

fulcrum on which they rested their lever to overturn the existing order of things (as history always placidly calls the particular forms of *disorder* for the time being) was in the soul of man. They could not renew the fiery gush of enthusiasm, when once the molten metal had begun to stiffen in the mould of policy and precedent. The religious element of Puritanism became insensibly merged in the political; and, its one great man taken away, it died, as passions have done before, of possession. It was one thing to shout with Cromwell before the battle of Dunbar, "Now, Lord, arise, and let thine enemies be scattered!" and to snuffle, "Rise, Lord, and keep us safe in our benefices, our sequestered estates, and our five per cent.!" Puritanism meant something when Captain Hodgson, riding out to battle through the morning mist, turns over the command of his troop to a lieutenant, and stays to hear the prayer of a cornet, there was "so much of God in it." Become traditional, repeating the phrase without the spirit, reading the present backward as if it were written in Hebrew, translating Jehovah by "I was" instead of "I am,"—it was no more like its former self than the hollow drum made of Zisca's skin was like the grim captain whose soul it had once contained. Yet the change was inevitable, for it is not safe to confound the things of Cæsar with the things of God. Some honest republicans, like Ludlow, were never able to comprehend the chilling contrast between the ideal aim and the material fulfilment, and looked askance on the strenuous reign of Oliver—that rugged builder of primitive manhood lying lonely there on the dead level of the century—as if some crooked changeling had been laid in the cradle instead of that fair babe of the Commonwealth they had dreamed. Truly there is a tide in the affairs of men, but there is no gulf-stream setting for ever in one direction; and those waves of enthusiasm on whose crumbling crests we sometimes see nations lifted for a gleaming moment are wont to have a gloomy trough before and behind.

But the founders of New England, though they must have sympathised vividly with the struggles and triumphs of their brethren in the mother country, were never subjected to the same trials and temptations, never hampered with the same lumber of usages and tradition. They were not driven to win power by doubtful and desperate ways, nor to maintain it by

any compromises of the ends which make it worth having. From the outset they were builders, without need of first pulling down, whether to make room or to provide material. For thirty years after the colonisation of the Bay, they had absolute power to mould as they would the character of their adolescent commonwealth. During this time a whole generation would have grown to manhood who knew the Old World only by report, in whose habitual thought kings, nobles, and bishops would be as far away from all present and practical concern as the figures in a fairy tale, and all whose memories and associations, all their unconscious training by eye and ear, were New English wholly. Nor were the men whose influence was greatest in shaping the framework and the policy of the Colony, in any true sense of word, fanatics. Enthusiasts, perhaps, they were, but with them the fermentation had never gone further than the ripeness of the vinous stage. Disappointment had never made it acetous, nor had it ever putrefied into the turbid zeal of Fifth Monarchism and sectarian whimsey. There is no better ballast for keeping the mind steady on its keel, and saving it from all risk of *crankiness*, than business. And they were business men, men of facts and figures no less than of religious earnestness. The sum of two hundred thousand pounds had been invested in their undertaking—a sum, for that time, truly enormous as the result of private combination for a doubtful experiment. That their enterprise might succeed, they must show a balance on the right side of the counting-house ledger, as well as in their private accounts with their own souls. The liberty of praying when and how they would, must be balanced with an ability of paying when and as they ought. Nor is the resulting fact in this case at variance with the *à priori* theory. They succeeded in making their thought the life and soul of a body politic, still powerful, still benignly operative, after two centuries; a thing which no mere fanatic ever did or ever will accomplish. Sober, earnest, and thoughtful men, it was no Utopia, no New Atlantis, no realisation of a splendid dream, which they had at heart, but the establishment of the divine principle of Authority on the common interest and the common consent; the making, by a contribution from the free-will of all, a power which should curb and guide the free-will of each for the general good. If they were

stern in their dealings with sectaries, it should be remembered that the Colony was in fact the private property of the Massachusetts Company, that unity was essential to its success, and that John of Leyden had taught them how unendurable by the nostrils of honest men is the corruption of the right of private judgment in the evil and selfish hearts of men when no thorough mental training has developed the understanding and given the judgment its needful means of comparison and correction. They knew that liberty in the hands of feeble-minded and unreasoning persons (and all the worse if they are honest) means nothing more than the supremacy of their particular form of imbecility; means nothing less, therefore, than downright chaos, a Bedlam-chaos of monomaniacs and bores. What was to be done with men and women, who bore conclusive witness to the fall of man by insisting on walking up the broad-aisle of the meeting-house in a costume which that event had put for ever out of fashion? About their treatment of witches, too, there has been a great deal of ignorant babble. Puritanism had nothing whatever to do with it. They acted under a delusion, which, with an exception here and there (and those mainly medical men, like Wierus and Webster), darkened the understanding of all Christendom. Dr. Henry More was no Puritan; and his letter to Glanvil, prefixed to the third edition of the *Sadducismus Triumphatus*, was written in 1678, only fourteen years before the trials at Salem. Bekker's *Bezauberte Welt* was published in 1693; and in the Preface he speaks of the difficulty of overcoming "the prejudices in which not only ordinary men, but the learned also, are obstinate." In Hathaway's case, 1702, Chief Justice Holt, in charging the jury, expresses no disbelief in the possibility of witchcraft, and the indictment implies its existence. Indeed, the natural reaction from the Salem mania of 1692 put an end to belief in devilish compacts and demoniac possessions sooner in New England than elsewhere. The last we hear of it there is in 1720, when Rev. Mr. Turell of Medford detected and exposed an attempted cheat by two girls. Even in 1692, it was the foolish breath of Cotton Mather and others of the clergy that blew the dying embers of this ghastly superstition into a flame; and they were actuated partly by a desire to bring about a religious revival, which might stay for a while the hastening lapse of their own

authority, and still more by that credulous scepticism of feeble-minded piety which dreads the cutting away of an orthodox tumour of misbelief, as if the life-blood of faith would follow, and would keep even a stumbling-block in the way of salvation, if only enough generations had tripped over it to make it venerable. The witches were condemned on precisely the same grounds that in our day led to the condemnation of *Essays and Reviews*.

But Puritanism was already in the decline when such things were possible. What had been a wondrous and intimate experience of the soul, a flash into the very crypt and basis of man's nature from the fire of trial, had become ritual and tradition. In prosperous times the faith of one generation becomes the formality of the next. "The necessity of a reformation," set forth by order of the Synod which met at Cambridge in 1679, though no doubt overstating the case, shows how much even at that time the ancient strictness had been loosened. The country had grown rich, its commerce was large, and wealth did its natural work in making life softer and more worldly, commerce in deprovincialising the minds of those already engaged in it. But Puritanism had already done its duty. As there are certain creatures whose whole being seems occupied with an egg-laying errand they are sent upon, incarnate ovipositors, their bodies but bags to hold this precious deposit, their legs of use only to carry them where they may safest be rid of it, so sometimes a generation seems to have no other end than the conception and ripening of certain germs. Its blind stirrings, its apparently aimless seeking hither and thither, are but the driving of an instinct to be done with its parturient function toward these principles of future life and power. Puritanism, believing itself quick with the seed of religious liberty, laid without knowing it, the egg of democracy. The English Puritans pulled down church and state to rebuild Zion on the ruins, and all the while it was not Zion, but America, they were building. But if their millennium went by, like the rest, and left men still human; if they, like so many saints and martyrs before them, listened in vain for the sound of that trumpet which was to summon all souls to a resurrection from the body of this death which men call life—it is not for us, at least, to forget the heavy debt we owe them. It was the drums of Naseby and Dunbar that

gathered the minute-men on Lexington Common; it was the red dint of the axe on Charles's block that marked One in our era. The Puritans had their faults. They were narrow, ungenial; they could not understand the text, "I have piped to you and ye have not danced," nor conceive that saving one's soul should be the cheerfullest, and not the dreariest, of businesses. Their preachers had a way, like the painful Mr. Perkins, of pronouncing the word *damn* with such an emphasis as left a doleful echo in their auditors' ears a good while after. And it was natural that men who captained or accompanied the exodus from existing forms and associations into the doubtful wilderness that led to the promised land, should find more to their purpose in the Old Testament than in the New. As respects the New England settlers, however visionary some of their religious tenets may have been, their political ideas savoured of the reality, and it was no Nephelococcygia of which they drew the plan, but of a commonwealth whose foundation was to rest on solid and familiar earth. If what they did was done in a corner, the results of it were to be felt to the ends of the earth; and the figure of Winthrop should be as venerable in history as that of Romulus is barbarously grand in legend.

I am inclined to think that many of our national characteristics, which are sometimes attributed to climate and sometimes to institutions, are traceable to the influences of Puritan descent. We are apt to forget how very large a proportion of our population is descended from emigrants who came over before 1660. Those emigrants were in great part representatives of that element of English character which was most susceptible of religious impressions; in other words, the most earnest and imaginative. Our people still differ from their English cousins (as they are fond of calling themselves when they are afraid we may do them a mischief) in a certain capacity for enthusiasm, a devotion to abstract principle, an openness to ideas, a greater aptness for intuitions than for the slow processes of the syllogism, and, as derivative from this, in minds of looser texture, a light-armed, skirmishing habit of thought, and a positive preference of the birds in the bush—an excellent quality of character *before* you have your bird in the hand.

There have been two great distributing centres of the English race on this continent, Massachusetts and Virginia.

Each has impressed the character of its early legislators on the swarms it has sent forth. Their ideas are in some fundamental respects the opposites of each other, and we can only account for it by an antagonism of thought beginning with the early framers of their respective institutions. New England abolished caste; in Virginia they still talk of "quality folks." But it was in making education not only common to all, but in some sense compulsory on all, that the destiny of the free republics of America was practically settled. Every man was to be trained, not only to the use of arms, but of his wits also; and it is these which alone make the others effective weapons for the maintenance of freedom. You may disarm the hands, but not the brains, of a people, and to know what should be defended is the first condition of successful defence. Simple as it seems, it was a great discovery that the key of knowledge could turn both ways, that it could open, as well as lock, the door of power to the many. The only things a New-Englander was ever locked out of were the jails. It is quite true that our Republic is the heir of the English Commonwealth; but as we trace events backward to their causes, we shall find it true also, that what made our Revolution a foregone conclusion was that act of the General Court, passed in May 1647, which established the system of common schools. "To the end that learning may not be buried in the graves of our forefathers in Church and Commonwealth, the Lord assisting our endeavours, it is therefore ordered by this Court and authority thereof, that every township in this jurisdiction, after the Lord hath increased them to fifty householders, shall then forthwith appoint one within their towns to teach all such children as shall resort to him to write and read."

Passing through some Massachusetts village, perhaps at a distance from any house, it may be in the midst of a piece of woods where four roads meet, one may sometimes even yet see a small square one-story building, whose use would not be long doubtful. It is summer, and the flickering shadows of forest-leaves dapple the roof of the little porch, whose door stands wide, and shows, hanging on either hand, rows of straw hats and bonnets, that look as if they had done good service. As you pass the open windows, you hear whole platoons of high-pitched voices discharging words of two

or three syllables with wonderful precision and unanimity. Then there is a pause, and the voice of the officer in command is heard reproving some raw recruit whose vocal musket hung fire. Then the drill of the small infantry begins anew, but pauses again because some urchin—who agrees with Voltaire that the superfluous is a very necessary thing—insists on spelling “subtraction” with an *s* too much.

If you had the good fortune to be born and bred in the Bay State, your mind is thronged with half-sad, half-humorous, recollections. The a-b abs of little voices long since hushed in the mould, or ringing now in the pulpit, at the bar, or in the Senate-chamber, come back to the ear of memory. You remember the high stool on which culprits used to be elevated with the tall paper fool’s-cap on their heads, blushing to the ears; and you think with wonder how you have seen them since as men climbing the world’s penance-stools of ambition without a blush, and gladly giving everything for life’s caps and bells. And you have pleasanter memories of going after pond-lilies, of angling for horn-pouts—that queer bat among the fishes—of nutting, of walking over the creaking snow-crust in winter, when the warm breath of every household was curling up silently in the keen blue air. You wonder if life has any rewards more solid and permanent than the Spanish dollar that was hung around your neck to be restored again next day, and conclude sadly that it was but too true a prophecy and emblem of all worldly success. But your moralising is broken short off by a rattle of feet and the pouring forth of the whole swarm—the boys dancing and shouting—the mere effervescence of the fixed air of youth and animal spirits uncorked—the sedate girls in confidential twos and threes decanting secrets out of the mouth of one cape-bonnet into that of another. Times have changed since the jackets and trousers used to draw up on one side of the road, and the petticoats on the other, to salute with bow and courtesy the white neckcloth of the parson or the squire, if it chanced to pass during intermission.

Now this little building, and others like it, were an original kind of fortification invented by the founders of New England. They are the martello-towers that protect our coast. This was the great discovery of our Puritan fathers. They were the first lawgivers who saw clearly and enforced practically the simple moral and political truth, that knowledge

was not an alms to be dependent on the chance charity of private men or the precarious pittance of a trust-fund, but a sacred debt which the Commonwealth owed to every one of her children. The opening of the first grammar school was the opening of the first trench against monopoly in church and state; the first row of trammels and pot-hooks which the little Shearjashubs and Elkanahs blotted and blubbered across their copy-books was the preamble to the Declaration of Independence. The men who gave every man the chance to become a landholder, who made the transfer of land easy, and put knowledge within the reach of all, have been called narrow-minded, because they were intolerant. But intolerant of what? Of what they believed to be dangerous nonsense, which, if left free, would destroy the last hope of civil and religious freedom. They had not come here that every man might do that which seemed good in his own eyes, but in the sight of God. Toleration, moreover, is something which is won, not granted. It is the equilibrium of neutralised forces. The Puritans had no notion of tolerating mischief. They looked upon their little commonwealth as upon their own private estate and homestead, as they had a right to do, and would no more allow the Devil's religion of unreason to be preached therein, than we should permit a prize-fight in our gardens. They were narrow; in other words they had an edge to them, as men that serve in great emergencies must; for a Gordian knot is settled sooner with a sword than a beetle.

The founders of New England are commonly represented in the after-dinner oratory of their descendants as men "before their time," as it is called; in other words, deliberately prescient of events resulting from new relations of circumstances, or even from circumstances new in themselves, and therefore altogether alien from their own experience. Of course such a class of men is to be reckoned among those non-existent human varieties so gravely catalogued by the ancient naturalists. If a man could shape his action with reference to what should happen a century after his death, surely it might be asked of him to call in the help of that easier foreknowledge which reaches from one day to the next, a power of prophecy whereof we have no example. We do not object to a wholesome pride of ancestry, though a little mythical, if it be accompanied with the feeling that *noblesse*

oblige, and do not result merely in a placid self-satisfaction with out own mediocrity, as if greatness, like righteousness, could be imputed. We can pardon it even in conquered races, like the Welsh and Irish, who make up to themselves for present degradation by imaginary empires in the past whose boundaries they can extend at will, carrying the bloodless conquests of fancy over regions laid down upon no map, and concerning which authentic history is enviously dumb. Those long beadrolls of Keltic kings cannot tyrannise over us, and we can be patient so long as our own crowns are uncracked by the Shillalah sceptres of their actual representatives. In our own case, it would not be amiss, perhaps, if we took warning by the example of Teague and Taffy. At least, I think it would be wise in our orators not to put forward so prominently the claim of the Yankee to universal dominion, and his intention to enter upon it forthwith. If we do our duties as honestly and as much in the fear of God as our forefathers did, we need not trouble ourselves much about other titles to empire. The broad foreheads and long heads will win the day at last in spite of all heraldry, and it will be enough if we feel as keenly as our Puritan founders did that those organs of empire may be broadened and lengthened by culture.¹ That our self-complacency should not increase the complacency of outsiders is not to be wondered at. As *we* sometimes take credit to ourselves (since all commendation of our ancestry is indirect self-flattery) for what the Puritan fathers never were, so there are others who, to gratify a spite against their descendants, blame them for not having been what they could not be; namely, before their time in such matters as slavery, witchcraft, and the like. The view, whether of friend or foe, is equally unhistorical, nay, without the faintest notion of all that makes history worth having as a teacher. That our grandfathers shared in the prejudices of their day is all that makes them human to us; and that nevertheless they could act bravely and wisely on occasion makes them only the more venerable. If certain barbarisms and superstitions disappeared earlier in New England than elsewhere, not by the decision of exceptionally enlightened or humane judges, but by force

¹ It is curious that, when Cromwell proposed to transfer a colony from New England to Ireland, one of the conditions insisted on in Massachusetts was that a college should be established.

of public opinion, that is the fact that is interesting and instructive for us. I never thought it an abatement of Hawthorne's genius that he came lineally from one who sat in judgment on the witches in 1692; it was interesting rather to trace something hereditary in the sombre character of his imagination, continually vexing itself to account for the origin of evil, and baffled for want of that simple solution in a personal Devil.

But I have no desire to discuss the merits or demerits of the Puritans, having long ago learned the wisdom of saving my sympathy for more modern objects than Hecuba. My object is to direct the attention of my readers to a collection of documents where they may see those worthies as they were in their daily living and thinking. The collections of our various historical and antiquarian societies can hardly be said to be *published* in the strict sense of the word, and few consequently are aware how much they contain of interest for the general reader no less than the special student. The several volumes of *Winthrop Papers*, in especial, are a mine of entertainment. Here we have the Puritans painted by themselves, and, while we arrive at a truer notion of the characters of some among them, and may accordingly sacrifice to that dreadful superstition of being usefully employed which makes so many bores and bored, we can also furtively enjoy the oddities of thought and speech, the humours of the time, which our local historians are too apt to despise as inconsidered trifles. For myself I confess myself heretic to the established theory of the gravity of history, and am not displeased with an opportunity to smile behind my hand at any ludicrous interruption of that sometimes wearisome ceremonial. I am not sure that I would not sooner give up Raleigh spreading his cloak to keep the royal Dian's feet from the mud, than that awful judgment upon the courtier whose Atlantean thighs leaked away in bran through the rent in his trunk-hose. The painful fact that Fisher had his head cut off is somewhat mitigated to me by the circumstance that the Pope should have sent him, of all things in the world, a cardinal's hat after that incapacitation. Theology herself becomes less unamiable to me when I find the Supreme Pontiff writing to the Council of Trent that "they should begin with original sin, *maintaining yet a due respect for the Emperor.*" That infallibility should

thus courtesy to decorum, shall make me think better of it while I live. I shall accordingly endeavour to give my readers what amusement I can, leaving it to themselves to extract solid improvement from the volumes before us, which include a part of the correspondence of three generations of Winthrops.

Let me premise that there are two men above all others for whom our respect is heightened by these letters—the elder John Winthrop and Roger Williams. Winthrop appears throughout as a truly magnanimous and noble man in an unobtrusive way—a kind of greatness that makes less noise in the world, but is on the whole more solidly satisfying than most others—a man who has been dipped in the river of God (a surer baptism than Styx or dragon's blood) till his character is of perfect proof, and who appears plainly as the very soul and life of the young Colony. Very reverend and godly he truly was, and a respect not merely ceremonious, but personal, a respect that savours of love, shows itself in the letters addressed to him. Charity and tolerance flow so naturally from the pen of Williams that it is plain they were in his heart. He does not show himself a very strong or very wise man, but a thoroughly gentle and good one. His affection for the two Winthrops is evidently of the warmest. We suspect that he lived to see that there was more reason in the drum-head religious discipline which made him, against his will, the founder of a commonwealth, than he may have thought at first. But for the fanaticism (as it is the fashion to call the sagacious straitness) of the abler men who knew how to root the English stock firmly in this new soil on either side of him, his little plantation could never have existed, and he himself would have been remembered only, if at all, as one of the jarring atoms in a chaos of otherwise-mindedness.

Two other men, Emanuel Downing and Hugh Peter, leave a positively unpleasant savour in the nostrils. Each is selfish in his own way—Downing with the shrewdness of an attorney, Peter with that clerical unction which in a vulgar nature so easily degenerates into greasiness. Neither of them was the man for a forlorn hope, and both returned to England when the civil war opened prospect of preferment there. Both, we suspect, were inclined to value their Puritanism for its rewards in this world rather than the next.

Downing's son, Sir George, was basely prosperous, making the good cause pay him so long as it was solvent, and then selling out in season to betray his old commander, Colonel Okey, to the shambles at Charing Cross. Peter became a colonel in the Parliament's army, and under the Protectorate one of Cromwell's chaplains. On his trial, after the Restoration, he made a poor figure, in striking contrast to some of the brave men who suffered with him. At his execution a shocking brutality was shown. "When Mr. Cook was cut down and brought to be quartered, one they called Colonel Turner calling to the Sheriff's men to bring Mr. Peters near, that he might see it; and by and by the Hangman came to him all besmeared in blood, and rubbing his bloody hands together, he tauntingly asked, *Come, how do you like this, Mr. Peters? How do you like this work?*"¹ This Colonel Turner can hardly have been other than the one who four years later came to the hangman's hands for robbery; and whose behaviour, both in the dock and at the gallows, makes his trial one of the most entertaining as a display of character. Peter would seem to have been one of those men gifted with what is sometimes called eloquence; that is, the faculty of stating things powerfully from momentary feeling, and not from that conviction of the higher reason which alone can give force and permanence to words. His letters show him subject, like others of like temperament, to fits of "hypocondriacal melancholy," and the only witness he called on his trial was to prove that he was confined to his lodgings by such an attack on the day of the king's beheading. He seems to have been subject to this malady at convenience, as some women to hysterics. Honest John Endicott plainly had small confidence in him, and did not think him the right man to represent the Colony in England. There is a droll resolve in the Massachusetts records by which he is "desired to write to Holland for £500 worth of *peter*, & £40 worth of match." It is with a match that we find him burning his fingers in the present correspondence.

