Cérès, the archbishop's palace and, above all, the interior of the cathedral, suffered the same fate. The bombardment came from the slight eminence to the north-east, not far from Fresnes. It was the fire in the scaffolding which broke out under the shells which did the greatest amount of damage.

It is not necessary to go in detail into the extent of the injury done to the cathedral, the immense solidity of whose osseous structure enabled it, in outward appearance, to sustain for a long time less complete destruction than the more fragile buildings around it. But as a wonderful living entity the existence of this glorious church was at an end. What was spared by this principal bombardment was lost when the Germans attacked Reims again on October 14, 1914, on February 19, 1915, and on subsequent occasions. The shell appears to be left, and opinions still differ among architects as to the

degree to which it will be possible to "restore" the battered basilica; the Germans, with their delicate tact, have suggested that a master-builder of their own might undertake the job. But in practical fact it is best for us to realise that as a work of art the outraged cathedral is dead.

The peculiar glory of the exterior of Reims was its lacework of exquisite medieval sculpture. Architectural critics have objected to this profusion of carved design as mitigating the grandeur of the principal lines of the building and as frittering away some part of its imposing majesty. But, as De Quincey reminds us, simplicity is not everything—Belshazzar's Feast was not simple. The great west front of Notre Dame de Reims was rather to be looked upon as a gallery of intentional magnificence than as the entrance to a typical Christian church. The Gothic world contained no other such bewildering specimen of richness, mounting, unstinted, far up into the heavens and farther than the eye could reach. It is this priceless veil of sculpture that German brutality has destroyed, and this is the answer to those who declare that the general lines of the cathedral have been preserved, so that its restoration is possible. This might be true of other cathedrals, which depend upon their proportions and their scheme. But Reims depended upon its wealth of exquisite devotional sculpture, carved by the artists of Charles V, and preserved, as by a miracle, through the dreadful fire of 1481, when the five leaden spires were melted, and poured through the streets in so many rivulets of burning lava. Let

us consider the tribute of the most eminent of living sculptors. M. Auguste Rodin, just before the war, wrote of Reims—

"The cathedral soars above me like a flame. I pause before the portal. These figures of Saints, well competent to hurl the thunderbolt! These humble serving men, who carry the Book! This great figure of a majestic woman, the Law! The admirable St. Denis of the northern doorway carries his head in his hand, and two angels support a crown where the head should be. May I not see in this a symbol?"

On all these statues irremediable ruin, permanent desecration, has been poured by the ignoble barbarity of the Germans. It is said that a certain General Baron von Heeringen was the executor of this particular feat. Let not the name of so detestable a Herostratus be unrecorded on the roll of infamy!

In our anger at what has been done to the House of Kings, we are in danger of neglecting to record the damage of a lesser kind which has been perpetrated elsewhere in the pre-eminently picturesque city of Clovis. The nucleus, of which we have spoken, bounded by the boulevards and by the Rue Chanzy, is believed to be entirely reduced to ruins. It was full of winding streets, arcaded pavements, ancient carved houses, and those which clustered round the Place d'Erlon, resting on pillars of stone or timber, were of endless variety and romantic charm. The curious façade of the church of St. Remi, in the square of the same name, far away at

the eastern extremity of the city, and peculiarly exposed to the enemy, is said to be unrecognisable, its world-famous glass lying in dust on the desecrated floor. This, however, is far from being the first time that St. Remi has been forced to relinquish its treasures to the violence of an enemy; it suffered incalculable losses at the Revolution. The early seventeenth-century Hôtel de Ville; the brilliant little thirteenth-century chapel of the archbishop's palace; the Maison des Ménétriers, with its extraordinary frieze of life-sized statues, under Gothic arches, of minstrels playing on strange musical instruments of the thirteenth century; the sculptured fronts and arcades of the Place des Marchés—all these are objects to which those who loved Reims in the past will look back with sorrow. We know not yet whether they are all of them entirely destroyed, but we shall be the less disappointed if we make up our minds to see them no more except in the volumes of archæologists.

One consolation, however, we may allow ourselves. Much anxiety was felt among art-lovers as to the fate of the celebrated tapestries which on feast-days gave such an aspect of sumptuousness to the interior of the cathedral. The oldest of these were presented by Archbishop Robert de Lenoncourt in 1530; there are fourteen of them, all dealing with subjects taken from the History of the Virgin, and they are particularly splendid in colour. They have not, however, the historical interest which attaches to those given in 1593 by Charles de Guise, Cardinal of Lorraine, called the Tapestries of the Mighty King Colvis, because one at least of these

latter deals with the prowess of that peculiarly Remish monarch; however, only two of these, and a fragment, out of the six which once existed, have reached our day. Finally, there are the Pepersack Tapestries presented by Archbishop Henry of Lorraine in 1633, which were kept in the archiepiscopal palace, but which the present writer had the privilege of seeing on an Easter Sunday many years ago, when the incalculable treasures of the church were simultaneously exposed before a dazzled audience. The earlier tapestries mentioned above were, it was at first reported, destroyed in the fire of the 19th of September, but fortunately, by a happy forethought not everywhere displayed by the French local authorities, they had long before been packed up and sent to a safe and secret destination. But of the seventeen Pepersack pieces, only two have survived the bombardment and the fire. They were in artistic merit much inferior to the Lenoncourt and the Clovis sets. In the month of August 1915 all that had been preserved of the Reims tapestries were produced from their hiding-place, and exhibited in Paris, at the Petit Palais. An elaborate quarto volume, produced by Madame M. Sarter in 1912, has fortunately retained for us the detailed description and reproduction of those pieces which the Germans have now destroyed.

By far the most coherent account of the martyrdom of Reims is given by M. Henri Jadart in the remarkable journal which has been recently published in the collection, *Du Tour de France.* M. Jadart is the librarian of the city and the keeper of the Reims Museum. His

original diary must be a very curious document; it was kept in pencil, on odd scraps of paper, and often written in the dark. The author refused to leave his post, and withdrew at length to the cellars of his museum, from which, whenever there was a lull in the cannonade, he emerged to note what fresh damage had been done to the sculptures, the documents, and the works of art. His unaffected record is of extraordinary interest. I regret that I have no space to quote from it the tragical pages in which, on September 19, he observed that the scaffolding on the northern tower of the cathedral had at last taken fire, and in which he wrote down, hour by hour, the progress of the exterminating flames.

If, in time to come, the historians of Germany prove ingenious in proffering excuses for their violence at Reims, on pretexts of military necessity and what not, it is to be expected that they will do their best to prevent the bull's-eye of history from being flashed on their activities at Arras. The picturesque capital of the Artois offered no resistance to their armies, and its complete destruction was an act of wanton malice unsurpassed in the roll of Teutonic vileness. It is desirable to follow with considerable care the treatment of Arras, which has not received from English writers all the sympathy and interest which it deserves. Let it be admitted at once that Arras has not been, in past years, appreciated at its full value by English or even by French artists. It has never attracted the tourist, although in its completeness and strangeness it was one of the unique treasures of the north of Europe. In our guide-

books, our Joannes and our Baedekers, little has ever been said to draw the man " for whom the visible world exists " to any places in which the monuments are not either antique or medieval. Since the days of Viollet-le-Duc, what has occupied French critics is largely the ecclesiastical architecture of the later Middle Ages and early Renaissance, for examples of which, as all the world is aware, northern France is richly, and even lavishly, conspicuous.

But there is another source of picturesque beauty in France of which the guide-books know little and care less. This is the domestic architecture of the sixteenth and early seventeenth century. It gave a peculiar charm to many Flemish towns, most of which have perished in the course of this war. It was to be met with, less abundantly, in several towns of the north-eastern corner of France, although in the majority of cases already reduced in extent by fires and reconstruction. Yet, here and there, little patronised by art-critics, there remained precious relics of it, such as the solemn and stately Place Ducale of Charleville, with its wall of high-roofed seventeenth-century houses. Charleville, now in the deepest segment of the enemy's occupation of France, may or may not still exist; it is difficult to obtain any information. But of this Flemish, or Spanish, style of sixteenth-century domestic architecture, Arras was the principal example left in France; and as our taste became more and more emancipated from a servilely exclusive admiration of Gothic, Arras would more and more have been appreciated as one of

the jewels of Europe. It may safely be said that Arras was destroyed before the world had quite waked up to a sense of the treasure it was neglecting.

Before the war of 1870, Arras must have been in its own way one of the most perfect things in Europe, for it was snugly enclosed in the admirable double line of fortifications built by Vauban in 1670. These were destroyed after the peace, and their ruin gave the external view of Arras a slovenly and dingy appearance. But within the crumbled cincture of fortifications the little city was perfect until the summer of 1914. Arras is slightly raised above the vast plain of the southern Artois; it was the Nemetacum of the Atrebates, a stronghold from the very earliest ages of history. There has been an unbroken line of bishops of Arras for more than fourteen hundred years. Although it had undergone bitter vicissitudes, of which the worst was its capture by storm, and complete depopulation, by Louis XI, in 1479—when he destroyed the very name, and re-colonised Arras under the title of Franchise—yet it had retained, or since the fifteenth century re-gained, its appearance of romantic unity. In the other towns of that district, in Valenciennes, for instance, or Douai, or even Cambrai, a house here and there, or a cluster of buildings, may preserve the Hispano-Flemish character, but the tourist has to "make believe" a great deal to conjure up a relative antiquity. But in Arras the illusion was complete, the evidence of ancient state abundant.

The centre of attraction was the Belfry, built in 1554,

which soared up, the loftiest of its kind in France, from the heart of the Upper Town. The way to visit Arras, so as to enjoy the exquisite impression of its ripe and warm beauty, was to make for the Belfry by pushing up to the pleasant Jardin Saint Vaast, where a nucleus was formed by the bishop's palace, the cathedral, and the Library-Museum. Thence winding lanes, so narrow as to darken midday, led to the Petite Place, the western end of which was almost closed by the huge bulk of the Hôtel de Ville. Behind this magnificent obstacle the square expanded, and revealed a complete series of houses built during the Austrian occupation, before 1654, when Spanish taste ruled in domestic architecture. This was surprising enough, but a narrow lane at right angles from the top of the Petite Place brought the wanderer abruptly out into the Grande Place, which was more amazing still. One had here the illusion of being transplanted to the scene of one of Callot's topographical engravings. The Grande Place was the most untouched example of its kind in Western Europe, a huge open space, without monuments, unpaved to the doorsteps of the houses, surrounded by arcades that rested on rude stone pillars, and diversified along the sky-line by an endless series of graceful and fantastic gables. These, and the ancient houses of the tortuous and exiguous Rue St. Géry, leading out of the right side of the Petite Place, comprised, with the Hôtel de Ville, the city's real artistic wealth, which did not consist in its churches. The beauty and value of Arras were civic.

At the end of August 1914, after the battles of Charleroi and Mons, the German army swept in a south-westerly direction through the north of France. Its right wing passed, almost without meeting any resistance, through the Nord and the Pas de Calais, pausing on the night of September 5 in the valley of the Scarfe, under the dilapidated walls of Arras, which the Germans entered next morning. The French, in retreating, had removed all men of military age, and the Germans found only a sad multitude of women, children, and aged men. They stayed in Arras three days, disgracing themselves by a good deal of pillage, but not of murder, nor did they destroy or injure any building. They left the city on September 9, and they did not reappear until after the battle of the Marne. The combat went on raging in the neighbourhood of Arras for three or four weeks, but the town was never the scene of actual hostilities. The enemy hoped to recapture it, and their forces swayed to and fro in its direction; sometimes, even, their sallies brought them quite close to it, but there were no combatants in Arras itself. But where the Germans showed a temper of extraordinary malignity was in their conduct when they found themselves finally being pushed away out of the Arras district, in the direction of Vimy and Lens. It was then, and not till then, that they deliberately directed their siege artillery against the city.

It must never be forgotten, in the eternal blazon of Germany's misdeeds, that their army bombarded Arras uselessly, even extravagantly, for no military purpose,

but as an act of vengeance in the rage of defeat. On October 6, at 9 a.m., there was not a single soldier of the Allies in any part of Arras. The Germans, although they had nothing to fear and because they had no longer anything to gain, positively delayed their own action in order to indulge their spite. The first shell was deliberately aimed at the majestic Belfry, which soared into the autumn sky, topped with its ducal crown, and on the very summit a colossal ramping lion carrying a pennon. Into the morning air its three great bronze bells were ringing its famous carillon of 1434. Although, in its altitude of seventy-five metres, dominating all the country round, the substantial Belfry offered an obvious aim, the German artillerymen failed at first to hit it, and then they turned to the Hôtel de Ville. They soon pierced its roof and smashed the delicate, highly decorated façade. It is said that one thousand shells fell in Arras that first day. The Germans re-directed their attention to the Belfry, which long resisted, but fell at the sixty-ninth blow that struck it, and littered the Petite Place with confused ruin. Then the cannonade abruptly ceased, as though upon this act of destruction should follow in the German camp a period of gratulation and rest.

The firing presently began again. The aim of the German guns had now become extremely accurate, and it was quite obvious that they were acting on a deliberate system. They completely destroyed the houses of the Petite Place, and then those of the Grande Place, which were fired at day after day until

nothing remained but a shapeless dust-heap. They concentrated their attention on the whole line of the Rue St. Géry and wiped it out of existence. For a week the cannonade did not cease. On October 7, that is to say at the very beginning of the attack, the bishop reported to the French Government that his cathedral was uninhabitable and that the church of St. Jean Baptiste was eviscerated. Of these buildings, the most notable of an ecclesiastical order in Arras, nothing but unrecognisable rubbish was left a few days later. We must not exaggerate, even in our indignation, and it is impossible to say that art was made much the poorer by the devastation of the churches of Arras. The cathedral of the Abbey of St. Vaast had, to be frank, no architectural value; it was built on the site of the cathedral demolished at the Revolution, and 1833 was a bad moment in French architecture. St. Jean Baptiste had been a fine, rather late Gothic church, but had been spoiled by tasteless restoration. On the other hand, the Hôtel de Ville, which was built by Carron at the close of the fifteenth century, was one of the finest edifices of its class in the country. It was extraordinarily rich in surface ornament, which had been effectively restored. As a proof of the way in which Arras was taken by surprise, it is said that no effort had been made to remove to a place of safety the archives of the city, which were stored in the Palais de Saint Vaast. These are understood to be completely destroyed, together with the manuscripts and painted missals which enjoyed a certain celebrity.

It is worth while to remember that the German general in command, mildly brought to book by some of his own countrymen for his unprovoked outrage on Arras, replied, in *Der Tag:* "My troops and I owe no explanation to any one; we have nothing to justify, nothing to excuse."

The world of Paris nourished a peculiar sentiment of affection for the romantic little town of Senlis, in the Ile de France. "O ma blanche Senlis, la plus douce à nommer," a French poet has sung, and if any place divided his loyalty with Senlis, it could only be the delicious La Ferté-Milon. But there was really no rival to the Lily of the Ile de France in the hearts of Parisians, who could just include its delicate perfection in the scope of a not too tiring day's excursion. The present writer remembers, in all his manifold wanderings over the fair fields of France, nothing more enchanting, nothing of a more phantasmal beauty, than the ascent of Senlis as one approached it along the straight white road running almost exactly westward from Crépy-en-Valois, the spire of the cathedral soaring in the sunshine. It seemed to spring out of the dark embattled mass of the old Roman ramparts, with their sixteen towers, and inside the fold of them the royal castle of the twelfth century. There was another lightness, another elegance, about the lovely town as it rose before the visitor, when he viewed it from the south across the winding and troubled waters of the Nonette, but from every point of view it was chiefly its incomparable cathedral to which it owed its beauty. It was "le

beau doigt de Senlis," pointing to the sky, that lifted the heart to ecstasy.

On close inspection, the cathedral lost nothing of its distinctive charm. It dates from the year 1155, and is acknowledged to be one of the finest examples surviving of Early Gothic. It had been injured, but not spoilt, by some rash reconstruction early in the sixteenth century. The main portal regaled the lingering eye by its extreme richness in strange and violent sculpture. Like so many great churches of its class, a certain awkwardness was inevitable in the inequality of its towers, the right-hand one having never been finished. It was the left-hand tower which commanded the landscape, especially when one came from the direction of Crépy-en-Valois; it was, and indeed is, a miracle of grace and delicacy, lifting its pinnacle eighty metres from the pavement.

It was from Crépy-en-Valois that the marauding Germans came down upon Senlis. In the beginning of September, the long wave of Teutonic invasion swept over the north-eastern frontier of the Ile de France. They had occupied Lunéville on August 28. Some fighting had already gone on in the neighbourhood of Senlis, when in the early afternoon of September 2 a shell struck the spire of the cathedral and exploded. The German guns were posted at the outlying hamlet of Chamont, and from that point they poured, for an hour and a half, a shower of shells upon the cathedral. This bombardment ceased, but the Germans were seen to approach the town along the Crèpy-en-Valois road. The mayor, a M. Odent, called his municipal council

around him, and then dismissed them, sitting alone in the town hall to await the arrival of the enemy. It seems that, Senlis being an open town, and its population entirely inoffensive, the mayor had no serious apprehension of damage. What followed has been variously related, the confusion and terror of the witnesses tending to obscure the sequence of events. But, as usual, a troop of soldier-cyclists seems to have formed the vanguard of the invaders, and these men immediately seized the archpriest of Senlis, the venerable Abbé Dourlent. They forced him to take them up to the summit of the cathedral, from which they pretended that shots had been fired at them. The Abbé told them that he alone had the key, and that it had not passed out of his possession. Upon this, and in view of this proof of innocence, the Germans proceeded to the Hôtel de Ville, where they found the unfortunate mayor seated, it is said, in the act of writing out a proclamation to the citizens. Him they arrested, and in company with several leading inhabitants, took away to Chamont, where, in the course of the evening, all these innocent civilians were murdered in cold blood at the order of the commanding officer.

The reason of the horrors of Senlis has never been divulged. But the German commander told the Abbé Dourlent—who was imprisoned at the Hôtel du Grand Cerf and threatened, but whose life was ultimately spared—that he had been ordered to make of Senlis "a French Louvain." "Senlis est condamnée," he said, "cette nuit même la ville va être entièrement brulée."

They started systematically with the principal street of the town, the Rue de la République, a thoroughfare containing handsome houses of the eighteenth century, the dwellings of the leading citizens. With the utmost calm, employing all the ingenious incendiary contrivances which they had used in Belgium, the German soldiers passed along the street, house by house, until nearly the whole was destroyed. Then, as is conjectured, other orders must have arrived from headquarters, for the destruction of Senlis abruptly ceased. It is difficult to divine the reason of the vindictive violence of the officer who directed these outrages. Senlis was absolutely harmless, an open town with no French soldiers in it. It seems to be quite certain that no civilian had made any attack whatever on the invaders. The pretence that there had been firing from the summit of the cathedral could not be supported in the face of the Abbé Dourlent's explanation, and in fact seems to have been dropped. The murder of the hostages and the burning of the Rue de la République are therefore inexplicable, and in the whole war no crimes have been committed more senseless or more perfidious.

The damage done by shells to the cathedral was considerable, especially in the upper regions of the tower. Several of the crockets of the spire, some of the pinnacles, the heads which decorated the bases of these pinnacles, the balustrade above the main façade, a statue, a gargoyle, are mentioned in the official report as having been destroyed. The roof was penetrated at several points, but on the whole there seems to have been

nothing accomplished on the surface of the cathedral which careful restoration cannot render invisible. The lovely apparition of Senlis will continue to shine from afar like a lily and like a lamp. Evidently, the conflagration was stopped before it reached the church of St. Vincent; and no bombs are recorded to have fallen on the Abbey of St. Frambourg, a noble fragment close to the cathedral. Each of these buildings is of the twelfth century. Moreover, the winding street of precious houses of the fifteenth and sixteenth century, which descends at the south to the waters of the Nonette, appears to be untouched. In short, Senlis, after a terrible alarm, escaped as a brand from the burning.

It is difficult to gain an impression of the present state of Soissons, which has had the misfortune to lie on the exact fighting line at the point where the curve between Noyon and Reims bulges nearest to Paris. Its geographical position on the left bank of the Aisne has always laid Soissons open to violent attack; during the Napoleonic wars Blücher's army inflicted serious damage on it, and the Prussians were not easily dislodged. It was besieged again, and occupied by the Russians in 1815. The existing town was laid out, a quadrilateral of streets within ramparts, after the last-mentioned occupation, and it is only the centre of Soissons, where the cathedral is muffled up in ancient houses, which preserves any medieval character. In October 1870 the Germans shelled the town for three successive days, and took it, but the damage done on that occasion was not noticeable a year or two afterwards, except so far as

regards the splendid abbey church of St. Jean-des-Vignes, which was severely knocked about. This abbey is of special interest to us English, because Thomas à Becket spent here nine years of his exile. The German bombardment of 1870 wounded the glorious thirteenth-century façade of this monument, but not irreparably.

In the present war, a novel feature of attack was that the ancient monuments, especially all ecclesiastical buildings of great value, were carefully aimed at by ihe enemy which, forty-four years earlier, had shown some ingenuity in avoiding them. Consequently, when Soissons was first bombarded, on the nights of September 24 and 25, 1914, the cathedral was deliberately aimed at. It was struck at several points, the roofs were pierced, the slates here and there reduced to dust. But much that was injured seems to have been nineteenth-century restoration, and a fragment of the old balustrade of the main façade would hardly be mentioned so prominently in the official report if more important parts had been blown up. The injury to St. Jean-des-Vignes was more severe; each of the spires was mutilated, and some of the delicate carving around the windows chipped. But the bombardment of February 1915 was much more serious. The north side of the cathedral was badly knocked about, and a shell, penetrating the nave, destroyed a pillar and strewed the interior of the church with debris. Much of the rich thirteenth-century glass, precious as rubies, was smashed. Later attacks and defences can have left Soissons little

of its wonderful charm, which M. André Hallays thus immortalised :

" Soissons is a white, peaceful and smiling city, which lifts its tower and its pointed spires by the banks of a lazy river, in the midst of a ring of green hills; town and landscape alike remind us of the little pictures which the illuminators of our old manuscripts loved to paint. Precious monuments display the whole history of French monarchy, from the Merovingian crypts of the Abbey of St. Médard to the handsome hôtel built just before the Revolution for the governors of the province. In the midst of narrow streets and little gardens, a magnificent cathedral spreads the arms of her great transept; to the north a straight wall and a vast painted window; to the south the apse with the delicacy of its marvellous arches."

