

son he was slender and gentlemanlike, but inclined to stoop ; his gait was decidedly not military. The general appearance indicated great delicacy of constitution. One would at once pronounce of him that he was different from other men. There was an earnestness in his manner and such perfect gentleness of breeding and freedom from everything artificial as charmed every one. I never met a man who so immediately won upon me.'

Mrs. Gisborne's son, who knew Shelley well at Leghorn, declared Captain Kennedy's description of him to be 'the best and most truthful I have ever seen.'

To all this we have to add the charm of the man's writings—of Shelley's poetry. It is his poetry, above everything else, which for many people establishes that he is an angel. Of his poetry I have not space now to speak. But let no one suppose that a want of humour and a self-delusion such as Shelley's have no effect upon a man's poetry. The man Shelley, in very truth, is not entirely sane, and Shelley's poetry is not entirely sane either. The Shelley of actual life is a vision of beauty and radiance, indeed, but availing

nothing, effecting nothing. And in poetry, no less than in life, he is 'a beautiful *and ineffectual* angel, beating in the void his luminous wings in *vain*.'

VIII

COUNT LEO TOLSTOI¹

IN reviewing at the time of its first publication, thirty years ago, Flaubert's remarkable novel of *Madame Bovary*, Sainte-Beuve observed that in Flaubert we come to another manner, another kind of inspiration, from those which had prevailed hitherto; we find ourselves dealing, he said, with a man of a new and different generation from novelists like George Sand. The ideal has ceased, the lyric vein is dried up; the new men are cured of lyricism and the ideal; 'a severe and pitiless truth has made its entry, as the last word of experience, even into art itself.' The characters of the new literature of fiction are 'science,

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a spirit of observation, maturity, force, a touch of hardness.' *L'idéal a cessé, le lyrique a tari.*

The spirit of observation and the touch of hardness (let us retain these mild and inoffensive terms) have since been carried in the French novel very far. So far have they been carried, indeed, that in spite of the advantage which the French language, familiar to the cultivated classes everywhere, confers on the French novel, this novel has lost much of its attraction for those classes; it no longer commands their attention as it did formerly. The famous English novelists have passed away, and have left no successors of like fame. It is not the English novel, therefore, which has inherited the vogue lost by the French novel. It is the novel of a country new to literature, or at any rate unregarded, till lately, by the general public of readers: it is the novel of Russia. The Russian novel has now the vogue, and deserves to have it. If fresh literary productions maintain this vogue and enhance it, we shall all be learning Russian.

The Slav nature, or at any rate the Russian nature, the Russian nature as it shows itself in the Russian novels, seems marked by an extreme sensitiveness, a consciousness most quick and acute both for what the man's self is experiencing, and also for what others in contact with him are thinking and feeling. In a nation full of life, but young, and newly in contact with an old and powerful civilisation, this sensitiveness and self-consciousness are prompt to appear. In the Americans, as well as in the Russians, we see them active in a high degree. They are somewhat agitating and disquieting agents to their possessor, but they have, if they get fair play, great powers for evoking and enriching a literature. But the Americans, as we know, are apt to set them at rest in the manner of my friend Colonel Higginson of Boston. 'As I take it, Nature said, some years since: "Thus far the English is my best race; but we have had Englishmen enough; we need something with a little more buoyancy than the Englishman; let us lighten the structure, even

at some peril in the process. Put in one drop more of nervous fluid, and make the American." With that drop, a new range of promise opened on the human race, and a lighter, finer, more highly organised type of mankind was born.' People who by this sort of thing give rest to their sensitive and busy self-consciousness may very well, perhaps, be on their way to great material prosperity, to great political power; but they are scarcely on the right way to a great literature, a serious art.

The Russian does not assuage his sensitiveness in this fashion. The Russian man of letters does not make Nature say: 'The Russian is my best race.' He finds relief to his sensitiveness in letting his perceptions have perfectly free play, and in recording their reports with perfect fidelity. The sincereness with which the reports are given has even something childlike and touching. In the novel of which I am going to speak there is not a line, not a trait, brought in for the glorification of Russia, or to feed vanity; things and characters go as nature takes them, and the author is absorbed

in seeing how nature takes them and in relating it. But we have here a condition of things which is highly favourable to the production of good literature, of good art. We have great sensitiveness, subtlety, and finesse, addressing themselves with entire disinterestedness and simplicity to the representation of human life. The Russian novelist is thus master of a spell to which the secrets of human nature—both what is external and what is internal, gesture and manner no less than thought and feeling—willingly make themselves known. The crown of literature is poetry, and the Russians have not yet had a great poet. But in that form of imaginative literature which in our day is the most popular and the most possible, the Russians at the present moment seem to me to hold, as Mr. Gladstone would say, the field. They have great novelists, and of one of their great novelists I wish now to speak.

Count Leo Tolstoi is about sixty years old, and tells us that he shall write novels no more. He is now occupied with religion and with the Chris-

tian life. His writings concerning these great matters are not allowed, I believe, to obtain publication in Russia, but instalments of them in French and English reach us from time to time. I find them very interesting, but I find his novel of *Anna Karénine* more interesting still. I believe that many readers prefer to *Anna Karénine* Count Tolstoi's other great novel, *La Guerre et la Paix*. But in the novel one prefers, I think, to have the novelist dealing with the life which he knows from having lived it, rather than with the life which he knows from books or hearsay. If one has to choose a representative work of Thackeray, it is *Vanity Fair* which one would take rather than *The Virginians*. In like manner I take *Anna Karénine* as the novel best representing Count Tolstoi. I use the French translation; in general, as I long ago said, work of this kind is better done in France than in England, and *Anna Karénine* is perhaps also a novel which goes better into French than into English, just as Frederika Bremer's *Home* goes into English better than into

French. After I have done with *Anna Karénine* I must say something of Count Tolstoi's religious writings. Of these too I use the French translation, so far as it is available. The English translation, however, which came into my hands late, seems to be in general clear and good. Let me say in passing that it has neither the same arrangement, nor the same titles, nor altogether the same contents, with the French translation.

There are many characters in *Anna Karénine*—too many if we look in it for a work of art in which the action shall be vigorously one, and to that one action everything shall converge. There are even two main actions extending throughout the book, and we keep passing from one of them to the other—from the affairs of Anna and Wronsky to the affairs of Kitty and Levine. People appear in connection with these two main actions whose appearance and proceedings do not in the least contribute to develop them; incidents are multiplied which we expect are to lead to something important, but which do not. What,

for instance, does the episode of Kitty's friend Warinka and Levine's brother Serge Ivanitch, their inclination for one another and its failure to come to anything, contribute to the development of either the character or the fortunes of Kitty and Levine? What does the incident of Levine's long delay in getting to church to be married, a delay which as we read of it seems to have significance, really import? It turns out to import absolutely nothing, and to be introduced solely to give the author the pleasure of telling us that all Levine's shirts had been packed up.