Peter seems to have entangled himself somehow with a Mrs. Deliverance Sheffield, whether maid or widow nowhere appears, but presumably the latter. The following state-

¹ *State Trials*, ii. 409. One would not reckon too closely with a man on trial for his life, but there is something pitiful in Peter's representing himself as coming back to England "out of the West Indies," in order to evade any complicity with suspected New England.

ment of his position is amusing enough: "I have sent Mrs. D. Sh. letter, which puts mee to new troubles, for though shee takes liberty upon my Cossen Downing's speeches, yet (Good Sir) let mee not be a foole in Israel. I had many good answers to yesterday's worke [a Fast] and amongst the rest her letter; which (if her owne) doth argue more wisdom than I thought shee had. You have often sayd I could not leave her; what to doe is very considerable. Could I with comfort & credit desist, this seemes best: could I goe on & content myselve, that were good. . . . For though I now seeme free agayne, yet the depth I know not. Had shee come over with me, I thinke I had bin quieter. This shee may know, that I have sought God earnestly, that the nexte weeke I shall bee riper:—I doubt shee gaynes most by such writings: & shee deserves most where shee is further of. If you shall amongst you advise mee to write to hir, I shall forthwith; our towne lookes upon mee contracted & so I have sayd myselve; what wonder the charge [change?] would make, I know not." Again: "Still pardon my offensive boldnes: I know not well whither Mrs. Sh. have set mee at liberty or not: my conclusion is, that if you find I cannot make an honourable retreat, then I shall desire to advance $\sigma\upsilon\nu$ $\Theta\epsilon\omega\phi$. Of you I now expect your last advice, viz.: whither I must goe on or of, *saluo evangelij honore*: if shee bee in good earnest to leave all agitations this way, then I stand still & wayt God's mind concerning mee. . . . If I had much mony I would part with it to her free, till wee heare what England doth, supposing I may bee called to some imployment that will not suit a marryed estate:" (here another mode of escape presents itself, and he goes on:) "for indeed (Sir) some must looke out & I have very strong thoughts to speake with the Duitch Governor & lay some way there for a supply &c." At the end of the letter, an objection to the lady herself occurs to him: "Once more for Mrs. Sh: I had from Mr. Hibbins & others, her fellow passengers, sad discouragements where they saw her in her trim. I would not come of with dishonor, nor come on with grieffe, or ominous hesitations." On all this shilly-shally we have a shrewd comment in a letter of Endicott: "I cannot but acquaint you with my thoughts concerning Mr. Peter since hee receaved a letter from Mrs. Sheffield, which was yesterday in the evening after the Fast, shee seeming in her

letter to abate of her affections towards him & dislikinge to come to Salem vppon such termes as he had written. I finde now that hee begins to play her parte, & if I mistake not, you will see him as greatly in loue with her (if shee will but hold of a little) as euer shee was with him; but he conceales it what he can as yett. The begininge of the next weeke you will heare further from him." The widow was evidently more than a match for poor Peter.

It should appear that a part of his trouble arose from his having coquetted also with a certain Mrs. Ruth, about whom he was "dealt with by Mrs. Amee, Mr. Phillips & two more of the Church, our Elder being one. When Mr. Phillips with much violence and sharpnes charged mee home . . . that I should hinder the mayd of a match at London, which was not so, could not thinke of any kindnes I euer did her, though shee haue had above 300 *li.* through my fingers, so as if God uphold me not after an especiall manner, it will sinke me surely . . . hee told me he would not stop my intended marriage, but assured mee it would not bee good . . . all which makes mee reflect upon my rash proceedings with Mrs. Sh." Panurge's doubts and difficulties about matrimony were not more entertainingly contradictory. Of course, Peter ends by marrying the widow, and presently we have a comment on "her trim."

In January, 1639, he writes to Winthrop: "My wife is very thankfull for her apples, & *desires much the new fashioned shooes.*" Eight years later we find him writing from England, where he had been two years: "I am coming over if I must; my wife comes of necessity to New England, having run her selfe out of breath here;" and then in the postscript, "bee sure you never let my wife come away from thence without my leave, & then you love mee." But life is never pure comedy, and the end in this case is tragical. Roger Williams, after his return from England in 1654, writes to John Winthrop, jun.: "Your brother flourisheth in good esteeme & is eminent for maintaining the Freedome of the Conscience as to matters of Beliefe, Religion, & Worship. Your Father Peters preacheth the same Doctrine though not so zealously as some years since, yet cries out against New English Rigidities & Persecutions, their civil injuries & wrongs to himselfe, & their unchristian dealing with him in excommunicating his distracted wife. All this he tould me in his

lodgings at Whitehall, those lodgings which I was tould were Canterburies [the Archbishop], but he himselve tould me that the Library wherein we were together was Canterburies & given him by the Parliament. His wife lives from him, not wholly but much distracted. He tells me he had but 200 a yeare & he allowed her four score per annum of it. Surely, Sir, the most holy Lord is most wise in all the trialls he exerciseth his people with. He tould me that his affliction from his wife stired him up to Action abroad, & when successe tempted him to Pride, the Bitternes in his bozome-comforts was a Cooler & a Bridle to him." Truly the whirligig of time brings about strange revenges. Peter had been driven from England by the persecutions of Laud; a few years later he "stood armed on the scaffold" when that prelate was beheaded, and now we find him installed in the archiepiscopal lodgings. Dr. Palfrey, it appears to me, gives altogether too favourable an opinion both of Peter's character and abilities. I conceive him to have been a vain and selfish man. He may have had the bravery of passionate impulse, but he wanted that steady courage of character which has such a beautiful constancy in Winthrop. He always professed a longing to come back to New England, but it was only a way he had of talking. That he never meant to come is plain from these letters. Nay, when things looked prosperous in England, he writes to the younger Winthrop: "My counsell is you should come hither with your family for certaynly you will bee capable of a comfortable living in this free Commonwealth. I doo seriously advise it. . . . G. Downing is worth £500 per annum but £4 per diem—your brother Stephen worth £2000 and a maior. I pray come." But when he is snugly ensconced in Whitehall, and may be presumed to have some influence with the prevailing powers, his zeal cools. "I wish you all friends to stay there & rather looke to the West Indyces if they remoue, for many are here to seeke when they come ouer." To me Peter's highest promotion seems to have been that he walked with John Milton at the Protector's funeral. He was, I suspect, one of those men, to borrow a charitable phrase of Roger Williams, who "feared God in the main," that is, whenever it was not personally inconvenient. William Coddington saw him in his glory in 1651: "Soe wee toucke the tyme to goe to viset Mr. Petters at his chamber. I was mery with

him & called him the Arch Bp: of Canterberye, in regard to his adtendance by ministers & gentlemen, & it passed very well." Considering certain charges brought against Peter (though he is said, when under sentence of death, to have denied the truth of them), Coddington's statement that he liked to have "gentlewomen waite of him" in his lodgings has not a pleasant look. One last report of him we get (September 1659) in a letter of John Davenport—"that Mr. Hugh Peters is distracted & under sore horrors of conscience, crying out of himselfe as damned & confessing haynous actings."

Occasionally these letters give us interesting glimpses of persons and things in England. In the letter of Williams just cited, there is a lesson for all parties raised to power by exceptional causes. "Surely, Sir, youre Father & all the people of God in England . . . are now in the sadle & at the helme, so high that *non datus descensus nisi cadendo*: Some cheere up their spirits with the impossibilitie of another fall or turne, so doth Major G. Harrison . . . a very gallant most deserving heavenly man, but most highflowne for the Kingdom of the Saints & the 5th Monarchie now risen & their sun never to set againe, &c. Others, as, to my knowledge, the Protector . . . are not so full of that faith of miracles, but still imagine changes & persecutions & the very slaughter of the witnesses before that glorious morning so much desired of a worldly Kingdome, if ever such a Kingdome (as literally it is by so many expounded) be to arise in this present world & dispensation." Poor General Harrison lived to be one of the witnesses so slaughtered. The practical good sense of Cromwell is worth noting, the English understanding struggling against Judaic trammels. Williams gives us another peep through the keyhole of the past: "It pleased the Lord to call me for some time & with some persons to practice the Hebrew, the Greeke, Latine, French, & Dutch. The secretarie of the Councill (Mr. Milton) for my Dutch I read him, read me many more languages. Grammar rules begin to be esteemed a Tyrannie. I taught 2 young gentlemen, a Parliament man's sons, as we teach our children English, by words, phrases, & constant talke, &c." It is plain that Milton had talked over with Williams the theory put forth in his tract on Education, and made a convert of him. We could wish that the good Baptist had gone a little more into particulars. But which of us knows among the

men he meets whom time will dignify by curtailing him of the "Mr.," and reducing him to a bare patronymic, as being a kind by himself? We have a glance or two at Oliver, who is always interesting. "The late renowned Oliver confest to me in close discourse about the Protestants affaires &c that he yet feard great persecutions to the protestants from the Romanists before the downfall of the Papacie," writes Williams in 1660. This "close discourse" must have been six years before, when Williams was in England. Within a year after, Oliver interfered to some purpose in behalf of the Protestants of Piedmont, and Mr. Milton wrote his famous sonnet. Of the war with Spain, Williams reports from his letters out of England in 1656: "This diversion against the Spaniard hath turnd the face & thoughts of many English, so that the saying now is, Crowne the Protector with gould,¹ though the sullen yet cry, Crowne him with thornes."

Again in 1654: "I know the Protector had strong thoughts of Hispaniola & Cuba. Mr. Cotton's interpreting of Euphrates to be the West Indies, the supply of gold (to take off taxes), & the provision of a warmer *diverticulum & receptaculum* then N. England is, will make a footing into those parts very precious, & if it shall please God to vouchsafe successe to this fleete, I looke to hear of an invitation at least to these parts for removall from his Highnes who lookes on N. E. only with an eye of pitie, as poore, cold & useless." The mixture of Euphrates and taxes, of the transcendental and practical, prophecy taking precedence of thrift, is characteristic, and recalls Cromwell's famous rule, of fearing God *and* keeping your powder dry. In one of the Protector's speeches,² he insists much on his wish to retire to a private life. There is a curious confirmation of his sincerity in a letter of William Hooke, then belonging to his household, dated the 13th of April, 1657. The question of the kingly title was then under debate, and Hooke's account of the matter helps to a clearer understanding of the reasons for Cromwell's refusing the title: "The protector is urged *utrinque* & (I am ready to think) willing enough to betake himself to a private life, if

¹ Waller put this into verse:

"Let the rich ore forthwith be melted down
And the state fixed by making him a crown."

² The *third* in Carlyle, 1654.

it might be. He is a godly man, much in prayer & good discourses, delighting in good men & good ministers, self-denying & ready to promote any good work for Christ." ¹ On the 5th of February, 1654, Captain John Mason, of Pequot memory, writes "a word or twoe of newes as it comes from Mr. Eaton, viz: that the Parliament sate in September last; they chose their old Speaker & Clarke. The Protectour told them they were a free Parliament, & soe left them that day. They, considering where the legislative power resided, concluded to vote it on the morrow, & to take charge of the militia. The Protectour hereing of it, sent for some numbers of horse, went to the Parliament House, nayld up the doores, sent for them to the Painted Chamber, told them they should attend the lawes established, & that he would wallow in his blood before he would part with what was conferd upon him, tendering them an oath: 140 engaged." Now it is curious that Mr. Eaton himself, from whom Mason got his news, wrote, only two days before, an account, differing, in some particulars, and especially in tone, from Mason's. Of the speech he says, that it "gave such satisfaction that about 200 have since ingaged to owne the present Government." Yet Carlyle gives the same number of signers (140) as Mason, and there is a sentence in Cromwell's speech, as reported by Carlyle, of precisely the same purport as that quoted by Mason. To me, that "wallow in my blood" has rather more of the Cromwellian ring in it, more of the quality of spontaneous speech, than the "rolled into my grave and buried with infamy" of the official reporter. John Haynes (24th July, 1653) reports "newes from England of astonishing nature," concerning the dissolution of the Rump. We quote his story both as a contemporaneous version of the event, and as containing some particulars that explain the causes that led to it. It differs, in some respects, from Carlyle, and is hardly less vivid as a picture: "The Parliament of England & Councell of State are both dissolved, by whom & the manner this: The Lord Cromwell, Generall, went to the house & asked the Speaker & Bradshaw by what power they sate ther. They answered by the same power that he woare his sword. Hee replied they should know they did not, & said they should sitt noe longer, demanding an account of the vast sommes of

¹ *Collections*, Third Series, vol. i. p. 182.

money they had received of the Commons. They said the matter was of great consequence & they would give him accompt in tenn dayes. He said, Noe, they had sate too long already (& might now take their ease), for ther inriching themselves & impoverishing the Commons, & then seized uppon all the Records. Immediatly Lambert, Livetenant Generall, & Hareson Maior Generall (for they two were with him), tooke the Speaker Lenthall by the hands, lift him out of the Chaire, & ledd him out of the house, & commanded the rest to depart, which fortwith was obeied, & the Generall tooke the keyes & locked the doore." He then goes on to give the reasons assigned by different persons for the act. Some said that the General "scented their purpose" to declare themselves perpetual, and to get rid of him by ordering him to Scotland. "Others say this, that the cries of the oppressed preveiled much with him . . . & hastned the declaracion of that ould principle, *Salus populi suprema lex &c.*" The General, in the heat of his wrath, himself snatching the keys and locking the door, has a look of being drawn from the life. Cromwell, in a letter to General Fortescue (November 1655) speaks sharply of the disorders and debauchedness, profaneness and wickedness, commonly practi ed amongst the army sent out to the West Indies. Major Mason gives us a specimen: "It is heere reported that some of the soldiers belonging to the ffeet at Boston, ffell upon the watch: after some bickering they commanded them to goe before the Governour; they returned that they were Cromwell's boyes." Have we not, in these days, heard of "Sherman's boys"?

Belonging properly to the *Winthrop Papers*, but printed in an earlier volume (Third Series, vol. i. pp. 185-198), is a letter of John Maidstone, which contains the best summary of the Civil War that I ever read. Indeed, it gives a clearer insight into its causes, and a better view of the vicissitudes of the Commonwealth and Protectorate, than any one of the more elaborate histories. There is a singular equity and absence of party passion in it which gives us faith in the author's judgment. He was Oliver's Steward of the Household, and his portrait of him, as that of an eminently fair-minded man who knew him well, is of great value. Carlyle has not copied it, and, as many of my readers may never have seen it, I reproduce it here: "Before I pass further,

pardon me in troubling you with the character of his person, which, by reason of my nearness to him, I had opportunity well to observe. His body was well compact and strong; his stature under six feet (I believe about two inches); his head so shaped as you might see it a store-house and shop both, of a vast treasury of natural parts. His temper exceeding fiery, as I have known, but the flame of it kept down for the most part or soon allayed with those moral endowments he had. He was naturally compassionate towards objects in distress, even to an effeminate measure; though God had made him a heart wherein was left little room for any fear but what was due to himself, of which there was a large proportion, yet did he exceed in tenderness toward sufferers. A larger soul, I think, hath seldom dwelt in a house of clay than his was. I do believe, if his story were impartially transmitted, and the unprejudiced world well possessed with it, she would add him to her nine worthies and make that number a *decemviri*. He lived and died in comfortable communion with God, as judicious persons near him well observed. He was that Mordecai that sought the welfare of his people and spake peace to his seed. Yet were his temptations such, as it appeared frequently that he that hath grace enough for many men may have too little for himself, the treasure he had being but in an earthen vessel and that equally defiled with original sin as any other man's nature is." There are phrases here that may be matched with the choicest in the life of Agricola; and, indeed, the whole letter, superior to Tacitus in judicial fairness of tone, goes abreast of his best writing in condensation, nay, surpasses it in this, that, while in Tacitus the intensity is of temper, here it is the clear residuum left by the ferment and settling of thought. Just before, speaking of the dissolution of Oliver's last Parliament, Maidstone says: "That was the last which sat during his life, he being compelled to wrestle with the difficulties of his place so well as he could without parliamentary assistance, and in it met with so great a burthen as (I doubt not to say) it drank up his spirits, of which his natural constitution yielded a large stock, and brought him to his grave, his interment being the seed-time of his glory and England's calamity." Hooke, in a letter of April 16, 1658, has a passage worth quoting: "The dissolution of the last Parliament puts the supreme powers upon difficulties, though the

trueth is the Nacion is so ill spirited that little good is to be expected from these Generall Assemblies. They [the supreme powers, to wit, Cromwell] have been much in Counsell since this disappointment, & God hath been sought by them in the effectuall sense of the need of help from heaven & of the extreme danger impendent on a miscarriage of their advises. But our expences are so vast that I know not how they can avoyde a recurrence to another Session and to make a further tryall. . . . The land is full of discontents, and the Cavaleerish party both still expect a day & nourish hopes of a Revolucion. The Quakers do still proceed & are not yet come to their period. The Presbyterians do abound, I thinke, more than ever, & are very bold & confident because some of their masterpieces lye unanswered, particularly their *Jus Divinum Regiminis Ecclesiastici* which I have sent to Mr. Davenport. It hath been extant without answer these many years [only four, brother Hooke, if we may trust the title-page]. The Anabaptists abound likewise, & Mr. Tombes hath pretended to have answered all the bookes extant against his opinion. I saw him presenting it to the Protectour of late. The Episcopall men ply the Common-Prayer booke with much more boldness then ever since these turnes of things, even in the open face of the City in severall places. I have spoken of it to the Protectour but as yet nothing is done in order to their being suppressed." It should teach us to distrust the apparent size of objects, which is a mere cheat of their nearness to us, that we are so often reminded of how small account things seem to one generation for which another was ready to die. A copy of the *Jus Divinum* held too close to the eyes could shut out the universe with its infinite chances and changes, its splendid indifference to our ephemeral fates. Cromwell, we should gather, had found out the secret of this historical perspective, to distinguish between the blaze of a burning tar-barrel and the final conflagration of all things. He had learned tolerance by the possession of power—a proof of his capacity for rule. In 1652 Haynes writes: "Ther was a Catechise lately in print ther, that denied the divinity of Christ, yett ther was motions in the house by some, to have it lycenced by authority. Cromwell mainly oposed, & at last it was voted to bee burnt which causes much discontent of somme." Six years had made Cromwell wiser.

One more extract from a letter of Hooke's (30th March 1659) is worth giving. After speaking of Oliver's death, he goes on to say: "Many prayers were put up solemnly for his life, & some, of great & good note, were too confident that he would not die. . . . I suppose himself had thoughts that he should have outlived this sickness till near his dissolution, perhaps a day or two before; which I collect partly by some words which he was said to speak . . . & partly from his delaying, almost to the last, to nominate his successor, to the wonderment of many who began sooner to despair of his life. . . . His eldest son succeeded him, being chosen by the Council, the day following his father's death, whereof he had no expectation. I have heard him say he had thought to have lived as a country gentleman, & that his father had not employed him in such a way as to prepare him for such employment; which, he thought, he did designedly. I suppose his meaning was lest it should have been apprehended he had prepared & appointed him for such a place, the burthen whereof I have several times heard him complaining under since his coming to the Government, the weighty occasions whereof with continuall oppressing cares had drunk up his father's spirits, in whose body very little blood was found when he was opened: the greatest defect visible was in his heart, which was flaccid & shrunk together. Yet he was one that could bear much without complaining, as one of a strong constitution of brain (as appeared when he was dissected) & likewise of body. His son seemeth to be of another frame, soft & tender, & penetrable with easier cares by much, yet he is of a sweete countenance, vivacious & candid, as is the whole frame of his spirit, only naturally inclined to choler. His reception of multitudes of addresses from towns, cities, & counties doth declare, among several other indiciums, more of ability in him than could, ordinarily, have been expected from him. He spake also with general acceptance & applause when he made his speech before the Parliament, even far beyond the Lord Fynes.¹ . . . If this Assembly miss it, we are like to be in an ill condition. The old ways & customs of England, as to worshipe, are in the hearts of the most, who long to see the days again which once they saw. . . . The hearts of very many are for the house of the Stewarts, & there is a speech as if they would

¹ This speech may be found in the Annual Register of 1762.

attempt to call the late King's judges into question. . . . The city, I hear, is full of Cavaliers." Poor Richard appears to have inherited little of his father but the inclination to choler. That he could speak far beyond the Lord Fynes seems to have been not much to the purpose. Rhetoric was not precisely the medicine for such a case as he had to deal with. Such were the glimpses which the New England had of the Old. Ishmael must ere long learn to shift for himself.