It is to be feared that all that will survive of this at the close of the present war will be a recollection of vanished beauty.

Meaux hardly deserves to be called a " cité meurtrie," because it escaped serious injury, yet its fate was so romantic, and to its terrified inhabitants seemed so miraculous, that it demands particular attention. It was the centre of the wonderful battle of the Marne, and the military critics are not yet in unison as to the reason which led the storming armies of the enemy to pause in their overwhelming charge on Paris, and to

swerve aside, to their own undoing, in an attack on Meaux. The result, at all events, was abundantly to the advantage of the Allies, for Paris was saved and Meaux itself was not sacrificed. I do not propose to examine here in military detail what the French continue to call "le miracle de la Marne," but I must dwell a little on the imminent danger run by the beautiful cathedral where Bossuet reigned, and by the rare monuments of his city. On September 2, 1914, early in the morning, the town council announced that Meaux would probably be occupied by the Germans in the course of that day, and that the inhabitants would do well to leave. The exodus began at once, and as five-sixths of the French population left, the British army, in retreat from Senlis, entered the town from the opposite side. For seven days and seven nights, as M. Montorgeuil has put it, a "silent and sepulchral Meaux, whose life was represented only by duty, charity and self-sacrifice, listened to the beating of its own heart, and to the noise of the battle raging around it."

The peculiar artistic attraction of Meaux consists in its bridge of old flour-mills, which forms a street of marvellous medieval buildings running right across the Marne. These mills, of various height, form and colour, have been cleverly adapted inside to modern commercial purposes, but outside they remain just what they were in Bossuet's time, and long before it. Here the wheat of the golden fields of La Brie is brought to be ground, just as it was in the sixteenth century, and the timbered

façades of these great mills, rich in red and russet and cream-colour, are crowned with curious roofs of darker tone, and are poised fantastically on carven piers. Their safety has been preserved by their bridge being used for the traffic of foot-passengers only, the municipality having long ago wisely insisted that the "Passerelle des Moulins" should be treated as an historical monument, the railway and high road across the Marne being taking over a bridge parallel to and adjoining the Mill Bridge. The danger to those admirable structures last autumn came in the first instance from the British, who blew up the bridges as a strategic precaution. The destruction of the Pont du Marché was very perilous for the mills, since they were peppered with fragments of stone and metal, but happily no positive damage was done. The explosion was more serious in its results to the cathedral, although this was farther off. It was struck in ten different places, and a paving-stone hurled through the roof of a chapel smashed in its passage the outer stone balustrade.

Meaux waited for the invader, isolated and without information. It seemed certain that it would be the centre of a battle, in the fluctuation of which enemy and friend alike would contribute to its desolation. On September 6 the Germans, who were drawn up to the east, at the village of Germigny-l'Evêque, began to bombard the cathedral of Meaux, and already the few persons who still gathered round the intrepid bishop gave up for lost the famous nave which has been called

" le plus lumineux des poèmes de pierre que l'architecture du passé ait fait chanter à des voutes." Next day the bombardment grew more serious, but the cathedral seemed to be protected by a charm; not a shell touched it. Next day, to the amazement of the beleaguered city, the cannonade ceased; the battle of the Marne had achieved its purpose, and Meaux, practically uninjured, was left to recover its normal serenity.

The circumstances of the destruction of Gerbéviller, a small town of some 1900 inhabitants, on the road between Lunéville and Nancy, in the Meurthe-et-Moselle, have greatly inflamed French indignation, but the place had no special artistic importance. Gerbéviller was an ancient town much tormented in successive wars. It held rather a strong position on the little river Mortagne, and on August 24, 1914, it was gallantly defended by a battalion of French infantry, who barricaded themselves on the bridge and actually held up the advancing Germans for twelve hours. The Bavarian invaders—who are described as horrible to look upon, " with hands and faces tattooed with blue "—entered the town at last in a fury, and shot down the inhabitants like rabbits. They burned nearly all the town, and when they were turned out again by the French it was found that they had completely destroyed the church, the castle, the Chapel Palatine and a house of the fifteenth century which was the pride of Gerbéviller. The castle, built in 1641, was a museum of beautiful objects collected by the Marquis Camille de Lambertye, who was

Chamberlain to the King of Poland. A monument known as the Labarum, a cross of stone with two statuettes of saints, stands untouched alone in the midst of the ruins, and this is practically all that survives of Gerbéviller.

We must not forget that Paris itself has not entirely escaped the shell of the marauding vandal. "That pedantic ferocity of scientific cynicism" which Sir Robert Morier perceived, forty years ago, would distinguish German methods in their next great war, was exemplified in the attack on Notre Dame which was made on October 11, 1914. This was extremely ingenious, carefully and accurately calculated, and was prevented by a mere accident from being horribly successful. On that Sunday, when the cathedral was crowded with worshippers, a *taube* which had pierced the defensive zone of Paris, proceeded with great audacity to drop several bombs on the building. One of these shells exploded on the west slope of the roof of the north transept, close to the great clock, and did a good deal of mischief. The nearest bell-turret was injured, and a quantity of modern glass was smashed; several jobs were provided for the carpenter, the slater and the glazier; Paris was extremely indignant, but from the artistic point of view no vital injury was done to Notre Dame, although the beautiful fourteenth-century statue of the Virgin was perilously near to the scene of what damage there was. One bomb, which seems to have been aimed at the apse of the church, ricochetted off

and exploded in flames in the garden below; another fell plump into the Seine.

It is very difficult—it is in many cases impossible—to learn with any certainty what has been the fate of places and monuments which lie behind the long line of the German trenches. It was long before news reached Paris, and then only by an accident, of the annihilation of Orchies, the cause of which is still very obscure. This was a small ancient town in the department of the Nord, not far from Douai, which the Germans, for some reason at present quite unknown, saw fit to destroy in September of last year. They massacred the inhabitants, and they burned the town, with its interesting Flemish-Spanish Hôtel de Ville, and its fine old church, so comprehensively that it is said that not one single building escaped. Orchies was a town of nearly four thousand inhabitants. It is not possible to conjecture what vindictive acts of this kind the invaders may have perpetrated in the department of the Ardennes, which is the only one which they hold in its entirety. This department had to bear the full brunt of their frenzied advance after Namur and Dinant. No trustworthy news of its condition has come through the lines to Paris. From the purely æsthetic point of view we may congratulate ourselves that Ardennes is one of the poorest departments of France in historical and artistic monuments. Lovers of the eccentric would regret the very odd Romanesque church of Vouziers, with its beautiful three-portalled façade set in the

side of a building of the shape of a portmanteau. The church of St. Nicolas in Rethel has some architectural merit, and we have already spoken of the Flemish Place Ducale of Charleville, but with these exceptions there is little in the Ardennes to be anxious about. According to M. Vachon all that is valuable in Rethel is destroyed, but the curtain which hides these north-eastern towns is scarcely penetrable. Clermont-en-Argonne, where one stone is no longer set upon another, contained in its charming little fifteenth-century church a statue by the great sculptor of the French Renaissance, Ligier Richier. What has become of it? What has been the fate of the unrivalled collection of pastels by Latour which was the pride of the Hôtel de Ville of St. Quentin, a town now far back behind the German trenches?

It appears that Noyon, with its incomparable basilica, though on the very line of war, is still intact. At Compiègne and at Chantilly, occupied in the first week of September, no damage, beyond some pilfering of *bric-à-brac*, was committed. Château-Thierry, though marked out for conflagration, escaped as by a miracle. The total destruction of Sermaize-les-Bains was an act of hideous wickedness, but had no æsthetic significance. The pages of M. Vachon's recital are full of painful detail of the reckless and ruthless incendiarism which has swallowed up scores of small towns and villages in Lorraine, and only now, after more than a year of tyranny, are the evil deeds of the invaders beginning to

be recorded. If any one doubts what a martyrdom the fair provinces of the east suffered last autumn, let him but turn to the heartrending recital of the reports of the Académie des Beaux-Arts de France. Surely there must come a day of reckoning for Germany.

October 1915.

THE NAPOLEONIC WARS IN ENGLISH POETRY

THE NAPOLEONIC WARS IN ENGLISH POETRY

It has always been noted in our history that the engagement of the British nation in important warfare does not have the result of stimulating the British poets to immediate celebration of battles. There are many causes which may be cited as inducing this silence, and some of the most powerful of them were suggested by Professor Gilbert Murray in a very remarkable address delivered before the Academic Committee. In the following pages I shall not endeavour to exaggerate the value of the verse which was put forth in England, on the subject of the war, during our great struggle with Napoleon, but shall be content to disengage it, perhaps for the first time, from the mass of work more abundantly, and often with a brighter inspiration, produced by the various poets of that age. Thus reserved, with everything round it winnowed away, it may appear more significant, and at all events more bulky, than is usually admitted or supposed. Our critics have been in the habit of saying that the great wars of a century ago did not interest our poets. It will be easy to show that this was not the case, although it is probable that we shall find that none of them

contrived to give a wholly articulate expression to their anxiety and their exultation.

The Classical School of the eighteenth century had included in its formulas a recognised method of treating warfare metrically. The nations of Europe had been incessantly fighting one another, and England had constantly been involved in struggles which an alliance now intensified and a convention now alleviated. Our prolonged and sporadic expeditions into strange tropic harbours and among fabulous races had an element of romance and wonder which it is very remarkable that no English poet took up and recorded, even if only in the stiff and cautious imagery then admissible. As a matter of fact, however, no bard was inspired by Trichinopoly in 1752, or even by Quebec in 1759. Martinique fired no imagination, and Ticonderoga had to wait more than a century unsung. The only exception was Vernon's expedition against Cartagena in 1739. This event stirred the imagination of a number of bards, and in particular of Thomson. It led, with little doubt, to the composition of "Rule Britannia," which, in spite of its bluster and its bad grammar, is a specimen of patriotic lyricism not to be despised. Cartagena was also the theme of Glover's "Admiral Hosier's Ghost," the best naval ballad of the eighteenth century, and its treatment in "The Seasons" will not be forgotten.

What the Classical School did best in the field of military poetry, however, was the elegy of pathetic resignation over the death of individual warriors. In

this class Collins' "Ode for 1746" and Gray's elegy on Sir William Williams of the "fine Vandyck head" are highly polished examples. The sentimental relation of the wounded or exhausted soldier to his home and family was described effectively by Burns and by Bloomfield. There was the rollicking treatment of a naval theme of which "Black-eyed Susan" is the type. Greatly commended in the third quarter of the eighteenth century were the martial ballads of Thomas Penrose, the doleful incumbent of Beckington-cum-Standerwick, who imitated Gray in stanzas which described how

> "Faintly bray'd the battle's roar,
> Distant down the hollow wind;
> Panting terror fled before,
> Wounds and death were left behind,"

and how ghastly "Edgar" looked, half-buried with the hostile dead. And finally there was the conventional battle-composition, of which the culminating example, the towering masterpiece, was Erasmus Darwin's "Battle of Minden," which our grandmothers were accustomed to recite at school with the applause of listening parents—

> "So stood Eliza on the wood-crowned height,
> O'er Minden's plain, spectatress of the fight,
> Sought with bold eye amid the bloody strife
> Her dearer self, the partner of her life;
> From hill to hill the rushing host pursued,
> And viewed his banner, or believed she viewed."

We dare not continue the stupendous narrative, but we must note that this appeared to our ancestors the

best and indeed the only legitimate type of military epos, and that its tradition affected every writer who attempted to picture warfare long after the romantic method had displaced the classic. It was supposed to be romantic, and we have only to turn to *Marmion* to see that Clara at Flodden is the younger and somewhat less maniacal sister of Eliza of the red and rolling eye.

Between the purely Classical School and the revival of poetry there is, perhaps, but a single example of war-poetry that need be mentioned. Yet honour is due to Sir William Jones, whose "Alcaic Ode" reflects the stubborn courage and loyal support of the weak which England's attitude in the isolation of 1781 called forth. It has a noble ring, and is too little known—

> "Such was this heaven-loved isle,
> Than Lesbos fairer, and the Cretan shore!
> No more shall Freedom smile?
> Shall Britons languish, and be men no more?
> Since all must life resign,
> Those sweet rewards which decorate the brave
> 'Tis folly to decline,
> And steal inglorious to the silent grave."

It has been necessary to indicate thus rapidly what were the forms dedicated to the celebration of warlike events by literary tradition down to the advent of Napoleon. If that event, and the military spectacle involved in it, had been delayed for ten or fifteen years, the texture of the English war-poetry inspired by it would be of a different character. We are accustomed

to date the revolution in our national verse by a reference to the publication of *Lyrical Ballads*, in the autumn of 1798 or, more exactly, to the appearance of "Tintern Abbey" in that volume. But, as a matter of fact, not only were the non-Lakist poets slow in accepting the Wordsworthian formulary, but it was only in certain cases and in particular classes of poetical work that the Lakists themselves adopted it. Wordsworth's famous preface of 1800 repudiated the use of "poetic diction" and "falsehood of description," and stated that he had found it "expedient" to abstain from the use of several conventions "which have been foolishly repeated by bad poets." But Wordsworth himself, in pieces like "Artegal and Elidure" and even "Vaudracour and Julia," in which it was necessary to record action in solemn numbers, fell back to a surprising extent upon the use of the conventional "poetic diction" of the eighteenth century. It is not until we come down to Keats, who lies beyond the war frontier altogether, that we find the classic diction completely abandoned. It will presently be seen how necessary it is to bear this fact in mind.

Until Napoleon suppressed the bread riots in Paris, in October 1795, his figure was generally unobserved on this side of the Channel. He was watched with gathering attention during his Italian campaigns, but he was no object of popular interest until the summer of 1798, when, urged by the Directory to attack England, he took the route of Egypt for that purpose. By August, when his fleet was destroyed by Nelson in Aboukir Bay,

he had become the centre of excited observation. Wordsworth, to whom our declaration of war upon the new French Republic five years previously had given the greatest shock which his moral nature had ever received, gradually and after painful revulsions of feeling abandoned his enthusiasm for France. He had always been much interested in the military life, and every student of "The Prelude" must remember the extraordinary episode of the soldier he met by Winander side—

> "Long were his arms, pallid his hands; his mouth
> Looked ghastly in the moonlight,"

—from whom Wordsworth imbibed such strange instruction in military wisdom. His sonnets dedicated to "National Independence and Liberty" prove the ecstasy with which his soul as a very young man accepted the struggle of the nations in their greatest expectancy. He was purged of moral dross by the vital energy around him—

> "the fife of war
> Was then a spirit-stirring sound indeed,
> A blackbird's whistle in a budding grove."

But the stupendous march of events roused no lyrical expression from lips so ready to communicate emotion in song.

In August 1802, when the signing of the Treaty of Amiens had quieted Europe for a moment, Wordsworth once more visited France, and now for the first time he occupied his verse with the current state of affairs in

that country. At Calais he paused to express his anger at the servility of the French, who had just made Bonaparte Consul for life, and who

> " With first-fruit offerings crowd to bend the knee
> . . before the new-born Majesty."

His famous third Calais sonnet contrasted this crafty servility with the sublime senselessness of republican joy in July 1790; in his fourth sonnet he

> " grieved for Bonaparté, with a vain
> And an unthinking grief,"

and insisted that

> " 'Tis not in battles that from youth we train
> The Governor who must be wise and good."

The splendid sonnets on the extinction of the Venetian Republic and on the subjugation of Switzerland appear to have been composed in 1802. In the whole of this group of poems which revolve around the subject of warfare without directly engaging upon it, Wordsworth contemplates Napoleon in his successive feats of arms with growing indignation and apprehension, and when we reach, in 1803, the various pieces dealing with the expected invasion, some of them among the most majestic in the language, we cease to deny to Wordsworth the title of a war-poet. At the present moment, when the question of a raid upon this country by an alien enemy is the subject of general discussion, we cannot

but be moved to read the extraordinary lines which Wordsworth wrote " in anticipation " in October 1803—

" Shout, for a mighty victory is won !
On British ground the Invaders are laid low;
The breath of Heaven has drifted them like snow,
And left them lying in the silent sun,
Never to rise again ! The work is done.
Come forth, ye old men, now in peaceful show
And greet your sons ! drums beat and trumpets blow
Clap, infants, clap your hands ! Divine must be
That triumph, when the very worst, the pain
And even the prospect of our brethren slain,
Hath something in it that the heart enjoys."

On another occasion the pacific Wordsworth, walking by starlight along the shores of Grasmere, rejoiced to see " the ruddy crest of Mars," and felt his heart contract with joy in the splendour of fighting " by just revenge inflamed." His memory went back to the time when " a band of military officers," then his friends, now his national foes, had been " the chief of my associates in Paris," and the fever of soldierly ferment once more inflamed his cheeks.

Coleridge, in spite of his having so remarkably enlisted in the King's regiment of Light Dragoons, had no love either of soldiers or of horses. His contributions to the poetry of the Great War were meagre, and were confined to the period of his youth. When he was asked to record some impressions of the fighting, he surprisingly replied, " I have no wish to qualify myself for the office of Historiographer to the King of Hell." The seventh strophe of the " Ode on the departing Year "—

" Not yet enslaved, not wholly vile,
O Albion! O my Mother Isle!"

—is the earliest expression in verse of our splendid isolation. In 1798 the perilous position of England extracted from Coleridge, who saw Somersetshire treated like La Vendée, the wild eclogue called " Fire, Famine, and Slaughter." His admirable ode, " France," and the less admirable but very curious " Fears in Solitude " belong to the spring of the same year. In April Coleridge was suffering agonies of apprehension, and his outpourings showed little confidence in the military resources of England—

" Spare us yet awhile,
Father and God! O! spare us yet awhile!
Oh! let not English women drag their flight
Fainting beneath the burden of their babes."

The prayer was heard, but the attitude of the suppliant lacked Wordsworth's dignity. During this time of anxiety Coleridge was unnerved by the dread of invasion; " my repeated night-yells," he says, " have made me a nuisance in my own house." In " The British Stripling's War Song," written a year later, the poet grew more daring—

" My own shout of onset, in the heart of my trance,
How oft it awakes me from visions of glory;
When I meant to have leapt on the Hero of France,
And have dashed him to earth, pale and breathless and gory."

Over the bad epigrams which Coleridge perpetrated at the time of the Peace a veil should be drawn, and on the

whole his performances as a war-poet are not above the level of his prowess as a Light Dragoon.

The rigid Southey was not affected, as was his softer friend, by the terrors of possible invasion, but he was obsessed with indignation at the practices of the press-gang. From Westbury, in this same year 1798, he sent forth a naval poem, called "The Victory," which is a chain of stiffly expressed but pathetic reflections on the horrors of being carried off from home and wife and children by "lawful violence." This abuse much affected Southey, and it tinges all the studies of naval warfare in his "English Eclogues" of 1799. He takes a grim joy in the story of the woman who tied her nightcap round her husband's head, and let herself be whisked away by the press-gang. In his strong division of feeling with regard to the Republic, Southey was not prepared to express himself with martial lyricism, and it was not until the Peninsular campaign was in full progress that he was interested in the war. It was not until Waterloo that he was deeply moved by it.

Meanwhile, as it is supposed in 1806, Wordsworth was inspired to compose the "Character of the Happy Warrior," over which we must pause a moment, since it is, above all doubt, the most important English contribution made to the poetry of warfare during Napoleonic times. We must take this long gnomic poem in connexion with the series of sonnets to National Independence and Liberty which have already been mentioned, for it is the culmination and crown of them. The death of Nelson at the battle of Trafalgar had

completely reconciled Wordsworth to the attitude of England towards France, an attitude which had awakened in him at first only sentiments of shame, and then of dubious acquiescence. The poet had not yet attained the height of patriotic serenity which breathes through the arduous and Roman pages of "The Convention of Cintra," but he could now contemplate the shattering of the French navy without any of those "ghost-like hauntings of shame" which had afflicted him in 1803. He could share the British ecstasy; he thrilled to the immortal signal, "England expects every man to do his duty." The Happy Warrior is not a direct portrait of Nelson, for Wordsworth still retained some puritanical objections to the admiral's supposed private character, but it is a study of exalted devotion to the loftiest principles of national chivalry, as exemplified by Nelson. The Happy Warrior is one

> "Who, doomed to go in company with Pain,
> And Fear, and Bloodshed, miserable train!
> Turns his necessity to glorious gain,"

and who, in the hour of severest tension,

> "Is happy as a Lover, and attired
> With sudden brightness, like a Man inspired."

It is not necessary to dwell on the majestic felicities of a poem which is one of the noblest that ever passed from the pen of a godlike prophet. It is, in the intellectual sphere, hardly less dominant than Trafalgar or Waterloo in the more eminent sphere of action.

After this, it must be confessed that our decline to less heroic levels is rapid and final. The actual presence of English and French forces contending on the soil of his beloved Portugal stirred the interest of Southey at last. His "Inscriptions," a section of his work which has few readers to-day, will on examination be found to contain a sort of broken record of the Peninsular War, in painfully tuneless blank verse. Here are tumid celebrations of Vimiero, Coruña, Talavera, The Douro, Busaco, and Torres Vedras. Wordsworth was interested in the adventures of Palafox and the Spanish guerillas, and felt drawn to write a series of sonnets about "noble Biscayans" and "the indignation of a high-minded Spanish," but they are among the most stilted of his compositions. From these petrified curiosities we turn with satisfaction to Charles Wolfe's ode called "The Burial of Sir John Moore at Coruña," which still, after a hundred years, palpitates with delicate life. First printed in 1817, this famous poem was probably written at least three years earlier. It has been vulgarised by excess of popularity, but if we endeavour to examine it as though we had never read it before we can but be struck by its freshness, its picturesqueness and its sincerity. Here, at last, the Darwin and Penrose style, the decayed eighteenth-century verbiage, has completely disappeared—

> "We buried him darkly at dead of night,
> The sods with our bayonets turning;
> By the struggling moonbeam's misty light,
> And the lantern dimly burning."