But the truth is we are not to take *Anna Karénine* as a work of art; we are to take it as a piece of life. A piece of life it is. The author has not invented and combined it, he has seen it; it has all happened before his inward eye, and it was in this wise that it happened. Levine's shirts were packed up, and he was late for his wedding in consequence; Warinka and Serge Ivanitch met at Levine's country-house and went out walking together; Serge was very near proposing, but did

not. The author saw it all happening so—saw it, and therefore relates it; and what his novel in this way loses in art it gains in reality.

For this is the result which, by his extraordinary fineness of perception, and by his sincere fidelity to it, the author achieves; he works in us a sense of the absolute reality of his personages and their doings. Anna's shoulders, and masses of hair, and half-shut eyes; Alexis Karénine's up-drawn eyebrows, and tired smile, and cracking finger-joints; Stiva's eyes suffused with facile moisture—these are as real to us as any of those outward peculiarities which in our own circle of acquaintance we are noticing daily, while the inner man of our own circle of acquaintance, happily or unhappily, lies a great deal less clearly revealed to us than that of Count Tolstoi's creations.

I must speak of only a few of these creations, the chief personages and no more. The book opens with 'Stiva,' and who that has once made Stiva's acquaintance will ever forget him? We

are living, in Count Tolstoi's novel, among the great people of Moscow and St. Petersburg, the nobles and the high functionaries, the governing class of Russia. Stépane Arcadiévitch—'Stiva'—is Prince Oblonsky, and descended from Rurik, although to think of him as anything except 'Stiva' is difficult. His *air souriant*, his good looks, his satisfaction; his 'ray,' which made the Tartar waiter at the club joyful in contemplating it; his pleasure in oysters and champagne, his pleasure in making people happy and in rendering services; his need of money, his attachment to the French governess, his distress at his wife's distress, his affection for her and the children; his emotion and suffused eyes, while he quite dismisses the care of providing funds for household expenses and education; and the French attachment, contritely given up to-day only to be succeeded by some other attachment to-morrow—no never, certainly, shall we come to forget Stiva. Anna, the heroine, is Stiva's sister. His wife Dolly (these English diminutives are common

among Count Tolstoi's ladies) is daughter of the Prince and Princess Cherbatzky, grandees who show us Russian high life by its most respectable side; the Prince, in particular, is excellent—simple, sensible, right-feeling; a man of dignity and honour. His daughters, Dolly and Kitty, are charming. Dolly, Stiva's wife, is sorely tried by her husband, full of anxieties for the children, with no money to spend on them or herself, poorly dressed, worn and aged before her time. She has moments of despairing doubt whether the gay people may not be after all in the right, whether virtue and principle answer; whether happiness does not dwell with adventuresses and profligates, brilliant and perfectly dressed adventuresses and profligates, in a land flowing with roubles and champagne. But in a quarter of an hour she comes right again and is herself—a nature straight, honest, faithful, loving, sound to the core; such she is and such she remains; she can be no other. Her sister Kitty is at bottom of the same temper, but she has her experience to get,

while Dolly, when the book begins, has already acquired hers. Kitty is adored by Levine, in whom we are told that many traits are to be found of the character and history of Count Tolstoi himself. Levine belongs to the world of great people by his birth and property, but he is not at all a man of the world. He has been a reader and thinker, he has a conscience, he has public spirit and would ameliorate the condition of the people, he lives on his estate in the country, and occupies himself zealously with local business, schools, and agriculture. But he is shy, apt to suspect and to take offence, somewhat impracticable, out of his element in the gay world of Moscow. Kitty likes him, but her fancy has been taken by a brilliant guardsman, Count Wronsky, who has paid her attentions. Wronsky is described to us by Stiva; he is 'one of the finest specimens of the *jeunesse dorée* of St. Petersburg; immensely rich, handsome, aide-de-camp to the emperor, great interest at his back, and a good fellow notwithstanding; more than a good fellow, intelligent besides and well read—a

man who has a splendid career before him.' Let us complete the picture by adding that Wronsky is a powerful man, over thirty, bald at the top of his head, with irreproachable manners, cool and calm, but a little haughty. A hero, one murmurs to oneself, too much of the Guy Livingstone type, though without the bravado and exaggeration. And such is, justly enough perhaps, the first impression, an impression which continues all through the first volume; but Wronsky, as we shall see, improves towards the end.

Kitty discourages Levine, who retires in misery and confusion. But Wronsky is attracted by Anna Karénine, and ceases his attentions to Kitty. The impression made on her heart by Wronsky was not deep; but she is so keenly mortified with herself, so ashamed, and so upset, that she falls ill, and is sent with her family to winter abroad. There she regains health and mental composure, and discovers at the same time that her liking for Levine was deeper than she knew, that it was a genuine feeling, a strong and lasting one.

On her return they meet, their hearts come together, they are married ; and in spite of Levine's waywardness, irritability, and unsettlement of mind, of which I shall have more to say presently, they are profoundly happy. Well, and who could help being happy with Kitty ? So I find myself adding impatiently. Count Tolstoi's heroines are really so living and charming that one takes them, fiction though they are, too seriously.

But the interest of the book centres in Anna Karénine. She is Stiva's sister, married to a high official at St. Petersburg, Alexis Karénine. She has been married to him nine years, and has one child, a boy named Serge. The marriage had not brought happiness to her, she had found in it no satisfaction to her heart and soul, she had a sense of want and isolation ; but she is devoted to her boy, occupied, calm. The charm of her personality is felt even before she appears, from the moment when we hear of her being sent for as the good angel to reconcile Dolly with Stiva. Then she arrives at the Moscow station from St. Peters-

burg, and we see the gray eyes with their long eye-lashes, the graceful carriage, the gentle and caressing smile on the fresh lips, the vivacity restrained but waiting to break through, the fulness of life, the softness and strength joined, the harmony, the bloom, the charm. She goes to Dolly, and achieves, with infinite tact and tenderness, the task of reconciliation. At a ball a few days later, we add to our first impression of Anna's beauty, dark hair, a quantity of little curls over her temples and at the back of her neck, sculptural shoulders, firm throat, and beautiful arms. She is in a plain dress of black velvet with a pearl necklace, a bunch of forget-me-nots in the front of her dress, another in her hair. This is Anna Karénine.

She had travelled from St. Petersburg with Wronsky's mother; had seen him at the Moscow station, where he came to meet his mother, had been struck with his looks and manner, and touched by his behaviour in an accident which happened while they were in the station to a poor workman crushed by a train. At the ball she

meets him again ; she is fascinated by him and he by her. She had been told of Kitty's fancy, and had gone to the ball meaning to help Kitty ; but Kitty is forgotten, or at any rate neglected ; the spell which draws Wronsky and Anna is irresistible. Kitty finds herself opposite to them in a quadrille together :—

‘She seemed to remark in Anna the symptoms of an over-excitement which she herself knew from experience—that of success. Anna appeared to her as if intoxicated with it. Kitty knew to what to attribute that brilliant and animated look, that happy and triumphant smile, those half-parted lips, those movements full of grace and harmony.’