The temperance question agitated the fathers very much as it still does the children. We have never seen the anti-prohibition argument stated more cogently than in a letter of Thomas Shepard, minister of Cambridge, to Winthrop, in 1639: "This also I doe humbly intreat, that there may be no sin made of *drinking in any case one to another*, for I am confident he that stands here will fall and be beat from his grounds by his own arguments; as also that the consequences will be very sad, and the thing provoking to God & man to make more sins than (as yet is seene) God himself hath made." A principle as wise now as it was then. Our ancestors were also harassed as much as we by the difficulties of domestic service. In a country where land might be had for the asking, it was not easy to keep hold of servants brought over from England. Emanuel Downing, always the hard, practical man, would find a remedy in negro slavery. "A warr with the Narraganset," he writes to Winthrop in 1645, "is verie considerable to this plantation, ffor I doubt whither it be not synne in us, having power in our hands, to suffer them to maynteyne the worship of the devill which their paw-waves often doe; 2lie, If upon a just warre the Lord should deliver them into our hands, wee might easily have men, women, & children enough to exchange for Moores, which wilbe more gaynefull pilladge for us than wee conceive, for I doe not see how wee can thrive untill wee gett into a stock of slaves sufficient to do all our business, for our children's children will hardly see this great Continent filled with people, soe that our servants will still desire freedom to plant for them selves, & not stay but for verie great wages. And I suppose you know verie well how wee shall maynteyne 20 Moores cheaper than one Englishe servant." The doubt whether it be not sin in us longer to tolerate their devil-worship, considering how much need we have of them

as merchandise, is delicious. The way in which Hugh Peter grades the sharp descent from the apostolic to the practical with an *et cetera*, in the following extract, has the same charm: "Sir, Mr. Endecot & myself salute you in the Lord Jesus &c. Wee have heard of a dividence of women and children in the bay & would bee glad of a share viz: a young woman or girle & a boy if you thinke good." Peter seems to have got what he asked for, and to have been worse off than before; for we find him writing two years later: "My wife desires my daughter to send to Hanna that was her mayd, now at Charltowne, to know if shee would dwell with us, for truly wee are so destitute (having now but an Indian) that wee know not what to doe." Let any housewife of our day, who does not find the Keltic element in domestic life so refreshing as to Mr. Arnold in literature, imagine a household with one wild Pequot woman communicated with by signs, for its maid of all work, and take courage. Those were serious times indeed, when your cook might give warning by taking your scalp or *chignon*, as the case might be, and making off with it into the woods. The fewness and dearness of servants made it necessary to call in temporary assistance for extraordinary occasions, and hence arose the common use of the word *help*. As the great majority kept no servants at all, and yet were liable to need them for work to which the family did not suffice, as, for instance, in harvest, the use of the word was naturally extended to all kinds of service. That it did not have its origin in any false shame at the condition itself, induced by democratic habits, is plain from the fact that it came into use while the word *servant* had a much wider application than now, and certainly implied no social stigma. Downing and Hooke, each at different times, one of them so late at 1667, wished to place a son as "servant" with one of the Winthrops. Roger Williams writes of his daughter, that "she desires to spend some time in service & liked much Mrs. Brenton, who wanted." This was, no doubt, in order to be well drilled in housekeeping, an example which might be followed still to advantage. John Tinker, himself the "servant" or steward of the second Winthrop, makes use of *help* in both the senses we have mentioned, and shows the transition of the word from its restricted to its more general application. "We have fallen a pretty deal of timber

& drawn some by Goodman Roger's team, but unless your worship have a good team of your own & a man to go with them, I shall be much distracted for *help* . . . & when our business is most in haste we shall be most to seek." Again, writing at harvest, as appears both by the date and by an elaborate pun—"I received the *sithes* you sent but in that there came not also yourself, it maketh me to *sighth*"—he says: "*Help* is scarce and hard to get, difficult to please, uncertain, &c. Means runneth out & wages on & I cannot make choice of my *help*."

It may be some consolation to know that the complaint of a decline in the quality of servants is no modern thing. Shakespeare makes Orlando say to Adam:

"O, good old man, how well in thee appears
The constant service of the antique world,
When service sweat for duty, not for meed!
Thou art not of the fashion of these times,
When none will sweat but for promotion."

When the faithful old servant is brought upon the stage, we may be sure he was getting rare. A century later, we have explicit testimony that things were as bad in this respect as they are now. Don Manuel Gonzales, who travelled in England in 1730, says of London servants: "As to common menial servants, they have great wages, are well kept and cloathed, but are notwithstanding the plague of almost every house in town. They form themselves into societies or rather confederacies, contributing to the maintenance of each other when out of place, and if any of them cannot manage the family where they are entertained, as they please, immediately they give notice they will be gone. There is no speaking to them, they are above correction, and if a master should attempt it, he may expect to be handsomely drubbed by the creature he feeds and harbours, or perhaps an action brought against him for it. It is become a common saying, *If my servant ben't a thief, if he be but honest, I can bear with other things.* And indeed it is very rare in London to meet with an honest servant."¹ Southey writes to his daughter Edith, in 1824, "All the maids eloped because I had turned a man out of the kitchen at eleven o'clock on the preceding night." Nay, Hugh Rhodes, in his *Boke of Nurture* (1577),

¹ *Collection of Voyages, etc., from the Library of the Earl of Oxford* vol. i. p. 151.

speaks of servants "ofte fleeting," *i.e.* leaving one master for another.

One of the most curious things revealed to us in these volumes is the fact that John Winthrop, Jr., was seeking the philosopher's stone, that universal elixir which could transmute all things to its own substance. This is plain from the correspondence of Edward Howes. Howes goes to a certain doctor, professedly to consult him about the method of making a cement for earthen vessels, no doubt crucibles. His account of him is amusing, and reminds one of Ben Jonson's Subtle. This was one of the many quacks who gulled men during that twilight through which alchemy was passing into chemistry. "This Dr, for a Dr he is, brags that if he have but the hint or notice of any useful thing not yet invented, he will undertake to find it out, except some few which he hath vowed not to meddle with as *vitrum maliabile, perpet. motus, via proxima ad Indos & lapis philos* : all, or anything else he will undertake, but for his private gain, to make a monopoly thereof & to sell the use or knowledge thereof at too high rates." This breed of pedlars in science is not yet extinct. The exceptions made by the Doctor show a becoming modesty. Again: "I have been 2 or 3 times with the Dr & can get but small satisfaction about your queries. . . . Yet I must confess he seemed very free to me, only in th: main he was mystical. This he said, that when the will of God is you shall know what you desire, it will come with such a light that it will make a harmony among all your authors, causing them sweetly to agree, & put you forever out of doubt & question." In another letter: "I cannot discover into *terram incognitam*, but I have had a ken of it showed unto me. The way to it is, for the most part horrible & fearful, the dangers none worse, to them that are *destinati filii* : sometimes I am traveling that way. . . . I think I have spoken with some that have been there."

Howes writes very cautiously: "Dear friend, I desire with all my heart that I might write plainer to you, but in discovering the mystery, I may diminish its majesty & give occasion to the profane to abuse it, if it should fall into unworthy hands." By and by he begins to think his first doctor a humbug, but he finds a better. Howes was evidently a man of imaginative temper, fit to be captivated by the

alchemistic theory of the unity of composition in nature, which was so attractive to Goethe. Perhaps the great poet was himself led to it by his Rosicrucian studies when writing the first part of *Faust*. Howes tells his friend that "there is all good to be found in unity, & all evil in duality & multiplicity. *Phoenix illa admiranda sola semper existit*, therefore while a man & she is two, he shall never see her"—a truth of very wide application, and too often lost sight of or never seen at all. "The Arabian Philos. I writ to you of, he was styled among us Dr Lyon, the best of all the Rosicrucians¹ that ever I met withal, far beyond Dr Ewer: they that are of his strain are knowing men; they pretend [*i.e.* claim] to live in free light, they honour God & do good to the people among whom they live, & I conceive you are in the right that they had their learning from Arabia."

Howes is a very interesting person, a mystic of the purest kind, and that while learning to be an attorney with Emanuel Downing. How little that perfunctory person dreamed of what was going on under his nose—as little as of the spiritual wonders that lay beyond the tip of it! Howes was a Swedenborgian before Swedenborg. Take this, for example: "But to our sympathetical business whereby we may communicate our minds one to another though the diameter of the earth interpose. *Diana non est centrum omnium*. I would have you so good a geometrician as to know your own centre. Did you ever yet measure your everlasting self, the length of your life, the breadth of your love, the depth of your wisdom & the height of your light? Let Truth be your centre, & you may do it, otherways not. I could wish you would now begin to leave off being altogether an outward man; this is but *casa Regentis*; the Ruler can draw you straight lines from your centre to the confines of an infinite circumference, by which you may pass from any part of the circumference to another without obstacle of earth or section of lines, if you observe & keep but one & the true & only centre, to pass by it, from it, & to it. Methinks I now see you *intus et extra* & talk to you, but you mind me not because you are from home, you are not within, you look as if you were careless of yourself; your hand & your voice differ; 't is my friend's hand, I know it well; but the voice is your enemy's. O, my friend, if you love me, get you

¹ Howes writes the word symbolically.

home, get you in! You have a friend as well as an enemy. Know them by their voices. The one is still driving or enticing you out; the other would have you stay within. Be within and keep within, & all that are within & keep within shall you see know & communicate with to the full, & shall not need to strain your outward senses to see & hear that which is like themselves uncertain & too-too often false, but, abiding forever within, in the centre of Truth, from thence you may behold and understand the innumerable divers emanations within the circumference, & still within; for without are falsities, lies, untruths, dogs &c." Howes was tolerant also, not from want of faith, but from depth of it. "The relation of your fight with the Indians I have read in print, but of the fight among yourselves, *bellum linguarum*, the strife of tongues, I have heard much, but little to the purpose. I wonder your people, that pretend to know so much, do not know that love is the fulfilling of the law, & that against love there is no law." Howes forgot that what might cause only a ripple in London might overwhelm the tiny Colony in Boston. Two years later, he writes more philosophically, and perhaps with a gentle irony, concerning "two monstrous births & a general earthquake." He hints that the people of the Bay might perhaps as well take these signs to themselves as lay them at the door of Mrs. Hutchinson and what not. "Where is there such another people then [as] in New England, that labors might & main to have Christ formed in them, yet would give or appoint him his shape & clothe him too? It cannot be denied that we have conceived many monstrous imaginations of Christ Jesus: the one imagination says, *Lo, here he is*; the other says, *Lo, there he is*; multiplicity of conceptions, but is there any one true shape of Him? And if one of many produce a shape, 'tis not the shape of the Son of God, but an ugly horrid metamorphosis. Neither is it a living shape, but a dead one, yet a crow thinks her own bird the fairest, & most prefer their own wisdom before God's, Antichrist before Christ." Howes had certainly arrived at that "centre" of which he speaks and was before his time, as a man of speculation, never a man of action, may sometimes be. He was fitter for Plotinus's colony than Winthrop's. He never came to New England, yet there was always a leaven of his style of thinkers here.

Howes was the true adept, seeking what spiritual ore there might be among the dross of the hermetic philosophy. What he says sincerely and inwardly was the cant of those outward professors of the doctrine who were content to dwell in the material part of it forever. In Jonathan Brewster, we have a specimen of these Wagners. Is it not curious, that there should have been a *balneum Mariæ* at New London two hundred years ago? that *la recherche de l'Absolu* should have been going on there in a log-hut, under constant fear that the Indians would put out, not merely the flame of one little life, but, far worse, the fire of our furnace, and so rob the world of this divine secret, just on the point of revealing itself? Alas! poor Brewster's secret was one that many have striven after before and since, who did not call themselves alchemists—the secret of getting gold without earning it—a chase that brings some men to a four-in-hand on Shoddy Avenue, and some to the Penitentiary, in both cases advertising its utter vanity. Brewster is a capital specimen of his class, who are better than the average, because they *do* mix a little imagination with their sordidness, and who have also their representatives among us, in those who expect the Jennings and other ideal estates in England. If Hawthorne had but known of him? And yet how perfectly did his genius divine that ideal element in our early New England life, conceiving what must have been without asking proof of what actually was!

An extract or two will sufficiently exhibit Brewster in his lures. Sending back some alchemistic book to Winthrop, he tells him that if his name be kept secret "I will write as clear a light, as far as I dare to, in finding the first ingredience. . . . The first figure in Flamonell doth plainly resemble the first ingredience, what it is, & from whence it comes, & how gotten, as there you may plainly see set forth by 2 resemblances held in a man's hand; for the confections there named is a delusion, for they are but the operations of the work after some time set, as the scum of the Red Sea, which is the Virgin's Milk upon the top of the vessel, white. Red Sea is the sun & moon calcinated & brought & reduced into water mineral which in some time, & most of the whole time, is red. 2ndly, the fat of mercurial wind, that is the fat or quintessence of sun & moon, earth & water, drawn out from them both, & flies aloft & bore up by the operation of our

mercury, that is our fire which is our air or wind." This is as satisfactory as Lepidus's account of the generation of the crocodile: "Your serpent of Egypt is bred now of your mud by the operation of your sun: so is your crocodile." After describing the three kinds of fire, that of the lamp, that of ashes, and that against nature, which last "is the fire of fire, that is the secret fire drawn up, being the quintessence of the sun & moon, with the other mercurial water joined with & together, which is fire elemental," he tells us that "these fires are & doth contain the whole mystery of the work." The reader, perhaps, thinks that he has nothing to do but forthwith to turn all the lead he can lay his hands on into gold. But no: "If you had the first ingredience & the proportion of each, yet all were nothing if you had not the certain times & seasons of the planets & signs, when to give more or less of this fire, namely a hot & dry, a cold & moist fire which you must use in the mercurial water before it comes to black & after into white & then red, which is only done by these fires, which when you practise you will easily see & perceive, that you shall stand amazed, & admire at the great & admirable wisdom of God, that can produce such a wonderful, efficacious, powerful thing as this is to convert all metallic bodies to its own nature, which may be well called a first essence. I say by such weak simple means of so little value & so little & easy labor and skill, that I may say with Artephus, 200 page, it is of a worke so easy & short, fitter for women & young children than sage and grave men. . . . I thank the Lord I understand the matter perfectly in the said book, yet I could desire to have it again 12 months hence, for about that time I shall have occasion to peruse, whenas I come to the second working which is most difficult, which will be some three or [4] months before the perfect white, & afterwards, as Artephus saith, I may burn my books, for he saith it is one regiment as well for the red as for the white. The Lord in mercy give me life to see the end of it!"—an exclamation I more than once made in the course of some of Brewster's periods.

Again, under pledge of profound secrecy, he sends Winthrop a manuscript, which he may communicate to the owner of the volume formerly lent, because "it gave me such light in the second work as I should not readily have found out by study, also & especially how to work the elixir fit for

medicine & healing all maladies which is clean another way of working than we held formerly. Also a light given how to dissolve any hard substance into the elixir, which is also another work. And many other things which in Ribley [Ripley?] I could not find out. More works of the same I would gladly see . . . for, Sir, so it is that any book of this subject, I can understand it though never so darkly written, having both knowledge & experience of the world,¹ that now easily I may understand their envious carriages to hide it. . . . You may marvel why I should give any light to others in this thing before I have perfected my own. This know, that my work being true thus far by all their writings, it cannot fail . . . for if, &c. &c., you cannot miss if you would, except you break your glass." He confesses he is mistaken as to the time required, which he now, as well as I can make out, reckons at about ten years. "I fear I shall not live to see it finished, in regard partly of the Indians who, I fear, will raise wars, as also I have a conceit that God sees me not worthy of such a blessing, by reason of my manifold miscarriages." Therefore he "will shortly write all the whole work in a few words plainly which may be done in 20 lines from the first to the last & seal it up in a little box & subscribe it to yourself . . . & will so write it that neither wife nor children shall know thereof." If Winthrop should succeed in bringing the work to perfection, Brewster begs him to remember his wife and children. "I mean if this my work should miscarry by wars of the Indians, for I may not remove it till it be perfected, otherwise I should so unsettle the body by removing sun & moon out of their settled places, that there would then be no other afterworking." Once more he inculcates secrecy, and for a most comical reason: "For it is such a secret as is not fit for every one either for secrecy or for parts to use it, as God's secret of his glory, to do good there-with, or else they may do a great deal of hurt, spending & employing it to satisfy sinful lusts. Therefore, I intreat you, sir, spare to use my name, & let my letters I send either be safely kept or burned that I write about it, for indeed, sir, I am more than before sensible of the evil effects that will arise by the publishing of it. I should never be at quiet, neither at home nor abroad, for one or other that would be enquiring & seeking after knowledge thereof,

¹ "World" here should clearly be "work."

that I should be tired out & forced to leave the place: nay, it would be blazed abroad into Europe." How much more comic is nature than any comedy! *Mutato nomine de te.* Take heart, ambitious youth, the sun and moon will be no more disconcerted by any effort of yours, than by the pots and pans of Jonathan Brewster. It is a curious proof of the quality so common (yet so often overlooked) in human character, that Brewster was all this while manager of the Plymouth trading-post, near what is now New London. The only professors of the transmutation of metals who still impose on mankind are to be found in what is styled the critical department of literature. Their *materia prima*, or universal solvent, serves equally for the lead of Tupper or the brass of Swinburne.

In a letter of Sir Kenelm Digby to J. Winthrop, Jr., we find some odd prescriptions. "For all sorts of agues, I have of late tried the following magnetical experiment with infallible success. Pare the patient's nails when the fit is coming on, & put the parings into a little bag of fine linen or sarsenet, & tie that about a live eel's neck in a tub of water. The eel will die & the patient will recover. And if a dog or hog eat that eel, they will also die."

"The man recovered of the bite,
The dog it was that died!"

"I have known one that cured all deliriums & frenzies whatsoever, & at once taking, with an elixir made of dew, nothing but dew purified & nipped up in a glass & digested 15 months till all of it was become a grey powder, not one drop of humidity remaining. This I know to be true, & that first it was as black as ink, then green, then gray, & at 22 months' end it was as white and lustrous as any oriental pearl. But it cured manias at 15 months' end." Poor Brewster would have been the better for a dose of it, as well as some in our day, who expect to cure men of being men by act of Congress. In the same letter Digby boasts of having made known the properties of *quinquina*, and also of the sympathetic powder, with which latter he wrought a "famous cure" of pleasant James Howell, author of the *Letters*. I do not recollect that Howell anywhere alludes to it. In the same letter, Digby speaks of the books he had sent to Harvard College, and promises to send more. In all Paris he cannot find a copy of Blaise Viginere *Des Chiffres*. "I had it in my library in

England, but at the plundering of my house I lost it with many other good books. I have *laid out* in all places for it." The words we have under-scored would be called a Yankeeism now. The house was Gatehurst, a fine Elizabethan dwelling, still, or lately, standing. Digby made his peace with Cromwell, and professes his readiness to spend his blood for him. He kept well with both sides, and we are not surprised to find Hooke saying that he hears no good of him from any.