How far is this from the hero of Minden, who

> " Vaults o'er the plain, and in the tangled wood
> Lo ! dead Eliza weltering in her blood ! "

Wolfe's simple and exquisite requiem is the one successful English anecdote poem of the Napoleonic wars.

The hardihood of the English poets in travelling over the continent of Europe during the Great War has hardly received due acknowledgment from their biographers. When it was difficult and even dangerous to stray outside the confines of Albion, almost every British bard took his life and his luggage in his hand, and essayed the adventure. Byron was pre-eminent among these voluntary exiles, and when, in July 1809, he landed in Lisbon, Sir Arthur Wellesley, who had just received the title of Lord Wellington, was holding Portugal against the overwhelming forces of France. In " Childe Harold's Pilgrimage " Byron seems to say that he was himself present at the battle of Talavera, but his language is ambiguous, and the fact is hardly credible. Byron was, however, in or near Seville at the time. We know that the infection of fighting seized him, and that, being so near to the English army, he nearly joined it, but was persuaded to push on for Greece. In these circumstances, we anticipate from Byron's pictures of the campaign more vigour and reality than we find in them. They are even ludicrously flat—

> " The Foe, the Victim, and the fond Ally, . .
> Are met—as if at home they could not die—
> To feed the crow on Talavera's plain,
> And fertilise the field that each pretends to gain."

Byron happened at this time to ride across what became, two years later, the battlefield of Albuera, and this scene came back to him when he wrote "The Curse of Minerva" at Athens in March 1811. That poem contains a passage on the capture of Barosa by General Graham, which must have been written immediately on the arrival of the news in Greece. Masséna had been sent "to drive the English leopards into the sea," and the smouldering war in the Peninsula had broken out again with renewed ferocity. The victory of Wellington was still far from decisive, and Byron in Athens, like many of his countrymen in London, thought an invasion of England imminent. The words of Byron, in "The Curse of Minerva," are significant—

> "Say with what eye along the distant down
> Would flying burghers mark the blazing town?
> How view the column of ascending flames
> Shake his red shadow o'er the startled Thames?
> Nay, frown not, Albion! for the torch was thine
> That lit such pyres from Tagus to the Rhine:
> Now should they burst on thy devoted coast,
> Go, ask thy bosom who deserves them most?"

Before the manuscript reached Murray, Salamanca and Vittoria had put another face on the situation; "The Curse of Minerva," a very petulant satire, was wisely withheld from publication. In "Childe Harold II," we may note that the rule of Bonaparte is described as "one bloated Chief's unwholesome reign." Byron was not fitted by his complexity of temperament to become the simple Tyrtaeus of his own or any other race.

Indeed, there was only one British writer of that

thrilling age who was in any degree moved to adopt the attitude of that lame schoolmaster of Aphidna who wrote Doric war-songs in the dim dawn of Athens. In Campbell we have an authentic and almost an official battle-minstrel. He took very seriously his mission to awaken and extend patriotic feeling in his native country, and when his earliest stanzas, "The Wounded Hussar," were hawked about the streets of Glasgow, they exacerbated public opinion, roused, not by any deeds on shore, but by the sea-victories off Cape St. Vincent and at Camperdown. Of Campbell's old father, the Glasgow trader, we are told that "he could sing a good naval song," and the poet naturally became the recognised laureate of the fleet. In 1801 he composed, although he did not immediately publish, "The Battle of the Baltic" and "Ye Mariners of England," lyrics in which a fastidious taste may detect many blemishes, but which will never lose their power to stir an English pulse. Campbell saw some fighting in Bavaria towards the close of 1800, but he was not present at Hohenlinden, although he has celebrated it in one of the most spirited of ballads. His position in Germany became very disagreeable, and when, in March 1801, war broke out between England and Denmark, Campbell made a rush from Altona to Yarmouth, hotly chased by a Danish frigate. A little later he published "The Soldier's Dream," beginning—

"Our bugles sang truce, for the night-cloud had lowered,
And the sentinel stars set their watch in the sky;
And thousands had sunk on the ground overpower'd,
The weary to sleep and the wounded to die."

The " Threatened Invasion " affected Campbell, as it did all the other poets, but it seems to be a subject which defies poetical treatment, and his " Rise, fellow freemen, and stretch the right hand " is but a poor affair. Indeed, in the line " Let a death-bed repentance be taught the proud foe," Campbell's ardour approaches the ridiculous. Far better is the somewhat later song beginning " Men of England ! " Less known is " Hallowed Ground," which is still stirring in some of its stanzas. A bald and almost comic anecdote is told in " Napoleon and the British Sailor."

Critical appreciation has steadily receded from Campbell, and it is not easy now to do him justice. It may therefore be of interest to quote from an unpublished letter written (Aug. 3, 1875) by Swinburne to a friend of his who had praised the martial lyrics—

" I was very much pleased by your article on Campbell, though not quite agreeing with your high estimate of some of his minor ballads and songs; but that is the right side on which to exceed, and with the tone of the whole I most heartily sympathise. It did one good to read it, after ——'s and other depreciations of our great (if not only) national lyric poet. Of his two masterpieces I should have spoken even more passionately than yourself; for the simple fact is that I know nothing like them at all—*simile aut secundum*—in their own line, which is one of the very highest in the highest range of poetry. What little of national verse is as good patriotically is far inferior poetically—

witness Burns and Rouget de l'Isle; and what little in that line might satisfy us better as poetry than the "Marseillaise" or "Scots wha hae" is pitifully wanting in the nerve which thrills by contact all the blood of all their hearers, boys and men, students and soldiers, poets and dullards, with one common and divine touch of unquenchable fire. Next to Campbell, of course, is Callicles, but even the old Attic song of tyrannicide is to me not quite so triumphant a proof of the worth and weight of poetry in national matters. All this and many things more I should myself have liked to say in public."

"All this," however, Swinburne never found an opportunity to "say in public," and I therefore offer no apology for here recording the opinion of so great an authority in favour of the war-poetry of Campbell.

The great surprise of the investigation on which we are now engaged is the almost complete inefficiency of Walter Scott. By the gallantry of his character and by his fondness for every species of high adventure he might seem to be pointed out as the natural exponent in rapid and spirited verse of the martial deeds of his countrymen. But he preserved an extraordinary reserve until the middle of the Peninsular War, and even then it cannot be said that his exertions added much to the glories of the British Muse. The sorrows of the Portuguese, who were treated by Masséna's troops very much as the Belgians have recently been treated by

the Germans, roused a lively indignation in England. A committee was formed for the relief of Portugal, and Walter Scott, on seeing the advertisement and without having been applied to, generously offered to write a poem and contribute the profits of its first edition to the fund. He was at the height of his popularity, and the proposal was, of course, accepted with enthusiasm. In a very brief time Scott had composed "The Vision of Don Roderick," which was published in the summer of 1811, soon after the victories of Fuentes de Oñoro and Albuera. It came, however, as a great disappointment to Scott's admirers; it had little or nothing of the buoyancy of "The Lord of the Isles" and "The Lady of the Lake," while it was impossible not to see that its spirit and temper were deformed by political prejudice. The omission of the name of Sir John Moore was seized upon as an odious example of Whig bias, and is, indeed, unaccountable on any theory very creditable to Scott. "The Vision of Don Roderick" is now little read, for the Spenserian stanza in which it is written is less attractive in Scott's hands than his easy, accustomed octosyllabics, yet the conclusion of it, where he lays the medieval legend wholly aside, and concentrates his attention on the deeds of our Peninsular forces, is often vigorous. A single fragment will give a just impression of the whole—

"Four moons have heard these thunders idly roll'd,
Have seen these wistful myriads eye their prey
As savage wolves survey a guarded fold—
But in the middle path a Lion lay!

At length they move, but not to battle-fray,
Nor blaze yon fires where meets the manly fight;
Beacons of infamy, they light the way
Where cowardice and cruelty unite
To damn with double shame their ignominious flight."

The abdication of Napoleon in April 1814 produced a great sensation in English society and a slight flutter in the dovecotes of the Muses. Landor, who had introduced the Corsican mysteriously into "Gebir" as "a mortal man above all mortal praise," now revised this verdict in a Greek epigram which remarks (as translated by Swinburne)—

"Thy life-long works, Napoleon, who shall write?
Time, in his children's blood who takes delight."

Southey, during the negotiations which led to the abdication, composed a great Pindaric ode on the subject of Napoleon, in which he remarked—

"For sooner shall the Ethiop change his skin,
Or from the Leopard shall her spots depart,
Than this man change his old flagitious heart.
Have ye not seen him in the balance weigh'd,
And there found wanting? On the stage of blood
Foremost the resolute adventurer stood";

and again, addressing France—

"One man hath been for ten long wretched years
The cause of all this blood and all these tears;
One man in this most awful point of time
Draws on thy danger, as he caused thy crime."

Southey's verse is rarely agreeable; its harmonies seem produced by a vigorous brandishing of the poker and the tongs; but in the course of this Ode of 1814 he is inspired by a sincere and righteous wrath, and his denunciation of the crimes of Bonaparte can still be read with interest. So can, in a different way, those of Byron, written off almost impromptu, so soon as the news of the abdication reached him. He heard, or probably saw in a newspaper, that his "poor little pagod," the Emperor of the French, was "pushed off his pedestal;" he immediately published anonymously, five days after the event in Paris, his "Ode to Napoleon Bonaparte." The diction of this poem has the looseness, the negligence of art, which destroys for us the charm of so much of Byron's work, but the vehemence of its rhetoric cannot be denied, nor the ingenuity of its symbolism—

> "He who of old would rend the oak
> Dreamed not of the rebound;
> Chained by the trunk he vainly broke,—
> Alone—how looked he round?
> Thou, in the sternness of thy strength,
> An equal deed hast done at length,
> And darker fate hast found;
> He fell, the forest prowlers' prey,
> But thou must eat thy heart away."

In the "Ode on Venice," not published until 1819, will be found certain shadowy reflections on military events in Europe between 1812 and 1814, and Byron surveys "the three fractions of the groaning globe"

with complacency, finding that, in a world subdued by the Tyrant, England alone "yet rears her crest, unconquered and sublime."

The victory of Waterloo was the first and the only incident of the Napoleonic wars which roused any general expression of lyrical emotion from the British Muses. It was copiously celebrated in verse, but by a singular fatality that verse was almost without exception inadequate to the occasion. Indeed, the only tribute to Waterloo which can be considered as having risen to anything like the height of its great theme was written in prose, although in a style so transcendental and elaborate as to compete with verse in its effect. It is therefore pardonable to record here the extraordinary performance of De Quincey called "The English Mail-Coach," the ingenious subject of which is the ecstasy carried through the length and breadth of England by the mail-coaches which "distributed over the face of the land, like the opening of apocalyptic vials, the heart-shaking news" of Waterloo. This was a subject admirably adapted to the Corinthian splendour of De Quincey's ornamented prose, and in the famous third section of this rhapsody, "The Dream-Fugue," he hovers over the very limit of which prose is capable in almost insupportable fulness of symbol and colour and reverberation. However severely purity of taste may cavil against the texture of this redundant richness, no one can deny that in "The English Mail-Coach" Waterloo has inspired De Quincey to the performance of an astonishing feat.

But of the poets the record is less exhilarating. Southey was the first to hasten, with characteristic conscientiousness, to the scene of battle, picking up notes and relics on the spot, as a cockney collects shells on the sea-shore. Almost immediately on his return to Kenswick he produced a volume of verse, entitled *The Poet's Pilgrimage to Waterloo.* He also kept a full journal of his adventures in the course of this journey, but this diary was not published until 1903. It is a much more interesting document than the poem, Southey's prose being always more readable than his verse. It contains a delightful paragraph, exemplifying the seriousness with which Southey took his high Parnassian calling. He tells us that he was accompanied by his wife and his eldest daughter, and he adds—

"Being in some degree bound to celebrate the greatest victory in British history, I persuaded myself that if any person had a valid cause or pretext for visiting the field of Waterloo it was the Poet Laureate."

The personal revelations in *The Poet's Pilgrimage* and the descriptions of Flemish scenery are interesting, and indeed give as favourable an impression of Southey's poetical powers as any part of his writings, but the actual reconstruction of the battle itself is very poor, and we presently drift into an intolerable morass of allegory. Was it Mommsen who said that Tacitus was "the most unmilitary of military writers"? Southey was at least as fond of battles and still less happy in describing them.

Yet Southey at Waterloo was a genius in comparison with Walter Scott, who, though not a Poet Laureate, felt obliged to visit the scene of the battle and to publish a poem on the subject. "The Field of Waterloo" was rapidly written and appeared in October 1815; it was published as an attractive volume, and its subject, no less than the name of its illustrious author, ensured it a great sale. Lord Erskine summed up the general criticism of it in an epigram which enjoyed a wide circulation—

> "On Waterloo's ensanguined plain
> Lie tens of thousands of the slain;
> But none by sabre or by shot
> Fell half so flat as Walter Scott."

Scott was a little more felicitous in the ode entitled "The Dance of Death," also written in 1815, and beginning—

> "Night and morning were at meeting
> Over Waterloo;
> Cocks had sung their earliest greeting,
> Faint and low they crew,"

and in the rather mysterious verses called "Saint Cloud"—

> "The drum's deep roll was heard afar;
> The bugle wildly blew
> Good night to Uhlan and Hussar
> That garrison Saint Cloud."

Scott took a great interest in the incidents of Napoleon's last campaign, and as late as April 1818 we find him commenting severely on Byron's abuse of language in speaking of "the carnage" of Mont St. Jean.

Two odes and several sonnets attest Wordsworth's emotion at the victory, and the earlier of the odes contains one striking passage—

> " We laud
> And magnify Thy name, Almighty God !
> But Man is Thy most awful instrument
> In working out a pure intent;
> Thou cloth'st the wicked in their dazzling mail
> And for Thy righteous purpose they prevail;
> Thine arm from peril guards the coasts
> Of them who in Thy laws delight :
> Thy presence turns the scales of doubtful fight,
> Tremendous God of battles, Lord of Hosts ! "

Unquestionably, however, Byron had been much more successful than all his brother-bards in his poetical treatment of Waterloo. He also, like Scott and Southey, explored the battlefield, but he was less precipitate in recording his impressions in verse. It is not until the third canto of " Childe Harold's Pilgrimage " that we are introduced to the " first and last of fields "—

> " And Harold stands upon this place of skulls,
> The grave of France, the deadly Waterloo."

The victory suggests to Byron a reflection which had not occurred to the other laureates of the victory and had not troubled the triumphal ecstasies of De Quincey. He admits that France is chained, but for that reason is Earth more free? Wordsworth had, in a solemn sonnet, impressed upon the Allies the duty of gratitude and justice. Byron is not hopeful of their response, and sees in the fall of Napoleon only a lessening of the

despots of the world by one. He breaks off these cynical suggestions to embark on one of his finest passages of description, that famous account of how "There was a sound of revelry by night," which is pursued to the field of Waterloo and is followed by an address to the fallen "Conqueror and Captive of the Earth," who, at the moment when it was written, was being closely guarded at St. Helena. The thirty-five stanzas in which Byron deals, sometimes rather remotely, with the incidents and politics of 1815, form the best metrical record of the feelings of Englishmen at that time which have come down to us. After the battle of Waterloo, but before the publication of "Childe Harold's Pilgrimage III," Byron printed several war-poems, presumed to be "from the French." These need not delay us, nor some trifles, not particularly neat, from the pen of the essentially unmartial Thomas Moore.

After the Peace there were some poetical retrospects which deserve to be mentioned. Walter Scott prefixed to one of the chapters of *Old Mortality* a quatrain which far outweighs in value all his laborious celebrations of the war—

> "Sound, sound the clarion, fill the fife!
> To all the sensual world proclaim,
> One crowded hour of glorious life
> Is worth an age without a name."

It is probable that if Shelley had been born a few years earlier he would have been moved to celebrate contemporary events with the passionate intensity which marked his genius. In the last years of his brief

life, when his powers had ripened and his views of humanity had widened, he showed himself an eager observer of the great world of European politics. But he was still a child when Napoleon was in the full tide of success, and his attention was not called to the Continent until after the Allies had signed the Peace of Paris. Some crude verses, entitled "Mother and Son," were written in 1812, and treat of the familiar terrors of the press-gang and "the woe which tyrants on their victims love to wreak." But Shelley contributed nothing serious to the subject of our inquiry until 1816, when he published, with "Alastor," his sonnet on the Fall of Bonaparte. In this he speaks of his hatred of the despot, and his joy that time has swept Napoleon's frail and bloody pomp in fragments towards oblivion. In the preface to *The Revolt of Islam* (1816) he analyses rather closely his own attitude towards Napoleon and the results of the war, but we can trace little direct inspiration from contemporary events in the epic itself, after the opening statement—

> "When the last hope of trampled France had failed
> Like a brief dream of unremaining glory,
> From visions of despair I rose."

Shelley then yearned for "Victory, Victory to the prostrate nations," but his purview of their condition was still extremely vague. Three years later, in October 1819, he was writing the "Ode to the Assertors of Liberty," which mirrors the discontent and distress which followed the war, and in 1820 he composed the great "Ode to

Liberty," in which he sums up the state of Europe in the preceding generation—

> " How like Bacchanals of blood
> Round France, the ghastly vintage, stood
> Destruction's sceptred slaves, and Folly's mitred brood!
> When one, like them, but mightier far than they,
> The Anarch of thy own bewildered powers
> Rose: armies mingled in obscure array,
> Like clouds with clouds, darkening the sacred bowers
> Of serene Heaven. He, by the past pursued,
> Rests with those dead, but unforgotten hours,
> Whose ghosts scare victor kings in their ancestral towers."

This was written about fifteen months before the death of Napoleon, the news of which roused Shelley to the composition of the vigorous lines beginning, " What! alive and so bold, O Earth? " and may have had something to do with the study of contemporary events in Greece which took the form of " Hellas." Shelley's inclination to write at the suggestion of events of the moment now increased, but he was approaching the end of his career. There is a temptation to examine " The Masque of Anarchy " in the interests of our inquiry, but its stanzas do not refer directly to Napoleon, of whom, however, we find a portrait preserved in the latest of all Shelley's works, the unfinished " Triumph of Life "—

> " ' Who is he with chin
> Upon his breast, and hands crost on his chain? '
> The child of a fierce hour."

But when this was written Europe was already six years past Waterloo. Still later came Byron's petulant

gibes at the Duke as "the best of cut-throats" in the eighth and ninth cantos of "Don Juan"; and the poetical record of the Napoleonic war ends with Byron's cynical inquiry to Wellington—

> "And I shall be delighted to learn who,
> Save you and yours, have gained by Waterloo."

If all the historical records were to perish, it would be impossible for posterity to recover a coherent impression of the course of the war from the works of contemporary British poets. The anger and confusion caused by the press-gangs, and the occasional and rather undignified panic of invasion, greatly overshadow in their effusions the heroic and strategic features of the struggle. The English, who fought so well, sang of battle very languidly, and even when they sat down to celebrate a victory their attention was apt to be called away by the curve of a garland of hop-vines or by a recollection of Cumbrian mountains. Southey, on the field of Waterloo, expatiates on the peculiarities of Flemish tillage. Nowhere do we find any attempt to depict the wide movement of troops over the length and breadth of Europe, or to define the larger political features of the struggle. For all that the poets tell us between 1795 and 1815, Wordsworth's "Happy Warrior" might as well be a mere aspiration as the portrait of an actual leader. We hear of battles in Portugal and Spain, but nothing of their cause or character. Bonaparte is revealed now as a godlike hero, now as a bestial tyrant, and the same poets who

have lifted him to heaven to-day will complacently revile him to-morrow. The Napoleonic War, in short, was so imperfectly recorded by the poets who lived through its tremendous shock that we may fairly represent it as not recorded by them at all. Nearly a century was to pass before there should rise a poet who, on the huge canvas of " The Dynasts," for the first time would paint for us a panorama of the struggle not unworthy of its stupendous issues.

January 1915.

WAR POETRY IN FRANCE

WAR POETRY IN FRANCE

THERE is a quality in war, as there is in religion, which does not lend itself kindly to the art of verse. At first sight we might expect to see these two forms of energy pre-eminent in encouraging lofty poetical expression. They are prodigiously romantic in their outline and their detail, they occupy man's thoughts and passions to the exclusion of all other interests, for, when either of them takes hold of humanity, all lesser occupations have to stand aside and wait. Yet, as a matter of critical experience, the lyrical triumphs of martial and religious poetry are few, and they are narrowly limited in scope. While he was delivering one of his famous Oxford lectures, Matthew Arnold held up in one hand *The Golden Treasury* and in the other *The Book of Praise*, and said, "How are we to explain that there is hardly anything that is not poetry in the one and hardly anything that is poetry in the other?" The latter may be affirmed, and with still more confidence, about any collection of exclusively military verse, since war has produced no Christina Rossetti. But the reason of it is difficult to seize, and evaded the acuteness of Arnold himself. Perhaps the very scope and tremendous importance of the two themes, which in their rigid outlines transcend the

imagination and make its exercise unnecessary, are elements in the species of paralysis which attacks the poet-artist in his attempt. At all events, it is certain that the poetry which has definitely succeeded in moving the hearts of armies has, at least in modern times, achieved that success by a sacrifice of the highest qualities of poetry.

It needs not, therefore, be a matter of surprise to discover that the poet who has done more than any other single man to prepare the temper of Frenchmen for the present war was not a writer of high intrinsic merit. The sale of *Chants du Soldat* has been continuous for more than forty years, and the little book has run through more than one hundred and sixty large editions. It has been more widely read and more durably popular than any other book of modern French verse. No consideration of the temper of the French nation to-day has any completeness if we ignore it. Nor does it contain a single offence against good taste, or any vulgarity of language. But although the poetry of Paul Déroulède has enjoyed and has deserved so universal an appreciation by the public, and although there is not merely no flagging in that interest, but, as a consequence of current events, a great recrudescence of it, yet it has scarcely received any acceptance from the leaders of literary opinion. In France, where criticism is so abundant and so generally intelligent, very little notice has ever been awarded to the poems of Déroulède. While he has taken his civic place as

one of the principal architects of the new national French spirit, the purely literary judgment on his work has never ceased to be what Leconte de Lisle indicated when some one mentioned the name of Déroulède in his presence: "Ce n'est pas assez de ne parler de ce jeune homme; il faut encore en mal parler." When Déroulède has been observed among the poets, there has usually been a proposal to hunt him out of the temple of Apollo.