Anna returns to St. Petersburg, and Wronsky returns there at the same time ; they meet on the journey, they keep meeting in society, and Anna begins to find her husband, who before had not been sympathetic, intolerable. Alexis Karénine is much older than herself, a bureaucrat, a formalist, a poor creature ; he has conscience, there is a root of goodness in him, but on the surface and until deeply stirred he is tiresome, pedantic, vain, exasperating.

The change in Anna is not in the slightest degree comprehended by him ; he sees nothing which an intelligent man might in such a case see, and does nothing which an intelligent man would do. Anna abandons herself to her passion for Wronsky.

I remember M. Nisard saying to me many years ago at the École Normale in Paris, that he respected the English because they are *une nation qui sait se gêner*—people who can put constraint on themselves and go through what is disagreeable. Perhaps in the Slav nature this valuable faculty is somewhat wanting ; a very strong impulse is too much regarded as irresistible, too little as what can be resisted and ought to be resisted, however difficult and disagreeable the resistance may be. In our high society with its pleasure and dissipation, laxer notions may to some extent prevail ; but in general an English mind will be startled by Anna's suffering herself to be so overwhelmed and irretrievably carried away by her passion, by her almost at once regard-

ing it, apparently, as something which it was hopeless to fight against. And this I say irrespectively of the worth of her lover. Wronsky's gifts and graces hardly qualify him, one might think, to be the object of so instantaneous and mighty a passion on the part of a woman like Anna. But that is not the question. Let us allow that these passions are incalculable; let us allow that one of the male sex scarcely does justice, perhaps, to the powerful and handsome guardsman and his attractions. But if Wronsky had been even such a lover as Alcibiades or the Master of Ravenswood, still that Anna, being what she is and her circumstances being what they are, should show not a hope, hardly a thought, of conquering her passion, of escaping from its fatal power, is to our notions strange and a little bewildering.

I state the objection; let me add that it is the triumph of Anna's charm that it remains paramount for us nevertheless; that throughout her course, with its failures, errors, and miseries, still the impression of her large, fresh, rich, generous, delight-

ful nature, never leaves us—keeps our sympathy, keeps even, I had almost said, our respect.

To return to the story. Soon enough poor Anna begins to experience the truth of what the Wise Man told us long ago, that 'the way of transgressors is hard.' Her agitation at a steeple-chase where Wronsky is in danger attracts her husband's notice and provokes his remonstrance. He is bitter and contemptuous. In a transport of passion Anna declares to him that she is his wife no longer; that she loves Wronsky, belongs to Wronsky. Hard at first, formal, cruel, thinking only of himself, Karénine, who, as I have said, has a conscience, is touched by grace at the moment when Anna's troubles reach their height. He returns to her to find her with a child just born to her and Wronsky, the lover in the house and Anna apparently dying. Karénine has words of kindness and forgiveness only. The noble and victorious effort transfigures him, and all that her husband gains in the eyes of Anna, her lover Wronsky loses. Wronsky comes to Anna's bed-

side, and standing there by Karénine, buries his face in his hands. Anna says to him, in the hurried voice of fever:—

“Uncover your face; look at that man; he is a saint. Yes, uncover your face; uncover it,” she repeated with an angry air. “Alexis, uncover his face; I want to see him.”

‘Alexis took the hands of Wronsky and uncovered his face, disfigured by suffering and humiliation.

“Give him your hand; pardon him.”

‘Alexis stretched out his hand without even seeking to restrain his tears.

“Thank God, thank God!” she said; “all is ready now. How ugly those flowers are,” she went on, pointing to the wall-paper; “they are not a bit like violets. My God, my God! when will all this end? Give me morphine, doctor—I want morphine. Oh, my God, my God!”

She seems dying, and Wronsky rushes out and shoots himself. And so, in a common novel, the story would end. Anna would die, Wronsky would commit suicide, Karénine would survive, in possession of our admiration and sympathy. But the story does not always end so in life:

neither does it end so in Count Tolstoi's novel. Anna recovers from her fever, Wronsky from his wound. Anna's passion for Wronsky reawakens, her estrangement from Karénine returns. Nor does Karénine remain at the height at which in the forgiveness scene we saw him. He is formal, pedantic, irritating. Alas! even if he were not all these, perhaps even his *pince-nez*, and his rising eyebrows, and his cracking finger-joints, would have been provocation enough. Anna and Wronsky depart together. They stay for a time in Italy, then return to Russia. But her position is false, her disquietude incessant, and happiness is impossible for her. She takes opium every night, only to find that 'not poppy nor mandragora shall ever medicine her to that sweet sleep which she owed yesterday.' Jealousy and irritability grow upon her; she tortures Wronsky, she tortures herself. Under these trials Wronsky, it must be said, comes out well, and rises in our esteem. His love for Anna endures; he behaves, as our English phrase is, 'like a gentleman'; his patience

is in general exemplary. But then Anna, let us remember, is to the last, through all the fret and misery, still Anna; always with something which charms; nay, with something, even, something in her nature, which consoles and does good. Her life, however, was becoming impossible under its existing conditions. A trifling misunderstanding brought the inevitable end. After a quarrel with Anna, Wronsky had gone one morning into the country to see his mother; Anna summons him by telegraph to return at once, and receives an answer from him that he cannot return before ten at night. She follows him to his mother's place in the country, and at the station hears what leads her to believe that he is not coming back. Madened with jealousy and misery, she descends the platform and throws herself under the wheels of a goods train passing through the station. It is over—the graceful head is untouched, but all the rest is a crushed, formless heap. Poor Anna!

We have been in a world which misconducts

itself nearly as much as the world of a French novel all palpitating with 'modernity.' But there are two things in which the Russian novel—Count Tolstoi's novel at any rate—is very advantageously distinguished from the type of novel now so much in request in France. In the first place, there is no fine sentiment, at once tiresome and false. We are not told to believe, for example, that Anna is wonderfully exalted and ennobled by her passion for Wronsky. The English reader is thus saved from many a groan of impatience. The other thing is yet more important. Our Russian novelist deals abundantly with criminal passion and with adultery, but he does not seem to feel himself owing any service to the goddess Lubricity, or bound to put in touches at this goddess's dictation. Much in *Anna Karénine* is painful, much is unpleasant, but nothing is of a nature to trouble the senses, or to please those who wish their senses troubled. This taint is wholly absent. In the French novels where it is so abundantly present its baneful effects do not end with itself. Burns

long ago remarked with deep truth that it *petrifies feeling*. Let us revert for a moment to the powerful novel of which I spoke at the outset, *Madame Bovary*. Undoubtedly the taint in question is present in *Madame Bovary*, although to a much less degree than in more recent French novels, which will be in every one's mind. But *Madame Bovary*, with this taint, is a work of *petrified feeling*; over it hangs an atmosphere of bitterness, irony, impotence; not a personage in the book to rejoice or console us; the springs of freshness and feeling are not there to create such personages. Emma Bovary follows a course in some respects like that of Anna, but where, in Emma Bovary, is Anna's charm? The treasures of compassion, tenderness, insight, which alone, amid such guilt and misery, can enable charm to subsist and to emerge, are wanting to Flaubert. He is cruel, with the cruelty of petrified feeling, to his poor heroine; he pursues her without pity or pause, as with malignity; he is harder upon her himself than any reader even, I think, will be inclined to be.