The early colonists found it needful to bring over a few trained soldiers, both as drill-masters and engineers. Underhill, Patrick, and Gardner had served in the Low Countries, probably also Mason. As Paris has been said to be not precisely the place for a deacon, so the camp of the Prince of Orange could hardly have been the best training-school for Puritans in practice, however it may have been for masters of casuistic theology. The position of these rough warriors among a people like those of the first emigration must have been a droll one. That of Captain Underhill certainly was. In all our early history, there is no figure so comic. Full of the pedantry of his profession and fond of noble phrases, he is a kind of cross between Dugald Dalgetty and Ancient Pistol, with a slight relish of the *miles gloriosus*. Underhill had taken side with Mr. Wheelwright in his heretical opinions, and there is every reason why he should have maintained, with all the ardour of personal interest, the efficiency of a covenant of grace without reference to the works of the subject of it. Coming back from a visit to England in 1638, he "was questioned for some speeches uttered by him in the ship, viz: that they at Boston were zealous as the scribes and pharisees were and as Paul was before his conversion, which he denying, they were proved to his face by a sober woman whom he had seduced in the ship and drawn to his opinion; but she was afterwards better informed in the truth. Among other passages, he told her how he came by his assurance, saying that, having long lain under a spirit of bondage, and continued in a legal way near five years, he could get no assurance, till at length, as he was taking a pipe of the good creature tobacco, the spirit fell home upon his heart, an absolute promise of free grace, with such assurance and joy, as he never doubted once of his good estate, neither should he, whatsoever sin he should fall into—a good preparative for such motions as he familiarly used to make

to some of that sex. . . . The next day he was called again and banished. The Lord's day after, he made a speech in the assembly, showing that as the Lord was pleased to convert Paul as he was persecuting, &c., so he might manifest himself to him as he was making moderate use of the good creature called tobacco." A week later "he was privately dealt with upon suspicion of incontinency . . . but his excuse was that the woman was in great trouble of mind, and some temptations, and that he resorted to her to comfort her." He went to the Eastward, and, having run himself out there, thought it best to come back to Boston and reinstate himself by eating his leek. "He came in his worst clothes (being accustomed to take great pride in his bravery and neatness) without a band, in a foul linen cap pulled close to his eyes, and, standing upon a form, he did, with many deep sighs and abundance of tears, lay open his wicked course, his adultery, his hypocrisy, &c. He spake well, save that his blubbering, &c., interrupted him." We hope he was a sincere penitent, but men of his complexion are apt to be pleased with such a tragi-comedy of self-abasement, if only they can be chief actors and conspicuous enough therein. In the correspondence before us Underhill appears in full turkey-cock proportions. Not having been advanced according to his own opinion of his merits, he writes to Governor Winthrop, with an oblique threat that must have amused him somewhat: "I profess, sir, till I know the cause, I shall not be satisfied, but I hope God will subdue me to his will; yet this I say that such handling of officers in foreign parts hath so far subverted some of them as to cause them turn public rebels against their state & kingdom, which God forbid should ever be found once so much as to appear in my breast." Why, then the world's mine oyster, which I with sword will open! Next we hear him on a point of military discipline at Salem. "It is this: how they have of their own appointment made them a captain, lieutenant, & ensign, & after such a manner as was never heard of in any school of war, nor in kingdom under heaven. . . . For my part, if there should not be a reformation in this disordered practice, I would not acknowledge such officers. If officers should be of no better esteem than for constables to place them, & martial discipline to proceed disorderly, I would rather lay down my command than to shame so noble

a prince from whom we came." Again: "Whereas it is somewhat questionable whether the three months I was absent, as well in the service of the country as of other particular persons, my request therefore is that this honoured Court would be pleased to decide this controversy, myself alleging it to be the custom of Nations that, if a Commander be lent to another State, by that State to whom he is a servant, both his place & means is not detained from him, so long as he doth not refuse the call of his own State to which he is a servant, in case they shall call him home. Then bringing up again his "ancient suite" for a grant of land, he throws in a neat touch of piety: "& if the honoured Court shall vouchsafe to make some addition, that which hath not been deserved, by the same power of God, may be in due season." In a postscript, he gives a fine philosophical reason for this desired addition which will go to the hearts of many in these days of high prices and wasteful taxation. "The time was when a little went far; then much was not known nor desired; the reason of the difference lieth only in the error of judgment, for nature requires no more to uphold it now than when it was satisfied with less." The valiant Captain interprets the law of nations, as sovereign powers are wont to do, to suit his advantage in the special case. We find a parallel case in a letter of Bryan Rosseter to John Winthrop, Jr., pleading for a remission of taxes. "The lawes of nations exempt allowed phisitions from personall services, & their estates from rates & assessments." In the Declaration of the town of Southampton on Long Island (1673), the dignity of constable is valued at a juster rate than Underhill was inclined to put upon it. The Dutch, it seems, demanded of them "to deliver up to them the badge of Civil and Military power; namely, the Constable's staffe & the Colonel's." Mayor Munroe of New Orleans did not more effectually magnify his office when he surrendered the city to General Butler.

Underhill's style is always of the finest. His spelling was under the purest covenant of grace. I must give a single specimen of it from a letter whose high moral tone is all the more diverting that it was written while he was under excommunication for the sin which he afterwards confessed. It is addressed to Winthrop and Dudley. "Honored in the Lord. Your silenc onc more admire me. I youse chris-

chan playnnes. I know you love it. Silenc can not reduce the hart of youer loves brother: I would the rightchous would smite me, espeschali youer slfe & the honored Depoti to whom I also dereckt this letter together with youer honored slfe. Jesus Christ did wayt; & God his Father did dig and telfe bout the barren figtre before he would cast it of: I would to God you would tender my soule so as to youse playnnes with me." (As if anything could be plainer than excommunication and banishment!) "I wrot to you both, but now [no] answer; & here I am dayli abused by malischous tongse: John Baker I here hath rot to the honored depoti how as I was dronck & like to be cild, & both falc, upon okachon I delt with Wannerton for intrushon, & findding them resolutli bent to rout out all gud a mong us & advanc there superstischous waye, & by boystrous words indeferd to fritten men to acomplish his end, & he abusing me to my face, dru upon him with intent to corb his insolent and dasterdli sperrite, but now [no] danger of my life, although it might hafe bin just with God to hafe giffen me in the hanse of youer enemise & mine, for they hat the wayse of the Lord & them that profes them, & therefore layes trapes to cachte the pore into there deboyst corses, as ister daye on Pickeren their Chorch Warden caim up to us with intent to mak some of ourse dronc, as is sospeckted, but the Lord soferd him so to misdemen himslfe as he is likli to li by the hielse this too month. . . . My hombel request is that you will be charitabel of me. . . . Let justies and merci be goyned. . . . You may plese to soggest youer will to this barrer, you will find him tracktabel." The concluding phrase seems admirably chosen, when we consider the means of making people "tractable" which the magistrates of the Bay had in their hands, and were not slow to exercise, as Underhill himself had experienced.

I cannot deny myself the pleasure of giving one more specimen of the Captain's "grand-delinquent" style, as I once heard such fine writing called by a person who little dreamed what a hit he had made. So far as I have observed, our public defaulters, and others who have nothing to say for themselves, always rise in style as they sink in self-respect. He is speaking of one Scott, who had laid claim to certain lands, and had been called on to show his title. "If he break the comand of the Asembli & bring not in the counterfit

portreture of the King imprest in yello waxe, anext to his false perpetuiti of 20 mile square, where by he did chet the Town of Brouckhaven, he is to induer the sentance of the Court of Asisies." Pistol would have been charmed with that splendid amplification of the Great Seal We have seen nothing like it in our day, except in a speech made to Mr. George Peabody at Danvers, if I recollect, while that gentleman was so elaborately concealing from his left hand what his right had been doing. As examples of Captain Underhill's adroitness in phonetic spelling, I offer *safarabel* and *poseschonse*, and reluctantly leave him.

Another very entertaining fellow for those who are willing to work through a pretty thick husk of tiresomeness for a genuine kernel of humour underneath is Coddington. The elder Winthrop endured many trials, but I doubt if any were sharper than those which his son had to undergo in the correspondence of this excellently tiresome man. *Tantæ molis Romanam condere gentem!* The dulness of Coddington, always that of no ordinary man, became irritable and aggressive after being stung by the gadfly of Quakerism. Running counter to its proper nature, it made him morbidly uneasy. Already an Anabaptist, his brain does not seem to have been large enough to lodge two maggots at once with any comfort to himself. Fancy John Winthrop, Jr., with all the affairs of the Connecticut Colony on his back, expected to prescribe alike for the spiritual and bodily ailments of all the hypochondriacs in his government, and with Philip's war impending—fancy him exposed also to perpetual trials like this: "G. F. [George Fox] hath sent thee a book of his by Jere: Bull, & two more now which thou mayest communicate to thy Council & officers. Also I remember before thy last being in England, I sent thee a book written by Francis Howgall against persecution, by Joseph Nicallson which book thou lovingly accepted and communicated to the Commissioners of the United Colonies (as I desired) also J. N. thou entertained with a loving respect which encouraged me" (fatal hospitality!)—"As a token of that ancient love that for this 42 years I have had for thee, I have sent thee three Manuscripts, one of 5 queries, other is of 15, about the love of Jesus &c. The 3d is why we cannot come to the worship which was not set up by Christ Jesus, which I desire thee to communicate to the priests to answer in thy jurisdiction, the

Massachusetts, New Plymouth, or elsewhere, & send their answer in writing to me. Also two printed papers to set up in thy house. It's reported in Barbadoes that thy brother Sammuell shall be sent Governour to Antego." What a mere dust of sugar in the last sentence for such a portentous pill! In his next letter he has other writings of G. F., "not yet copied, which if thou desireth, when I hear from thee, I may convey them unto thee. Also sence G. Ffox departure William Edmondson is arrived at this Island, who having given out a paper to all in authority, which, my wife having copied, I have here inclosed presented thee therewith." Books and manuscripts were not all. Coddington was also glad to bestow on Winthrop any wandering tediousness in the flesh that came to hand. "I now understand of John Stubbs freedom to visit thee (with the said Jo: B.) he is a larned man, as witness the battle door¹ on 35 languages"—a terrible man this, capable of inflicting himself on three dozen different kindreds of men. It will be observed that Coddington, with his "thou desireths," is not quite so well up in the grammar of his thee-and-thouing as my Lord Coke. Indeed, it is rather pleasant to see that in his alarm about "the enemy," in 1673, he backslides into the second person plural. If Winthrop ever looked over his father's correspondence, he would have read in a letter of Henry Jacie the following dreadful example of retribution: "The last news we heard was that the Bores in Bavaria slew about 300 of the Swedish forces & took about 200 prisoners, of which they put out the eyes of some & cut out the tongues of others & so sent them to the King of Sweden, which caused him to lament bytterly for an hour. Then he sent an army & destroyed those Bores, about 200 or 300 of their towns. Thus we hear." Think of that, Master Coddington! Could the sinful heart of man always suppress the wish that a Gustavus might arise to do judgment on the Bores of Rhode Island? The unkindest part of it was that, on Coddington's own statement, Winthrop had never persecuted the Quakers, and had even endeavoured to save Robinson and Stevenson in 1659.

Speaking of the execution of these two martyrs to the bee in their bonnets, John Davenport gives us a capital example of the way in which Divine "judgments" may be made to

¹The title-page of which our learned Marsh has cited for the etymology of the word.

work both ways at the pleasure of the interpreter. As the crowd was going home from the hanging, a drawbridge gave way, and some lives were lost. The Quakers, of course, made the most of this lesson to the *pontifices* in the bearing power of timber, claiming it as a proof of God's wrath against the persecutors. This was rather hard, since none of the magistrates perished, and the popular feeling was strongly in favour of the victims of their severity. But Davenport gallantly captures these Quaker guns, and turns them against the enemy himself. "Sir, the hurt that befell so many, by their own rashness, at the Draw Bridge in Boston, being on the day that the Quakers were executed, was not without God's special providence in judgment and wrath, I fear, against the Quakers and their abettors, who will be much hardened thereby." This is admirable, especially as his parenthesis about "their own rashness" assumes that the whole thing was owing to natural causes. The pity for the Quakers, too, implied in the "I fear," is a nice touch. It is always noticeable how much more liberal those who deal in God's command without his power are of his wrath than of his mercy. But we should never understand the Puritans if we did not bear in mind that they were still prisoners in that religion of Fear which casts out Love. The nearness of God was oftener a terror than a comfort to them. Yet perhaps in them was the last apparition of Faith as a wonder-worker in human affairs. Take away from them what you will, you cannot deny them *that*, and its constant presence made them great in a way and measure of which this generation, it is to be feared, can have but a very inadequate conception. If men now-a-days find their tone antipathetic, it would be modest at least to consider whether the fault be wholly theirs—whether it was they who lacked, or we who have lost. Whether they were right or wrong in their dealing with the Quakers is not a question to be decided glibly after two centuries' struggle toward a conception of toleration very imperfect even yet, perhaps impossible to human nature. If they did not choose what seems to us the wisest way of keeping the devil out of their household, they certainly had a very honest will to keep him out, which we might emulate with advantage. However it be in other cases, historic toleration must include intolerance among things to be tolerated.

The false notion which the first settlers had of the savages by whom the continent was befead rather than inhabited, arose in part from what they had heard of Mexico and Peru, in part from the splendid exaggerations of the early travellers, who could give their readers an El Dorado at the cheap cost of a good lie. Hence the kings, dukes, and earls who were so plenty among the red men. Pride of descent takes many odd shapes, none odder than when it hugs itself in an ancestry of filthy barbarians, who daubed themselves for ornament with a mixture of bear's-grease and soot, or coloured clay, and were called emperors by Captain John Smith and his compeers. The droll contrast between this imaginary royalty and the squalid reality is nowhere exposed with more ludicrous unconsciousness than in the following passage of a letter from Fitz-John Winthrop to his father, November 1674: "The bearer hereof, Mr. Danyell, one of the Royal Indian blood . . . does desire me to give an account to yourself of the late unhappy accident which has happened to him. A little time since, a careless girl playing with fire at the door, it immediately took hold of the mats, and in an instant consumed it to ashes, with all the common as well as his lady's chamber furniture, and his own wardrobe and armory, Indian plate, and money to the value (as is credibly reported in his estimation) of more than an hundred pounds Indian. . . . The Indians have handsomely already built him a good house and brought him in several necessaries for his present supply, but that which takes deepest melancholy impression upon him is the loss of an excellent Masathuset cloth cloak and hat, which was only seen upon holy days and their general sessions. His journey at this time is only to intreat your favor and the gentlemen there for a kind relief in his necessity, having no kind of garment but a short jerkin which was charitably given him by one of his Common-Councilmen. He principally aims at a cloak hat."

" King Stephen was a worthy peer,
His breeches cost him half-a-crown."

But it will be observed that there is no allusion to any such article of dress in the costume of this prince of Pequot. Some light is perhaps thrown on this deficiency by a line or two in one of Williams's letters, where he says: "I have long had scruples of selling the Natives ought but what may

tend or bring to civilising: I therefore neither brought nor shall sell them loose coats nor breeches." Precisely the opposite course was deemed effectual with the Highland Scotch, between whom and our Indians there was a very close analogy. They were compelled by law to adopt the usages of *Gallia Braccata*, and sansculottism made a penal offence. What impediment to civilisation Williams had discovered in the offending garment it is hard to say. It is a question for Herr Teufelsdröck. Royalty, at any rate, in our day, is dependent for much of its success on the tailor. Williams's opportunities of studying the Indian character were perhaps greater than those of any other man of his time. He was always an advocate for justice toward them. But he seems to have had no better opinion of them than Mr. Parkman,¹ calling them shortly and sharply, "wolves endowed with men's brains." The same change of feeling has followed the same causes in their case as in that of the Highlanders—they have become romantic in proportion as they have ceased to be dangerous.

As exhibitions of the writer's character, no letters in the collection have interested us more than those of John Tinker, who for many years was a kind of steward for John Winthrop and his son. They show him to have been a thoroughly faithful, grateful, and unselfish servant. He does not seem to have prospered except in winning respect, for when he died his funeral charges were paid by the public. We learn from one of his letters that John Winthrop, Jr., had a negro (presumably a slave) at Paquanet, for he says that a mad cow there "had almost spoiled the neger & made him ferfull to tend the rest of the cattell." That such slaves must have been rare, however, is plain from his constant complaints about the difficulty of procuring "help," some of which we have already quoted. His spelling of the word "ferfull" shows that the New England pronunciation of that word had been brought from the old country. He also uses the word "creatures" for kine, and the like, precisely as our farmers do now. There is one very comical passage in a letter of the 2nd of August, 1660, where he says: "There hath been a motion by some, the chief of the town (New London), for my keeping an ordinary, or rather under the notion of a tavern, which, *though it suits not with my genius,*

¹ In his *Jesuits in North America*.

yet am almost persuaded to accept for some good grounds." Tinker's modesty is most creditable to him, and we wish it were more common now. No people on the face of the earth suffer so much as we from impostors who keep inconveniences, "under the notion of a tavern," without any call of natural genius thereto; none endure with such unexemplary patience the superb indifference of inn-keepers, and the condescending inattention of their gentlemanly deputies. We are the thralls of our railroads and hotels, and we deserve it.

Richard Saltonstall writes to John Winthrop, Jr., in 1636: "The best thing that I have to beg your thoughts for at this present is a motto or two that Mr. Prynne hath writ upon his chamber walls in the Tower." We copy a few phrases, chiefly for the contrast they make with Lovelace's famous verses to Althea. Nothing could mark more sharply the different habits of mind in Puritan and Cavalier. Lovelace is very charming, but he sings

"The sweetness, mercy, majesty,
And glories of his King,"

to wit, Charles I. To him "stone walls do not a prison make," so long as he has "freedom in his love, and in his soul is free." Prynne's King was of another and higher kind: "*Carcer excludit mundum, includit Deum. Deus est turris etiam in turre: turris libertatis in turre angustiae: Turris quietis in turre molestiae. . . . Arctari non potest qui in ipsa Dei infinitate incarceratus spatiat. . . . Nil crus sentit in nervo si animus sit in caelo: nil corpus patitur in ergastulo, si anima sit in Christo.*" If Lovelace has the advantage in fancy, Prynne has it as clearly in depth of sentiment. There could be little doubt which of the parties represented by these men would have the better if it came to a death-grapple.

There is curiously little sentiment in these volumes. Most of the letters, except where some point of doctrine is concerned, are those of shrewd, practical men, busy about the affairs of this world, and earnest to build their New Jerusalem on something more solid than cloud. The truth is, that men anxious about their souls have not been by any means the least skilful in providing for the wants of the body. It was far less the enthusiasm than the common-sense of the Puritans which made them what they were in politics and religion.

That a great change should be wrought in the settlers by the circumstances of their position was inevitable; that this change should have had some disillusion in it, that it should have weaned them from the ideal and wonted them to the actual, was equally so. In 1664, not much more than a generation after the settlement, Williams prophesies: "When we that have been the eldest are rotting (to-morrow or next day), a generation will act, I fear, far unlike the first Winthrops and their models of love. I fear that the common trinity of the world (profit, preferment, pleasure) will here be the *tria omnia* as in all the world beside, that Prelacy and Papacy too will in this wilderness predominate, that god Land will be (as now it is) as great a god with us English as god Gold was with the Spaniards. While we are here, noble sir, let us *viriliter hoc agere, rem agere humanam, divinam, Christianam*, which, I believe, is all of a most public genius," or, as we should now say, true patriotism. If Williams means no play on the words *humanam* and *divinam*, the order of precedence in which he marshals them is noticeable. A generation later, what Williams had predicted was in a great measure verified. But what made New England Puritanism narrow was what made Scotch Cameronianism narrow—its being secluded from the great movement of the nation. Till 1660 the colony was ruled and mostly inhabited by Englishmen closely connected with the party dominant in the mother country, and with their minds broadened by having to deal with questions of state and European policy. After that time they sank rapidly into provincials, narrow in thought, in culture, in creed. Such a pedantic portent as Cotton Mather would have been impossible in the first generation: he was the natural growth of the third—the manifest judgment of God on a generation who thought Words a saving substitute for Things. Perhaps some injustice has been done to men like the second Governor Dudley, and it should be counted to them rather as a merit than a fault, that they wished to bring New England back within reach of the invigorating influence of national sympathies, and to rescue it from a tradition which had become empty formalism. Puritanism was dead, and its profession had become a wearisome cant before the Revolution of 1688 gave it that vital force in politics which it had lost in religion.

I have gleaned all I could of what is morally picturesque or

characteristic from these volumes, but New England history has rather a gregarious than a personal interest. Here, by inherent necessity rather than design, was made the first experiment in practical democracy, and accordingly hence began that reaction of the New World upon the Old whose result can hardly yet be estimated. There is here no temptation to make a hero, who shall sum up his own individuality and carry forward by his own will that purpose of which we seem to catch such bewitching glances in history, which reveals itself more clearly and constantly, perhaps, in the annals of New England than elsewhere, and which yet, at best, is but tentative, doubtful of itself, turned this way and that by chance, made up of instinct, and modified by circumstances quite as much as it is directed by deliberate forethought. Such a purpose, or natural craving, or result of temporary influences, may be misguided by a powerful character to his own ends, or, if he be strongly in sympathy with it, may be hastened toward its own fulfilment; but there is no such heroic element in our drama, and what is remarkable is, that, under whatever government, democracy grew with the growth of the New England Colonies, and was at last potent enough to wrench them, and the better part of the continent with them, from the mother country. It is true that Jefferson embodied in the Declaration of Independence the speculative theories he had learned in France, but the impulse to separation came from New England; and those theories had been long since embodied there in the practice of the people, if they had never been formulated in distinct propositions.

I have little sympathy with declaimers about the Pilgrim Fathers, who look upon them all as men of grand conceptions and superhuman foresight. An entire ship's company of Columbuses is what the world never saw. It is not wise to form any theory and fit our facts to it, as a man in a hurry is apt to cram his travelling-bag, with a total disregard of shape or texture. But perhaps it may be found that the facts will only fit comfortably together on a single plan, namely, that the fathers did have a conception (which those will call grand who regard simplicity as a necessary element of grandeur) of founding here a commonwealth on those two eternal bases of Faith and Work; that they had, indeed, no revolutionary ideas of universal liberty, but yet, what

answered the purpose quite as well, an abiding faith in the brotherhood of man and the fatherhood of God; and that they did not so much propose to make all things new, as to develop the latent possibilities of English law and English character, by clearing away the fences by which the abuse of the one was gradually discommoning the other from the broad fields of natural right. They were not in advance of their age, as it is called, for no one who is so can ever work profitably in it; but they were alive to the highest and most earnest thinking of their time.