Let us acknowledge that his rhymes are poor and often are mere assonance; let it be granted that his hurried emotional writing is amateurish at its best, feeble and mediocre at its worst. Let us also note that we are dealing with a French objective, and therefore with an audience naturally critical. In matters of art, the large English public has a positive fondness for the man who does not know his business, and who triumphs over his want of trained skill. But this is not the temper of France, where ignorance of the *métier* is still held to be a disadvantage. When refined Academicians shuddered to hear the poems of Déroulède howled at café-concerts by raucous women wrapped in the tricolour, their emotion was not ridiculous. To a conscientious artist these performances could not but be distressing. But what such people as Leconte de Lisle, shut up in their ivory towers, did not perceive was that this painfully "inartistic" verse was the product of a sincere and lofty inspiration. It is that which makes Déroulède so extremely interesting to-day.

His sorrowful, angry verses, smelling of gunpowder and sounding of drum-taps, are so much a part of the temper of the new France to-day that they demand an attention from serious criticism which has never yet been given them. In one of the few serious analyses of his work which French criticism has contributed, Pontmartin called him "l'intrépide sentinelle des lendemains de la défaite." For more than forty years France has waited for that to-morrow to dawn; it has come at last, but Déroulède, who gazed all night into the eastern darkness with a great desire, died just too soon to enter into its radiance.

The peculiarity of Déroulède's attitude was that he continued strenuously militant when the rest of the French nation was tired of war. One of his biographers has said of him that "he not merely preaches revenge, he *is* the Revenge." His life was enclosed, in a very remarkable way, by the frontiers of war. He appeared first as a public character at the very darkest hour of despair after the defeat He noted the exact date of his resolution; on February 8, 1871, he wrote: "A partir d'aujourd'hui, je me voue à la Revanche." He began immediately to send forth his little poems, which were like so many arrows at the heart of despair. He was always denouncing weakness and fear, and his verses had the awakening sound of the tramp of armed men. He persisted, in spite of constant political mistakes, with exasperating failures of tact, through long periods during which nobody listened to his voice, in

calling upon France not to rest under her humiliation, but to face the inevitable struggle with a fiery optimism. When, late in his life, admirers proposed to Déroulède a literary honour of some kind, he waved it aside: " Je ne suis rien qu'un sonneur de clairon," he replied, and he continued to blow his lonely horn, like Roland in the valley of Roncesvalles. What seems almost a miracle is that he lived on until just before the new war of Revenge broke out, dying on January 30, 1914, worn out by long disease, but heroic to the last. It was said of him that if he could only have lived six months longer he would have been able to die of joy.

Paul Déroulède was born in 1846, the son of a lawyer, who died early and left him and his brother André to the care of an admirable mother. They were brought up in an atmosphere of literature, for Émile Augier was their mother's brother and Pigault-Lebrun their grandfather. Paul showed the more definite talent, and early began to write verses, to which the death of his uncle Colonel Déroulède, who was killed fighting in Cochin-China, gave a certain martial colour. This was superficial, however, and oddly enough, when the war of 1870 broke out, the future author of *Chants du Soldat* was very hostile to it. He nourished pacific dreams of a universal fraternity, and he hated Napoleon III much more than he feared Wilhelm of Prussia. In the very pleasing record of his life which MM. Tharaud have presented to us, the story of his conversion is told, and

it is as striking as any crisis in a religious experience. Full of his anti-military dreams, he retired to his mother's country-place, and was walking out, when an old peasant met him and spoke to him. "Can you tell me," said the man, with an obvious anxiety, "on what day the troops are to start?" Déroulède scornfully answered, "How should I know?" and the peasant fixed on him a look of reproach which he never forgot. It brought about what the Evangelicals call an instant conviction of sin, and in that moment the divine grace of patriotism was revealed to him. His pacifist indifference died within him, and the heart of a soldier took its place. He joined the army as a sub-lieutenant, and it was on the 7th of August, the date of the battle of Weissenbourg, that his conversion was complete. From that day on, until his death more than forty years later, he lived for no other purpose than to pursue the apostolate of revenge.

He had his full experience of the distresses of war. He led his troops to the recapture of Montbéliard, and his heroic mother, one day in August when the regiment was at Neuville-en-Tournefuy, drove up to the commander and presented to him a tall lad of seventeen, saying, "You have my elder son already; I bring you my younger one. If I had a third, I would bring him also to defend our country." The splendid courage of the old lady gave the brothers a certain prestige in the regiment, where they were known as "les fils à la mère"; they fought in successive disastrous battles,

and finally at Sedan, where in the gigantic chaos they were believed to have both been killed. So it was reported crudely to their wonderful mother, who, notwithstanding her Spartan courage, was stricken on the spot with a paralysis from which she never completely recovered. But André, though seriously wounded, was not killed, while Paul was carried safe and sound into Germany as a prisoner, and was interned at Breslau. Of his romantic escape and of his adventures during the Commune we can say nothing here, although they have a direct bearing upon his poems. But one phrase which MM. Tharaud quote is too characteristic to be omitted. On his return to his own country, Déroulède solemnly wrote down, for his own behoof, these words of prophecy and faith: "Je ne dois seulement être prêt à me faire tuer pour la France. Je dois ne plus vivre que pour elle. Mon but est de lui préparer des libérateurs et des soldats." And that is what he never ceased to do until he died.

Two months after his return from his German prison, the Commune broke out in Paris. This was one of many occasions in the life of Déroulède when he was mixed up in matters which seemed to have nothing to do with the central thread of his inspiration. His successive dealings with Ferry, Gambetta, Boulanger and Clémenceau gave a wild appearance of incoherence to his strange and violent career. Curiously enough, now that he is dead, the glaring pieces of glass seem to have taken shape in the turn of the kaleidoscope, and

we see what they all meant and why they were inevitable. Looking back over the forty years, the life of Paul Déroulède becomes, not very intelligible perhaps, but yet beautiful and decorous in its penetrating view of the future, in the unity of its proud and fiery aspirations. On July 6, 1872, on occasion of the anniversary of Corneille, Coquelin recited verses by Déroulède—

> " Et toi, Corneille, toi, père du grand courage,
> Redis-nous ces leçons dont tu formais les cœurs,
> Le calme dans l'effort, la haine après l'outrage,
> Redis-nous la patrie et refais-nous vainqueurs."

The poet was charged with inconsistency because he had entered Paris with the army of Versailles, and had led an assault upon the barricades. Some years later, in a violent article in *L'Intransigeant*, Rochefort reproached Paul Déroulède with having picked up his cross of the Legion of Honour out of a pool of the blood of Parisians. The answer was direct : " I received my cross two months before the Commune, for service on the battlefield. I never have shot a Parisian ; and I found behind the barricades only the wretches whom you had sent there without accompanying them." He explains, in another place, that he considered that Frenchmen should restore order in their own house, and not let the Germans be their policemen.

His arm was broken on the barricades, and he withdrew from the violence of strife to the melancholy woodlands of his ancestral home, a little château at

Langély in the Périgord. There the Déroulèdes had worked out their destiny since the sixteenth century, neighbours of Montaigne. There, during his slow convalescence, the latest of their sons, meditating on the fortunes of France, wrote his first little volume of verses, *Chants du Soldat.* It came quietly into existence in 1872, and, as MM. Tharaud excellently point out, it was the first voice that France raised after the war. The temper of it exactly suited the grave and poignant situation; "nous savions mourir, sinon combattre; nous avons été braves, mais la fortune nous a trahis." The critics hardly observed the appearance of the book, but it presently ran like wildfire through the country. It re-lighted the extinguished torch of hope in tens of thousands of hearts, and it unites 1872 and 1914 with an unbroken thread of blood-red colour. When we speak of the war poetry of the present war, we are bound to consider the verses with which Déroulède, practically alone, and with an astounding persistency, kept alive certain definite sentiments in the fluctuating and shifting conscience of France.

German diplomacy rarely fails to play into the hands of its enemies. A remarkable stimulus was given to the sale of *Chants du Soldat,* which thereupon became the vade-mecum of every intelligent French fighting man, by the action of Count Arnim in Paris. He protested to General de Cissey, then Minister of War, against the publication by a French officer of "insolent verses directed against Prussia and the Prussians." The

direct answer came from the French Academy, which had not hitherto observed the *Chants du Soldat*, but now "crowned" the volume with every circumstance of distinction. Déroulède, having become a national hero, was drawn back into the army, and was promoted in a battalion of Chasseurs. But the fate which always dogged him lay in wait for him now. Scarcely had he begun his new military duties than his horse threw him, and he smashed his foot so seriously that he was obliged to resign. So it happened throughout the career of this extraordinary man. Thirsting to distinguish himself in action, his efforts in public life invariably failed, while the one frail gift of his lyrical inspiration continued to perfume French sentiment like an inexhaustible grain of musk.

His poems were published in three slender instalments, *Chants du Soldat* in 1872, *Nouveaux Chants du Soldat* in 1875, *Marches et Sonneries* in 1881. Although these little verses have been before the world so long, it is well that we should examine them from a new point of view, for it almost seems as though they spoke to us now for the first time, or at least with a new clear note. It is interesting to analyse their character, and to compare their attitude with the present condition of France.

"Ils ont cette espèrance,—
La France n'est pas morte encor—Vive la France!"

This was the spirit which it was given to Déroulède, above all other men, to awaken and to sustain till the

hour of new experience should strike. His poems do not deal directly with battle; they are not painted in the Maclise or even in the De Neuville and Detaille manner. They are anecdotes, chosen because they illustrate the temper of the French soldier, or bring home to him the necessities of France. With an unconscious felicity which has all the effect of subtilty, the poet, in lines of brief and sometimes even halting inspiration, insists on giving blunt, plain statements of incidents that awaken the sensation of patriotism. In "Le Turco," a boy scarcely seventeen is brought by his mother to the regiment—"Courage, mon fils!" "Courage, maman!"—and marches to the war; when the winter comes, he coughs and the doctor orders him to go home, but he will not go "while there are Prussians in France." He is shot in battle, and an old Turco carries him on his back out of the line of fire. The French are forced to retreat, but the Turco will not confess it to the dying boy, but says over and over again, "Oui, petit Français, tu les as vaincus."

This is directly sentimental; more penetrating is "La Belle Fille," where, while the French are marching through the village of Raucourt to battle, a girl rushes up and kisses a soldier; later, after the defeat, as they march back in disorder, the girl stops the same soldier, and bites his cheek. Déroulède is rarely so savage as this. He prefers such a theme as he illustrates in the extremely gay, delicate and affecting little piece, "Le Bon Gîte." His longest effort in verse, "Le Sergent,"

which appeared in the volume of 1875, is sentimental to excess, and perhaps the point at which his remarkable talent has suffered most from the passage of time is precisely this "Middle Victorian"—as we might venture to call it—tendency to wallow in the primitive emotions.

Déroulède broke out in a spasm of angry lyricism in 1882, and the cause of this may safely be conjectured. He found that France was sinking into a tame oblivion of her losses and her hatreds. The spirit of Jules Ferry, of whom Déroulède frankly said "Ce Ferry a l'athéisme de la patrie," was gaining ground. To the poet of *Chants du Soldat* nothing mattered except love for the fatherland, determination to endure sacrifice, a steadfast eye fixed on the captive territories. He dreaded the opiate of peace, the distraction of material advantages, and it is characteristic of him that he steadily opposed the scheme for colonial expansion, insisting that all that energy should be concentrated on rifle practice and military gymnastics. He saw the nation slipping away from the central idea of revenge. As a poet he is not dejected, he is not timorous, but above all he does not brag; he admits crushing defeat. Yet all these things are nothing to him, and all commercial and political happiness but dross, so long as the ancient injury is not wiped out—

"France, veux-tu mon sang? Il est à toi, ma France!
S'il te faut ma souffrance,
Souffrir sera ma loi;

S'il te faut ma mort, mort à moi,
Et vive toi,
Ma France ! "

During his lifetime Déroulède did great injustice to himself, and gave the Philistines frequent cause to blaspheme, by the violence of his language in the tribune and by his quarrels with successive governments. As early as 1878, when Madame de MacMahon asked him to write a cantata entitled *Vive la France*, which Gounod set to music, the poet could not help introducing a reference to the white flag which set all the world by the ears. In March 1888, during the inauguration of a monument to the soldiers killed in Tonkin, Déroulède must needs protest, and there followed a riot. After the fall of the Goblet Ministry, indeed, he was like a dog with a tin kettle tied to his tail, rushing hither and thither, till he was patted by the deceptive hand of General Boulanger. All this must now be forgotten, and what must be remembered is that at a time when half the world despaired of the future of France, when Renan could tremulously murmur " France is dying," and could recommend a craven policy of pacifism, the poet of *Chants du Soldat* never swerved from his position for an hour. He wrote in " À Mes Amis "—and the noble words might be graven on his monument—

" J'en sais qui croient que la haine s'apaise :
Mais non ! l'oubli n'entre pas dans nos cœurs !
Trop de sol manque à la terre française,
Les conquérants ont été trop vainqueurs !

L'honneur, le rang, on a tout à reprendre . .
Par quels moyens ? D'autres vous le diront.
Moi, c'est l'ardeur que je voudrais nous rendre,
Je ne suis, moi, qu'un sonneur de clairon.

Je vis les yeux fixés sur la frontière
Et front baissé, comme un bœuf au labour;
Je vais, rêvant à notre France entière,
Des murs de Metz au clocher de Strasbourg.
Depuis dix ans j'ai commencé ce rêve,
Tout le traverse et rien ne l'interrompt.
Dieu veuille un jour qu'un grand Français l'achève !
Je ne suis, moi, qu'un sonneur de clairon."

Déroulède was supported in his enthusiasm by his old friend Madame Henri Thénard, in whose *salon* in the Rue de Sèvres he was accustomed to recite his *Chants du Soldat* directly he had composed them. The death (June 1915) of this noble and venerable lady, who was a prime mover in the foundation of the Ligue des Patriotes in 1882, breaks another interesting link with the Empire.

There is something very singular in the coincidence that Déroulède, like Moses, wandered about in the wilderness for forty years, and died at length almost in sight of the Promised Land of La Revanche. The volume in which Jérôme and Jean Tharaud recount his adventures has been published since his death, but was completed just before it. Those who have read " La Tragédie de Ravaillac," which is in its own way a masterpiece, are aware how remarkable is the aptitude shown by MM. Tharaud in reducing a mass of biographi-

cal material to its entirely salient and vital proportions. This gift is displayed in their latest work, but not so adequately as to forbid our regret that they did not delay the completion of their monograph a little longer. When once Déroulède was dead, his immortality began, and there can be no doubt that his biographers would have been able to produce a more rounded portrait of him if they had not been hampered by the respect due, during his lifetime, to an elderly man in failing health. In particular, they would have dwelt on the significance of the very curious scene which took place in the winter of 1913, when Déroulède, warned by his doctor that the exertion of addressing a large company would almost certainly be fatal to him, insisted on dying in this way. He summoned the Ligue des Patriotes to meet him at Champigny-la-Bataille to commemorate the soldiers fallen in the war of 1870, and determined to be addressing them when the cardiac seizure should destroy him. He duly addressed his leaguers in an impassioned oration, closing his speech with the words, " Vive, vive à jamais notre bien-aimée patrie, le France ! " prepared to die *coram populo* and amid the thunders of applause. But nothing Déroulède planned ever succeeded, and the motor-car had to carry him home again, to live for several weeks longer.

But the Moses of French battle-poetry had scarcely passed away before its Joshua made his appearance. The name of Théodore Botrel was entirely unknown in England, and it was not until the first weeks of the

war that the improvisatore of Breton airs became famous throughout the world. It was signed below a copy of verses, distributed on August 1, 1914, beginning—

" Quoi ? Le tocsin tonne à l'église ?
C'est donc vraiment le branle-bas ?
Eh bien ! puisque l'on mobilise,
Hardi, les gâs !

Le Kaiser, d'un ton de rogomme,
Vient nous provoquer aux combats ?
Raillons tous comme un seul homme :
Hardi, les gâs ! "

Here, it was plain, was a disciple or spiritual son of the author of *Chants du Soldat*, and indeed Botrel presently confessed himself " petit sergent de Déroulède." In a poem, " Mes Clarionnées," which he wrote on the 4th of August, he defined his own position—

" —jusqu'à ce que l'on m'égorge,
Tant bien que mal—même râlant,—
Je veux sonner à pleine gorge
Comme Déroulède et Roland ;

Et ma chanson, alerte et pure,
Rythmant votre sublime essor,
Ne s'arrêtera—je le jure—
Que vous triomphants ou moi mort ! "

Sergeant Botrel, however, is very far indeed from being a slavish copy of his predecessor, and the inspiration of his verse is anything but identical. Déroulède did not begin to write verses until France had entered

her darkest hour of discouragement and defeat. It is particularly noticeable in his poems that he invariably acknowledges present failure, although he looks beyond it to a coming triumph, of which, moreover, it is impossible for him—in his great sincerity—to pretend to be perfectly certain. Such poetry as is contained in *Chants du Soldat* was appropriate and salutary up to the moment of renewed hostilities, but then must lose its significance. It is not to be supposed that Paul Déroulède, at the age of seventy, having long abandoned the practice of verse (since 1882 he had done little more than re-issue his poems), would have been able adequately to come forward as the Tyrtæus of a new world at war. For this kind of work the freshness of youth is imperatively needed, and that freshness is the characteristic of Botrel. In him something of the jauntiness of Aristide Bruant and still more a certain childish, almost innocent, *bravura* seems to have taken the place of Déroulède's academic gravity. If we did not fear to seem dazzled by the appearance at the proper moment of so sparkling a talent, we should claim the praise of being the most spirited war-poet of the world, not for Körner or Béranger or even Déroulède, but for the wandering Breton minstrel from Malines who is now officially gazetted Poet to the Armies of France.

The romance of Botrel's brief career is remarkable. He shot up into fame, as we have said, at the moment of mobilisation. Within a few days, as by a kind of magic, all the roads and railways of France were ringing

with a new song, " C'est ta Gloire," which Botrel had composed to a tune of his own. Never were the tap of the drum and the trampling of feet so vividly put into metre—

" Quand, par delà la frontière,
On insulta le drapeau,
Dans un élan du colère
Nous chantâmes aussitôt :—
' C'est la guerr', la guerr', la guerre,
C'est la guerre qu'il nous faut ! ' "

The poet, who is Belgian by birth, found himself by the middle of the month of August in his native country, where he was nearly lost to French enthusiasm by his determination to serve in the Belgian army. He made a proposal to this effect to the Belgian Minister of War, General de Broqueville, who declined it in terms of the highest generosity, urging Botrel to devote himself to the interests of France. Events now moved with extraordinary rapidity, for only eight days later (August 30, 1914) the French Government, by a decree of M. Millerand, appointed Théodore Botrel poet-laureate to the armies of France. An official notice of that date authorised him to " se rendre dans tous les dépôts, camps et hôpitaux pour y dire et chanter ses poèmes patriotiques." This is an appointment probably unprecedented in the history of politics.

Since that date, no one has worked with a more fiery assiduity than the accredited " chansonnier des Armées." M. Maurice Barrès is an eloquent witness to Botrel's

zeal, his activity, his resource and his charm. He circulates among the French troops, from army to army, from troop to troop, reciting and singing to music of his own composition the magical repertory of his constantly increasing store of *Chants du Bivouac*. Everywhere he is welcomed by enthusiastic soldiers, in crowds often so large that Botrel's rich voice cannot reach the outermost circle, crowds that wait for his refrain, take it up, and disperse it round the whole eastern edge of France. The actual medical effect of Botrel's singing in the hospitals is declared to be miraculous. Mechanically, he introduces to the pain-stricken and the depressed brighter spirits, a quicker pulse, a more immediate hope. When he has been singing to the wounded, they develop a new determination to get well swiftly and to hasten back to fight. Some of his later songs, born of his perfect confidence, which is now almost a religion, are of a resonant quality. The poem called "Rosalie" has excited the coldest critics of Paris, and has been accepted by the Army with a sort of half-idolatrous exultation. It is a song to the glory of the terrible little French bayonet, a weapon which is popularly called, nobody seems to know why, "Rosalie"—

"Nous avons soif de vengeance :
Rosalie, verse à la France,
Verse à boire !
De la Gloire à pleins bidons
Buvons donc ! "

" Rosalie " promises to take rank immediately by the side of the " Marseillaise," as a second immortal war-song of the French.

A name which was, we believe, almost unknown before the declaration of war is that of M. Miguel Zamacoïs, whose poems, published in various periodicals, have not yet been collected in a volume. His influence is not to be compared with that of M. Botrel, for his appeal is narrowly intellectual, not broadly instinctive. The *Chants du Bivouac* are redolent of good-nature, courage, humour and high spirits; they are borne up by a kind of divine puerility. Botrel is much more occupied with the bright side of fighting than with its shadows. When the English troops mustered at La Ferté-Milon, he greeted them with the lark-song, beginning—

" Dès l'premier jour de guerre
La loyale Angleterre
Envoyait aux combats
Ses plus vaillants soldats,
Conduits par French-le-brave,
Toujours correct et grave.
Ah ! qu'ils ont donc bon air,
Les guerriers d'Kitchener !
Voilà les ' Kakis,'
Qui nous ont conquis,
Tant ils sont exquis
(*Aoh ! Yès ! Very well !*)
Lorsque, bravement,
Flegmatiquement,
Ils cogn'nt sur l'All'mand :
Aoh ! Yès ! Very well ! "

This is not the manner of M. Zamacoïs, who is incapable of these Skeltonian or Scarronesque numbers,

but who dedicates a muse of rhetorical severity to a study of German character. His addresses to the Kaiser, to the generals, to the enslaved professors of the Vaterland, have a concentration of scorn and a dignity of reproof which remind the English reader of the invectives of Sir Owen Seaman. He sees the brilliant Prussian officer, peacocking it in the *salons* of Berlin, and like an avenging conscience he reminds him of what a brute he really is at heart—

" Car c'est toi, survenant dans la petite ville
Que rien ne pouvait plus à présent protéger,
Qui t'offrais chaque fois le plaisir bien facile
De l'épouvanter sans danger !