But where the springs of feeling have carried Count Tolstoi, since he created Anna ten or twelve years ago, we have now to see.

We must return to Constantine Dmitrich Levine. Levine, as I have already said, thinks. Between the age of twenty and that of thirty-five he had lost, he tells us, the Christian belief in which he had been brought up, a loss of which examples nowadays abound certainly everywhere, but which in Russia, as in France, is among all young men of the upper and cultivated classes more a matter of course, perhaps, more universal, more avowed, than it is with us. Levine had adopted the scientific notions current all round him; talked of cells, organisms, the indestructibility of matter, the conservation of force, and was of opinion, with his comrades of the university, that religion no longer existed. But he was of a serious nature, and the question what his life meant, whence it came, whither it tended, presented themselves to him in moments of crisis and affliction with irresistible importunity, and

getting no answer, haunted him, tortured him, made him think of suicide.

Two things, meanwhile, he noticed. One was, that he and his university friends had been mistaken in supposing that Christian belief no longer existed; they had lost it, but they were not all the world. Levine observed that the persons to whom he was most attached, his own wife Kitty amongst the number, retained it and drew comfort from it; that the women generally, and almost the whole of the Russian common people, retained it and drew comfort from it. The other was, that his scientific friends, though not troubled like himself by questionings about the meaning of human life, were untroubled by such questionings, not because they had got an answer to them, but because, entertaining themselves intellectually with the consideration of the cell theory, and evolution, and the indestructibility of matter, and the conservation of force, and the like, they were satisfied with this entertainment, and did not perplex themselves with investigat-

ing the meaning and object of their own life at all.

But Levine noticed further that he himself did not actually proceed to commit suicide; on the contrary, he lived on his lands as his father had done before him, busied himself with all the duties of his station, married Kitty, was delighted when a son was born to him. Nevertheless he was indubitably not happy at bottom, restless and disquieted, his disquietude sometimes amounting to agony.

Now on one of his bad days he was in the field with his peasants, and one of them happened to say to him, in answer to a question from Levine why one farmer should in a certain case act more humanely than another: 'Men are not all alike; one man lives for his belly, like Mitiovuck, another for his soul, for God, like old Plato.'¹—'What do you call,' cried Levine, 'living for his soul, for God?' The peasant answered: 'It's quite simple—living by the rule of God, of the truth. All

¹ A common name among Russian peasants.

men are not the same, that's certain. You yourself, for instance, Constantine Dmitrich, you wouldn't do wrong by a poor man.' Levine gave no answer, but turned away with the phrase, *living by the rule of God, of the truth*, sounding in his ears.

Then he reflected that he had been born of parents professing this rule, as their parents again had professed it before them ; that he had sucked it in with his mother's milk ; that some sense of it, some strength and nourishment from it, had been ever with him although he knew it not ; that if he had tried to do the duties of his station it was by help of the secret support ministered by this rule ; that if in his moments of despairing restlessness and agony, when he was driven to think of suicide, he had yet not committed suicide, it was because this rule had silently enabled him to do his duty in some degree, and had given him some hold upon life and happiness in consequence.

The words came to him as a clue of which he

could never again lose sight, and which with full consciousness and strenuous endeavour he must henceforth follow. He sees his nephews and nieces throwing their milk at one another and scolded by Dolly for it. He says to himself that these children are wasting their subsistence because they have not to earn it for themselves and do not know its value, and he exclaims inwardly : 'I, a Christian, brought up in the faith, my life filled with the benefits of Christianity, living on these benefits without being conscious of it, I, like these children, I have been trying to destroy what makes and builds up my life.' But now the feeling has been borne in upon him, clear and precious, that what he has to do is to *be good* ; he has 'cried to *Him*.' What will come of it ?

'I shall probably continue to get out of temper with my coachman, to go into useless arguments, to air my ideas unseasonably ; I shall always feel a barrier between the sanctuary of my soul and the soul of other people, even that of my wife ; I shall always be holding her responsible for my annoyances

and feeling sorry for it directly afterwards. I shall continue to pray without being able to explain to myself why I pray ; but my inner life has won its liberty ; it will no longer be at the mercy of events, and every minute of my existence will have a meaning sure and profound which it will be in my power to impress on every single one of my actions, that of *being good*.'

With these words the novel of *Anna Karénine* ends. But in Levine's religious experiences Count Tolstoi was relating his own, and the history is continued in three autobiographical works translated from him, which have within the last two or three years been published in Paris : *Ma Confession*, *Ma Religion*, and *Que Faire*. Our author announces further, 'two great works,' on which he has spent six years : one a criticism of dogmatic theology, the other a new translation of the four Gospels, with a concordance of his own arranging. The results which he claims to have established in these two works, are, however, indicated sufficiently in the three published volumes which I have named above.

These autobiographical volumes show the same extraordinary penetration, the same perfect sincerity, which are exhibited in the author's novel. As autobiography they are of profound interest, and they are full, moreover, of acute and fruitful remarks. I have spoken of the advantages which the Russian genius possesses for imaginative literature. Perhaps for Biblical exegesis, for the criticism of religion and its documents, the advantage lies more with the older nations of the West. They will have more of the experience, width of knowledge, patience, sobriety, requisite for these studies; they may probably be less impulsive, less heady.

Count Tolstoi regards the change accomplished in himself during the last half-dozen years, he regards his recent studies and the ideas which he has acquired through them, as epoch-making in his life and of capital importance:—

‘Five years ago faith came to me; I believed in the doctrine of Jesus, and all my life suddenly changed. I ceased to desire that which previously I desired, and, on the other hand, I took to desiring what I had never desired before. That which

formerly used to appear good in my eyes appeared evil, that which used to appear evil appeared good.'

The novel of *Anna Karénine* belongs to that past which Count Tolstoi has left behind him; his new studies and the works founded on them are what is important; light and salvation are there. Yet I will venture to express my doubt whether these works contain, as their contribution to the cause of religion and to the establishment of the true mind and message of Jesus, much that had not already been given or indicated by Count Tolstoi in relating, in *Anna Karénine*, Levine's mental history. Points raised in that history are developed and enforced; there is an abundant and admirable exhibition of knowledge of human nature, penetrating insight, fearless sincerity, wit, sarcasm, eloquence, style. And we have too the direct autobiography of a man not only interesting to us from his soul and talent, but highly interesting also from his nationality, position, and course of proceeding. But to light and salvation in the Christian religion we are not, I think, brought

very much nearer than in Levine's history. I ought to add that what was already present in that history seems to me of high importance and value. Let us see what it amounts to.