LESSING ¹

WHEN Burns's humour gave its last pathetic flicker in his "John, don't let the awkward squad fire over me," was he thinking of actual brother-volunteers, or of possible biographers? Did his words betray only the rhythmic sensitiveness of poetic nerves, or were they a foreboding of that helpless future, when the poet lies at the mercy of the plodder,—of that bi-voluminous shape in which dullness overtakes and revenges itself on genius at last? Certainly Burns has suffered as much as most large-natured creatures from well-meaning efforts to account for him, to explain him away, to bring him into harmony with those well-regulated minds which, during a good part of the last century, found out a way, through rhyme, to snatch a prosiness beyond the reach of prose. Nay, he has been wronged also by that other want of true appreciation, which deals in panegyric, and would put asunder those two things which God has joined—the poet and the man—as if it were not the same rash improvidence that was the happiness of the verse and the misfortune of the gauger. But his deathbed was at least not haunted by the unappeasable apprehension of a German for his biographer; and that the fame of Lessing should have four times survived this cunningest assault of oblivion is proof enough that its base is broad and deep-set.

There seems to be, in the average German mind, an inability or a disinclination to see a thing as it really is, unless it be a matter of science. It finds its keenest pleasure in divining a profound significance in the most trifling things, and the number of mare's-nests that have been stared into by the German *Gelehrter* through his spectacles passes calculation. They are the one object of contemplation that makes

¹ G. E. Lessing. *Sein Leben und seine Werke*. Von Adolf Stahr. Vermehrte und verbesserte Volks-Ausgabe. Dritte Auflage. Berlin. 1864.

The Same. Translated by E. P. Evans, Ph.D., Professor, etc., in the University of Michigan. Boston: W. V. Spencer. 1866. 2 vols.

G. E. Lessing's *Sämmtliche Schriften*, herausgegeben von Karl Lachmann. 1853-57. 12 Bände.

that singular being perfectly happy, and they seem to be as common as those of the stork. In the dark forest of æsthetics, particularly, he finds them at every turn—"fanno tutto il loco varo." If the greater part of our English criticism is apt only to skim the surface, the German, by way of being profound, too often burrows in delighted darkness quite beneath its subject, till the reader feels the ground hollow beneath him, and is fearful of caving into unknown depths of stagnant metaphysic air at every step. The Commentary on Shakespeare of Gervinus, a really superior man, reminds one of the Roman Campagna, penetrated underground in all directions by strange winding caverns, the work of human borers in search of we know not what. Above are the divine poet's larks and daisies, his incommunicable skies, his broad prospects of life and nature; and meanwhile our Teutonic *teredo* worms his way below, and offers to be our guide into an obscurity of his own contriving. The reaction of language upon style, and even upon thought, by its limitations on the one hand, and its suggestions on the other, is so apparent to any one who has made even a slight study of comparative literature, that we have sometimes thought the German tongue at least an accessory before the fact, if nothing more, in the offences of German literature. The language has such a fatal genius for going stern-foremost, for yawing, and for not minding the helm without some ten minutes' notice in advance, that he must be a great sailor indeed who can safely make it the vehicle for anything but imperishable commodities. Vischer's *Æsthetik*, the best treatise on the subject, ancient or modern, is such a book as none but a German could write, and it is written as none but a German could have written it. The abstracts of its sections are sometimes nearly as long as the sections themselves, and it is as hard to make out which head belongs to which tail, as in a knot of snakes thawing themselves into sluggish individuality under a spring sun. The average German professor spends his life in making lanterns fit to guide us through the obscurest passages of all the *ologies* and *ysics*, and there are none in the world of such honest workmanship. They are durable, they have intensifying glasses, reflectors of the most scientific make, capital sockets in which to set a light, and a handsome lump of potentially illuminating tallow is thrown in. But, in order to *see* by them, the explorer must make

his own candle, supply his own cohesive wick of common-sense, and light it himself. And yet the admirable thoroughness of the German intellect! We should be ungrateful indeed if we did not acknowledge that it has supplied the raw material in almost every branch of science for the defter wits of other nations to work on; yet we have a suspicion that there are certain lighter departments of literature in which it may be misapplied, and turn into something very like clumsiness. Delightful as Jean Paul's humour is, how much more so would it be if he only knew when to stop! Ethereally deep as is his sentiment, should we not feel it more if he sometimes gave us a little less of it—if he would only not always deal out his wine by beer-measure? So thorough is the German mind, that might it not seem now and then to work quite through its subject, and expatiate in cheerful unconsciousness on the other side thereof?

With all its merits of a higher and deeper kind, it yet seems to us that German literature has not quite satisfactorily answered that so long-standing question of the French Abbé about *esprit*. Hard as it is for a German to be clear, still harder to be light, he is more than ever awkward in his attempts to produce that quality of style, so peculiarly French, which is neither wit nor liveliness taken singly, but a mixture of the two that must be drunk while the effervescence lasts, and will not bear exportation into any other language. German criticism, excellent in other respects, and immeasurably superior to that of any other nation in its constructive faculty, in its instinct for getting at whatever principle of life lies at the heart of a work of genius, is seldom lucid, almost never entertaining. It may turn its light, if we have patience, into every obscurest cranny of its subject, one after another, but it never flashes light *out* of the subject itself, as Sainte Beuve, for example, so often does, and with such unexpected charm. We should be inclined to put Julian Schmidt at the head of living critics in all the more essential elements of his outfit; but with him is not one conscious at too frequent intervals of the professorial grind—of that German tendency to bear on too heavily, where a French critic would touch and go with such exquisite measure? The Great Nation, as it cheerfully calls itself, is in nothing greater than its talent for saying little things agreeably, which is perhaps the very top of mere culture,

and in literature is the next best thing to the power of saying great things as easily as if they were little. German learning, like the elephants of Pyrrhus, is always in danger of turning upon what it was intended to adorn and reinforce, and trampling it ponderously to death. And yet what do we not owe it? Mastering all-languages, all records of intellectual man, it has been able, or has enabled others, to strip away the husks of nationality and conventionalism from the literatures of many races, and to disengage that kernel of human truth which is the germinating principle of them all. Nay, it has taught us to recognise also a certain value in those husks, whether as shelter for the unripe or food for the fallen seed.

That the general want of style in German authors is not wholly the fault of the language is shown by Heine (a man of mixed blood), who can be daintily light in German; that it is not altogether a matter of race is clear from the graceful airiness of Erasmus and Reuchlin in Latin, and of Grimm in French. The sense of heaviness which creeps over the reader from so many German books is mainly due, we suspect, to the language, which seems well-nigh incapable of that aerial perspective so delightful in first-rate French, and even English, writing. But there must also be in the national character an insensibility to proportion, a want of that instinctive discretion which we call tact. Nothing short of this will account for the perpetual groping of German literature after some foreign mould in which to cast its thought or feeling, now trying a Louis Quatorze pattern, then something supposed to be Shakespearian, and at last going back to ancient Greece, or even Persia. Goethe himself, limpidly perfect as are many of his shorter poems, often fails in giving artistic coherence to his longer works. Leaving deeper qualities wholly out of the question, *Wilhelm Meister* seems a mere aggregation of episodes if compared with such a masterpiece as *Paul and Virginia*, or even with a happy improvisation like the *Vicar of Wakefield*. The second part of *Faust*, too, is rather a reflection of Goethe's own changed view of life and man's relation to it, than an harmonious completion of the original conception. Full of placid wisdom and exquisite poetry it certainly is; but if we look at it as a poem, it seems more as if the author had striven to get in all he could, than to leave out all he might. We cannot help asking what business have paper money and

political economy and geognosy here? We confess that Thales and the Homunculus weary us not a little, unless, indeed, a poem be nothing, after all, but a prolonged conundrum. Many of Schiller's lyrical poems—though the best of them find no match in modern verse for rapid energy, the very axles of language kindling with swiftness—seem disproportionately long in parts, and the thought too often has the life well-nigh squeezed out of it in the sevenfold coils of diction, dappled though it be with splendid imagery.

In German sentiment, which runs over so easily into sentimentalism, a foreigner cannot help being struck with a certain incongruousness. What can be odder, for example, than the mixture of sensibility and sausages in some of Goethe's earlier notes to Frau von Stein, unless, to be sure, the publishing them? It would appear that Germans were less sensible to the ludicrous—and we are far from saying that this may not have its compensatory advantages—than either the English or the French. And what is the source of this sensibility, if it be not an instinctive perception of the incongruous and disproportionate? Among all races, the English has ever shown itself most keenly alive to the fear of making itself ridiculous; and among all, none has produced so many humorists: only one of them, indeed, so profound as Cervantes, yet all masters in their several ways. What English-speaking man, except Boswell, could have arrived at Weimar, as Goethe did, in that absurd *Werthermontirung*? And where, out of Germany, could he have found a reigning Grand Duke to put his whole court into the same sentimental livery of blue and yellow, leather breeches, boots, and all, excepting only Herder, and that not on account of his clerical profession, but of his age? To be sure, it might be asked also where else in Europe was a prince to be met with capable of manly friendship with a man whose only decoration was his genius? But the comicality of the other fact no less remains. Certainly the German character is in no way so little remarkable as for its humour. If we were to trust the evidence of Herr Hub's dreary *Deutsche komische und humoristische Dichtung*, we should believe that no German had even so much as a suspicion of what humour meant, unless the book itself, as we are half inclined to suspect, be a joke in three volumes, the *want* of fun being the real point thereof. If German patriotism can be induced

to find a grave delight in it, we congratulate Herr Hub's publishers, and for ourselves advise any sober-minded man who may hereafter "be merry," not to "sing psalms," but to read Hub as the more serious amusement of the two. There are epigrams there that make life more solemn, and, if taken in sufficient doses, would make it more precarious. Even Jean Paul, the greatest of German humorous authors, and never surpassed in comic conception or in the pathetic quality of humour, is not to be named with his master, Sterne, as a creative humorist. What are Siebenkäs, Fixlein, Schmelze, and Fibel (a single lay-figure to be draped at will with whimsical sentiment and reflection, and put in various attitudes), compared with the living reality of Walter Shandy and his brother Toby, characters which we do not see merely as puppets in the author's mind, but poetically projected from it in an independent being of their own? Heine himself, the most graceful, sometimes the most touching, of modern poets, and clearly the most easy of German humorists, seems to me wanting in a refined perception of that inward propriety which is only another name for poetic proportion, and shocks us sometimes with an *Unflätigkeit*, as at the end of his *Deutschland*, which, if it make Germans laugh, as we should be sorry to believe, makes other people hold their noses. Such things have not been possible in English since Swift, and the *persifleur* Heine cannot offer the same excuse of savage cynicism that might be pleaded for the Irishman.

I have hinted that Herr Stahr's *Life of Lessing* is not precisely the kind of biography that would have been most pleasing to the man who could not conceive that an author should be satisfied with anything more than truth in praise, or anything less in criticism. My respect for what Lessing was, and for what he did, is profound. In the history of literature it would be hard to find a man so stalwart, so kindly, so sincere,¹ so capable of great ideas, whether in their influence on the intellect or the life, so unswervingly true to the truth, so free from the common weaknesses of his class. Since Luther, Germany has given birth to no such intellectual athlete—to no son so German to the core. Greater poets she has had, but no greater writer; no nature

¹ "If I write at all, it is not possible for me to write otherwise than just as I think and feel."—LESSING to his father, 21st December 1767.

more finely tempered. Nay, may we not say that great character is as rare a thing as great genius, if it be not even a nobler form of it? For surely it is easier to embody fine thinking, or delicate sentiment, or lofty aspiration, in a book than in a life. The written leaf, if it be, as some few are, a safe-keeper and conductor of celestial fire, is secure. Poverty cannot pinch, passion swerve, or trial shake it. But the man Lessing, harassed and striving life-long, always poor and always hopeful, with no patron but his own right hand, the very shuttlecock of fortune, who saw ruin's ploughshare drive through the hearth on which his first home-fire was hardly kindled, and who, through all, was faithful to himself, to his friend, to his duty, and to his ideal, is something more inspiring for us than the most glorious utterance of merely intellectual power. The figure of Goethe is grand, it is rightfully pre-eminent it has something of the calm, and something of the coldness, of the immortals; but the Valhalla of German letters can show one form, in its simple manhood, statelier even than this.

Manliness and simplicity, if they are not necessary coefficients in producing character of the purest tone, were certainly leading elements in the Lessing who is still so noteworthy and lovable to us when eighty-six years have passed since his bodily presence vanished from among men. He loved clearness, he hated exaggeration in all its forms. He was the first German who had any conception of style, and who could be full without spilling over on all sides. Herr Stahr, we think, is not just the biographer he would have chosen for himself. His book is rather a panegyric than a biography. There is sometimes an almost comic disproportion between the matter and the manner, especially in the epic details of Lessing's onslaughts on the nameless herd of German authors. It is as if Sophocles should have given a strophe to every bullock slain by Ajax in his mad foray upon the Grecian commissary stores. He is too fond of striking an attitude, and his tone rises unpleasantly near a scream, as he calls the personal attention of heaven and earth to something which Lessing himself would have thought a very matter-of-course affair. He who lays it down as an axiom, that "genius loves simplicity," would hardly have been pleased to hear the *Letters on Literature* called the "burning thunderbolts of his annihilating criticism," or the

Anti-Götze pamphlets, "the hurtling arrows that sped from the bow of the immortal hero." Nor would he with whom accuracy was a matter of conscience have heard patiently that the Letters "appeared in a period distinguished for its lofty tone of mind, and in their own towering boldness they are a true picture of the intrepid character of the age."¹ If the age was what Herr Stahr represents it to have been, where is the great merit of Lessing? He would have smiled, we suspect, a little contemptuously, at Herr Stahr's repeatedly quoting a certificate from the "historian of the proud Britons," that he was "the first critic in Europe." Whether we admit or not Lord Macaulay's competence in the matter, we are sure that Lessing would not have thanked his biographer for this soup-ticket to a ladleful of fame. If ever a man stood firmly on his own feet, and asked help of none, that man was Gotthold Ephraim Lessing.

Herr Stahr's desire to *make* a hero of his subject, and his love for sonorous sentences like those we have quoted above, are apt to stand somewhat in the way of our chance at taking a fair measure of the man, and seeing in what his heroism really lay. He furnishes little material for a comparative estimate of Lessing, or for judging of the foreign influences which helped from time to time in making him what he was. Nothing is harder than to worry out a date from Herr Stahr's haystacks of praise and quotation. Yet dates are of special value in tracing the progress of an intellect like Lessing's, which, little actuated by an inward creative energy, was commonly stirred to motion by the impulse of other minds, and struck out its brightest flashes by collision with them. He himself tells us that a critic should "first seek out some one with whom he can contend," and quotes in justification from one of Aristotle's commentators, *Solet Aristoteles quærerere pugnam in suis libris*. This Lessing was always wont to do. He could only feel his own strength, and make others feel it—could only call it into full play in an intellectual wrestling-bout. He was always anointed and ready for the ring, but with this distinction, that he was no mere prize-fighter, or bully for the side that would pay him best, nor even a contender for mere sentiment, but a self-forgetful

¹ "I am sure that Kleist would rather have taken another wound with him into his grave than have such stuff jabbered over him (*sich solch Zeug nachschwätzen lassen*)."—LESSING to Gleim, 6th September 1759.

champion for the truth as he saw it. Nor is this true of him only as a critic. His more purely imaginative works—his *Minna*, his *Emilia*, his *Nathan*—were all written, not to satisfy the craving of a poetic instinct, nor to rid head and heart of troublous guests by building them a lodging outside himself, as Goethe used to do, but to prove some thesis of criticism or moral; by which Truth could be served. His zeal for her was perfectly unselfish. "Does one write, then, for the sake of always being in the right? I think I have been as serviceable to Truth," he says, "when I miss her, and my failure is the occasion of another's discovering her, as if I had discovered her myself."¹ One would almost be inclined to think, from Herr Stahr's account of the matter, that Lessing had been an autochthonous birth of the German soil, without intellectual ancestry or hopeful kindred. That this is the sufficient natural history of no original mind we need hardly say, since originality consists quite as much in the power of using to purpose what it finds ready to its hand, as in that of producing what is absolutely new. Perhaps we might say that it was nothing more than the faculty of combining the separate, and therefore ineffectual, conceptions of others, and making them into living thought by the breath of its own organising spirit. A great man without a past, if he be not an impossibility, will certainly have no future. He would be like those conjectural Miltons and Cromwells of Gray's imaginary hamlet. The only privilege of the original man is, that, like other sovereign princes, he has the right to call in the current coin and reissue it stamped with his own image, as was the practice of Lessing.

Herr Stahr's over-intensity of phrase is less offensive than amusing when applied to Lessing's early efforts in criticism. Speaking of poor old Gottsched, he says: "Lessing assailed him sometimes with cutting criticism, and again with exquisite humour. In the notice of Gottsched's poems, he says, among other things, 'The exterior of the volume is so handsome that it will do great credit to the bookstores, and it is to be hoped that it will continue to do so for a long time. But to give a satisfactory idea of the interior surpasses our powers.' And in conclusion he adds, 'These poems cost two thalers and four groschen. The two thalers pay for the ridiculous, and the four groschen pretty much for

¹ Letter to Klotz, 9th June 1766.

the useful.' ” Again, he tells us that Lessing concludes his notice of Klopstock’s “Ode to God” “with these inimitably roguish words: ‘What presumption to beg thus earnestly for a woman!’ Does not a whole book of criticism lie in these nine words?” For a young man of twenty-two, Lessing’s criticisms show a great deal of independence and maturity of thought; but humour he never had, and his wit was always of the bluntest—crushing rather than cutting. The mace, and not the scimitar, was his weapon. Let Herr Stahr put all Lessing’s “inimitably roguish words” together, and compare them with these few intranslatable lines from Voltaire’s letter to Rousseau, thanking him for his *Discours sur l’Inégalité*: “On n’a jamais employé tant d’esprit à vouloir nous rendre bêtes; il prend envie de marcher à quatre pattes quand on lit votre ouvrage.” Lessing from the first was something far better than a wit. Force was always much more characteristic of him than cleverness. Sometimes Herr Stahr’s hero-worship leads him into positive misstatement. For example, speaking of Lessing’s Preface to the *Contributions to the History and Reform of the Theatre*, he tells us that “his eye was directed chiefly to the English theatre and Shakespeare.” Lessing at that time (1749) was only twenty, and knew little more than the names of any foreign dramatists except the French. In this very Preface his English list skips from Shakespeare to Dryden, and in the Spanish he omits Calderon, Tirso de Molina, and Alarcon. Accordingly, we suspect that the date is wrongly assigned to Lessing’s translation of *Toda la Vida es Sueño*. His mind was hardly yet ready to feel the strange charm of this most imaginative of Calderon’s dramas.

Even where Herr Stahr undertakes to give us light on the sources of Lessing, it is something of the dimmest. He attributes *Miss Sara Sampson* to the influence of the *Merchant of London*, as Mr. Evans translates it literally from the German, meaning our old friend, “George Barnwell.” But we are strongly inclined to suspect from internal evidence that Moore’s more recent *Gamester* gave the prevailing impulse. And if Herr Stahr must needs tell us anything of the Tragedy of Middle-Class Life, he ought to have known that on the English stage it preceded Lillo by more than a century—witness the *Yorkshire Tragedy*—and that something very like it was even much older in France. We are

inclined to complain, also, that he does not bring out more clearly how much Lessing owed to Diderot both as dramatist and critic, nor give us so much as a hint of what already existing English criticism did for him in the way of suggestion and guidance. But though we feel it to be our duty to say so much of Herr Stahr's positive faults and negative shortcomings, yet we leave him in very good humour. While he is altogether too full upon certain points of merely transitory importance—such as the quarrel with Klotz—yet we are bound to thank him both for the abundance of his extracts from Lessing, and for the judgment he has shown in the choice of them. Any one not familiar with his writings will be able to get a very good notion of the quality of his mind, and the amount of his literary performance, from these volumes; and that, after all, is the chief matter. As to the absolute merit of his works other than critical, Herr Stahr's judgment is too much at the mercy of his partiality to be of great value.