C'est toi qui maltraitais le prêtre et le notable
Et faisais devant eux le malin et le fier,
Parce que tu sentais près de toi, sur la table,
Ton grand sabre et ton revolver.

C'est toi qui menaçais les villageois sans armes,
Guettés par l'œil mauvais des pétroleurs casqués;
C'est toi qui faisais peur à des femmes en larmes,
Entouré de canons braqués !

Toi qui terrorisais dans d'humbles maisonnettes
Des vieillards sans vigueur et des gamins tremblants,
Parce qu'autour de toi brillaient les baïonnettes
Au bout des fusils vigilants ! "

The psychology of the modern German is the object of the analysis of M. Zamacoïs, who builds up, like a poetical public prosecutor, his stringent case against the accused. It is sometimes questioned whether any good purpose is served by these exposures. The answer is

that crimes deserve punishment, and that it is well that the poet's disgust should be graven in acid on the brow of the criminal. In the case of the Germans there is more than crime: there is inexplicable infatuation. If I may give an instance, which has not been made public and has reached me from its source in France, I will relate a story which might well inspire M. Zamacoïs. In the varying fortunes of the line in Lorraine, the Germans captured a village which had resisted them. The officer in command had all the houses set aflame, and then collected his men in the church. Making them stand near the door, he commanded them to fire up the nave at the ciborium, which they smashed, scattering the Reserved Host over the altar; he then bid them aim at the chalice, with a like result. In the wavering fortunes of the war, this officer was captured by the French, and proved to be an amiable and even pious Bavarian. When some time had passed, the French general reminded his prisoner of his act of sacrilege, and said, "How could you, a devout Catholic, commit an impiety which must endanger the salvation of your soul?" The Bavarian covered his face with his hands, and murmured, "*Oh! es war schrecklich, schrecklich!* but I was ordered to do it!" Even spiritual suicide is demanded of the slaves of Prussian military discipline.

There has surely never been a war which has called forth such a quantity of fugitive verse as the present one. I recollect no parallel to it in modern history. During the war of 1870, the silence of the singing-birds

of France was in the highest degree noticeable; there was a complete cessation of sound, as in a hedgerow when the hawk is there. Nor have our own lesser contests been the cause of much verse; I cannot recollect that any poetical effusion accompanied the South African War. The present abundance of poems is perhaps a consequence, and certainly a proof, of the extraordinary revival of a taste for poetry which has marked the new century, and of the discovery by hundreds, I had almost said thousands, of men and women in France and England that metrical expression of a very decent excellence is easily within their reach. Accordingly, as in this country we have seen offered to the public of the newspapers an enormous mass of verse, very little of which was not marked by some delicate and sincere observation or emotion, so in the French press there has been a remarkable outpouring of ingenious and ardent lyrics illustrating one facet or another of the situation created by the war. It is noticeable, however, that the effect of these pieces is considerably weakened by their being brought together. We have seen this in England, where the too-hastily-edited collections of miscellaneous poems have produced rather a deplorable effect.

So far as I am aware, only one such collection has yet been made in France, but in turning over the pages of *Les Poètes de la Guerre* I am conscious of the same disadvantage. The poets are forty-one in number, and their zeal, patriotism, and high spirit

unite them in a fervent chorus. Several of their pieces, when they happened to catch the eye in the newspapers where they originally appeared, affected me keenly. Why, then, is it that, bound together side by side, they seem to have lost their freshness, and to have become, in a certain measure, importunate and perfunctory? I can account for it only on the supposition with which I opened these remarks, that the poet of war, like the poet of religion, has to sacrifice the fineness of his art to the directness of his task. He cannot throw into the "Olney Hymns" the beauty of the "Sonnets from the Portuguese," and his task being one of edification, the more he tries to adorn the plain tale he has to tell, the more its spiritual significance evades him. He must be Déroulède or Botrel—in other words, he must resign all ambition to write as an artist—if he is to produce his direct and durable impression.

The forty-one poets belong rather to the older than the present generation. We do not find among them any of the names which have attracted notice for the first time recently, while those who have been conspicuous for experiment or revolt are entirely absent. The young poets are fighting for their country, and several, alas! like Charles Péguy, and the tender Émile Despax, author of *La Maison des Glycines*, and Robert d'Humières, the translator of Rudyard Kipling, have already fallen on the field of honour. The Poètes de la Guerre have a slightly old-fashioned air, and are none the worse for that; they are non-combatants, but their

hearts are in the battle. Here is a spiritual and, we trust, prophetic sonnet, beginning "Wilhelm, l'Enfer t'attend," signed by the oldest of the French poets, the octogenarian M. Stéphane Liégeard, who was the last French deputy for Thionville, and knows the tricks of the bandits of the Rhine. Many belated Parnassians find their place among the Forty-One, names once familiar, and now reawakened by the national crisis; such are M. Auguste Dorchain, and M. Émile Hinzelin, and M. Jacques Normand, and M. Jean Rameau, the last of whom sends some stinging quatrains on the Iron Cross—

"Ce joujou de fer gris est drôle
Et ne fait pas mal au côté,
Mais, rouge et gravé sur l'épaule,
Ce serait beaucoup mieux porté."

M. Raoul Ponchon, author of so many *gazettes rimées* in the newspapers, is another old friend, and so is François Fabié, a peasant-poet from the Rouergue, who for thirty years past has been a sort of John Clare of France, and represents with simplicity and sweetness "la petite patrie." And here, among the Forty-One, we find more illustrious figures, Madame de Noailles, and M. Edmond Rostand, and M. Paul Fort.

I mention this name last, for it is that on which I desire to insist the longest. It will be remembered that some five years ago, after the death of Léon Diercx, who had borne the princely title in succession to Stéphane Mallarmé, M. Paul Fort was elected "Prince" of the

French poets by a large majority. This little ceremony of choosing a leader combines in a rather droll way the ancient traditions of Toulouse or Narbonne with the enterprise of a newspaper-office. It would not be wise to claim too much divine right for a monarch so capriciously elected, for a laureate who, like a king of Poland, is made rather than created. But the voters have each time shown themselves men of taste, and a dynasty containing the successive names of Mallarmé, Diercx, Paul Fort, is a royal house that has a history. M. Fort is in several respects a representative writer, and it gave evidence of the moderate and sympathetic nature of his mind that the suffrages of so many schools of poetry could be united in his regard. He has, from the first, been remarkable for the extreme, perhaps the dangerous, fluidity of his language. He is like Victor Hugo in this, if in nothing else, that no subject or mood presents any difficulty of expression to him. He flows, like a tide, over the sandbanks and the reefs of language, flooding his subject with an even, ardent and melodious mastery, beneath which are concealed problems of style which would daunt any other living writer—except, perhaps, and in a totally different way, Mr. Thomas Hardy.

Whether from this amazing facility in bending language to his will, or whether from the concentrated violence of his emotion, or rather, perhaps, from these two causes acting on each other, M. Paul Fort has succeeded more completely than any other poet in producing a monu-

ment of art, as distinguished from improvisation, entirely devoted to the results and preoccupations of the War. With a full sense of the virile beauty of Rupert Brooke's "1914" sonnets, we place at their side, because of its plenitude and variety, the exquisite collection of M. Paul Fort's *Poèmes de France*. If we take Botrel's *Chants du Bivouac* as the most vivid lyrical utterance of the soldier fighting at the front, we must place beside it, as the work of French poetic art which most marvellously interprets the subtle and poignant reveries of the non-combatant patriot, this "bulletin de la guerre" by M. Paul Fort.

We have all observed the peculiar effect on landscape produced by an impending change from hot dry weather to rain. The colour of every natural object is intensified; the grey hills turn more than blue, they become purple, with intermittent gauze of violet. The sky grows more luminous, the sea more azure, trees greener and flowers more brilliant than is quite normal, and the agitation of storm and change is felt in the breathless thrill of nature. In reading the *Poèmes de France* we are conscious of a like effect. Everything is drawn up to a pitch, not of exaggeration, but of high clairvoyance and sensitiveness; everything bends to M. Fort's plastic mastery of language; nothing is too slight, too solemn, too tender, too gorgeous to receive its meed of attention. Rossetti, in a phrase often quoted and sometimes misinterpreted, announced that poetry, to make its effect, must be "amusing." Amusing is this body of

lyrics in the true sense, exciting, various, all alive with its anecdotes, its footnotes, its asides, its sudden daring flights into the empyrean, its swoopings into domesticity.

M. Fort begins with an ode on the destruction of the Cathedral of Reims, dedicated to "monstrous General Baron von Plattenberg," its infamous destroyer. The poet was born opposite the glorious church in an old house close to the "Lion d'Or," that hospitable inn dear to many wandering Englishmen. He mourns, again and again, over the wanton ruin of Senlis, an act which has roused a peculiar ferment of indignation in French bosoms. He gives an extraordinarily vivid account of how the fact of war was announced to himself, early on that August morning, in his peaceful country home, by the rattling of the drums in the village street. These are the themes round which M. Fort weaves his skein of brilliant silken threads—the tranquillity and beauty of France, the violence of the shock of invasion, the horrible gluttony of destruction on the part of the invaders. He is full of irony, of anger, of tenderness; he exhibits, waving it like a banner, an immense feeling of pride in the landscape of France.

In "Ce que nous défendons" he celebrates, with lingering detail, the beauties of all the provinces of his country—

"Oui! le Béarn au loin souffre dans des cérises; la Provence, où la rose est plus que l'aube exquise, émeut d'un froid mistral ses oranges sanguines, elles tombent;

et ce vent, roses, vous assassine; la Guyenne aérée empoussière ses vignes."

(The reader probably does not need to be reminded that since the beginning of his career M. Paul Fort has persisted, nobody knows why, in printing his verses—and very good verses they are—as if they were prose. We respect his foible, though we are tempted to break his periods into metre.) His stanzas, with their rich praise of all these varied and wonderful provinces, form a great bouquet of odour and colour. He pays us a charming compliment: "Il n'est que les Anglais et nous pour aimer finement la France." His references to the English are invariably of a nature to draw the hearts of the two nations nearer to one another. "Le Chant des Anglais," which is a sort of dream-fugue on the air of "It's a long, long way to Tipperary," is extremely touching; none the less, and perhaps all the more, because a pardonable want of familiarity with the exact meaning of some of our colloquial phrases gives a perilously comic effect to what is entirely serious and tender in intention.

It is difficult, perhaps in consequence of his remarkable fluidity of style, to give a brief and yet adequate impression of M. Fort's manner. But from the splendid "Veillée des Saints Patrons de France" I may extract one stanza. The saints have met, with oriflammes and ribbanded wings, around the Archangel Michael on his great Abbey of Mont St. Michel, there to proclaim their

unalterable fidelity to France in her hour of torment; and they proclaim joy and hope, for victory is announced in heaven. The arrival of the various saints is described with marvellous vivacity, and among the brilliant throng sailing through the calm and silent azure towards the great abbey church on its island there are some legendary forms familiar to ourselves—

" Le preux, le beau, le vrai saint Georges d'Angleterre, éblouissant d'éclairs du casque aux genouillères, haussant brumeusement une Rose géante à la pointe du glaive, illuminant, derrière, la subite venue de saint Patrick d'Irlande (oh ! quels grands Trèfles d'or enguirlandent sa crosse !) et l'aspect sauvageon de saint André d'Écosse qui porte en lampes tristes, en veilleuses lumières, d'immenses Chardons bleus sur sa croix de travers. Que nous vient-il du nord où des Anges circulent? O Vierge du Brabant ! pure et sainte Gudule ! ô bergère des Anges, approchez-vous de l'âtre. Mais ce bûcher n'est rien au prix de votre ardeur, vous qui tenez modestement sur votre cœur l'huile d'Asie brulant dans la coupe d'albâtre ! "

With this we might compare the glowing study of Russia contained in " Les Cosaques," and the Italian pictures in the longest and most ambitious poem of the collection, the great ode in honour of the Garibaldis.

The greatest of wars is not over, and we know not what surprises its development may have in store for

us. But throughout France, so far as her temper is revealed in the verse which the tremendous crisis has awakened in her literature, there is an extraordinary unanimity of sentiment. Whether in the songs her soldiers sing around their camp fires, or in the elaborate lyrics of her poet-artists, the key-note is everywhere the same: *Sursum corda!* Throughout the French people there is a superb and delicate confidence of victory, which does not express itself in frantic shouts or extravagant prophecies, but is gravely founded on the determination of a united people to defend the fatherland which they never loved with so devoted a passion as they do at this hour of anxiety and sorrow.

July 1915.

A FRENCH SATIRIST IN ENGLAND

A FRENCH SATIRIST IN ENGLAND

It becomes more and more difficult to find a place in the history of poetry for those writers who are by the development of events suddenly inspired to express their emotion, and who, when those events have passed by, find little or nothing left to say. The poetry of such men partakes of the nature of action; it is their share contributed to the energetic movement of their age. But, increasingly, we concentrate our attention on the poets who hold aloof from action, who write with equal indifference to their surroundings whether in a bower of roses or on a battlefield. We do so because these are the genuine and permanent artists, whose evolution is almost entirely unaffected by their conditions. Nevertheless, we have to take into consideration, also, the writers who are stung into lyrical expression by the vehemence of facts, such as Ebenezer Elliott by the Corn Law agitation, or Theodor Körner by the War of Liberation, or on a different level Paul Déroulède by the events of 1870. It makes our general survey of the art imperfect if we ignore these poets, simply because they are difficult to fit into our scheme of æsthetics. Among such men of temporary genius,

manifestly inspired by a certain succession of events, none is more curious than the poet of the Three Days' Revolution, the remarkable Auguste Barbier, who was lifted by the magnificence of his *Iambes* to the highest apex of celebrity in 1830, and who died, completely forgotten, in 1882.

To comprehend the nature of Barbier's contribution to literature, we have to remind ourselves of the world upon which he made his violent and brief attack. A young man of five-and-twenty, hitherto unknown, he reeled on to the scene of Paris in a state of feverish exaltation, intoxicated with extravagant democracy, and waving a lighted torch in his hand. The wood of public opinion blazed at once, for it was absolutely ready for conflagration. The public seized upon Barbier's first satires, on "La Curée," "L'Idole," and "Popularité" in particular, because they expressed, in very fine verse, the sentiment of revolution which could not be suppressed a moment longer. Joseph de Maistre had prophesied that there would surely be risings among the people, and the futility of Charles X had gradually precipitated a change in France.

From the earliest days of 1830, it was evident to close observers that everything was tending towards a revolution in Paris. On the 3rd of January a new journal, *Le National*, had begun to appear, under the editorship of Armand Carrel, and this at once became the organ of a new anti-royalist party; it was immensely read. Young Barbier, and others of his kind, were told in

its columns that men must not be spared if France was to be free. Meanwhile the King stiffened himself to an absurd resistance; in March he responded in menacing language to the humble remonstrance of the Chamber, though presented by Guizot and Royer-Collard, and he prorogued Parliament for six months. Talleyrand advised the ministers to buy themselves estates in Switzerland, for their work in France was over. Charles X, supported by Polignac, refused all compromise, all argument with the Liberals; he was determined to be master in France; he said that what had cost his brother Louis XVI his head had been his deplorable tendency to concession. He, for his part, if the people dared to be troublesome, would scourge them with scorpions. On the 26th of July his four famous ordinances were published in the *Moniteur;* they suppressed the liberty of the press, declared the Chamber dissolved, disfranchised three-quarters of the electors, and summoned the surviving fourth to choose a new Chamber.

That same evening an angry crowd gathered before the Palais Royal, and Polignac escaped from the midst of it on its march by leaping from his carriage and running like a hare. Next morning barricades began to rise in the streets, and at night blood began to flow. General Marmont, who had been given the command of Paris, wrote to the King, "This has ceased to be a riot; it has become a revolution." But Charles X, who was at St. Cloud, affected to observe nothing; while the

tocsin rang he dined at his usual hour, took his walk on the terrace, played with the royal children till their bedtime, and then settled to his game of whist. All night the sound of hammers and saws filled the air, and when morning broke on the 28th the tricolour was floating from all the spires, and the whole eastern section of Paris was in the hands of the insurgents. On the 29th, the Louvre, with Marmont in it, was captured by the people, who then entered the Tuileries without resistance. The Duke of Orleans put himself at the head of the populace, and Charles X fled to Rambouillet, where he abdicated on the 2nd of August, 1830. The briefest and one of the least bloody of revolutions was over.

When this revolution broke out, the news of it reached a young man of twenty-five, who was buried in the country, on an estate in the department of Seine-et-Marne. What he was doing there, or how he had been occupied up to that moment, does not seem to be recorded, for no biography of Auguste Barbier has ever been published. All we know is that he sought out General Jouanez, who was a resident of the same village, and gained permission to accompany him to Paris. Every violent and eager spirit was being drawn to the capital by the passion of change. The friends arrived on the 31st of July, to find Paris in all the chaos of civil war. They could not pass the barricades at Charenton, and so had to make a long round and get in by the Faubourg St. Antoine. They met wild troops

of citizens shouting, and, in the midst of the turmoil a young man, " en moustache et en habit bourgeois," clasped Jouanez in his arms and shouted, " Mon Général, le peuple a été sublime ! " Barbier left them folded in this enthusiastic embrace, and descended the narrow and winding streets alone till he came out by the Arcade St. Jean on the Hôtel de Ville. There he had a shock of surprise, for the whole façade was riddled with shots, tricolour flags were waving from every window, and crowds of citizens, in the highest possible spirits, were entering and leaving the hotel like bees swarming in and out of a hive.

The sight of the very scene of the fiercest battle of democracy excited in Barbier a superhuman emotion. He gazed at it for a long time, and when at last he turned away it was with a beating heart and a tingling brain. He wandered along the quays, and the passion that was in him began to churn into music. There seems to be no record of his having previously indulged the ambition to be a poet, but " La Curée "—which has some claim to be considered the most splendid political poem ever written—formed itself in him as he walked along. It is as curious a case as occurs in the history of literature of the sudden revealing of a vocation. There was much satiric poetry in that exciting time; there were the songs of Béranger, which contributed largely to the fall of the Bourbons; there were the " Insurrection " of Barthélemy and Méry, the copious " Messéniennes " of Casimir Delavigne, but all these are now impossible to

read, the dreadful rhetoric of Casimir being particularly impenetrable. But the unique feature of "La Curée" is the freshness of its vehemence, the vitality of its serried drum-taps. After more than eighty years, what pulse but must be stirred by such verse as this—

"C'est que la Liberté n'est pas une comtesse
Du noble faubourg Saint-Germain,
Une femme qu'un cri fait tomber en faiblesse,
Qui met du blanc et du carmin :
C'est une forte femme aux puissantes mamelles,
À la voix rauque, aux durs appas,
Qui, du brun sur la peau, du feu dans les prunelles,
Agile et marchant à grands pas,
Se plaît aux cris du peuple, aux sanglantes mêlées,
Aux longs roulements des tambours,
A l'odeur de la poudre, aux lointaines volées
Des cloches et des canons sourds;
Qui ne prend ses amours que dans la populace;
Qui ne prête son large flanc
Qu'à des gens forts comme elle, et qui veut qu'on l'embrasse
Avec des bras rouges de sang."

There was no other voice like it to be heard in France, and more than a year was to pass before Victor Hugo began his career as a political poet with *Les Feuilles d'Automne*. Nothing could be more emphatic than the sudden accomplishment of the young Tyrtæus of the barricade, and a few hours after "La Curée" was printed in the *Revue de Paris* the fame of its author was universal.

Auguste Barbier had been brought up in the fear and

hatred of the legitimate régime. He loathed the very notion of a king, and it is notable that, while all the other romantics cultivated a worship for Napoleon, Barbier flouted the memory of the great Emperor as scornfully as he did the actual presence of Charles X and Louis Philippe. His bellicose satires, so many blasts on the trumpet of democracy, were collected early in 1831, under the title of *Iambes*, and they achieved an unparalleled success. For a moment, Barbier was easily the first poet of France. His biblical imprecations roused the nation like the accents of a new Ezekiel. Lamartine said that he had equalled Pindar and surpassed Juvenal. Balzac said that Barbier and Lamartine were the only great poets of the epoch. Sainte-Beuve, who afterwards turned against Barbier and repudiated him, was dazzled in 1831 by his extraordinary intrepidity in marshalling "the most perilous images that ever a poet attempted." The aged Rouget de Lisle read the *Iambes* in his retirement at Choisy-le-Roi, and murmured a *Nunc dimittis*. The ardent love of liberty and the impetuous virility of style which animated these rhetorical lyrics concealed for the moment their defects, and from 1830 to 1835 Barbier lived in a blaze of glory. But then his inspiration rapidly declined; after 1837 he scarcely published anything; forty-five years later he died at Nice (February 13, 1882), utterly neglected.

So much it has seemed necessary to say about a poet who has become a name and little more to living readers.

But I do not propose upon this occasion to dwell on the merits of the once-famous *Iambes* or on the general history of Auguste Barbier. I wish to call attention to a volume of verse which has had a very remarkable fate, and which possesses a peculiar interest for English readers. It has the quality of being not merely entirely forgotten, but of never having been remembered. The great celebrity of Barbier lasted, as we have said, through the three or four earliest years of the reign of Louis Philippe, and then declined. Two years after the publication of the *Iambes*, in 1833, he brought out a second collection of poems, *Il Pianto*, descriptive of a sentimental visit which he had paid in the preceding year to " noble et douce Italie, ô mère du vrai beau." This was well received, but without enthusiasm. What people had enjoyed was Barbier's imprecations in accents of brass; they cared less for his whisperings through silver. Disagreeable things began to be said about him. Alfred de Musset, in a cruel satire, painted Auguste Barbier as a breathless little man, hurried along by four giantesses, his four favourite metaphors, who held him tightly by the collar and throttled him. A contemporary panegyrist had compared the poet of the *Iambes* to a naked athlete, suddenly leaping on a stage that was occupied by little dancers in ribbands of silk and stars of tinsel. But when the athlete rigged out his own limbs in the tinsel and silk of romantic poetry the democracy began to be bored with him.