I must be general and I must be brief; neither my limits nor my purpose permit the introduction of what is abstract. But in Count Tolstoi's religious philosophy there is very little which is abstract, arid. The idea of *life* is his master idea in studying and establishing religion. He speaks impatiently of St. Paul as a source, in common with the Fathers and the Reformers, of that ecclesiastical theology which misses the essential and fails to present Christ's Gospel aright. Yet Paul's 'law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus freeing me from the law of sin and death' is the pith and ground of all Count Tolstoi's theology. Moral life is the gift of God, is God, and this true life, this union with God to which we aspire, we reach through Jesus. We reach it through union with Jesus and by adopting his life. This doctrine is proved true for us by the life in God, to be acquired

through Jesus, being what our nature feels after and moves to, by the warning of misery if we are severed from it, the sanction of happiness if we find it. Of the access for *us*, at any rate, to the spirit of life, us who are born in Christendom, are in touch, conscious or unconscious, with Christianity, this is the true account. Questions over which the churches spend so much labour and time—questions about the Trinity, about the godhead of Christ, about the procession of the Holy Ghost, are not vital; what is vital is the doctrine of access to the spirit of life through Jesus.

Sound and saving doctrine, in my opinion, this is. It may be gathered in a great degree from what Count Tolstoi had already given us in the novel of *Anna Karénine*. But of course it is greatly developed in the special works which have followed. Many of these developments are, I will repeat, of striking force, interest, and value. In *Anna Karénine* we had been told of the scepticism of the upper and educated classes in Russia.

But what reality is added by such an anecdote as the following from *Ma Confession* :—

‘I remember that when I was about eleven years old we had a visit one Sunday from a boy, since dead, who announced to my brother and me, as great news, a discovery just made at his public school. This discovery was to the effect that God had no existence, and that everything which we were taught about Him was pure invention.’

Count Tolstoi touched, in *Anna Karénine*, on the failure of science to tell a man what his life means. Many a sharp stroke does he add in his latter writings :—

‘Development is going on, and there are laws which guide it. You yourself are a part of the whole. Having come to understand the whole so far as is possible, and having comprehended the law of development, you will comprehend also your place in that whole, you will understand yourself.’

‘In spite of all the shame the confession costs me, there was a time, I declare, when I tried to look as if I was satisfied with this sort of thing!’

But the men of science may take comfort from hearing that Count Tolstoi treats the men of letters

no better than them, although he is a man of letters himself:—

‘The judgment which my literary companions passed on life was to the effect that life in general is in a state of progress, and that in this development we, the men of letters, take the principal part. The vocation of us artists and poets is to instruct the world; and to prevent my coming out with the natural question, “What am I, and what am I to teach?” it was explained to me that it was useless to know that, and that the artist and the poet taught without perceiving how. I passed for a superb artist, a great poet, and consequently it was but natural I should appropriate this theory. I, the artist, the poet—I wrote, I taught, without myself knowing what. I was paid for what I did. I had everything: splendid fare and lodging, women, society; I had *la gloire*. Consequently, what I taught was very good. This faith in the importance of poetry and of the development of life was a religion, and I was one of its priests—a very agreeable and advantageous office.

‘And I lived ever so long in this belief, never doubting but that it was true!’

The adepts of this literary and scientific religion are not numerous, to be sure, in comparison with the mass of the people, and the mass of the people,

as Levine had remarked, find comfort still in the old religion of Christendom; but of the mass of the people our literary and scientific instructors make no account. Like Solomon and Schopenhauer, these gentlemen, and 'society' along with them, are, moreover, apt to say that life is, after all, vanity: but then they all know of no life except their own.

'It used to appear to me that the small number of cultivated, rich, and idle men, of whom I was one, composed the whole of humanity, and that the millions and millions of other men who had lived and are still living were not in reality men at all. Incomprehensible as it now seems to me, that I should have gone on considering life without seeing the life which was surrounding me on all sides, the life of humanity; strange as it is to think that I should have been so mistaken, and have fancied my life, the life of the Solomons and the Schopenhauers, to be the veritable and normal life, while the life of the masses was but a matter of no importance—strangely odd as this seems to me now, so it was, notwithstanding.'

And this pretentious minority, who call themselves 'society,' 'the world,' and to whom their

own life, the life of 'the world,' seems the only life worth naming, are all the while miserable! Our author found it so in his own experience:—

'In my life, an exceptionally happy one from a worldly point of view, I can number such a quantity of sufferings endured for the sake of "the world," that they would be enough to furnish a martyr for Jesus. All the most painful passages in my life, beginning with the orgies and duels of my student days, the wars I have been in, the illnesses, and the abnormal and unbearable conditions in which I am living now—all this is but one martyrdom endured in the name of the doctrine of the world. Yes, and I speak of my own life, exceptionally happy from the world's point of view.

'Let any sincere man pass his life in review, and he will perceive that never, not once, has he suffered through practising the doctrine of Jesus; the chief part of the miseries of his life have proceeded solely from his following, contrary to his inclination, the spell of the doctrine of the world.'

On the other hand, the simple, the multitudes outside of this spell, are comparatively contented:—

'In opposition to what I saw in our circle, where

life without faith is possible, and where I doubt whether one in a thousand would confess himself a believer, I conceive that among the people (in Russia) there is not one sceptic to many thousands of believers. Just contrary to what I saw in our circle, where life passes in idleness, amusements, and discontent with life, I saw that of these men of the people the whole life was passed in severe labour, and yet they were contented with life. Instead of complaining like the persons in our world of the hardship of their lot, these poor people received sickness and disappointments without any revolt, without opposition, but with a firm and tranquil confidence that so it was to be, that it could not be otherwise, and that it was all right.'

All this is but development, sometimes rather surprising, but always powerful and interesting, of what we have already had in the pages of *Anna Karénine*. And like Levine in that novel, Count Tolstoi was driven by his inward struggle and misery very near to suicide. What is new in the recent books is the solution and cure announced. Levine had accepted a provisional solution of the difficulties oppressing him; he had lived right on, so to speak, obeying his conscience, but not asking

how far all his actions hung together and were consistent :—

‘He advanced money to a peasant to get him out of the clutches of a money-lender, but did not give up the arrears due to himself; he punished thefts of wood strictly, but would have scrupled to impound a peasant’s cattle trespassing on his fields; he did not pay the wages of a labourer whose father’s death caused him to leave work in the middle of harvest, but he pensioned and maintained his old servants; he let his peasants wait while he went to give his wife a kiss after he came home, but would not have made them wait while he went to visit his bees.’