Of Mr. Evans's translation we can speak for the most part with high commendation. There are great difficulties in translating German prose; and whatever other good things Herr Stahr may have learned from Lessing, terseness and clearness are not among them. We have seldom seen a translation which read more easily, or was generally more faithful. That Mr. Evans should nod now and then we do not wonder, nor that he should sometimes choose the wrong word. We have only compared him with the original where we saw reason for suspecting a slip; but, though we have not found much to complain of, we have found enough to satisfy us that his book will gain by a careful revision. We select a few oversights, mainly from the first volume, as examples. On page 34, comparing Lessing with Goethe on arriving at the University, Mr. Evans, we think, obscures, if he does not wholly lose the meaning, when he translates *Leben* by "social relations," and is altogether wrong in rendering *Patrizier* by "aristocrat." At the top of the next page, too, "suspicious" is not the word for *bedenklich*. Had he been writing English, he would surely have said "questionable." On page 47, "overtrodden shoes" is hardly so good as the idiomatic "down at the heel." On page 104, "A very humorous representation" is oddly made to "confirm the documentary evidence." The re-

verse is meant. On page 115, the sentence beginning "the tendency in both" needs revising. On page 138, Mr. Evans speaks of the "Poetical Village-younger of Des-touches." This, we think, is hardly the English of *Le Poète Campagnard*, and almost recalls Lieberkühn's theory of translation, toward which Lessing was so unrelenting—"When I do not understand a passage, why, I translate it word for word." On page 149, *Miss Sara Sampson* is called "the first social tragedy of the German Drama." All tragedies surely are *social*, except the *Prometheus*. *Bürgerliche Tragödie* means a tragedy in which the protagonist is taken from common life, and perhaps cannot be translated clearly into English except by "tragedy of middle-class life." So on page 170 we find Emilia Galotti called a "Virginia *bourgeoise*," and on page 172 a hospital becomes a *lazaretto*. On page 190 we have a sentence ending in this strange fashion: "in an episode of the English original, which Wieland omitted entirely, one of its characters nevertheless appeared in the German tragedy." On page 205 we have the Seven Years' War called "a bloody *process*." This is mere carelessness, for Mr. Evans, in the second volume, translates it rightly "*lawsuit*." What English reader would know what "You are intriguing me" means, on page 228? On p. 264, vol. ii., we find a passage inaccurately rendered, which we consider of more consequence, because it is a quotation from Lessing. "O, out upon the man who claims, Almighty God, to be a preacher of Thy word, and yet so impudently asserts that, in order to attain Thy purposes, there was only one way in which it pleased Thee to make *Thyself* known to him!" This is very far from *nur den einzigen Weg gehabt den Du Dir gefallen lassen ihm kund zu machen!* The *ihm* is scornfully emphatic. We hope Professor Evans will go over his version for a second edition much more carefully than we have had any occasion to do. He has done an excellent service to our literature, for which we heartily thank him, in choosing a book of this kind to translate, and translating it so well. We would not look such a gift horse too narrowly in the mouth.

Let us now endeavour to sum up the result of Lessing's life and labour with what success we may.

Gotthold Ephraim Lessing was born (January 22, 1729) at Camenz, in Upper Lusatia, the second child and eldest son

of John Gottfried Lessing, a Lutheran clergyman. Those who believe in the persistent qualities of race, or the cumulative property of culture, will find something to their purpose in his Saxon blood and his clerical and juristic ancestry. It is worth mentioning, that his grandfather, in the thesis for his doctor's degree, defended the right to entire freedom of religious belief. The name first comes to the surface in Parson Clement Lessigk, nearly three centuries ago, and survives to the present day in a painter of some distinction. It has almost passed into a proverb, that the mothers of remarkable children have been something beyond the common. If there be any truth in the theory, the case of Lessing was an exception, as might have been inferred, perhaps, from the peculiarly masculine type of his character and intellect. His mother was in no wise superior, but his father seems to have been a man somewhat above the pedantic average of the provincial clergymen of his day, and to have been a scholar in the ampler meaning of the word. Besides the classics, he had possessed himself of French and English, and was somewhat versed in the Oriental languages. The temper of his theology may be guessed from his having been, as his son tells with some pride, one of "the earliest translators of Tillotson." We can only conjecture him from the letters which Lessing wrote to him, from which we should fancy him as on the whole a decided and even choleric old gentleman, in whom the wig, though not a predominant, was yet a notable feature, and who was, like many other fathers, permanently astonished at the fruit of his loins. He would have preferred one of the so-called learned professions for his son—theology above all—and would seem to have never quite reconciled himself to his son's distinction, as being in none of the three careers which alone were legitimate. Lessing's bearing towards him, always independent, is really beautiful in its union of respectful tenderness with unswerving self-assertion. When he wished to evade the maternal eye, Gotthold used in his letters to set up a screen of Latin between himself and her; and we conjecture the worthy Pastor Primarius playing over again in his study at Camenz, with some scruples of conscience, the old trick of Chaucer's fox:—

" Mulier est hominis confusio;
Madam, the sentence of this Latin is,
Woman is mannes joy and mannes bliss."

He appears to have snatched a fearful and but ill-concealed joy from the sight of the first collected edition of his son's works, unlike Tillotson as they certainly were. Ah, had they only been *Opera!* Yet were they not volumes, after all, and able to stand on their own edges beside the immortals, if nothing more?

After grinding with private-tutor Mylius the requisite time, Lessing entered the school of Camenz, and in his thirteenth year was sent to the higher institution at Meissen. We learn little of his career there, except that Theophrastus, Plautus, and Terence were already his favourite authors, that he once characteristically distinguished himself by a courageous truthfulness, and that he wrote a Latin poem on the valour of the Saxon soldiers, which his father very sensibly advised him to shorten. In 1750, four years after leaving the school, he writes to his father: "I believed even when I was at Meissen that one must learn much there which he cannot make the least use of in real life (*der Welt*), and I now [after trying Leipzig and Wittenberg] see it all the more clearly"—a melancholy observation which many other young men have made under similar circumstances. Sent to Leipzig in his seventeenth year, he finds himself an awkward, ungainly lad, and sets diligently to perfecting himself in the somewhat unscholastic accomplishments of riding, dancing, and fencing. He also sedulously frequents the theatre, and wrote a play, *The Young Scholar*, which attained the honour of representation. Meanwhile his most intimate companion was a younger brother of his old tutor Mylius, a young man of more than questionable morals, and who had even written a satire on the elders of Camenz, for which—over-confidently trusting himself in the outraged city—he had been fined and imprisoned; so little could the German Muse, celebrated by Klopstock for her swiftness of foot, protect her son. With this scandalous person and with play-actors, more than probably of both sexes, did the young Lessing share a Christmas cake sent him by his mother. Such news was not long in reaching Camenz, and we can easily fancy how tragic it seemed in the little parsonage there, to what cabinet councils it gave rise in the paternal study, to what ominous shaking of the clerical wig in that domestic Olympus. A pious fraud is practised on the boy, who hurries home thinly clad through the winter weather, his

ill-eaten Christmas cake wringing him with remorseful indigestion, to receive the last blessing, if such a prodigal might hope for it, of a broken-hearted mother. He finds the good dame in excellent health, and softened toward him by a cold he has taken on his pious journey. He remains at home several months, now writing Anacreontics of such warmth that his sister (as volunteer representative of the common hangman) burns them in the family stove; now composing sermons to convince his mother that "he could be a preacher any day"—a theory of that sacred office unhappily not yet extinct. At Easter, 1747, he gets back to Leipzig again, with some scant supply of money in his pocket, but is obliged to make his escape thence between two days somewhere toward the middle of the next year, leaving behind him some histrionic debts (chiefly, we fear, of a certain Mademoiselle Lorenz) for which he had confidingly made himself security. Stranded, by want of floating or other capital, at Wittenberg, he enters himself, with help from home, as a student there, but soon migrates again to Berlin, which had been his goal when making his hegira from Leipzig. In Berlin he remained three years, applying himself to his chosen calling of author of all work, by doing whatever honest job offered itself—verse, criticism, or translation—and profitably studious in a very wide range of languages and their literature. Above all, he learned the great secret, which his stalwart English contemporary, Johnson, also acquired, of being able to "dine heartily" for threepence.

Meanwhile he continues in a kind of colonial dependence on the parsonage at Camenz, the bonds gradually slackening, sometimes shaken a little rudely, and always giving alarming hints of approaching and inevitable autonomy. From the few home letters of Lessing which remain (covering the period before 1753, there are only eight in all), we are able to surmise that a pretty constant maternal cluck and shrill paternal warning were kept up from the home coop. We find Lessing defending the morality of the stage and his own private morals against charges and suspicions of his parents, and even making the awful confession that he does not consider the Christian religion itself as a thing "to be taken on trust," nor a Christian by mere tradition so valuable a member of society as "one who has *prudently* doubted, and by the way of examination has arrived at conviction,

or at least striven to arrive." Boyish scepticism of the superficial sort is a common phenomenon enough, but the Lessing variety of it seems to us sufficiently rare in a youth of twenty. What strikes us mainly in the letters of these years is not merely the maturity they show, though that is remarkable, but the tone. We see already in them the cheerful and never overweening self-confidence which always so pleasantly distinguished Lessing, and that strength of tackle, so seldom found in literary men, which brings the mind well home to its anchor, enabling it to find holding-ground and secure riding in any sea. "What care I to live in plenty," he asks gaily, "if I only live?" Indeed, Lessing learned early, and never forgot, that whoever would be life's master, and not its drudge, must make it a means, and never allow it to become an end. He could say more truly than Goethe, *Mein Acker ist die Zeit*, since he not only sowed in it the seed of thought for other men and other times, but cropped it for his daily bread. Above all, we find Lessing even thus early endowed with the power of keeping his eyes wide open to what he was after, to what would help or hinder him—a much more singular gift than is commonly supposed. Among other jobs of this first Berlin period, he had undertaken to arrange the library of a certain Herr Rüdiger, getting therefor his meals and "other receipts," whatever they may have been. His father seems to have heard with anxiety that this arrangement had ceased, and Lessing writes to him: "I never wished to have anything to do with this old man longer than *until I had made myself thoroughly acquainted with his great library*. This is now accomplished, and we have accordingly parted." This was in his twenty-first year, and we have no doubt, from the *range* of scholarship which Lessing had at command so young, that it was perfectly true. All through his life he was thoroughly German in this respect also, that he never *quite* smelted his knowledge clear from some slag of learning.

In the early part of the first Berlin residence, Pastor Primarius Lessing, hearing that his son meditated a movement on Vienna, was much exercised with fears of the temptation to Popery he would be exposed to in that capital. We suspect that the attraction thitherward had its source in a perhaps equally catholic, but less theological magnet—the Mademoiselle Lorenz above mentioned. Let us

remember the perfectly innocent passion of Mozart for an actress, and be comforted. There is not the slightest evidence that Lessing's life at this time, or any other, though careless, was in any way debauched. No scandal was ever coupled with his name, nor is any biographic chemistry needed to bleach spots out of his reputation. What cannot be said of Wieland, of Goethe, of Schiller, of Jean Paul, may be safely affirmed of this busy and single-minded man. The parental fear of Popery brought him a seasonable supply of money from home, which enabled him to clothe himself decently enough to push his literary fortunes, and put on a bold front with publishers. Poor enough he often was, but never in so shabby a pass that he was forced to write behind a screen, like Johnson.

It was during this first stay in Berlin that Lessing was brought into personal relations with Voltaire. Through an acquaintance with the great man's secretary, Richter, he was employed as translator in the scandalous Hirschel lawsuit, so dramatically set forth by Carlyle in his *Life of Frederick*, though Lessing's share in it seems to have been unknown to him. The service could hardly have been other than distasteful to him; but it must have been with some thrill of the *anche io!* kind that the poor youth, just fleshing his maiden pen in criticism, stood face to face with the famous author, with whose name all Europe rang from side to side. This was in February 1751. Young as he was, we fancy those cool eyes of his making some strange discoveries as to the real nature of that lean nightmare of Jesuits and dunces. Afterwards the same secretary lent him the manuscript of the *Siècle de Louis XIV.*, and Lessing thoughtlessly taking it into the country with him, it was not forthcoming when called for by the author. Voltaire naturally enough danced with rage, screamed all manner of unpleasant things about robbery and the like, cashiered the secretary, and was, we see no reason to doubt, really afraid of a pirated edition. *This* time his cry of wolf must have had a quaver of sincerity in it. Herr Stahr, who can never keep separate the Lessing as he then was and the Lessing as he afterwards became, takes fire at what he chooses to consider an unworthy suspicion of the Frenchman, and treats himself to some rather cheap indignation on the subject. For ourselves, we think Voltaire altogether in the right, and we respect Lessing's

honesty too much to suppose, with his biographer, that it was this which led him, years afterwards, to do such severe justice to *Merope*, and other tragedies of the same author. The affair happened in December 1751, and a year later Lessing calls Voltaire a "great man," and says of his *Amalie*, that "it has not only beautiful passages, it is beautiful throughout, and the tears of a reader of feeling will justify our judgment." Surely there is no resentment here. Our only wonder would be at its being written after the Hirschel business. At any rate, we cannot allow Herr Stahr to shake our faith in the sincerity of Lessing's motives in criticism—he could not in the soundness of the criticism itself—by tracing it up to a spring at once so petty and so personal.

During a part of 1752¹ Lessing was at Wittenberg again as student of medicine, the parental notion of a strictly professional career of some kind not having yet been abandoned. We must give his father the credit of having done his best, in a well-meaning paternal fashion, to make his son over again in his own image, and to thwart the design of nature by coaxing or driving him into the pincfold of a prosperous obscurity. But Gotthold, with all his gifts, had no talent whatever for contented routine. His was a mind always in solution, which the divine order of things, as it is called, could not precipitate into any of the traditional forms of crystallisation, and in which the time to come was already fermenting. The principle of growth was in the young literary hack, and he must obey it or die. His was to the last a *natura naturans*, never a *naturata*. Lessing seems to have done what he could to be a dutiful failure. But there was something in him stronger and more sacred than even filial piety; and the good old pastor is remembered now only as the father of a son who would have shared the benign oblivion of his own theological works, if he could only have had his wise way with him. Even after so many biographies and review articles, genius continues to be a marvellous and inspiring thing. At the same time, considering the then con-

¹ Herr Stahr heads the fifth chapter of his Second Book, "Lessing at Wittenberg. December 1751 to November 1752." But we never feel quite sure of his dates. The Richter affair puts Lessing in Berlin in December 1751, and he took his Master's degree at Wittenberg, 29th April 1752. We are told that he finally left Wittenberg "toward the end" of that year. He himself, writing from Berlin in 1754, says that he has been absent from that city *nur ein halbes Jahr* since 1748. There is only one letter for 1752, dated at Wittenberg, 9th June.

dition of what was pleasantly called literature in Germany, there was not a little to be said on the paternal side of the question, though it may not seem now a very heavy mulct to give up one son out of ten to immortality—at least the Fates seldom decimate in *this* way. Lessing had now, if we accept the common standard in such matters, “completed his education,” and the result may be summed up in his own words to Michaelis, 16th October 1754: “I have studied at the Fürstenschule at Meissen, and after that at Leipzig and Wittenberg. But I should be greatly embarrassed if I were asked to tell *what*.” As early as his twentieth year he had arrived at some singular notions as to the uses of learning. On the 20th of January 1749, he writes to his mother: “I found out that books, indeed, would make me learned, *but never make me a man*.” Like most men of great knowledge, as distinguished from mere scholars, he seems to have been always a rather indiscriminate reader, and to have been fond, as Johnson was, of “browsing” in libraries. Johnson neither in amplitude of literature nor exactness of scholarship could be deemed a match for Lessing; but they were alike in the power of readily applying whatever they had learned, whether for purposes of illustration or argument. They resemble each other, also, in a kind of absolute common-sense, and in the force with which they could plant a direct blow with the whole weight both of their training and their temperament behind it. As a critic, Johnson ends where Lessing begins. The one is happy in the lower region of the understanding: the other can breathe freely in the ampler air of reason alone. Johnson acquired learning, and stopped short from indolence at a certain point. Lessing assimilated it, and accordingly his education ceased only with his life. Both had something of the intellectual sluggishness that is apt to go with great strength; and both had to be baited by the antagonism of circumstances or opinions, not only into the exhibition, but into the possession of their entire force. Both may be more properly called original men than, in the highest sense, original writers.

From 1752 to 1760, with an interval of something over two years spent in Leipzig to be near a good theatre, Lessing was settled in Berlin, and gave himself wholly and earnestly to the life of a man of letters. A thoroughly healthy, cheerful nature he most surely had, with something at first of the

careless light-heartedness of youth. Healthy he was not always to be, not always cheerful, often very far from light-hearted, but mainly from first to last he eminently was. Downcast he could never be, for his strongest instinct, invaluable to him also as a critic, was to see things as they really are. And this not in the sense of a cynic, but of one who measures himself as well as his circumstances—who loves truth as the most beautiful of all things and the only permanent possession, as being of one substance with the soul. In a man like Lessing, whose character is even more interesting than his works, the tone and turn of thought are what we like to get glimpses of. And for this his letters are more helpful than those of most authors, as might be expected of one who said of himself, that, in his more serious work, "he must profit by his first heat to accomplish anything." He began, we say, light-heartedly. He did not believe that "one should thank God only for good things." "He who is only in good health, and is willing to work, has nothing to fear in the world." "What another man would call want, I call comfort." "Must not one often act thoughtlessly, if one would provoke Fortune to do something for him?" In his first inexperience, the life of "the sparrow on the house-top" (which we find oddly translated "roof") was the one he would choose for himself. Later in life, when he wished to marry, he was of another mind, and perhaps discovered that there was something in the old father's notion of a fixed position. "The life of the sparrow on the house-top is only right good if one need not expect any end to it. If it cannot always last, every day it lasts too long"—he writes to Ebert in 1770. Yet even then he takes the manly view. "Everything in the world has its time, everything may be overlived and overlooked, if one only have health." Nor let any one suppose that Lessing, full of courage as he was, found professional authorship a garden of Alcinoüs. From creative literature he continually sought refuge, and even repose, in the driest drudgery of mere scholarship. On the 26th of April 1768, he writes to his brother with something of his old gaiety: "Thank God, the time will soon come when I cannot call a penny in the world my own but I must first earn it. I am unhappy if it must be by writing." And again in May 1771: "Among all the wretched, I think him the most wretched who must work with his head, even if he

is not conscious of having one. But what is the good of complaining?" Lessing's life, if it is a noble example, so far as it concerned himself alone, is also a warning when another is to be asked to share it. He too would have profited had he earlier learned and more constantly borne in mind the profound wisdom of that old saying, *Si sit prudentia*. Let the young poet, however he may believe of his art that "all other pleasures are not worth its pains," consider well what it is to call down fire from heaven to keep the pot boiling, before he commit himself to a life of authorship as something fine and easy. That fire will not condescend to such office, though it come without asking on ceremonial days to the free service of the altar.

Lessing, however, never would, even if he could, have so desecrated his better powers. For a bare livelihood, he always went sturdily to the market of hack-work, where his learning would fetch him a price. But it was only in extremest need that he would claim that benefit of clergy. "I am worried," he writes to his brother Karl, 8th April 1773, "and work because working is the only means to cease being so. But you and Voss are very much mistaken if you think that it could ever be indifferent to me, under such circumstances, on what I work. Nothing less true, whether as respects the work itself or the principal object wherefor I work. I have been in my life before now in very wretched circumstances, yet never in such that I would have written for bread in the true meaning of the word. I have begun my 'Contributions' because this work helps me . . . to live from one day to another." It is plain that he does not call this kind of thing in any high sense writing. Of that he had far other notions; for though he honestly disclaimed the title, yet his dream was always to be a poet. But he *was* willing to work, as he claimed to be, because he had one ideal higher than that of being a poet, namely, to be thoroughly a man. To Nicolai he writes in 1758: "All ways of earning his bread are alike becoming to an honest man, whether to split wood or to sit at the helm of state. It does not concern his conscience how useful he is, but how useful he would be." Goethe's poetic sense was the Minotaur to which he sacrificed everything. To make a study, he would soil the maiden petals of a woman's soul; to get the delicious sensation of a reflex sorrow, he would wring a heart. All

that saves his egoism from being hateful is, that, with its immense reaches, it cheats the sense into a feeling of something like sublimity. A patch of sand is displeasing; a desert has all the awe of ocean. Lessing also felt the duty of self-culture; but it was not so much for the sake of feeding fat this or that faculty as of strengthening character—the only soil in which real mental power can root itself and find sustenance. His advice to his brother Karl, who was beginning to write for the stage, is two parts moral to one literary. "Study ethics diligently, learn to express yourself well and correctly, and cultivate your own character. Without that I cannot conceive a good dramatic author." Marvellous counsel this will seem to those who think that wisdom is only to be found in the fool's paradise of Bohemia!

We said that Lessing's dream was to be a poet. In comparison with success as a dramatist, he looked on all other achievement as inferior in kind. In 1767 he writes to Gleim (speaking of his call to Hamburg): "Such circumstances were needed to rekindle in me an almost extinguished love for the theatre. I was just beginning to lose myself in other studies which would have made me unfit for any work of genius. My *Laocoön* is now a secondary labour." And yet he never fell into the mistake of overvaluing what he valued so highly. His unflinching common-sense would have saved him from that, as it afterwards enabled him to see that something was wanting in him which must enter into the making of true poetry, whose distinction from prose is an inward one of nature, and not an outward one of form. While yet under thirty he assures Mendelssohn that he was quite right in neglecting poetry for philosophy, because "only a part of our youth should be given up to the arts of the beautiful. We must practise ourselves in weightier things before we die. An old man who lifelong has done nothing but rhyme, and an old man who lifelong has done nothing but pass his breath through a stick with holes in it—I doubt much whether such an old man has arrived at what he was meant for."