He determined, it would seem, to be a naked athlete once more, but the early career of Louis Philippe gave his muse no opportunity of startling Paris. Barbier therefore formed the strange plan of invading England with a definite intention of attacking its social order. From a passage in one of the vague essays of his old age we learn that he was in London through a part of 1836, and it was doubtless at this time that he made the observations which inspire the fiery versification of his next volume, *Lazare*, which appeared in Paris in 1837. This is a series of lyrical poems, often very elaborate in form, exclusively occupied with the dispraise of England. Various eminent characters, and notably Heine, whom Barbier met at Boulogne a little later, have expressed their dislike of our country, or our language, or our manners, in splenetic numbers, but I know no other case in which a poet of renown has filled an entire volume with nothing else. Moreover, the fate of *Lazore* is almost unique. It has never, in these eighty years, been, I believe, so much as mentioned by any English writer, while the decline in Barbier's popularity and the altered feeling about England in France led to its being almost entirely ignored in Paris when it was published. It was a diatribe against the social life of England in the last year of William IV, but before the author could publish it the girlish Victoria was on the throne, and the gallantry of France awoke to greet a new English monarch. The *Lazare* of Barbier is therefore as little known as any work of its

intrinsic merit in the literature of Europe, and it seems worth reviving, if only as an historical curiosity. Whether the recall of Talleyrand (" old Talley "), whom Palmerston had deeply offended, had anything to do with Barbier's anger, I must leave the political historians to decide, but there is some reason to think that the poet was admitted to the counsels of the old diplomatist after 1834.

The Prologue to *Lazare* is supposed to be spoken by the poet as he leaves the coast of France to step on board that great coal-ship, smoking on the bosom of Ocean, which calls itself " Angleterre." He announces the intention of his visit, which is to explore the horrors of our social system; and it is observable that he starts with anything but what can be called an open mind. His attitude is solemn and in truth a little inexplicable. He quotes a divine command to investigate and report upon the shocking condition of England. Lazarus, whom he is about to defend, is, by a strained metaphor, the English democracy, borne whither it would not go by the strident machinery of the English State. The poet professes to believe that he runs great danger by unveiling whatever it may be that he shall find to unveil. England ceases to be a coaling steamer and becomes a cliff-bound island as he intones—

" Je connais les débris qui recouvrent la plage,
Les mâts rompus et les corps morts;
Mais il est dans le ciel un Dieu qui m'encourage
Et qui m'entraîne loin des bords."

He anticipates horror, but prays that he may preserve truth. God has sent him forth, a tiny David, to pierce with the missile of verse the forehead of the giant Philistine, Albion. Surely, no holiday bard ever approached a country at peace with his own in so astonishing a spirit of defiance!

He withdraws from Boulogne, to reappear in London, which affects him with terror as it has affected many imaginative visitors from abroad, as fifty years later it affected our great Belgian friend, Verhaeren. In Barbier's descriptions, the absence of humour and the want of all relation with past experience combine to make the picture extravagantly dark. But such lines as the following, in spite of their exaggeration, may be read with the contemporary commentary of Dickens—

"Des chantiers en travail, des magasins ouverts,
Capables de tenir dans leurs flancs l'univers;
Puis, un ciel tourmenté, nuage sur nuage;
Le soleil, comme un mort, le drap sur le visage.
Ou, parfois, dans les flots d'un air empoisonné
Montrant comme un mineur son front tout charbonné;
Enfin, dans un amas de choses, sombre, immense,
Un peuple noir, vivant et mourant en silence."

It would not be difficult to parallel these dismal lines by pages in *Oliver Twist*, which was at that moment being written.

Barbier did not fail to pay an early visit to Bedlam, that "monument de crainte et de douleur," which was then one of the dreadful shows in which foreigners

delighted. It had lately been removed from its old station in Little Moorfields to the other side of the Thames. The famous Hospital of St. Mary Bethlem produced upon the mind of the French poet an effect more terrible than that of a sea in storm, more hideous than that of a conflagration, and he was haunted for days and nights by

> " L'aspect tumultueux des pauvres créatures
> Qui vivent, ô Bedlam ! sous tes voûtes obscures ! "

A touch of national vanity seems to animate the violent poem, one of the least inspired in the volume, which Barbier dedicates to this distressing subject, since Charenton, which answered in Paris to Bedlam in London, had recently been reformed by the enlightened Dr. Esquirol, who had introduced into the arrangement and discipline of the great French asylum all kinds of improvements. Although the Quakers had done much to ameliorate the general condition of lunatics in some parts of England, their humanities had made little impression as yet in Bedlam, where the French poet, in 1836, saw the unhappy patients chained to the walls and crippled with leglocks and coercion-chairs. Nor is he at all ahead of public opinion in his time. He admits, naïvely enough, that it would be impossible to examine this interesting " tableau " of lunacy if the patients were not secured with handcuffs and strait-waistcoats. If the maniacs were free to wander about—

" Ah ! malheur aux humains
Qui tomberaient alors sous ses robustes mains."

But his rage against England breaks out at the end, when he tells Bedlam that its " temple " is fitly peopled by those who worship the national goddess of Dementia—

" Et que le ciel brumeux de la sombre Angleterre
Peut servir largement de dôme au sanctuaire,"

a rather lumbering way of saying that all Englishmen are practically mad. " Bedlam " is a bad poem, and its injustice is patent, for England was no worse in respect of its treatment of lunatics than other countries. A pity for insanity, a new sympathy, was being shown by many artists, and we may remember a terrible picture by Goya and a still more sombre passage in Shelley's " Julian and Maddalo," but neither the poet nor the painter represented the conditions they illustrated as being specially to the shame of Spanish or of Italian humanity.

The moment when Barbier visited London appears to have been the darkest in our history with regard to the drinking of gin among the poor. Traill points out that the excesses of the gin-shops had led in 1834 to a condition which created the greatest alarm among such would-be social reformers as then existed, and indeed from that date onwards there began to be a diminution, slight at first, but continuous, in the proportion of spirit-

licences to the population. An amateur census had revealed the terrific fact that a quarter of a million persons visited the gin-shops within a single week, 18,000 of them being children. Barbier seems to have witnessed some heartrending scenes. In the poem called " Le Gin " he says—

> " L'enfance rose et se sèche et se fane;
> Les frais vieillards souillent leurs cheveux blancs;
> Les matelots désertent les haubans;
> Et par le froid, le brouillard et la bise,
> La femme vend jusques à sa chemise."

A year before the Frenchman came amongst us, so cruelly " taking notes," a Select Committee of the House of Commons had sat to discuss what steps could be taken to diminish the horrors of drunkenness. But the public would have none of the reforms, such as Sunday closing and the reduction of duties on tea, coffee, and sugar, which the Select Committee proposed. The inhabitants of London still preferred, in a degree which we now find it difficult to conceive, to have their swinish wallowing in Gin Lane unconfined by law. William IV had the majority of his subjects with him when he railed against the effeminacy of temperance, and it is well known that he forbade the drinking of water in the royal household. Modern teetotalism begins, oddly enough, in the very year in which Barbier wrote his stringent verses.

The French poet describes gin as being the universal

drink of Londoners; but, as he speaks of its "flot d'or," it is possible that he confounded it with whisky. Whether alone or with its golden sister, however, he declares gin to be the goddess of the great cities of England, and in one of those bold images of which he still had the secret he cries—

> "Hélas! la Mort est bientôt à l'ouvrage,
> Et pour répondre à la clameur sauvage,
> Son maigre bras frappe comme un taureau
> Le peuple anglais au sortir du caveau."

On every hand the poet sees the mortality and degradation which dog the steps of drunkenness, and he spares no scorn for the depravity of the English people. Here and there a moralist may protest, and may try to rouse public opinion to the national disgrace. In vain—

> "Partout le Gin et chancelle et s'abîme,
> Partout la Mort emporte sa victime."

It is amusing, to say the least, to find the French satirist of 1836 using the same metaphor which was made so famous by W. T. Stead half a century later, and giving the title of "Le Minotaure" to a flaming denunciation of what we have now learned to call the White Slave Traffic. One wonders where, in that reticent age, he found his statistics, but he has no hesitation in declaring that—

> "Le vieux Londres a besoin d'immoler tous les ans
> A ses amours honteux plus de cinquante enfants!

Pour son vaste appétit il ravage la ville,
Il dépeuple les champs, et par soixante mille,
Soixante mille au moins, vont tomber sous ses coups
Les plus beaux corps du monde et les cœurs les plus doux."

It is impossible not to advance a certain charge of unfairness against the attitude of Barbier in this matter also, for he writes as though England were alone to blame among the countries of Europe. The subject is one which makes it undesirable to dwell here on a vigorous poem, the literary merit of which must be admitted. The poet cannot but have been aware of that depravity of manners which made a contemporary of his own describe Paris as " la Grande Prostituée," nor, in general terms at least, of the terrible facts which were, a few months later, exposed by F. A. Béraud in a too-famous work. But Barbier might have replied that two blacks do not make a white, and what seems to have shocked him particularly in London was the total apathy of the police and the deadly prudery of the public. " Malheur," he cries, " en ce pays aux pauvres Madeleines," and he thunders forth his denunciation of a great city which calls itself Christian, and in which not a heart is found with courage enough to take pity on the sorrows of the fallen or a hand to dry their tears.

It would seem that Barbier visited Ireland, and a set of charming plaintive verses, very different from the usual form of *Lazare*, are dedicated to " Le Belles Collines d'Irlande." He has witnessed the embarcation of a shipload of " Exiles of Erin," and his

heart bled at the sight of a mass of human beings, driven on board like sheep, haggard with famine, and clothed solely in rags. He is almost needlessly unkind about these rags, for he calls them " les haillons troués de la riche Angleterre." He is somewhat lacking in humour, as satirists are apt to be, for he anticipates the sarcasm of the statesman who said that the only real remedy for the woes of Ireland would be to tow her out into the Atlantic and sink her for twenty-four hours. Barbier seriously suggests that if the abominable tyranny of England weighs much longer upon the green Erin she " s'en irait sous les ondes." It is a delightful picture reminiscent of *Alice's Adventures*, of the gaunt Britannia, with her long teeth, leaning a sharp elbow so heavily upon Ireland as to press her slowly down under the water. But in a book where almost everything is so ugly the last stanza of " Les Belles Collines " is refreshing—

" Mais heureux les troupeaux qui paissent, vagabonds,
Les pâtures de trèfle en nos fraîches vallées !
Heureux les chers oiseaux qui chantent leurs chansons
Dans les bois frissonnants ou passent leurs volées !
Oh ! les vents sont bien doux dans nos prês murmurants,
Et les meules de foin ont des odeurs divines;
L'oseille et le cresson garnissent les courants
De tous vos clairs ruisseaux, ô mes belles collines ! "

This is a charming picture, but only produced as a momentary foil to the hideousness of England.

Whether Barbier was at this time well acquainted

with our language is not apparent, but he was certainly unfamiliar with our current literature. In a long and elaborate ode, entitled " La Lyre d'Airain," he points out that whereas wild Italy, and Germany the flaxen, and lyric France enjoy the possession of noble poets, " la ténébreuse Angleterre " has no other instrument than a brazen lyre, of which the screaming looms of her factories serve as strings. Polyhymnia, mother of harmony, smiles encouragingly on the other nations, but has only rough words for England. The poet, therefore, calls upon the sons of the other nations to listen to the voice of this angry Muse, to these notes struck on the strings of brass. They will distinguish human cries from myriads of slaves toiling in darkness and pain to fill the coffers of English pride. The picture he gives of millions of workers lifting impotent voices of despair to heaven is overwhelming. And the employer of labour is depicted as uniformly tyrannical, pitiless, and egotistical, protected by infamous laws, which support him in his worst excesses. There is not a chink of light in this dark picture.

Here, as elsewhere, the satire of the French poet is extravagant and unjust. But when he insists upon the wretchedness of the dwellings of the English poor, on their miserable rates of wages, on the overcrowding, above all, on the cruel modes of employing children, we feel that he had much reason to be angry. What no one would guess from his ferocious stanzas is that the Factory Act of 1833 and the Poor Law of 1834 had

already begun to cause an improvement in social conditions. But possibly this was still mainly rural and hardly to be observed in the great towns. What, however, amounts almost to prevision on Barbier's part are the lamentations which he puts into the mouths of the children. These are often so exactly identical with those enshrined in Mrs. Browning's "Cry of the Children" as to raise a question whether a stray copy of *Lazera* may not have come into her hands. Her poem was written in 1843 and in direct reference to the Report of the Commission of 1842, but already in 1836 the French poet makes the children, dizzy with driving the wheels of iron all day long, yearn for a place where

> "nos poitrines
> Ne se briseraient pas sur de froides machines,
> Et, la nuit nous laissant respirer ses pavots,
> Nous dormirons enfin comme les animaux."

("If we cared for any meadows it was only to lie down in them and sleep.")

But a still more terrible picture of English manners is supplied by the long poem entitled "La Tamise." Barbier must have been feeling exceedingly unwell when he sat down to compose this piece. He is not alone among poets, and especially foreign poets, in considering the Thames a very sinister phenomenon. But he outdoes the others; he writes as if the unfortunate river were Acheron and Phlegethon rolled into

one. It forms a natural and almost an irresistible asylum for suicides; to walk along its black banks, to be pierced by its icy fog, is to despair of life itself. England is hell—

> "Ah! si vous connaissiez cette île,
> Vous sauriez quel est cet enfer";

it is a country where charity and pity are unknown; "où l'on ne prête à la misère l'oreille non plus que la main." London rises along the Thames, menacing, black, a sooty wall of bronze. The poet is chilled to the heart by the muddy streets, the filthy smells, the icy rain. "Oh!" he cries, "la vie est affreuse à traîner dans ce lieu fatal!" He notes in high and low alike a total absence of sympathy for poverty or sorrow, and ever the horrible river glides by, carrying its suicides and its dead dogs and its nameless offal down to a squalid sea.

It is almost to be supposed that Barbier was in communication with some disaffected Englishman, who pointed out to him the national abuses which most loudly called for satire. Admittedly, in the 'thirties, the treatment of our army was the worst in our history; as has been said, the common soldier "dragged out his existence under conditions which to us seem simply revolting." But it is difficult to imagine how a young Frenchman, like Barbier, a mere visitor to our shores, came to know so much about it. The subject of "Le Fouet" is neither more nor less than flogging in the

army, a theme which, we may confidently hope, has inspired no other poet before or since. The English practice of whipping soldiers for every trifling delinquency excites in the French poet's bosom the most vehement indignation. He gives a description of the punishment so hideously vivid that we can hardly doubt that he was present at an execution of the kind. Such monstrosities, he avers, could take place only within the base and cruel "Albion, cœur de roche," and he puts into the mouths of the miserable soldiers a lyric cry of despair and appeal. Through his verse, these wretched men call upon England to desist from her cruelties, and they declare that—

"Ses murailles de chair, ses soldats valeureux,
Sont traités par ses mains comme on traite les bœufs."

The curious unfairness of Barbier must from the very first have alienated sympathy from his diatribes. Was it not M. de Thiard who said that he was very fond of the pastorals of M. de Florian, but that they would be improved by a wolf here and there? Conversely, we may say that Barbier's fuscous paintings of English society would be improved by a gleam of light here and there. In the stern poem called "Les Mineurs de Newcastle" he makes many just reflections on the terrible dangers and the cruel monotony of subterranean industry, but he writes exactly as though there were no mines—as, in a previous poem, no looms—in any other part of the world but in this detest-

able and deplorable Albion. Sir Humphrey Davy's invention, it is true, is mentioned as—

" la lampe salutaire
Qu'un ami des humains fit pour le noir mineur."

It is probable that Barbier did not exaggerate in the least the terrible conditions under which miners of both sexes and every age were working when he visited England. There was practically no legislation to regulate the slavery, for it was nothing less, under which the miners in the north of England languished. Nor was the apathy of public opinion shaken until Lord Ashley's Bill of 1842, following upon a Royal Commission earlier in the same year, awakened the conscience of the House of Commons. It is, therefore, somewhat extraordinary to find a French poet, so early as 1836, putting these words into the mouths of the miners of Newcastle—

" O Dieu ! Dieu tout-puissant ! pour les plus justes causes
Nous ne demandons pas le tumulte des choses,
Et le renversement de l'ordre d'ici-bas; . .
Ce dont nous te prions, enfants de la misère,
C'est d'amollir le cœur des puissants de la terre,
Et d'en faire pour nous un plus solide appui;
C'est de leur rappeler sans cesse, par exemple,
Qu'en laissant dépérir les fondements du temple,
Le monument s'écroule et tout tombe avec lui."

Somewhere in London, perhaps at the East India House, Barbier found a sinister toy which had been

constructed for the private pleasure of Tippoo Sahib. It represented a life-sized manikin carefully dressed in the uniform of an English soldier, and a mechanical tiger, which, being wound up, seized the trooper in its claws and tore him, while the instrument gave forth noises which were supposed to be the dying shrieks of the Englishman. This playful *joujou d'un Sultan* was one of the objects in London which pleased the French poet most; he describes it with extreme gusto. His own sympathies, of course, are entirely with Tippoo and with the tiger, and not at all with " ces Clives, ces Hastings de sinistre mémoire." His anger against England is nowhere more extravagant than in relation to India, where he charges us with causing famines on purpose. His temper of mind is revealed by the confession that when some great London lady was giving a rout, her windows a blaze of light, Barbier stood on the pavement, cursing the guests as they entered.

It was not to be expected that a poet of revolution, in such a very bad temper, should visit England without expatiating on the exclusion of Byron from the national Valhalla. Although the decision of the Dean was a dozen years old, the fame of it still vibrated throughout Europe. This was, probably, the most notorious act of England, in continental opinion, since Waterloo. Its causes were not comprehended, and it was set down to unadulterated hypocrisy and cant. The poem entitled " Westminster " is one of the longest

and the most vigorous in Barbier's volume. The opening stanzas of it are put into the mouth of Byron himself, who exclaims that the odious attacks of the British public—

> " rendirent mon cœur plus noir et plus amer
> Que le fenouil sauvage arraché par la mer,
> Et le flot écumeux que la sombre nature
> Autour de l'Angleterre a roulé pour ceinture."

The French poet, whose voice is not to be distinguished from that of Byron, replies to the angry ghost in accents not less furious. The Abbey, noble as it is, fills him with rage, and its sepulchral beauties rouse in him a passion of rebellion. He declares that none are any longer buried there but the pompous and their slaves. The phantoms of the free flap in vain for entrance against the high, dim windows of the Minster; and their funereal clamours, so haughtily disdained by the arrogant snobbishness of England, rouse the rest of the universe to indignation.

Another long poem, " Les Hustings," is a sort of eclogue, in which " Menace " and " Corruption " address and answer one another on the electoral abuses of England. It is not a little curious that Dickens should have been describing the contest of Slumkey and Fizkin for the parliamentary representation of the borough of Eatanswill at the very moment when Auguste Barbier was treating the same subject from the gravest point of view possible. The French poet might really

have been the veritable Count Smorltork whom Mr. Pickwick found taking notes at Mrs. Leo Hunter's garden-party. In a certain sense, although Dickens is so sparkling and Barbier so gloomy, these accounts of our electoral practices in 1836 do closely confirm one another. The French poet describes the total absence of virtuous independence in the electorate. Money pours in in floods, but the elector will be turned out of his house if he refuses to vote as his landlord wishes. It has been so in England for five hundred years, and all the electorate, Radicals and Tories, Papists and Protestants, are equally infamous and venal. The closing stanzas are worth quoting. Corruption cries—

" O Menace, ô ma sœur, à grands pas avançons :
Déjà la foule ardente, au bruit de la fanfare,
Roule autour des hustings en épais tourbillons :
Pour emporter d'assaut le scrutin qu'on prépare,
Fais jaillir la terreur du fond de tes poumons."

To which Menace replies—

" Et toi, Corruption ! répands l'or à main pleine,
Verse le flot impur sur l'immense troupeau :
Qu'il envahisse tout, les hustings et l'arène,
Et que la Liberté, présente à ce tableau,
Voile son front divin de sa toge romaine."

These sinister verses might have been printed as an epigraph to Chapter XIII of Mr. Pickwick's celebrated Memoirs.

It will be observed that international politics take little or no part in the varied contents of *Lazare.*

There is, however, a slight exception to this in the ode called " Le Pilote," on the form of which, by the way, the influence of André Chénier is strongly felt. The Pilot is William Pitt, that " homme au large et froid cerveau," who, although he had been dead for thirty years, still cries " Carnage ! " and sets loose the dogs of war on Europe. That he opposed France by a coalition of nations is not forgotten, and he is reproached for imposing on his own country " l'impôt et ses énormes poids " for the sake of keeping up this menace, and of tearing from the burning kisses of France the forehead of her sister England—

" O William Pitt, ô nocher souverain !
O pilote à la forte tête !
Il est bien vrai que ton cornet d'airain
Domina toujours la tempête ;
Qu'inébranlable et ferme au gouvernail
Comme un Neptune tu sus faire,
Devant ta voix tomber le sourd travail
De la grande onde populaire."

Lord Melbourne is a transient phantom whom Barbier disdains to name.