Count Tolstoi has since advanced to a far more definite and stringent rule of life—the positive doctrine, he thinks, of Jesus. It is the determination and promulgation of this rule which is the novelty in our author’s recent works. He extracts this essential doctrine, or rule of Jesus, from the Sermon on the Mount, and presents it in a body of commandments—Christ’s commandments; the pith, he says, of the New Testament, as the Decalogue is the pith of the Old. These

all-important commandments of Christ are 'commandments of peace,' and five in number. The first commandment is: 'Live in peace with all men; treat no one as contemptible and beneath you. Not only allow yourself no anger, but do not rest until you have dissipated even unreasonable anger in others against yourself.' The second is: 'No libertinage and no divorce; let every man have one wife and every woman one husband.' The third: 'Never on any pretext take an oath of service of any kind; all such oaths are imposed for a bad purpose.' The fourth: 'Never employ force against the evil-doer; bear whatever wrong is done to you without opposing the wrong-doer or seeking to have him punished.' The fifth and last: 'Renounce all distinction of nationality; do not admit that men of another nation may ever be treated by you as enemies; love all men alike as alike near to you; do good to all alike.'

If these five commandments were generally observed, says Count Tolstoi, all men would become

brothers. Certainly the actual society in which we live would be changed and dissolved. Armies and wars would be renounced; courts of justice, police, property, would be renounced also. And whatever the rest of us may do, Count Tolstoi at least will do his duty and follow Christ's commandments sincerely. He has given up rank, office, and property, and earns his bread by the labour of his own hands. 'I believe in Christ's commandments,' he says, 'and this faith changes my whole former estimate of what is good and great, bad and low, in human life.' At present—

'Everything which I used to think bad and low—the rusticity of the peasant, the plainness of lodging, food, clothing, manners—all this has become good and great in my eyes. At present I can no longer contribute to anything which raises me externally above others, which separates me from them. I cannot, as formerly, recognise either in my own case or in that of others any title, rank, or quality beyond the title and quality of man. I cannot seek fame and praise; I cannot seek a culture which separates me from men. I cannot refrain from seeking in my whole existence—in my lodging, my food, my clothing, and my ways of going on with

people—whatever, far from separating me from the mass of mankind, draws me nearer to them.'

Whatever else we have or have not in Count Tolstoi, we have at least a great soul and a great writer. In his Biblical exegesis, in the criticism by which he extracts and constructs his Five Commandments of Christ which are to be the rule of our lives, I find much which is questionable along with much which is ingenious and powerful. But I have neither space, nor, indeed, inclination, to criticise his exegesis here. The right moment, besides, for criticising this will come when the 'two great works,' which are in preparation, shall have appeared.

For the present I limit myself to a single criticism only—a general one. Christianity cannot be packed into any set of commandments. As I have somewhere or other said, 'Christianity is a *source*; no one supply of water and refreshment that comes from it can be called the sum of Christianity. It is a mistake, and may lead to much error, to exhibit any series of maxims, even

those of the Sermon on the Mount, as the ultimate sum and formula into which Christianity may be run up.'

And the reason mainly lies in the character of the Founder of Christianity and in the nature of his utterances. Not less important than the teachings given by Jesus is the *temper* of their giver, his temper of sweetness and reasonableness, of *epieikeia*. Goethe calls him a *Schwärmer*, a fanatic; he may much more rightly be called an opportunist. But he is an opportunist of an opposite kind from those who in politics, that 'wild and dreamlike trade' of insincerity, give themselves this name. They push or slacken, press their points hard or let them be, as may best suit the interests of their self-aggrandisement and of their party. Jesus has in view simply 'the rule of God, of the truth.' But this is served by waiting as well as by hasting forward, and sometimes served better.

Count Tolstoi sees rightly that whatever the propertied and satisfied classes may think, the

world, ever since Jesus Christ came, is judged; 'a new earth' is in prospect. It was ever in prospect with Jesus, and should be ever in prospect with his followers. And the ideal in prospect has to be realised. 'If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.' But they are to be done through a great and widespread and long-continued change, and a change of the inner man to begin with. The most important and fruitful utterances of Jesus, therefore, are not things which can be drawn up as a table of stiff and stark external commands, but the things which have most soul in them; because these can best sink down into our soul, work there, set up an influence, form habits of conduct, and prepare the future. The Beatitudes are on this account more helpful than the utterances from which Count Tolstoi builds up his Five Commandments. The very *secret* of Jesus, 'He that loveth his life shall lose it, he that will lose his life shall save it,' does not give us a command to be taken and followed in the letter, but an idea to work in

our mind and soul, and of inexhaustible value there.

Jesus paid tribute to the government and dined with the publicans, although neither the empire of Rome nor the high finance of Judea were compatible with his ideal and with the 'new earth' which that ideal must in the end create. Perhaps Levine's provisional solution, in a society like ours, was nearer to 'the rule of God, of the truth,' than the more trenchant solution which Count Tolstoi has adopted for himself since. It seems calculated to be of more use. I do not know how it is in Russia, but in an English village the determination of 'our circle' to earn their bread by the work of their hands would produce only dismay, not fraternal joy, amongst that 'majority' who are so earning it already. 'There are plenty of us to compete as things stand,' the gardeners, carpenters, and smiths would say; 'pray stick to your articles, your poetry, and nonsense; in manual labour you will interfere with us, and be taking the bread out of our mouths.'

So I arrive at the conclusion that Count Tolstoi has perhaps not done well in abandoning the work of the poet and artist, and that he might with advantage return to it. But whatever he may do in the future, the work which he has already done, and his work in religion as well as his work in imaginative literature, is more than sufficient to signalise him as one of the most marking, interesting, and sympathy-inspiring men of our time—an honour, I must add, to Russia, although he forbids us to heed nationality.

IX

AMIEL¹

It is somewhat late to speak of Amiel, but I was late in reading him. Goethe says that in seasons of cholera one should read no books but such as are tonic, and certainly in the season of old age this precaution is as salutary as in seasons of cholera. From what I heard I could clearly make out that Amiel's Journal was not a tonic book: the extracts from it which here and there I fell in with did not much please me; and for a good while I left the book unread.

But what M. Edmond Scherer writes I do not easily resist reading, and I found that M. Scherer had prefixed to Amiel's Journal a long and im-

¹ Published in *Macmillan's Magazine*, September 1887.

portant introduction. This I read; and was not less charmed by the *mitis sapientia*, the understanding, kindness and tenderness, with which the character of Amiel himself, whom M. Scherer had known in youth, was handled, than interested by the criticism on the Journal. Then I read Mrs. Humphry Ward's interesting notice, and then—for all biography is attractive, and of Amiel's life and circumstances I had by this time become desirous of knowing more—the *Étude Biographique* of Mademoiselle Berthe Vadier.

Of Amiel's cultivation, refinement, and high feeling, of his singular graces of spirit and character, there could be no doubt. But the specimens of his work given by his critics left me hesitating. A poetess herself, Mademoiselle Berthe Vadier is much occupied with Amiel's poetry, and quotes it abundantly. Even Victor Hugo's poetry leaves me cold, I am so unhappy as not to be able to admire *Olympio*; what am I to say, then, to Amiel's

'Journée
Illuminée,
Riant soleil d'avril,
En quel songe
Se plonge
Mon cœur, et que veut-il'?