This period of Lessing's life was a productive one, though none of its printed results can be counted of permanent value, except his share in the *Letters on German Literature*. And even these must be reckoned as belonging to the years of his apprenticeship and training for the master-workman he afterwards became. The small fry of authors and translators

were hardly fitted to call out his full strength, but his vivisection of them taught him the value of certain structural principles. "To one dissection of the fore quarter of an ass," says Haydon in his diary, "I owe my information." Yet even in his earliest criticisms we are struck with the same penetration and steadiness of judgment, the same firm grasp of the essential and permanent, that were afterwards to make his opinions law in the courts of taste. For example, he says of Thomson, that, "as a dramatic poet, he had the fault of never knowing when to leave off; he lets every character talk so long as anything can be said; accordingly, during these prolonged conversations, the action stands still, and the story becomes tedious." Of *Roderick Random*, he says that "its author is neither a Richardson nor a Fielding; he is one of those writers of whom there are plenty among the Germans and French." We cite these merely because their firmness of tone seems to us uncommon in a youth of twenty-four. In the *Letters*, the range is much wider, and the application of principles more consequent. He has already secured for himself a position among the literary men of that day, and was beginning to be feared for the inexorable justice of his criticisms. His *Fables* and his *Miss Sara Sampson* had been translated into French, and had attracted the attention of Grimm, who says of them (December 1754): "These Fables commonly contain in a few lines a new and profound moral meaning. M. Lessing has much wit, genius, and invention; the dissertations which follow the Fables prove moreover that he is an excellent critic." In Berlin, Lessing made friendships, especially with Mendelssohn, Von Kleist, Nicolai, Gleim, and Ramler. For Mendelssohn and Von Kleist he seems to have felt a real love; for the others at most a liking, as the best material that could be had. It certainly was not of the juiciest. He seems to have worked hard and played hard, equally at home in his study and Baumann's wine-cellar. He was busy, poor, and happy.

But he was restless. We suspect that the necessity of for ever picking up crumbs, and their occasional scarcity, made the life of the sparrow on the house-top less agreeable than he had expected. The imagined freedom was not quite so free after all, for necessity is as short a tether as dependence, or official duty, or what not, and the regular occupation of grub-

hunting is as tame and wearisome as another. Moreover, Lessing had probably by this time sucked his friends dry of any intellectual stimulus they could yield him; and when friendship reaches that pass, it is apt to be anything but inspiring. Except Mendelssohn and Von Kleist, they were not men capable of rating him at his true value; and Lessing was one of those who always burn up the fuel of life at a fearful rate. Admirably dry as the supplies of Ramler and the rest no doubt were, they had not substance enough to keep his mind at the high temperature it needed, and he would soon be driven to the cutting of green stuff from his own wood-lot, more rich in smoke than fire. Besides this, he could hardly have been at ease among intimates most of whom could not even conceive of that intellectual honesty, that total disregard of all personal interests where truth was concerned, which was an innate quality of Lessing's mind. Their theory of criticism was, Truth, or even worse if possible, for all who do not belong to our set; for us, that delicious falsehood which is no doubt a slow poison, but then so *very* slow. Their nerves were unbraced by that fierce democracy of thought, trampling on all prescription, all tradition, in which Lessing loved to shoulder his way and advance his insupportable foot. "What is called a heretic," he says in his Preface to *Berengarius*, "has a very good side. It is a man who at least *wishes* to see with his own eyes." And again, "I know not if it be a duty to offer up fortune and life to the truth; . . . but I know it *is* a duty, if one undertake to teach the truth, to teach the whole of it, or none at all." Such men as Gleim and Ramler were mere *dilettanti*, and could have no notion how sacred his convictions are to a militant thinker like Lessing. His creed as to the rights of friendship in criticism might be put in the words of Selden, the firm tread of whose mind was like his own: "Opinion and affection extremely differ. Opinion is something wherein I go about to give reason why all the world should think as I think. Affection is a thing wherein I look after the pleasing of myself." How little his friends were capable of appreciating this view of the matter is plain from a letter of Ramler to Gleim, cited by Herr Stahr. Lessing had shown up the weaknesses of a certain work by the Abbé Batteux (long ago gathered to his literary fathers as conclusively as poor old Ramler himself), without regard to the important fact that

the Abbé's book had been translated by a friend. Horrible to think of at best, thrice horrible when the friend's name was Ramler! The impression thereby made on the friendly heart may be conceived. A ray of light penetrated the rather opaque substance of Herr Ramler's mind, and revealed to him the dangerous character of Lessing. "I know well," he says, "that Herr Lessing means to speak his own opinion, and"—what is the dreadful inference?—"and by suppressing others, to gain air, and make room for himself. This disposition is not to be overcome."¹ Fortunately not, for Lessing's opinion always meant something, and was worth having. Gleim no doubt sympathised deeply with the sufferer by this treason, for he too had been shocked at some disrespect for La Fontaine, as a disciple of whom he had announced himself.

Berlin was hardly the place for Lessing, if he could not take a step in any direction without risk of treading on somebody's gouty foot. This was not the last time that he was to have experience of the fact that the critic's pen, the more it has of truth's celestial temper, the more it is apt to reverse the miracle of the archangel's spear, and to bring out whatever is toadlike in the nature of him it touches. We can well understand the sadness with which he said,

"Der Blick des Forscher's Fand
Nicht selten mehr als er zu finden wünschte."

Here, better than anywhere, we may cite something which he wrote of himself to a friend of Klotz. Lessing, it will be remembered, had literally "suppressed" Klotz. "What do you apprehend, then, from me? The more faults and errors you point out to me, so much the more I shall learn of you; the more I learn of you, the more thankful shall I be. . . . I wish you knew me more thoroughly. If the opinion you have of my learning and genius (*Geist*) should perhaps suffer thereby, yet I am sure the idea I would like you to form of my character would gain. I am not the insufferable, unmannerly, proud, slanderous man Herr Klotz proclaims me. It cost me a great deal of trouble and compulsion to be a little bitter against him."² Ramler and

¹ "Ramler," writes Georg Forster, "ist die Ziererei, die Eigenliebe, die Eitelkeit in eigener Person."

² Lessing to Von Murr, 25th November 1768. The whole letter is well worth reading.

the rest had contrived a nice little society for mutual admiration, much like that described by Goldsmith, if, indeed, he did not convey it from the French, as was not uncommon with him. "What, have you never heard of the admirable Brandellius or the ingenious Mogusius, one the eye and the other the heart of our University, known all over the world?" "Never," cried the traveller; "but pray inform me what Brandellius is particularly remarkable for." "You must be little acquainted with the republic of letters," said the other, "to ask such a question. Brandellius has written a most sublime panegyric on Mogusius." "And, prithee, what has Mogusius done to deserve so great a favour?" "He has written an excellent poem in praise of Brandellius." Lessing was not the man who could narrow himself to the proportions of a clique; lifelong he was the terror of the Brandellii and Mogusii, and, at the signal given by him,

" They, but now who seemed
In bigness to surpass Earth's giant sons,
Now less than smallest dwarfs in narrow room
Throng numberless."

Besides, whatever other reasons Lessing may have had for leaving Berlin, we fancy that his having exhausted whatever means it had of helping his spiritual growth was the chief. Nine years later, he gave us a reason for not wishing to stay long in Brunswick, "Not that I do not like Brunswick, but because nothing comes of being long in a place which one likes."¹ Whatever the reason, Lessing, in 1760, left Berlin for Breslau, where the post of secretary had been offered him under Frederick's tough old General Tauentzien. "I will spin myself in for a while like an ugly worm, that I may be able to come to light again as a brilliant winged creature," says his diary. Shortly after his leaving Berlin, he was chosen a member of the Academy of Sciences there. Herr Stahr, who has no little fondness for the footlight style of phrase, says, "It may easily be imagined that he himself regarded his appointment as an insult rather than as an honour." Lessing himself merely says that it was a matter of indifference to him, which is much more in keeping with his character and with the value of the intended honour.

¹ A favourite phrase of his, which Egbert has preserved for us with its Saxon accent, was, *Es kommt doch nicht dabey heraus*, implying that one might do something better for a constancy than shearing swine.

The Seven Years' War began four years before Lessing took up his abode in Breslau, and it may be asked how he, as a Saxon, was affected by it. We might answer, hardly at all. His position was that of armed neutrality. Long ago at Leipzig he had been accused of Prussian leanings; now in Berlin he was thought too Saxon. Though he disclaimed any such sentiment as patriotism, and called himself a cosmopolite, it is plain enough that his position was simply that of a German. Love of country, except in a very narrow parochial way, was as impossible in Germany then as in America during the Colonial period. Lessing himself, in the latter years of his life, was librarian of one of those petty princelets who sold their subjects to be shot at in America—creatures strong enough to oppress, too weak to protect their people. Whoever would have found a Germany to love must have pieced it together as painfully as Isis did the scattered bits of Osiris. Yet he says that "the true patriot is by no means extinguished" in him. It was the noisy ones that he could not abide; and, writing to Gleim about his "Grenadier" verses, he advises him to soften the tone of them a little, he himself being a "declared enemy of imprecations," which he would leave altogether to the clergy. We think Herr Stahr makes too much of these anti-patriot flings of Lessing, which, with a single exception, occur in his Letters to Gleim, and with reference to a kind of verse that could not but be distasteful to him, as needing no more brains than a drum, nor other inspiration than serves a trumpet. Lessing undoubtedly had better uses for his breath than to spend it in shouting for either side in this "bloody lawsuit," as he called it, in which he was not concerned. He showed himself German enough, and in the right way, in his persistent warfare against the tyranny of French taste.

He remained in Breslau the better part of five years, studying life in new phases, gathering a library, which, as commonly happens, he afterwards sold at great loss, and writing his *Minna* and his *Laocoön*. He accompanied Tauentzien to the siege of Schweidnitz, where Frederick was present in person. He seems to have lived a rather free-and-easy life during his term of office, kept shockingly late hours, and learned, among other things, to gamble—a fact for which Herr Stahr thinks it needful to account in a high philosophical fashion. We prefer to think that there are

some motives to which remarkable men are liable in common with the rest of mankind, and that they may occasionally do a thing merely because it is pleasant, without forethought of medicinal benefit to the mind. Lessing's friends (whose names were *not*, as the reader might be tempted to suppose, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar) expected him to make something handsome out of his office; but the pitiful result of those five years of opportunity was nothing more than an immortal book. Unthrifty Lessing, to have been so nice about your fingers (and so near the mint, too), when your general was wise enough to make his fortune! As if ink-stains were the only ones that would wash out, and no others had ever been covered with white kid from the sight of all reasonable men! In July 1764 he had a violent fever, which he turned to account in his usual cheerful way: "The serious epoch of my life is drawing nigh. I am beginning to become a man, and flatter myself that in this burning fever I have raved away the last remains of my youthful follies. Fortunate illness!" He had never intended to bind himself to an official career. To his father he writes: "I have more than once declared that my present engagement could not continue long, that I have not given up my old plan of living, and that I am more than ever resolved to withdraw from any service that is not wholly to my mind. I have passed the middle of my life, and can think of nothing that could compel me to make myself a slave for the poor remainder of it. I write you this, dearest father, and must write you this, in order that you may not be astonished if, before long, you should see me once more very far removed from all hopes of, or claims to, a settled prosperity, as it is called." Before the middle of the next year he was back in Berlin again.

There he remained for nearly two years, trying the house-top way of life again, but with indifferent success, as we have reason to think. Indeed, when the metaphor resolves itself into the plain fact of living just on the other side of the roof—in the garret, namely—and that from hand to mouth, as was Lessing's case, we need not be surprised to find him gradually beginning to see something more agreeable in a *fixirtes Glück* than he had once been willing to allow. At any rate, he was willing, and even heartily desirous, that his friends should succeed in getting for him the place of royal librarian. But Frederick, for some unexplained reason,

would not appoint him. Herr Stahr thinks it had something to do with the old *Siècle* manuscript business. But this seems improbable, for Voltaire's wrath was not directed against Lessing; and even if it had been, the great king could hardly have carried the name of an obscure German author in his memory through all those anxious and warlike years. Whatever the cause, Lessing early in 1767 accepts the position of Theatrical Manager at Hamburg, as usual not too much vexed with disappointment, but quoting gaily,

"Quod non dant proceres, dabit histrio."

Like Burns, he was always "contented wi' little and canty wi' mair." In connection with his place as Manager he was to write a series of dramatic essays and criticisms. It is to this we owe the *Dramaturgie*—next to the *Laocoön* the most valuable of his works. But Lessing—though it is plain that he made his hand as light as he could, and wrapped his lash in velvet—soon found that actors had no more taste for truth than authors. He was obliged to drop his remarks on the special merits or demerits of players, and to confine himself to those of the pieces represented. By this his work gained in value; and the latter part of it, written without reference to a particular stage, and devoted to the discussion of those general principles of dramatic art on which he had meditated long and deeply, is far weightier than the rest. There are few men who can put forth all their muscle in a losing race, and it is characteristic of Lessing that what he wrote under the dispiritment of failure should be the most lively and vigorous. Circumstances might be against him, but he was incapable of believing that a cause could be lost which had once enlisted his conviction.

The theatrical enterprise did not prosper long; but Lessing had meanwhile involved himself as partner in a publishing business which harassed him while it lasted, and when it failed, as was inevitable, left him hampered with debt. Help came in his appointment (1770) to take charge of the Duke of Brunswick's library at Wolfenbüttel, with a salary of six hundred thalers a year. This was the more welcome, as he soon after was betrothed with Eva König, widow of a rich manufacturer.¹ Her husband's affairs, however, had

¹ I find surprisingly little about Lessing in such of the contemporary correspondence of German literary men as I have read. A letter of Boie to Merck (April 10, 1775) gives us a glimpse of him. "Do you

been left in confusion, and this, with Lessing's own embarrassments, prevented their being married till October 1776. Eva König was every way worthy of him. Clever, womanly, discreet, with just enough coyness of the will to be charming when it is joined with sweetness and good sense, she was the true helpmate of such a man—the serious companion of his mind and the playfellow of his affections. There is something infinitely refreshing to me in the love-letters of these two persons. Without wanting sentiment, there is such a bracing air about them as breathes from the higher levels and strongholds of the soul. They show that self-possession which can alone reserve to love the power of new self-surrender—of never cloying, because never wholly possessed. Here is no invasion and conquest to the weaker nature by the stronger, but an equal league of souls, each in its own realm still sovereign. Turn from such letters as these to those of St. Preux and Julie, and you are stifled with the heavy perfume of a demirep's boudoir—to those of Herder to his Caroline, and you sniff no doubtful odour of professional unction from the sermon-case. Manly old Dr. Johnson, who could be tender and true to a plain woman, knew very well what he meant when he wrote that single poetic sentence of his—"The shepherd in Virgil grew at last acquainted with Love, and found him to be a native of the rocks."

In January 1778 Lessing's wife died from the effects of a difficult childbirth. The child, a boy, hardly survived its birth. The few words wrung out of Lessing by this double sorrow are to me as deeply moving as anything in tragedy. "I wished for once to be as happy (*es so gut haben*) as other men. But it has gone ill with me!" "And I was so loth to lose him, this son!" "My wife is dead; and I have had this experience also. I rejoice that I have not many more such experiences left to make, and am quite cheerful." "If you had known her! But they say that to praise one's wife

know that Lessing will probably marry Reiske's widow and come to Dresden in place of Hagedorn? The restless spirit! How he will get along with the artists, half of them, too, Italians, is to be seen. . . . Liffert and he have met and parted good friends. He has worn ever since on his finger the ring with the skeleton and butterfly which Liffert gave him. He is reported to be much dissatisfied with the theatrical filibustering of Goethe and Lenz, especially with the remarks on the drama in which so little respect is shown for his Aristotle, and the Leipzig folks are said to be greatly rejoiced at getting such an ally."

is self-praise. Well, then, I say no more of her! But if you had known her!" *Quite cheerful!* On the 10th of August he writes to Elise Reimarus—he is writing to a woman now, an old friend of his and his wife, and will be less restrained: "I am left here all alone. I have not a single friend to whom I can wholly confide myself. . . . How often must I curse my ever wishing to be for once as happy as other men! How often have I wished myself back again in my old, isolated condition—to be nothing, to wish nothing, to do nothing, but what the present moment brings with it! . . . Yet I am too proud to think myself unhappy. I just grind my teeth, and let the boat go as pleases wind and waves. Enough that I will not upset it myself." It is plain from this letter that suicide had been in his mind, and, with his antique way of thinking on many subjects, he would hardly have looked on it as a crime. But he was too brave a man to throw up the sponge to fate, and had work to do yet. Within a few days of his wife's death he wrote to Eschenburg: "I am right heartily ashamed if my letter betrayed the least despair. Despair is not nearly so much my failing as levity, which often expresses itself with a little bitterness and misanthropy." A stoic, not from insensibility or cowardice, as so many are, but from stoutness of heart, he blushes at a moment's abdication of self-command. And he will not soil the clear memory of his love with any tinge of the sentimentality so much the fashion, and to be had so cheap, in that generation. There is a moderation of sincerity peculiar to Lessing in the epithet of the following sentence: "How dearly must I pay for the single year I have lived with a *sensible* wife!" *Werther* had then been published four years. Lessing's grief has that pathos which he praised in sculpture—he may writhe, but he must not scream. Nor is this a new thing with him. On the death of a younger brother he wrote to his father, fourteen years before: "Why should those who grieve communicate their grief to each other purposely to increase it? . . . Many mourn in death what they loved not living. I will love in life what nature bids me love, and after death strive to bewail it as little as I can."

We think Herr Stahr is on his stilts again when he speaks of Lessing's position at Wolfenbüttel. He calls it an "assuming the chains of feudal service, being buried in a corner, a

martyrdom that consumed the best powers of his mind, and crushed him in body and spirit for ever." To crush *for ever* is rather a strong phrase, Herr Stahr, to apply to the spirit, if one must ever give heed to the sense as well as the sound of what one is writing. But eloquence has no bowels for its victims. We have no doubt the Duke of Brunswick meant well by Lessing, and the salary he paid him was as large as he would have got from the frugal Frederick. But one whose trade it was to be a Duke could hardly have had much sympathy with his librarian after he had once found out what he really was. For even if he was not, as Herr Stahr affirms, a republican, and we doubt very much if he was, yet he was not a man who could play with ideas in the light French fashion. At the ardent touch of his sincerity they took fire, and grew dangerous to what is called the social fabric. The logic of wit, with its momentary flash, is a very different thing from that consequent logic of thought, pushing forward its deliberate sap day and night with a fixed object, which belonged to Lessing. The men who attack abuses are not so much to be dreaded by the reigning house of Superstition as those who, as Dante says, syllogise hateful truths. As for "the chains of feudal service," they might serve a Fenian Head-Centre on a pinch, but are wholly out of place here. The slavery that Lessing had really taken on him has that of a great library, an Alcina that could always too easily witch him away from the more serious duty of his genius. That a mind like his could be buried in a corner is mere twaddle, and of a kind that has done great wrong to the dignity of letters. Wherever Lessing sat, was the head of the table. That he suffered at Wolfenbüttel is true; but was it nothing to be in love and in debt at the same time, and to feel that his fruition of the one must be postponed for uncertain years by his own folly in incurring the other? If the sparrow-life must end, surely a wee bush is better than nae beild. One cause of Lessing's occasional restlessness and discontent Herr Stahr has failed to notice. It is evident from many passages in his letters that he had his share of the hypochondria which goes with an imaginative temperament. But in him it only serves to bring out in stronger relief his deep-rooted manliness. He spent no breath in that melodious whining which, beginning with Rousseau, has hardly yet gone out of fashion. Work of some

kind was his medicine for the blues—if not always of the kind he would have chosen, then the best that was to be had; for the useful, too, had for him a sweetness of its own. Sometimes he found a congenial labour in rescuing, as he called it, the memory of some dead scholar or thinker from the wrongs of ignorance or prejudice or falsehood; sometimes in fishing a manuscript out of the ooze of oblivion, and giving it, after a critical cleansing, to the world. Now and then he warmed himself and kept his muscle in trim with buffeting soundly the champions of that shallow artificiality and unctuous wordiness, one of which passed for orthodox in literature, and the other in theology. True religion and creative genius were both so beautiful to him that he could never abide the mediocre counterfeit of either, and he who put so much of his own life into all he wrote could not but hold all scripture sacred in which a divine soul had recorded itself. It would be doing Lessing great wrong to confound his controversial writing with the paltry quarrels of authors. His own personal relations enter into them surprisingly little, for his quarrel was never with men, but with falsehood, cant, and misleading tradition, in whomsoever incarnated. Save for this, they were no longer readable, and might be relegated to that herbarium of Billingsgate gathered by the elder Disraeli.