If we make due allowance for a perverse determination on the part of Barbier to see nothing English in a roseate light, the exactitude and the width of his observations are certainly very remarkable. We have compared him with his fictitious contemporary, Count Smorltork, but he is distinguished from that credulous visitor by his accuracy. Barbier's mistakes are all

errors of omission, and have the air of being wilful. He is singularly exempt from those blunders to which a foreigner, and in particular an unfriendly foreigner, is liable in his animadversions of another country. So exact is he, even in his malignity, that we find ourselves wondering by what means he gathered together facts which he certainly did not find in the British newspapers of that day. It is the gift of a satirist to detect our faults when we have not noticed them ourselves. From this point of view no poem in *Lazare* is more clairvoyant than that which is dedicated to Shakespeare. Here he hits upon a national error which no contemporary observed. During the reign of William IV the neglect of the study of Shakespeare, whether on the boards or in the library, reached a lower point than it had known for a century and a half. No important edition, no celebrated performance, no weighty commentary on the plays, belong to that reign, during which it was the newly-awakened zeal of foreign scholarship which kept the memory of the poet alive in Europe.

Barbier declares that (in 1836) Shakespeare is wholly forgotten in Great Britain. His temples are deserted, his admirers are silent. Albion has lost all taste for his divine symbols. A superficial observer, looking at the English theatres, at English books and newspapers, might well be excused for believing that Shakespeare's very name is about to be swallowed up in eternal oblivion. No one acts him, no one praises him, no one cares about his memory. (This, if we look into the

dates, is true enough; it was not until five or six years later, in the 'forties, that the personal revival of Shakespeare began.) But the French poet refuses to be cast down, and he breaks into a really eloquent tribute to the poet of Stratford—a tribute which seems to have escaped the notice of all those who compile Shakespearian anthologies. No quotation from *Lazare* could give a more favourable impression of Barbier's poetical genius than the passage which closes in these generous stanzas—

" O toi qui fus l'enfant de la grande nature,
Robuste nourrisson dans ses deux bras porté;
Toi qui, mordant le bout de sa mamelle pure,
D'une lèvre puissante y bus la vérité;

Tout ce que ta pensée a touché de son aile,
Tout ce que ton regard a fait naître ici-bas,
Tout ce qu'il a paré d'une forme nouvelle
Croîtra dans l'avenir sans crainte du trépas.

Shakespeare! vainement sous les voûtes suprêmes
Passe le vil troupeau des mortels inconstants,
Comme du sable, en vain sur l'abîme des temps
L'un par l'autre écrasés s'entassent les systèmes;

Ton génie est pareil au soleil radieux
Qui, toujours immobile au haut de l'empyrée,
Verse tranquillement sa lumière sacrée
Sur la folle rumeur des flots tumultueux."

This recalls the " Others abide our Question " of Matthew Arnold, but preceded it by at least a dozen years.

Although Barbier, as we have indicated, was remarkably well informed about the exterior of English life, he would not have been a Frenchman of his time

if he had escaped the tradition of the "spleen." He is superior to the common legends of long teeth, wife-selling, and raw beef, but he succumbs to the theory of a mysterious wasting disease peculiar to the British Islands. The attribution of this malady—"the mind's wrong bias," as its laureate had called it—to inhabitants of this realm had long been admitted by the eighteenth century, but hardly to the exclusion of other claimants. I have not discovered an earlier source of the legend than Voltaire, who perhaps introduced the word, as well as the idea, into France from England, and who claimed the spleen as our national disease. Barbier, in a poem of great merit, describes it as a kind of mortal *ennui*, "prince des scorpions," scourge of our nation. He tells the inhabitants of this island that notwithstanding her boxers, her jockeys and her foxes, England is not really entertained by anything, and that the spleen, with nine-fold lash, is whipping them all, its citizens, to suicide. He makes a curious reference to the running of railways, which is early indeed when we reflect that the Great Western Bill had only just overcome the resistance of Eton and Oxford, and passed into law; he says that England has taken to running railway-trains in order to rouse her spirits, but they will have no other result than to hurry Englishmen faster down to hell. He regards the recent invention of the steamer with a no less jaundiced eye.

In another poem, after charging the English with a gross indifference to the beauties of nature, and with being ready to destroy all the amenities of landscape

for the sake of making a few pounds, he hits on one of his violent images and presents to us the genius of machinery as a giant hippopotamus, " insensible animal," trampling and rolling upon the glory of the earth. This final poem, " La Nature," ends, however, with a passage of real beauty, where the poet foresees a radiant future for the unhappy Albion, when its present possessors have disappeared (mown down, perhaps, by " le spleen ") and Britain rejoices at last in the protection of those divine presences, the Eagle and Liberty. An Epilogue to *Lazare* tells the reader that Barbier has polished these rhymes as a mirror in which the Mother of Sorrows may see her face reflected. His object has been to awaken terror and pity in the heart of Europe, and so he closes his strange book, with a sort of Ronsard-like hymn, half charming and half ridiculous.

The complete oblivion which immediately fell upon this volume can be accounted for in several ways. Reaction against the exaggerated fame of the author of the *Iambes* led at that moment to a no less excessive depreciation, so that, merely as poetry, Barbier's work failed to awaken interest. As an attack on English manners and the ruling class in Great Britain, the change in Parisian feeling caused by the death of William IV and the interesting accession of the girlish Victoria made the diatribes which *Lazare* contained tactless and ill timed. Such satire was a kind of bad manners. It was therefore neglected in Paris, and the poet fell into great obscurity. In England, on the other hand, it is almost certain that the volume never came under

the notice of any critic, or, perhaps, of any reader. Now, after nearly eighty years, when England and France understand one another so perfectly, it may be presented as a whimsical curiosity of literature which can do nothing but excite a smile on either side of the Channel.

THE NEUTRALITY OF SWEDEN

THE NEUTRALITY OF SWEDEN

APART from the actual belligerents, there was no country of Europe which was more painfully startled by the outbreak of this war than Sweden. The first instinctive impulse of the Swedes was to protest in anger against so uncalled-for an interruption of their comfort. A prominent Swedish publicist exclaimed, "The lightning has struck the powder-barrel which all the nations have been so busy filling, and the whole world is one flame." For reasons which will presently be defined, the susceptibilities of Sweden, after several years of nervous strain, had calmed down, and the country was looking forward to tranquillity at home and abroad. After some delicate pilotage, the ship of Swedish state had seemed to be in harbour at last, when suddenly, on every side of her, broke out the yapping of guns. Her government did not hesitate for a moment. Whatever might eventually be the necessary action, Sweden's first instinctive duty was to affirm her old policy of neutrality, the strictest neutrality maintained towards all the belligerents in exact equality. No offers—if such were made—could tempt her to forsake the position she had taken up, nor persuade her

to join one side or the other. First of all, laying aside all local jealousies, Sweden took the outstretched hand of Norway, and the two countries registered a mutual vow under no circumstances to let the great war drive either of them into acts hostile to the other.

To understand the position we must realise the political conditions of Sweden in August, 1914. The first Liberal government of modern Swedish history was formed by Hr. Karl Staaff in 1905. This was shortlived and was succeeded by a new Conservative era, which lasted until 1911, when Hr. Staaff came into power again. His resignation in February 1914 was a consequence of the constitutional crisis arising out of the defence question. Then a Conservative statesman—as Conservatives count in Sweden—succeeded in forming a cabinet. This was Hr. Hammarskjöld, a politician of weight and honour, and one of the greatest living experts on International Law. He was lucky enough to secure, as his Foreign Minister, Hr. Knut Wallenberg, to whom is due the main direction of Swedish external politics since the war broke out. It is not too much to say that Hr. Wallenberg is the most commanding figure in Sweden to-day, and it is mainly in consequence of his firmness and consistency that no mistakes of importance have been made in the conduct of affairs. He rules the storm with a strong hand, and he has never, from the first moment, wavered in his determination to preserve intact the neutrality of his country. Hr. Wallenberg is a patriot of the purest water, and the welfare, the safety, and the independence of Sweden have been his unique

care. That he held out a hand to Denmark at an early stage is a matter of rumour and of probability; what is certain is that he arranged the momentous meeting of the three Scandinavian kings at Malmö.

In its determination to maintain a position severely aloof, the government of which Hr. Hammarskjöld is the head was faced by not a few difficulties which required patience and tact to overcome. It is useless to deny that there existed a clique, almost a party, in Stockholm, whose sympathies were so strongly with Germany at the very outset as to create an element of anxiety for the Swedish government. What this clique consisted of, and why it possessed a considerable importance, may presently be made clear. For the moment, it is enough to say that its action was based upon the old dread of Russian aggression, which has been for a century past the bugbear of Sweden. The government never wavered, but it is vain to deny that a certain disquietude reigned as to what would be the consequences to Sweden if the Allies were victorious and Germany were crushed. Would any power on earth, it was anxiously asked, be able to stem the advance of Russia on her way to the high seas?

In their policy of neutrality, the Swedish ministers were supported by their natural opponents, the Liberals and the Social-Democrats. Working-class sentiment, from the first, has been steadily adverse to any participation in the fighting. But there is a military element in the country which, although not numerically strong, is able to make itself loudly heard. The psychology

of a professional war-class is simple enough. Those who have been trained to warfare wish to fight, and nothing can be more natural than that they should. They hold fighting to be in itself a good thing, and they see no reason why diplomacy and legislation should prevent it when the cause is just. They resent the interference of politicians; *silent leges inter arma*, they say, as they did in the days of Cicero. The soldier caste in Sweden was tired of being inactive, and it looked upon Germany as the typical military country. Swedish officers had long been flattered and cajoled in Prussian military circles, and the society in which they shone at home was openly pro-German.

At the first moment of the crisis, nothing could have been more adroit than the conduct of Germany, or have given clearer evidence of her wide scheme of preparedness. Nothing had been left to chance; all was arranged beforehand on a perfect plan. Germany knew that a little seed of flame, a spark of anti-neutral prejudice, lay at the heart of the military and aristocratic society of her northern neighbour. That Germany did everything she possibly could to fan this flame into a big fire is a well-known fact, and the means she took are patent. She had formed close and long-standing connexions with the Swedish press, connexions that were no doubt of an honourable nature, but much more intimate than any which England had dreamed of. German newspapers reached Sweden as abundantly and regularly as usual, and the more or less official German news agencies poured in a constant flow of highly coloured

information. Sweden was immediately overrun with emissaries of all sorts and conditions, from the professor, with his Nobel Prize diploma as his passport, to the Social-Democratic deputy waving the red rag of " Tsardom is the danger of European democracy " in front of his Swedish *Genossen.* Tons of German pamphlets were dumped in Sweden; the German White Book was immediately ready in a Swedish translation; while the thousand and one things which Germany considered necessary to impress Sweden, not with the frightfulness but with the rightfulness of the German cause, were pulled out from their pigeon-holes in Wilhelms-strasse, and were hurried to their Swedish destination under the charge of the egregious Herr von Kühlmann.

Thus Germany acted, and what did the Allies do to counteract her blow? What, in particular, did England do? It is distressing to our national vanity to be obliged to answer—Worse than nothing! Much excuse may be made for the disturbance in August 1914 of the ordinary arrangements for the transmission of news by telegraph. There was a universal entanglement which could but result in temporary dislocation. But it is only proper to add that the inexperience and the want of imagination of the new official authorities added immensely and needlessly to the trouble. Private newspaper correspondents attached to friendly countries found their messages delayed until it was no longer worth their while to attempt to push them through. The Censorship, in its playful infancy, laid its little hands on almost every newspaper message sent to a neutral

country, and tore it into scraps. For instance—and this was an act of officialdom so stupid that posterity will hesitate to credit it—the verbatim report of Sir Edward Grey's momentous speech in the House of Commons on August 3, a document which the British government should have strained every nerve to get quickly transmitted to every country of the world, was held up by the military censor for three days! English newspapers which, by an amazing arrangement, were supplied through an agent at Liège, were not able to reach Sweden until the war had been proceeding for three full weeks. The Belgian agent's office and his papers were blown to pieces by the German's siege guns. Our English authorities are not to be blamed for this!

Of course, things righted themselves by and by, but in the meantime the Germans had had the field to themselves, and they certainly had not wasted their opportunity. Yet, with all their well-laid plans, with all their elaborate preparations, they did not reap any rich harvest. Professor Wilhelm Ostwald, the famous thermochemist, was sent from Berlin on an "absolutely unofficial" visit to tempt Sweden with a future Baltic empire in which Sweden should be the leading state. He was bluntly told that Sweden did not want Finland back. When further asked what it was proposed that the official language of this future empire should be, he indiscreetly replied, "German, of course." He then hurriedly returned to Germany, not a little perturbed, moreover,

that his Swedish friends should have been so far wanting in tact as to raise the question of the future of Slesvig.

Albert Südekum, the Social-Democratic deputy, who preceded Ostwald, had enjoyed, if possible, still less success with his mission. The Swedish Social-Democratic party has the good fortune to possess in its leader, Hr. Hjalmar Branting, one of the strongest men of his opinions in the whole of Europe. Besides being one of the foremost politicians in Sweden, he is also one of her most eminent journalists. Without hiding his traditional fear of "tsaristic" Russia, he has shown from the beginning of the war a most decided sympathy for the Allies. The lucidity of Branting's intellect made him comprehend the essential justice of the cause of the Allies long before their case was presented to the neutral countries and while other Swedish editors were still undecided. The crime against Belgium justified Hr. Branting in the eyes of his own country. As he says in his weighty contribution to *King Albert's Book:* "But then came the crime against international law, the violation of Belgian neutrality. For us, who intend to defend to the very utmost our neutrality, it was like a thrust directed against our own heart." In spite of these views, Hr. Branting maintained an attitude of strict impartiality, and when "comrade" Südekum arrived to plead the justice of Germany's cause, Branting allowed him to address the party and consented to publish his arguments in the *Social-Demokraten*, the leading party-organ. But

he himself replied so effectively to the German missionary, and pulled all his argument so ruthlessly to pieces, that Südekum went back crestfallen to Germany without having fulfilled the aim of his mission.

Sweden had at first nothing to read but the German pamphlets and the German newspapers. But after some time she got access to news from the other side as well. The German White Book was followed by the English Blue Book, the French Yellow Book, the Russian Orange Book, and the Belgian Grey Book. Not that government publications in all the colours of the rainbow could alter Sweden's decision to remain neutral, but she had, at last, an opportunity of judging matters on the evidence of the opposing parties. The result was a marked change in the general tone of the Swedish press, and Wolff's Bureau was no longer looked upon as an immaculate purveyor of nothing but the truth. The largest and most influential of the journals of Sweden, *Dagens Nyheter*, a paper which is admirably conducted and which boasts of a daily circulation of over 90,000, has been eminently fair to the Allies throughout; it has given all the news from London, Paris, and Petrograd as well as from Berlin, and it is impossible to detect in its opinions any bias for Germany. At the other extremity of journalism, the *Svenska Dagbladet* was at the beginning of the war an outspoken defender of the Prussian cause, but even this paper has never advocated a participation in the struggle, while every month there is apparent a cooling in its zeal for Germany.

The blowing-up of Swedish ships by German mines instantly lowered the temperature of the pro-Germans, and when the attacks on English non-combatants began Swedish sympathy was still further alienated. Such deeds are not in the tradition of the eminently humane and gracious people of Sweden, who have an instinctive and traditional horror of *kultur* of this sort. After the first Norfolk raids the Swedish press did not mince matters. It was unanimous in disapproval, and *Dagens Nyheter* plainly told its German friends that if they persisted in the murder of babies Swedish sympathy would " turn away in disgust."

On the other hand, Sweden was made sore by our prohibition of the export of iron ore, but pacified when we rescinded it. Germany also gave deep offence by putting wood on her prohibited list, and this embargo she has not removed. The closure of the North Sea greatly hampered Swedish trade, and produced a considerable exasperation in commercial circles; but the blockade of February 1915 set Swedish opinion still more violently against Germany. In all these balancings of natural and national interest there is no real element of attack upon the solid principles of neutrality. The aggressive military party has shown itself to be helpless, and its voice is heard less loudly. The majority of Swedish citizens has no wish that Germany should preponderate in the whole world, while the government, too discreet to take a side, continues with honesty and adroitness to steer the ship of state through the shoals of diplomatic intrigue, which are often hardly less

dangerous than the multitudinous reefs of its own intricate coastline.

For many years Germany has done everything in her power not only to foster sympathetic relations with Sweden and Norway but also to develop in a thousand ingenious ways material and intellectual intercourse between herself and them. As far as Norway is concerned, it is needless to do more than remind ourselves of the Kaiser's annual summer trips to the Norwegian fjords, where his *Hohenzollern*, in its white shining armour, became a phenomenon as unavoidable as the midnight sun; his lavish contributions to the restoration fund of Trondhjem Cathedral, the Westminster Abbey of Norway; his instantaneous and dramatic dispatch of a German liner as a relief ship with foodstuffs and other necessaries to Aalesund when that Norwegian coast-town was devastated by fire; not to speak of his slightly less-appreciated gift to Norway of a hideous giant statue of "Frithiof the Viking."

In Sweden the Teutonic methods have been somewhat different, and, perhaps, a little more subtle. The Kaiser himself has not been so much in evidence there. His visits to Sweden have been limited to ordinary state appearances, such as are prescribed by international etiquette. The apparition of the phantom hull of the *Hohenzollern* in Swedish waters has not been entirely neglected, but it has been less frequent than in the fjords of Norway. Sweden has no cathedral restoration fund, and she has been spared the terrible "high art" of the Kaiser. But intellectual and commercial Germany,

hurrying at the heels of military Germany, has taken up the work of its lord and master. Quick and comfortable transit of passengers and goods between the two countries has been established by means of the steam ferries between Trelleborg in Sweden and Sassnitz in Germany, a route offering such facilities that the international traffic has increased enormously within a few years. And no wonder, for a steam ferry as large as a liner and supplied with every luxury takes on board a complete railway train, sleeping and dining cars and all, in such a way that the traveller, having entered his compartment in Stockholm, needs not leave it, unless he wishes to do so, until he arrives in Berlin. There are two daily services in each direction, and they compete irresistibly with the boats which cross the unruly waters of the North Sea from Sweden to England only twice a week.

It is idle to disregard the material advantages gained to Germany by the Trelleborg-Sassnitz route. It has had a great influence on the relations of the two countries as a whole. On the other hand, while energetic attempts have been sporadically made to establish better, quicker, and more modern direct communications between Sweden and England, nothing substantial has been achieved, and the facilities in this respect remain to-day nearly the same as they were twenty- five years ago. Nor is it to the credit of English enterprise that all such attempts as have been made to establish a better state of things have had their origin, not among our own traders, but among Swedes residing in this country.

But hitherto they have met with no response whatever.

Let us turn to the intellectual intercourse between the two countries. Any Swedish man of science who has anything of importance to impart—and there are many of them who have—is almost sure to see his essay or treatise immediately translated into German, and discussed in German scientific circles nearly as fully as in his own country. The same is the case with Swedish novelists and playwrights. No Swedish writer of repute has had to wait long for a German publisher, and very often the royalties resulting from the German editions exceed those of his native country. For instance, August Strindberg, whom the Swedes regard as their greatest modern genius, was more highly appreciated in Germany than in any other country, perhaps his own not excepted. It was not until a short time before Strindberg's death that his name was known to a dozen persons in England. It is not a matter of indifference to the Swedes to see their works become standard in Germany almost as soon as, and sometimes even sooner than, in their own country. How many people in England outside a very small circle of specialists could name half a dozen world-famous Swedish scientists and writers after Linnæus and Swedenborg? In Germany such names are familiar to all educated persons.

Nor is English literature at all a prominent part of the equipment of Swedish intellectual life. There is a fair acquaintance with some of our classics, and no finer translation of Shakespeare exists than that sent forth

from the University of Upsala as the life-work of Professor Hagberg. The Shakespearean masterpieces are constantly found on the *répertoire* both of the State theatre and privately owned stages. The work of several modern English playwrights has been produced with success in each of the Scandinavian countries. Mr. Kipling received the Nobel Prize from the Swedish Academy, and there is a market for a good deal of popular English fiction. But the names of Meredith, Hardy, and Conrad are scarcely known.

When, however, we pass outside the domain of *belles-lettres*, and enter that of science, politics, and philosophy, the advantages enjoyed by Germany are seen to be overwhelming. No English works are easily obtainable, while German books of all kinds are found in profusion in every bookshop. This must not be attributed to conscious unwillingness on the part of the Swedish student to avail himself of what English literature has to offer him, but simply to the difficulty which the bookseller has in obtaining English books on reasonable terms. While German publishers flood the Swedish book-market with everything they publish, and send out their books "*à condition*" (that is to say, on terms of sale or return), the English publishers sit in their offices waiting for firm orders—and cash. But in a country of a little over five million inhabitants there do not exist many booksellers who can afford to buy outright works that cost from half a guinea to three, while depending on the off chance of selling them. It is a pity that the English publishing trade cannot discover

some means of opening to English authors the valuable Scandinavian market. At present they abandon it without a struggle to German enterprise.

The Swedish newspaper press is remarkably active, and, for such a small country, reasonably " up to date," but the complexion of a press must to a certain extent depend upon its food. The Swedish press is as independent as the British, and no " reptile " organs like those created by Bismarck would ever thrive in the Swedish climate, but if a newspaper cannot get the news it wants it is bound to take what it can get. Quite up to the declaration of war, all telegraphic news sent from this country to Sweden by Reuters had to pass through Wolff's Bureau in Berlin, where it was edited and cooked. Every attempt on the Swedish side—and such attempts have been frequently made—to change this absurd state of things, and avoid the censorship of the branch office in Wilhelms-strasse by getting into direct communication with London, has failed in consequence of British apathy on the subject.

Turning from the commercial and intellectual life of Sweden to that of the working classes, the preponderance of German enterprise is no less remarkable.[1] The Swedish workers are Social-Democrats almost to a man and woman. In no other European country has the growth of that party been so rapid, and to-day the Labour Party

[1] The economical character of Swedish neutrality is forcibly defined in the February 1915 number of *Statsvetenskaplig Tidskrift*, by the eminent statistician, Dr. Pontus Fahlbeck, of Lund.

is numerically the strongest in the Riksdag. Wonders have been accomplished towards improving the lot of the worker, and at the outbreak of the war there were being started other and wider schemes of social betterment.