But M. Scherer and other critics, who do not require us to admire Amiel's poetry, maintain that in his Journal he has left 'a book which will not die,' a book describing a malady of which 'the secret is sublime and the expression wonderful'; a marvel of 'speculative intuition,' a 'psychological experience of the utmost value.' M. Scherer and Mrs. Humphry Ward give Amiel's Journal very decidedly the preference over the letters of an old friend of mine, Obermann. The quotations made from Amiel's Journal by his critics failed, I say, to enable me quite to understand this high praise. But I remember the time when a new publication by George Sand or by Sainte-Beuve was an event bringing to me a shock of pleasure, and a French book capable of renewing that sensation is seldom produced now. If Amiel's Journal was of the

high quality alleged, what a pleasure to make acquaintance with it, what a loss to miss it! In spite, therefore, of the unfitness of old age to bear atonic influences, I at last read Amiel's Journal,—read it carefully through. Tonic it is not; but it is to be read with profit, and shows, moreover, powers of great force and value, though not quite, I am inclined to think, in the exact line which his critics with one consent indicate.

In speaking of Amiel at present, after so much has been written about him, I may assume that the main outlines of his life are known to my readers: that they know him to have been born in 1821 and to have died in 1881, to have passed the three or four best years of his youth at the University of Berlin, and the remainder of his life mostly at Geneva, as a professor, first of æsthetics, afterwards of philosophy. They know that his publications and lectures, during his lifetime, disappointed his friends, who expected much from his acquirements, talents, and vivacity; and that his fame rests upon two volumes of extracts

from many thousand pages of a private journal, *Journal Intime*, extending over more than thirty years, from 1848 to 1881, which he left behind him at his death. This Journal explains his sterility; and displays in explaining it, say his critics, such sincerity, with such gifts of expression and eloquence, of profound analysis and speculative intuition, as to make it most surely 'one of those books which will not die.'

The sincerity is unquestionable. As to the gifts of eloquence and expression, what are we to say? M. Scherer speaks of an 'ever new eloquence' pouring itself in the pages of the Journal: M. Paul Bourget, of 'marvellous pages' where the feeling for nature finds an expression worthy of Shelley or Wordsworth: Mrs. Humphry Ward, of 'magic of style,' of 'glow and splendour of expression,' of the 'poet and artist' who fascinates us in Amiel's prose. I cannot quite agree. Obermann has been mentioned: it seems to me that we have only to place a passage from Sénancour beside a passage from Amiel, to perceive the

difference between a feeling for nature which gives magic to style and one which does not. Here and throughout I am to use as far as possible Mrs. Humphry Ward's translation, at once spirited and faithful, of Amiel's Journal. I will take a passage where Amiel has evidently some reminiscence of Sénancour (whose work he knew well), is inspired by Sénancour—a passage which has been extolled by M. Paul Bourget:—

‘Shall I ever enjoy again those marvellous reveries of past days,—as, for instance, once, when I was still quite a youth in the early dawn sitting amongst the ruins of the castle of Faucigny; another time in the mountains above Lancy, under the mid-day sun, lying under a tree and visited by three butterflies; and again another night on the sandy shore of the North Sea, stretched full length upon the beach, my eyes wandering over the Milky Way? Will they ever return to me, those grandiose, immortal, cosmogonic dreams in which one seems to carry the world in one's breast, to touch the stars, to possess the infinite? Divine moments, hours of ecstasy, when thought flies from world to world, penetrates the great enigma, breathes with a respiration large, tranquil, and profound like that of the ocean, and hovers serene and boundless like the blue heaven! Visits from the

Muse Urania, who traces around the foreheads of those she loves the phosphorescent nimbus of contemplative power, and who pours into their hearts the tranquil intoxication, if not the authority of genius,—moments of irresistible intuition in which a man feels himself great as the universe and calm like God! . . . What hours, what memories!’

And now for Obermann’s turn, Obermann by the Lake of Bienne:—

‘My path lay beside the green waters of the Thiele. Feeling inclined to muse, and finding the night so warm that there was no hardship in being all night out of doors, I took the road to Saint Blaise. I descended a steep bank, and got upon the shore of the lake where its ripple came up and expired. The air was calm; every one was at rest; I remained there for hours. Towards morning the moon shed over the earth and waters the ineffable melancholy of her last gleams. Nature seems unspeakably grand, when, plunged in a long reverie, one hears the rippling of the waters upon a solitary strand, in the calm of a night still enkindled and luminous with the setting moon.

‘Sensibility beyond utterance, charm and torment of our vain years; vast consciousness of a nature everywhere greater than we are, and everywhere impenetrable; all-embracing passion, ripened wisdom, delicious self-abandonment—everything that a mortal heart can contain of life-weariness and yearning, I felt

it all, I experienced it all, in this memorable night. I have made a grave step towards the age of decline, I have swallowed up ten years of life at once. Happy the simple, whose heart is always young !'

No translation can render adequately the cadence of diction, the 'dying fall' of reveries like those of Sénancour or Rousseau. But even in a translation we must surely perceive that the magic of style is with Sénancour's feeling for nature, not Amiel's ; and in the original this is far more manifest still.

Magic of style is creative : its possessor himself creates, and he inspires and enables his reader in some sort to create after him. And creation gives the sense of life and joy ; hence its extraordinary value. But eloquence may exist without magic of style, and this eloquence, accompanying thoughts of rare worth and depth, may heighten their effect greatly. And M. Scherer says that Amiel's speculative philosophy is 'on a far other scale of vastness' than Sénancour's, and therefore he gives the preference to the eloquence of Amiel, which clothes and conveys this vaster philosophy. Amiel was

no doubt greatly Sénancour's superior in culture and instruction generally; in philosophical reading and what is called philosophical thought he was immensely his superior. My sense for philosophy, I know, is as far from satisfying Mr. Frederic Harrison as my sense for Hugo's poetry is from satisfying Mr. Swinburne. But I am too old to change and too hardened to hide what I think; and when I am presented with philosophical speculations and told that they are 'on a high scale of vastness,' I persist in looking closely at them and in honestly asking myself what I find to be their positive value. And we get from Amiel's powers of 'speculative intuition' things like this—

'Created spirits in the accomplishment of their destinies tend, so to speak, to form constellations and milky ways within the empyrean of the divinity; in becoming gods, they surround the throne of the sovereign with a sparkling court.'

Or this—

'Is not mind the universal virtuality, the universe latent? If so, its zero would be the germ of the infinite, which is expressed mathematically by the double zero (00).'