But, as Hr. Hjalmar Branting, the leader of the Swedish Labour Party, has lately said—

"Our Labour Movement grew as a German plant before it took root in and was re-shaped for the Swedish soil. And when the Swedish workers fought their great defensive battle in the general strike of 1909, their German brethren gave them a powerful support."

Is it to be wondered at if the Swedish worker has had his eyes directed towards the native land of Marx and Lassalle?

These favourable conditions for a general Germanophil sentiment throughout the Swedish nation have not, however, met with the success which might have been anticipated. In spite of all the obstacles which have blocked the way for a proper comprehension of English life, English thought, and English institutions, the Swede, who can boast that his nation was the first self-governing people in Europe, has always had a weak spot in his heart for the home of democratic institutions, the land of Dickens, Darwin, Mill, and Gladstone. While duly appreciating the energy and the methodical work of the German, he has never been able to pump up any great enthusiasm for him as an individual. To take

an instance from business life, an English commercial traveller would always, circumstances and conditions being equal, have preference over a German rival.

It would be an error—and it is an error into which various English residents of Sweden have fallen—to exaggerate the international character of much that has been said in the Swedish press about the situation. In particular, the series of articles which were published in *Aftonbladet* by Captain Ernst Liljedahl, in February 1915, have been much discussed and have been construed in a sense dangerously unfriendly to the Allies. I confess that I cannot regard them in this light. The writer is a captain in the Swedish army, an ardent democrat, and a prominent member of the Riksdag. It is admitted that his personal sympathies are more with Germany than with Russia. But I am unable to discover, in a close study of Captain Liljedahl's remarkable articles, any expression of a hope that Germany will conquer, and he specifically condemns the treatment of Belgium. His aim is to put clearly before the Swedish public the danger which lurks for Sweden behind the Russification of Finland. His articles, however, carefully read, betray no anti-British feeling, and, like almost all other Swedish democrats, he looks upon England as the home of democratic ideas.

The visit of King Edward VII to Stockholm in the spring of 1908 was almost immediately followed by a similar visit from the Kaiser. No one witnessing both of these events could avoid observing the enormous difference in the attitude of the inhabitants of the city

on these two occasions. The reception of the Kaiser was friendly and even respectful; the conventional cheers always granted to a visiting monarch were not lacking. But the welcome awarded to King Edward and Queen Alexandra was on a different plane altogether. Here it was obvious that the people had their hearts in the business. The cheers from the enormous crowds of working-class people were deafening, and the air was white with fluttering handkerchiefs. It was a spontaneous outburst on the part of the population, not the ordinary politeness of the inquisitive sightseer. It was democratic Sweden welcoming the representative of democratic England. It is not only possible but almost certain that in the heartiness of this greeting, quite unusual in Sweden, there lay an expression of gratitude and acknowledgment to the English monarch for the friendly part that England, its government and its press had played in the recent settlement of the Åland Islands affair.

These islands, situated in the Baltic, quite close to the Swedish coast, were ceded by Sweden to Russia, as an appanage of Finland, in the peace of Åbo after the war of 1809. It is known that this was done through an error or an oversight on the part of the Swedish negotiator, as they were not demanded by Russia. However, ceded they were, and in due time, in spite of repeated promises to England, the largest of them became strongly fortified. During the Crimean war, the British fleet under Napier went into the Baltic, bombarded the Åland fortress of Bomarsund, and razed it to the ground.

In the Treaty of Paris, 1856, which concluded the Crimean war, the Emperor of all the Russias undertook, as a condition of peace with Great Britain and France, not to fortify the Åland Islands again.

This state of things remained unaltered until 1907, when the Anglo-Russian *entente* was arranged. Very soon M. Isvolsky, the Russian Minister for Foreign Affairs, approached the British and French governments with the proposition that the Paris Treaty, in so far as it concerned the non-fortification of the Åland Islands, should be considered abrogated. Not that Russia really wanted to fortify the Åland Islands, not that she had any sinister designs on Sweden, but it was a slur on the sovereignty of a great power that she was not allowed to do what she liked on her own territory. The susceptibilities of the Swedes are delicate, and the country was dangerously excited by this unexpected occurrence, for a glance at the map shows that the re-fortification of Bomarsund would practically have meant the bottling up of the whole Gulf of Bothnia, and the consequent cutting off of the northern part of Sweden with regard to naval defence. To meet such a danger to the integrity and independence of the country an enormous expense in armaments would have been necessary, an expense which would have crippled the finances of even such a prosperous and economically sound country as Sweden. But quite apart from this, a fortified Åland would have had a most deplorable moral effect. It would have been a pistol constantly levelled at the heart of Sweden; it would have meant,

as a politician at the time expressed it, "that the wishes of a Russian minister at Stockholm would be turned into commands."

That the proud and independent Swedes, who do not wish for anything but to live in peace and on the friendliest terms with all their neighbours, should submit to a permanent position of "hands up," was not to be supposed for a moment. Directly the facts became known the whole nation was united. Party feeling—and it was running pretty high at that time—disappeared; the whole press spoke with one voice, and in the then-assembled Riksdag Conservatives combined with Liberals and Socialists in a unanimous protest against any attempt to weaken the defensive position of Sweden.

The further development and settlement of this affair are too recent history to be entered upon here in detail, but it is an open secret that it was the firm attitude of the British government, backed by almost the entire English press, in insisting upon the *status quo* in the Baltic, that averted the threatening danger from the shores of Sweden. In this crisis, although Germany did nothing to help, her sympathy and even her compassion were expressed with the unctuous effusion of a Codlin.

In the whole of this delicate question, and in the broader and essentially less delicate question of Finland, we shall form no accurate idea of the present position of Sweden unless we glance at her historic character, and try to realise what may be called her historic

experience. Sweden possesses the natural dignity of those who have striven for glory, and have won the laurels only to see them wither and turn to dust. She has exercised in years long past the Thucydidean virtues of determination, prudence, and discipline, but she has come in the ripeness of age to accept the summing-up of our divine poet—

> "Oh heart! oh blood that freezes, blood that burns!
> Earth's returns
> For whole centuries of folly, noise, and sin!
> Shut them in,
> With their triumphs and their glories and the rest!
> Love is best."

We shall understand the present attitude of Sweden most clearly by glancing for a moment at the glories and deceptions of her past.

According to the most ancient legends of the Swedes, it was Odin who founded the empire of the Svea. He brought his pontiffs out of the Greater Scythia, Svithjód, and marshalled them around the mystic altar which he raised at Sigtuna, on Lake Mælar, where then and there he created Sweden, the Lesser Scythia. The gay little town of Sigtuna, now a mere summer-village on the way from Stockholm to Upsala, is proud of the ruins of the four great minsters which the Esthonians shattered in 1187, but it is imposing to the traveller only when he reflects upon its high antiquity, and on the sacred flame which lighted on its altar the earliest beacon of Swedish nationality. The primal history of the country, and of its gods and pontiff-kings and invading Finnish giants,

are they not written in the fabulous chronicles of the Svea, and enshrined for our wonder in *Ynglingasaga* and in *Heimskringla*? I mention them here because of their beautiful remoteness, and because they give the Swede of to-day a basis for his proper hereditary pride. His nation is no new-comer among the peoples of the earth; on the contrary, though its peaks are shrouded in the thick mist of fable, the solid rock of Swedish history rises up far beyond the Christian era. But as little as Sigtuna desires to-day to rebuild its pagan fanes and renew the worship of Odin, so little does the Sweden of our age nourish an ambition for territorial aggrandisement. To represent the Swedes as anxious to secure something out of the eventual hurly-burly, or as tainted by the land-grabbing fever, is wholly to misjudge the temper of every class in Sweden.

Towards the close of the seventeenth century, after the romantic wars of Charles X, which permanently impressed the imagination of Europe, Sweden rose from the negotiations at Copenhagen and at Stolbova in the position of a great power. She had not merely an immense and unparalleled prestige, but her territory was twice as extensive as it is to-day. She held the whole of the interior of the Baltic, the mouths of the great German rivers, half the lakes of northern Russia, and an influence which made itself felt as far off as the Black Sea. But in order to gain this immense territory she had been obliged to bleed herself almost to exhaustion of men and money, and she had acquired the bitter detestation of all her neighbours. In five years, from

having been the champion of Protestantism in Europe, she had earned the hatred of every Protestant power. Sweden had her fill of supremacy, and, like the child set loose in the confectioner's shop, her taste for it was sickened in perpetuity.

It has been observed by an acute Swedish historian, Dr. Oskar Dumrath, that the sources of the prodigious calamities of Sweden after the battles of 1676 and 1677 were "anti-ethnographical." Charles X was the great example of the conqueror who seeks to enlarge his dominions by a cynical disregard of the elements which he is forcing into the national conglomeration. Pomeranians and Poles, Russians and Prussians, Holsteiners and Danes, all were dragooned by the policy of Magnus de la Gardie into a confederacy, the parts of which remained mutually hateful to one another as well as inherently hostile to the common tyrant. The extraordinarily exciting and picturesque history of Sweden, from the proclamation of Charles IX in 1600 to the Peace of Nystad in 1721, is an object-lesson in the limits and principles of national ambition. Through indulgence in an appetite for the mere trappings of glory, Sweden sank to the position of a second-rate power, stripped of all her unrighteous conquests, and saved from disaster only by the unity of her own native states. There could not be a more wholesome example of the danger of territorial "frightfulness," or of the folly of burdening the fortunes of a people with the weight of unwilling Alsaces and trampled Posens.

But there is an aspect of this historic experience which

is little understood by those who look at Swedish affairs from a distance and without special knowledge. The result of her bitter disappointments in the eighteenth century has been to disillusion Sweden completely and for ever as to the flavour of the fruits of conquest. At Pultawa and at Fredrikshald those fruits turned to ashen dust between her lips, and if Sweden looks back with romantic pride to the prowess of Charles XII, it is also with a steady determination never again to risk the nation's happiness at the call of military ambition. From the end of the seventeenth century the Swedes gradually withdrew from all their conquests. They abandoned Pomerania and Holstein in 1720, in 1721 they yielded Esthonia and Livonia, in 1809 they made the grievous sacrifice of Finland. Long before this they had peacefully relinquished to the Dutch the American territories held by the New Sweden Company in the State of Delaware, and finally the island of St. Bartholomew in the West Indies, the last of all the foreign or colonial possessions of Sweden, was peacefully ceded to France. When, in 1877, the Swedish flag was lowered over the court-house of Gustavia, it was a sign that Sweden finally withdrew from all competition with other foreign powers.

Yet there may have been many aliens who regretted the self-abnegation of Sweden. The memory of Swedish rule lives pleasantly in the recollection of her former provinces of Pomerania and Esthonia. Her aim never was to oppress, but to educate and raise her subjects, while even in Delaware the Minquas Indians

lamented the departure of those whom they called " Our White Brothers." Dr. Gustaf Sundbärg claims not too much when he says—

" History has not many—perhaps, indeed, no—instances to present that bear comparison with Sweden's treatment of conquered Finland; how the former moulded the latter into a sister people with the grant of a full share in the civilisation to which she had herself attained; how the superior race literally *educated* the inferior, in just the same manner as in private life the elders educate their juniors, but in a manner which is not by any means regularly adopted between nations."

It would be easy to multiply instances of this placable and easy attitude of the Swedes, which may involve a weakness as well as a strength, but which at all events is inconsistent with any such desire for territorial aggrandisement as has been absurdly attributed to Sweden by some impatient pressmen. Nor is there in this reserved attitude of the nation anything which responds to the braggart lust of domination which has made Germany so hateful. Left to herself, there is no question that Sweden would repudiate the Devil of Potsdam and all his ways, with the maximum of pacific horror. But she has not been left to herself, and it is necessary, if we are to understand the attitude of Sweden, to give careful attention to what she has persuaded herself to think is the attitude of her neighbour, Russia.

Apart altogether from the instinctive feeling of sympathy with the Finnish nation, whose culture was originally, as we have seen, built up by Sweden, the nation west of the Gulf of Bothnia has watched the Russification of the east of that gulf with an alarm which may be baseless but must be admitted to be natural. It is not merely the existence of social and racial ties with Finland which makes the treatment of that duchy a matter of anxiety in Stockholm, but geographical conditions also. We have but to look at the map to perceive that the most elementary sense of self-preservation has made Sweden feel the necessity of putting her house in order with regard to her national defence. But it is imperative on us to admit that as far as Sweden is concerned not the wildest stretch of imagination could put any other construction upon the reorganisation of her defensive forces than the necessity of being prepared, as far as her resources would allow her, to meet any attempt to violate her neutrality and her independence.

The Swedes are a peaceful nation at heart. The old viking spirit that made them go roving over western Europe, and even as far as Byzantium, is dead. The love of adventure has found other expressions. They may still go down to the sea in their ships, but now it is not for raiding English, German, French, or Levantine coasts, but to unravel the secrets of the icebound Arctic and Antarctic regions or to unearth the marvels of the long-forgotten buried cities in the South American

jungle. The Swede loves his own country, but he hates no other. His only desire is to live in peace and on good terms with all his neighbours and to be allowed to go on with the development of his own natural resources in forest, mine, and waterfall. He does not want to interfere with any other country, but neither does he want any other country to interfere with him.

The great upheaval that took place in Russia after the Russo-Japanese war brought the Russification of the Grand Duchy to a standstill, and even caused a return to former more liberal methods. But this was only temporary. The revolution suppressed and the danger averted gave new vigour to the work of Russian bureaucracy. It was a case of *reculer pour mieux sauter*. The statesmen watching affairs from Stockholm were alarmed to see the Finnish constitution again violated, time after time, and Finnish citizens and officials imprisoned in Russian fortresses or sent to Siberia. In the name of Russian unification, the ancient liberties of Finland were swallowed morsel by morsel. Strategic railways, of the ultimate purpose of which there scarcely could be any doubt, were being planned and built at a great pace, thus connecting the railway system of Russia with many points on the Finnish coast. If there had been any doubt left in Swedish minds of the intentions of the militarist clique in Russia, it was swept away by the sensational espionage disclosures which occurred during 1913, and are a matter of public knowledge. Russian military spies were found in great numbers all over the country, and the most disquieting part of this un-

palatable business was that the Russian military attaché in Stockholm was so deeply implicated that he had to leave the country. Was it surprising that Sweden should feel alarmed? It is quite possible that her fears were exaggerated, but she can hardly be blamed if she looked upon the machinations of her neighbour with a certain distrust. All measures taken by Russia seemed to her to have only one possible aim. She received ample assurances that there were no evil designs behind what was going on, but her fears were not at rest. The fate of Finland was before her eyes, and she was determined not to share it if she could possibly avoid it. If the hour of her destiny should strike, she would certainly do her utmost to defend her integrity and independence, but she knew that she could scarcely hope to hold out for a long period against the overwhelming numbers that might be hurled against her unless she could count upon the assistance of some powerful friend, whose interest it might be not to let her be crushed between the paws of the Great Bear. This was Germany's chance, and no pains were spared in Berlin to assure the Swedes that, if Russia attacked them, Germany would put her mailed fist between them and the advancing monster. With these cautiously "unofficial" assurances were mingled solemn warnings not to trust to England or to France. Germany, and Germany alone, would come to Sweden's help in the hour of need. It was again the old story, "Codlin's your friend—not Short."

Nevertheless, it was still natural for Sweden to look

for support towards the Western powers, who had guaranteed her integrity of 1855. Republican France and democratic England surely could not stand by and see such a civilised nation as the Swedish reduced to the condition of Poland and Finland? Could England permit a rival great power to establish a naval base on the Atlantic seaboard almost facing her own northern naval stations?

But the situation in Europe changed. The Franco-Russian alliance was concluded. Sweden regarded it as a promising sign of better things to come that the "Marseillaise" was played and applauded at Tsarskoje Selo, but she grew serious once more when this was followed by even louder applause of the "All for the Tsar" at the Élysée. Yet she lulled her apprehensions. The French squadron that went on the first alliance-visit to Kronstadt had called at Stockholm on its way, and enjoyed there a reception that stands alone in the records of enthusiasm.

Then came 1907 with the Anglo-Russian *entente*, and the shadow of suspicion fell once more darkly over Scandinavia. To be sure, the position taken up by Great Britain over the Åland Islands question raised new hopes, but as the years went on these became fainter. Sweden began to question whether the sympathy and sentiment of the English would take the form of practical and active support. In the perturbed state of public opinion a good many people in Sweden began speculating about what other great power could possibly be appealed to, to avert the dangers that

seemed looming in the distance. The answer was ready: it was to the other side of the Baltic that she must look. For, if Sweden were crushed, Russia would be almost omnipotent in the Baltic, and Germany would be left in a perilous position. Nor had Sweden any reason to fear Germany. She was on the most friendly political terms with that great central European empire, and their commercial and intellectual intercourse was of the most intimate and profitable kind.

If in circumstances like these Sweden had gone to the length of thinking of an alliance, no one could have been surprised. Even France, with her powerful army, had found it necessary for her own safety to enter into close relations with Russia, while England had in effect relinquished her traditional isolation. What wonder, then, if a nation of some five million souls scattered over a large country should follow such examples?

But Sweden was not to be tempted into any kind of alliance. Certain voices, it is true, began to cry out that the only sane policy for Sweden was an alliance with Germany, but they cried in the wilderness. The government persisted in the long-established policy of absolute neutrality, and showed on several occasions its sincere intention to live on good and friendly terms with all her neighbours. To the wheedling German intriguers Sweden suavely replied that, while ready to guard and defend her vital interests, she was not to be enticed into any European combination. This was the will of the nation as a whole, and succeeding governments have given unbroken expression to it. It is a

continuation of this policy which has actuated that which Hr. Hammarskjöld has pursued since the outbreak of war. The Swedish people themselves have shown their strong feelings of sympathy with the Russian nation by their hospitable and friendly treatment of the tens of thousands of Russian refugees who passed through Sweden on their way back to their own country. The Swedes did this in such a way and on such a scale that both the refugees themselves and the Russian government scarcely could find words adequately to express their admiration and gratitude.

On one matter, about which there has been misunderstanding or confusion, it is desirable to make some final explanation. This is the question of railway communication across the northern provinces of Scandinavia. We read sometimes in the English press of a " Russian intrigue " to get a railway from Finland to the Atlantic. Here is a confusion of ideas, excusable from the great imperfection of the maps which are in general English use. Two separate projects are here mixed together, and they must be distinguished. For a long time past, Swedish pessimists have been saying that Russia might find it to her advantage to attack Sweden and Norway simultaneously, because she would thereby acquire the northern provinces of the peninsula, and so control the railway which was opened in 1903, and which runs from Luleå on the Gulf of Bothnia, through Gellivara, to Narvik (Viktoriahavn) on the Ofoten Fjord. The importance of Narvik is that, though it is well within the Arctic Circle, it is completely

and invariably ice-free. By linking up this railway, which is the northernmost in the world, with the system of Finnish railways which comes up on the eastern side of the Swedish frontier—and in fact these railways have quite recently been completed on the Russian side right up to the last Finnish outpost, Torneå—Russia would get a clear run from the Pacific to the Atlantic.

This is one thing; quite another is no "intrigue" at all, but the openly expressed desire of the Russian government that Sweden should prolong her railway system—which used to end at Morjärv, but has recently been extended to Karungi—quite up to the Finnish-Russian frontier, so that this linking-up should take place now, and facilitate immediately and in the friendliest way the railway traffic between the two countries, which the war has enormously increased. The only possible route in winter from western Europe to Russia is through Newcastle, Bergen, Christiania, and Karungi. At present, when traffic reaches Karungi, the final station on the Swedish side, it has to be connected with the Russian end-station by a laborious system of sledges and motors. There may be military objections which are not patent to a foreigner, and of course nothing could be done without the deliberate consent of the Riksdag. From the point of view of the convenience of the Allies, the completion of this railway route is much to be desired.

To sum up, the main cause of such want of sympathy with England and France as is to be detected to-day in the attitude of Sweden is due to her ancient haunting

fear of the aggressiveness of Russia. This is a matter which it behoves us to approach with the greatest delicacy, but it is obvious that no appreciation of Scandinavian opinion can be formed if it is ignored. The happy conclusion of the Åland Islands scare in 1908 greatly relieved the tension, and Sweden remains grateful to us for our share in that relief. But it is idle to deny that there remained other causes for a certain apprehension. The Bobrikoff *régime* in Finland, and the efforts to nullify that Finnish constitution which every Czar since 1809 had sworn to uphold, cannot be pleasant for the Swedes, whose language is spoken and written by the educated classes of Finland, and who have close intellectual and moral relationship with the Finns. Sweden may misjudge the intentions of Russia, but she is agitated to see her gigantic neighbour pushing closer and closer to that ice-free port on the Atlantic which Peter the Great is supposed to have emphasised in his will as one of the essentials of Russian domination.

The probability is that the fears of Sweden are unfounded, and that the dread of Russia which warps all her political judgment is a mere bugbear. But would it not be in the interest of Russia herself to remove the cause of that fear and mistrust? A stroke of the pen by the all-powerful Tsar, giving back to Finland at the conclusion of the war her constitutional liberties, would not only make that country once more the most loyal part of the great Russian empire, and unify her with Russia far more than could be done by any ukase of restrictions and suppressions, but it would be hailed by

Sweden with enthusiasm as the most perfect proof that Russia harbours no designs on her neighbour across the Baltic. It would inaugurate an era of sincere friendship between the two countries, and it would increase the commercial, industrial, and intellectual intercourse between them, to the immediate benefit of both.

And why not improve upon the occasion? Why not say to Sweden: "These Åland Islands, which have worried you so much, take them back. We got them by a diplomatic accident, without having asked for them; we do not want them. Let them lie there, unfortified, of course, and permanently neutral, as a signal proof of our trust in each other."

It would be a *grand geste* of a *grand seigneur*, and Russia, the great, the powerful, the generous Russia, could well afford it. What would the world say? Its answer would be, "This is, indeed, the doing of the Tsar of Hague fame; it may not be war, but it is certainly magnificent!"

April 1915.

INDEX

INDEX

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY R. CLAY AND SONS, LTD.,
BRUNSWICK STREET, STAMFORD STREET, S.E., AND BUNGAY, SUFFOLK.