Or, to let our philosopher develop himself at more length, let us take this return to the zero, which Mrs. Humphry Ward prefers here to render by *nothingness* :—

‘This psychological reinvolution is an anticipation of death ; it represents the life beyond the grave, the return to Scheol, the soul fading into the world of ghosts or descending into the region of *Die Mütter* ; it implies the simplification of the individual who, allowing all the accidents of personality to evaporate, exists henceforward only in the invisible state, the state of point, of potentiality, of pregnant nothingness. Is not this the true definition of mind ? is not mind, dissociated from space and time, just this ? Its development, past or future, is contained in it just as a curve is contained in its algebraical formula. This nothing is an all. This *punctum* without dimensions is a *punctum saliens*.’

French critics throw up their hands in dismay at the violence which the Germanised Amiel, propounding his speculative philosophy, often does to the French language. My objection is rather that such speculative philosophy, as that of which I have been quoting specimens has no value, is perfectly futile. And Amiel’s Journal contains far too much of it.

What is futile we may throw aside; but when Amiel tells us of his 'protean nature essentially metamorphosable, polarisable, and virtual,' when he tells us of his longing for 'totality,' we must listen, although these phrases may in France, as M. Paul Bourget says, 'raise a shudder in a humanist trained on Livy and Pascal.' But these phrases stood for ideas which did practically rule, in a great degree, Amiel's life, which he often develops not only with great subtlety, but also with force, clearness, and eloquence, making it both easy and interesting to us to follow him. But still, when we have the ideas present before us, I shall ask, what is their value, what does Amiel obtain in them for the service of either himself or other people?

Let us take first what, adopting his own phrase, we may call his 'bedazzlement with the infinite,' his thirst for 'totality.' *Omnis determinatio est negatio.* Amiel has the gift and the bent for making his soul 'the capacity for all form, not a soul but *the* soul.' He finds it easier and more

natural 'to be *man* than *a man*.' His permanent instinct is to be 'a subtle and fugitive spirit which no base can absorb or fix entirely.' It costs him an effort to affirm his own personality: 'the infinite draws me to it, the *Henosis* of Plotinus intoxicates me like a philtre.'

It intoxicates him until the thought of absorption and extinction, the *Nirvāna* of Buddhism, becomes his thought of refuge:—

'The individual life is a nothing ignorant of itself, and as soon as this nothing knows itself, individual life is abolished in principle. For as soon as the illusion vanishes, Nothingness resumes its eternal sway, the suffering of life is over, error has disappeared, time and form have for this enfranchised individuality ceased to be; the coloured air-bubble has burst in the infinite space, and the misery of thought has sunk to rest in the changeless repose of all-embracing Nothing.'

With this bedazement with the infinite and this drift towards Buddhism comes the impatience with all production, with even poetry and art themselves, because of their necessary limits and imperfection:—

‘Composition demands a concentration, decision, and pliancy which I no longer possess. I cannot fuse together materials and ideas. If we are to give anything a form we must, so to speak, be the tyrants of it. We must treat our subject brutally and not be always trembling lest we should be doing it a wrong. We must be able to transmute and absorb it into our own substance. This sort of confident effrontery is beyond me ; my whole nature tends to that impersonality which respects and subordinates itself to the object ; it is love of truth which holds me back from concluding and deciding.’

The desire for the all, the impatience with what is partial and limited, the fascination of the infinite, are the topics of page after page in the Journal. It is a prosaic mind which has never been in contact with ideas of this sort, never felt their charm. They lend themselves well to poetry. but what are we to say of their value as ideas to be lived with, dilated on, made the governing ideas of life ? Except for use in passing, and with the power to dismiss them again, they are unprofitable. Shelley’s

‘Life like a dome of many-coloured glass
Stains the white radiance of eternity
Until death tramples it to fragments’

has value as a splendid image nobly introduced in a beautiful and impassioned poem. But Amiel's 'coloured air-bubble,' as a positive piece of 'speculative intuition,' has no value whatever. Nay, the thoughts which have positive truth and value, the thoughts to be lived with and dwelt upon, the thoughts which are a real acquisition for our minds, are precisely thoughts which counteract the 'vague aspiration and indeterminate desire' possessing Amiel and filling his Journal: they are thoughts insisting on the need of limit, the feasibility of performance. Goethe says admirably—

'Wer grosses will muss sich zusammenraffen:
In der Beschränkung zeigt sich erst der Meister.'

'He who will do great things must pull himself together: it is in working within limits that the master comes out.' Buffon says not less admirably—

'Tout sujet est un; et quelque vaste qu'il soit, il peut être renfermé dans un seul discours.'

'Every subject is one; and however vast it may be

is capable of being contained in a single discourse.' The ideas to live with, the ideas of sterling value to us, are, I repeat, ideas of this kind : ideas staunchly counteracting and reducing the power of the infinite and indeterminate, not paralysing us with it.

And indeed we have not to go beyond Amiel himself for proof of this. Amiel was paralysed by living in these ideas of 'vague aspiration and indeterminate desire,' of 'confounding his personal life in the general life,' by feeding on these ideas, treating them as august and precious, and filling hundreds of pages of *Journal* with them. He was paralysed by it, he became impotent and miserable. And he knew it, and tells us of it himself with a power of analysis and with a sad eloquence which to me are much more interesting and valuable than his philosophy of *Maïa* and the Great Wheel. 'By your natural tendency,' he says to himself, 'you arrive at disgust with life, despair, pessimism.' And again : 'Melancholy outlook on all sides. Disgust with myself.' And again : 'I cannot deceive myself as to the fate in

store for me : increasing isolation, inward disappointment, enduring regrets, a melancholy neither to be consoled nor confessed, a mournful old age, a slow agony, a death in the desert.' And all this misery by his own fault, his own mistakes. 'To live is to conquer incessantly ; one must have the courage to be happy. I turn in a vicious circle ; I have never had clear sight of my true vocation.'

I cannot, therefore, fall in with that particular line of admiration which critics, praising Amiel's Journal, have commonly followed. I cannot join in celebrating his prodigies of speculative intuition, the glow and splendour of his beatific vision of absolute knowledge, the marvellous pages in which his deep and vast philosophic thought is laid bare, the secret of his sublime malady is expressed. I hesitate to admit that all this part of the Journal has even a very profound psychological interest : its interest is rather pathological. In reading it we are not so much pursuing a study of psychology as a study of mental pathology.

But the Journal reveals a side in Amiel which his critics, so far as I have seen, have hardly noticed, a side of real power, originality, and value. He says himself that he never had clear sight of his true vocation: well, his true vocation, it seems to me, was that of a literary critic. Here he is admirable: M. Scherer was a true friend when he offered to introduce him to an editor, and suggested an article on Uhland. There is hardly a literary criticism in these two volumes which is not masterly, and which does not make one desire more of the same kind. And not Amiel's literary criticism only, but his criticism of society, politics, national character, religion, is in general well informed, just, and penetrating in an eminent degree. Any one single page of this criticism is worth, in my opinion, a hundred of Amiel's pages about the Infinite Illusion and the Great Wheel. It is to this side in Amiel that I desire now to draw attention. I would have abstained from writing about him if I had only to disparage and to find fault, only to say that he had been overpraised, and that his