So far from being "crushed in spirit" at Wolfenbüttel, the years he spent there were among the most productive of his life. *Emelia Galotti*, begun in 1758, was finished there and published in 1771. The controversy with Götze, by far the most important he was engaged in, and the one in which he put forth his maturest powers, was carried on thence. His *Nathan the Wise* (1779), by which almost alone he was known as a poet outside of Germany, was conceived and composed there. The last few years of his life were darkened by ill-health and the depression which it brings. His *Nathan* had not the success he hoped. It is sad to see the strong, self-sufficing man cast about for a little sympathy, even for a little praise. "It is really needful to me that you should have some small good opinion of it [*Nathan*], in order to make me once more contented with myself," he writes to Elise Reimarus in May 1779. That he was weary of polemics, and dissatisfied with himself for letting them distract him from better things, appears from his last pathetic letter to the old friend he

loved and valued most—Mendelssohn. “And in truth, dear friend, I sorely need a letter like yours from time to time, if I am not to become wholly out of humour. I think you do not know me as a man that has a very hot hunger for praise. But the coldness with which the world is wont to convince certain people that they do not suit it, if not deadly, yet stiffens one with chill. I am not astonished that *all* I have written lately does not please *you*. . . . At best, a passage here and there may have cheated you by recalling our better days. I, too, was then a sound, slim sapling, and am now such a rotten, gnarled trunk!” This was written on the 19th of December 1780; and on the 15th of February 1781, Lessing died, not quite fifty-two years old. Goethe was then in his thirty-second year, and Schiller ten years younger.

Of Lessing's relation to metaphysics the reader will find ample discussion in Herr Stahr's volumes. We are not particularly concerned with them, because his interest in such questions was purely speculative, and because he was more concerned to exercise the powers of his mind than to analyse them. His chief business, his master impulse always, was to be a man of letters in the narrower sense of the term. Even into theology he only made occasional raids across the border, as it were, and that not so much with a purpose of reform as in defence of principles which applied equally to the whole domain of thought. He had even less sympathy with heterodoxy than with orthodoxy, and, so far from joining a party or wishing to form one, would have left belief a matter of choice to the individual conscience. “From the bottom of my heart I hate all those people who wish to found sects. For it is not error, but sectarian error, yes, even sectarian truth, that makes men unhappy, or would do so if truth would found a sect.”¹ Again he says, that in his theological controversies he is “much less concerned about theology than about sound common sense, and only therefore prefer the old orthodox (at bottom *tolerant*) theology to the new (at bottom *intolerant*), because the former openly conflicts with sound common sense, while the latter would fain corrupt it. I reconcile myself with my open enemies in order the better to be on my guard against my

¹ To his brother Karl, 20th April 1774.

secret ones.”¹ At another time he tells his brother that he has a wholly false notion of his (Lessing’s) relation to orthodoxy. “Do you suppose I grudge the world that anybody should seek to enlighten it?—that I do not heartily wish that every one should think rationally about religion? I should loathe myself if even in my scribblings I had any other end than to help forward those great views. But let me choose my own way, which I think best for this purpose. And what is simpler than this way? I would not have the impure water, which has long been unfit to use, preserved; but I would not have it thrown away before we know whence to get purer. . . . Orthodoxy, thank God, we were pretty well done with; a partition-wall had been built between it and Philosophy, behind which each could go her own way without troubling the other. But what are they doing now? They are tearing down this wall, and, under the pretext of making us rational Christians, are making us very irrational philosophers. . . . We are agreed that our old religious system is false; but I cannot say with you that it is a patchwork of bunglers and half-philosophers. I know nothing in the world in which human acuteness has been more displayed or exercised than in that.”² Lessing was always for freedom, never for looseness, of thought, still less for laxity of principle. But it must be a real freedom, and not that vain struggle to become a majority, which, if it succeed, escapes from heresy only to make heretics of the other side. *Abire ad plures* would with him have meant, not bodily but spiritual death. He did not love the fanaticism of innovation a whit better than that of conservatism. To his sane understanding both were equally hateful, as different masks of the same selfish bully. Coleridge said that toleration was impossible till indifference made it worthless. Lessing did not wish for toleration, because that implies authority, nor could his earnest temper have conceived of indifference. But he thought it as absurd to regulate opinion as the colour of the hair. Here, too, he would have agreed with Selden, that “it is a vain thing to talk of an heretic, for a man for his heart cannot think any otherwise than he does think.” Herr Stahr’s chapters on this point, bating a little exaltation of tone, are very satisfactory; though, in his desire to make

¹ To his brother Karl, 20th March 1777.

² To the same, 2nd February 1774.

a leader of Lessing, he almost represents him as being what he shunned—the founder of a sect. The fact is, that Lessing only formulated in his own way a general movement of thought, and what mainly interests us is that in him we see a layman, alike indifferent to clerisy and heresy, giving energetic and pointed utterance to those opinions of his class which the clergy are content to ignore so long as they remain esoteric. At present the world has advanced to where Lessing stood, while the Church has done its best to stand stock-still; and it would be a curious, were it not a melancholy spectacle, to see the indifference with which the laity look on while theologians thrash their wheatless straw, utterly unconscious that there is no longer any common term possible that could bring their creeds again to any point of bearing on the practical life of men. Fielding never made a profounder stroke of satire than in Squire Western's indignant "Art not in the pulpit now? When art got up there, I never mind what dost say."

As an author, Lessing began his career at a period when we cannot say that German literature was at its lowest ebb, only because there had not yet been any flood-tide. That may be said to have begun with him. When we say German literature, we mean so much of it as has any interest outside of Germany. That part of the literary histories which treats of the dead waste and middle of the eighteenth century reads like a collection of obituaries, and were better reduced to the conciseness of epitaph, though the authors of them seem to find a melancholy pleasure, much like that of undertakers, in the task by which they live. Gottsched reigned supreme on the legitimate throne of dullness. In Switzerland, Bodmer essayed a more republican form of the same authority. At that time a traveller reports eight hundred authors in Zürich alone! Young aspirant for lettered fame, in imagination clear away the lichens from their forgotten headstones, and read humbly the "As I am, so thou must be," on all! Everybody remembers how Goethe, in the seventh book of his Autobiography, tells the story of his visit to Gottsched. He enters by mistake an inner room at the moment when a frightened servant brings the discrowned potentate a periwig large enough to reach to the elbows. That awful emblem of pretentious sham seems to be the best type of the literature then predominant. We always fancy it set upon a pole, like

Gessler's hat, with nothing in it that was not wooden, for all men to bow down before. The periwig style had its natural place in the age of Louis XIV., and there were certainly brains under it. But it had run out in France, as the tie-wig style of Pope had in England. In Germany it was the mere imitation of an imitation. Will it be believed that Gottsched recommends his *Art of Poetry* to beginners, in preference to Breitinger's, because it "will enable them to produce every species of poem in a correct style, while out of that no one can learn to make an ode or a cantata?" "Whoever," he says, "buys Breitinger's book in order to learn how to make poems, will too late regret his money."¹ Gottsched, perhaps, did some service even by his advocacy of French models, by calling attention to the fact that there *was* such a thing as style, and that it was of some consequence. But not one of the authors of that time can be said to survive, nor to be known even by name except to Germans, unless it be Klopstock, Herder, Wieland, and Gellert. And the latter's immortality, such as it is, reminds us somewhat of that Lady Gosling's, whose obituary stated that she was "mentioned by Mrs. Barbauld in her *Life of Richardson* 'under the name of Miss M., afterwards Lady G.'" Klopstock himself is rather remembered for what he was than what he is—an immortality of unreadableness; and we much doubt if many Germans put the *Oberon* in their trunks when they start on a journey. Herder alone survives, if not as a contributor to literature, strictly so called, yet as a thinker and as part of the intellectual impulse of the day. But at the time, though there were two parties, yet within the lines of each there was a loyal reciprocity of what is called on such occasions appreciation. Wig ducked to wig, each blockhead had a brother, and there was a universal apotheosis of the mediocrity of our set. If the greatest happiness of the greatest number be the true theory, this was all that could be desired. Even Lessing at one time looked up to Hagedorn as the German Horace. If Hagedorn were pleased, what mattered it to Horace? Worse almost than this was the universal pedantry. The solemn bray of one pedagogue was taken up and prolonged in a thousand echoes. There was not only no originality, but no desire for it—perhaps even a dread of it, as something that would break the *entente cordiale*

¹ *Gervinus*, iv. 62.

of placid mutual assurance. No great writer had given that tone of good-breeding to the language which would gain it entrance to the society of European literature. No man of genius had made it a necessity of polite culture. It was still as rudely provincial as the Scotch of Allan Ramsay. Frederick the Great was to be forgiven if, with his practical turn, he gave himself wholly to French, which had replaced Latin as a cosmopolitan tongue. It had lightness, ease, fluency, elegance—in short, all the good qualities that German lacked. The study of French models was perhaps the best thing for German literature before it got out of long-clothes. It was bad only when it became a tradition and a tyranny. Lessing did more than any other man to overthrow this foreign usurpation when it had done its work.

The same battle had to be fought on English soil also, and indeed is hardly over yet. For the renewed outbreak of the old quarrel between Classical and Romantic grew out of nothing more than an attempt of the modern spirit to free itself from the laws of taste laid down by the *Grand Siècle*. But we must not forget the debt which all modern prose literature owes to France. It is true that Machiavelli was the first to write with classic pith and point in a living language; but he is, for all that, properly an ancient. Montaigne is really the first modern writer who assimilated his Greek and Latin, and showed that an author might be original and charming, even classical, if he did not try too hard. He is also the first modern critic, and his judgments of the writers of antiquity are those of an equal. He made the ancients his servants, to help him to think in Garçon French; and, in spite of his endless quotations, began the crusade against pedantry. It was not, however, till a century later, that the reform became complete in France, and then crossed the Channel. Milton is still a pedant in his prose, and not seldom even in his great poem. Dryden was the first Englishman who wrote perfectly easy prose, and he owed his style and turn of thought to his French reading. His learning sits easily on him, and has a modern cut. So far, the French influence was one of unmixed good, for it rescued us from pedantry. It must have done something for Germany in the same direction. For its effect on poetry we cannot say as much; and its traditions had themselves become pedantry in another shape when Lessing made an end of it. He himself

certainly learned to write prose of Diderot; and whatever Herr Stahr may think of it, his share in the *Letters on German Literature* got its chief inspiration from France.

It is in the *Dramaturgie* that Lessing first properly enters as an influence into European literature. He may be said to have begun the revolt from pseudo-classicism in poetry, and to have been thus unconsciously the founder of romanticism. Wieland's translation of Shakespeare had, it is true, appeared in 1762; but Lessing was the first critic whose profound knowledge of the Greek drama and apprehension of its principles gave weight to his judgment, who recognised in what the true greatness of the poet consisted, and found him to be really nearer the Greeks than any other modern. This was because Lessing looked always more to the life than the form—because he knew the classics, and did not merely cant about them. But if the authority of Lessing, by making people feel easy in their admiration for Shakespeare, perhaps increased the influence of his works, and if his discussions of Aristotle have given a new starting-point to modern criticism, it may be doubted whether the immediate effect on literature of his own critical essays was so great as Herr Stahr supposes. Surely "Götz" and "The Robbers" are nothing like what he would have called Shakespearian, and the whole *Sturm un Drang* tendency would have roused in him nothing but antipathy. Fixed principles in criticism are useful in helping us to form a judgment of works already produced, but it is questionable whether they are not rather a hindrance than a help to living production. Ben Jonson was a fine critic, intimate with the classics as few men have either the leisure or the strength of mind to be in this age of many books, and built regular plays long before they were heard of in France. But he continually trips and falls flat over his metewand of classical propriety, his personages are abstractions, and fortunately neither his precepts nor his practice influenced any one of his greater coevals.¹ In breadth of understanding,

¹ It should be considered, by those sagacious persons who think that the most marvellous intellect of which we have any record could not master so much Latin and Greek as would serve a sophomore, that Shakespeare must through conversation have possessed himself of whatever principles of art Ben Jonson and the other university men had been able to deduce from their study of the classics. That they should not have discussed these matters over their sack at the Mermaid is incredible; that Shakespeare, who left not a drop in any orange he

and the gravity of purpose that comes of it, he was far above Fletcher or Webster, but now far below either in the subtler, the incalculable, qualities of a dramatic poet! Yet Ben, with his principles off, could soar and sing with the best of them; and there are strains in his lyrics which Herrick, the most Catullian of poets since Catullus, could imitate, but never match. A constant reference to the statutes which taste has codified would only bewilder the creative instinct. Criticism can at best teach writers without genius what is to be avoided or imitated. It cannot communicate life; and its effect, when reduced to rules, has commonly been to produce that correctness which is so praiseworthy and so intolerable. It cannot give taste, it can only demonstrate who has had it. Lessing's essays in this kind were of service to German literature by their manliness of style, whose example was worth a hundred treatises, and by the stimulus there is in all original thinking. Could he have written such a poem as he was capable of conceiving, his influence would have been far greater. It is the living soul, and not the metaphysical abstraction of it, that is genetic in literature. If to do were as easy as to know what were good to be done! It was out of his own failures to reach the ideal he saw so clearly, that Lessing drew the wisdom which made him so admirable a critic. Even here, too, genius can profit by no experience but its own.

For, in spite of Herr Stahr's protest, we must acknowledge the truth of Lessing's own characteristic confession, that he was no poet. A man of genius he unquestionably was, if genius may be claimed no less for force than fineness of mind—for the intensity of conviction that inspires the understanding as much as for that apprehension of beauty which gives energy of will to imagination—but a poetic genius he was not. His mind kindled by friction in the process of thinking, not in the flash of conception, and its delight is in demonstration, not in bodying forth. His prose can leap and run, his verse is always thinking of his feet. Yet in his *Minna* and his *Emilia*¹ he shows one faculty of the squeezed, could not also have got all the juice out of this one, is even more so.

¹ In *Minna* and *Emilia* Lessing followed the lead of Diderot. In the Preface to the second edition of Diderot's *Théâtre*, he says: "I am very conscious that my taste, without Diderot's example and teaching, would have taken quite another direction; perhaps one more my own,

dramatist, that of construction, in a higher degree than any other German.¹ Here his critical deductions served him to some purpose. The action moves rapidly, there is no speechifying, and the parts are coherent. Both plays act better than anything of Goethe or Schiller. But it is the story that interests us, and not the characters. These are not, it is true, the incorporation of certain ideas, or, still worse, of certain dogmas, but they certainly seem something like machines by which the motive of the play is carried on; and there is nothing of that interplay of plot and character which makes Shakespeare more real in the closet than other dramatists with all the helps of the theatre. It is a striking illustration at once of the futility of mere critical insight and of Lessing's want of imagination, that in the *Emilia* he should have thought a Roman motive consistent with modern habits of thought, and that in *Nathan* he should have been guilty of anachronisms which violate not only the accidental truth of fact, but the essential truth of character. Even if we allowed him imagination, it must be only on the lower plane of prose; for of verse as anything more than so many metrical feet he had not the faintest notion. Of that exquisite sympathy with the movement of the mind, with every swifter or slower pulse of passion, which proves it another species from prose, the very ἀφροδίτη καὶ λύρα of speech, and not merely a higher one, he wanted the fineness

yet hardly one with which my understanding would in the long run have been so well content." Diderot's choice of prose was dictated and justified by the accentual poverty of his mother-tongue. Lessing certainly revised his judgment on this point (for it was not equally applicable to German), and wrote his maturer *Nathan* in what he took for blank verse. There was much kindred between the minds of the two men. Diderot always seems to us a kind of debased Lessing. Lessing was also indebted to Burke, Hume, the two Warton, and Hurd, among other English writers. Not that he borrowed anything of them but the quickening of his own thought. It should be remembered that Rousseau was seventeen, Diderot and Sterne sixteen, and Winckelmann twelve years older than Lessing. Wieland was four years younger.

¹ Goethe's appreciation of Lessing grew with his years. He writes to Lavater, 18th March 1781: "Lessing's death has greatly depressed me. I had much pleasure in him and much hope of him." This is a little patronising in tone. But in the last year of his life, talking with Eckermann, he naturally antedates his admiration, as reminiscence is wont to do. "You can conceive what an effect this piece (*Minna*) had upon us young people. It was, in fact, a shining meteor. It made us aware that something higher existed than anything whereof that feeble literary epoch had a notion. The first two acts are truly a masterpiece of exposition, from which one learned much and can always learn."

of sense to conceive. If we compare the prose of Dante to Milton, though both were eloquent, with their verse, we see at once which was the most congenial to them. Lessing has passages of freer and more harmonious utterance in some of his most careless prose essays, than can be found in his *Nathan* from the first line to the last. In the *numeris lege solutis* he is often snatched beyond himself, and becomes truly dithyrambic; in his pentameters the march of the thought is comparatively hampered and irresolute. His best things are not poetically delicate, but have the tougher fibre of proverbs. Is it not enough, then, to be a great prose-writer? They are as rare as great poets, and if Lessing have the gift to stir and to dilate that something deeper than the mind which genius only can reach, what matter if it be not done to music? Of his minor poems we need say little. Verse was always more or less mechanical with him, and his epigrams are almost all stiff, as if they were bad translations from the Latin. Many of them are shockingly coarse, and in liveliness are on a level with those of our Elizabethan period. Herr Stahr, of course, cannot bear to give them up, even though Gervinus be willing. The prettiest of his shorter poems (*Die Namen*) has been appropriated by Coleridge, who has given it a grace which it wants in the original. His *Nathan*, by a poor translation of which he is chiefly known to English readers, is an Essay on Toleration in the form of a dialogue. As a play, it has not the interest of *Minna* or *Emilia*, though the Germans, who have a praiseworthy national stoicism where one of their great writers is concerned, find in seeing it represented a grave satisfaction, like that of subscribing to a monument. There is a sober lustre of reflection in it that makes it very good reading; but it wants the molten interfusion of thought and phrase which only imagination can achieve.

As Lessing's mind was continually advancing—always open to new impressions, and capable, as very few are, of apprehending the many-sidedness of truth—as he had the rare quality of being honest with himself—his works seem fragmentary, and give at first an impression of incompleteness. But one learns at length to recognise and value this very incompleteness as characteristic of the man who was growing lifelong, and to whom the selfish thought that any share of truth could be exclusively *his* was an impossibility.

At the end of the ninety-fifth number of the *Dramaturgie* he says: "I remind my readers here, that these pages are by no means intended to contain a dramatic system. I am accordingly not bound to solve all the difficulties which I raise. I am quite willing that my thoughts should seem to want connection—nay, even to contradict each other—if only there are thoughts in which they [my readers] find material for thinking themselves. I wish to do nothing more than scatter the *fermenta cognitionis*." That is Lessing's great praise, and gives its chief value to his works—a value, indeed, imperishable, and of the noblest kind. No writer can leave a more precious legacy to posterity than this; and beside this shining merit, all mere literary splendours look pale and cold. There is that life in Lessing's thought which engenders life, and not only thinks for us, but makes us think. Not sceptical, but for ever testing and inquiring, it is out of the cloud of his own doubt that the flash comes at last with sudden and vivid illumination. Flashes they indeed are, his finest intuitions, and of very different quality from the equable north-light of the artist. He felt it, and said it of himself, "Ever so many flashes of lightning do not make daylight." We speak now of those more rememberable passages where his highest individuality reveals itself in what may truly be called a passion of thought. In the *Laocoön* there is daylight of the serenest temper, and never was there a better example of the discourse of reason, though even that is also a fragment.

But it is as a nobly original man, even more than as an original thinker, that Lessing is precious to us, and that he is so considerable in German literature. In a higher sense, but in the same kind, he is to Germans what Dr. Johnson is to us—admirable for what he was. Like Johnson's, too, but still from a loftier plane, a great deal of his thought has a direct bearing on the immediate life and interests of men. His genius was not a St. Elmo's fire, as it so often is with mere poets—as it was in Shelley, for example, playing in ineffectual flame about the points of his thought—but was interfused with his whole nature and made a part of his very being. To the Germans, with their weak nerve of sentimentalism, his brave common sense is a far wholesomer tonic than the cynicism of Heine, which is, after all, only sentimentalism soured. His jealousy for maintaining the just

boundaries whether of art or speculation may warn them to check with timely dikes the tendency of their thought to diffuse inundation. Their fondness in æsthetic discussion for a nomenclature subtle enough to split a hair at which even a Thomist would have despaired, is rebuked by the clear simplicity of his style.¹ But he is no exclusive property of Germany. As a complete man, constant, generous, full of honest courage, as a hardy follower of Thought wherever she might lead him, above all, as a confessor of that Truth which is for ever revealing itself to the seeker, and is the more loved because never wholly revealable, he is an ennobling possession of mankind. Let his own striking words characterise him—

“Not the truth of which any one is, or supposes himself to be, possessed, but the upright endeavour he has made to arrive at truth, makes the worth of the man. For not by the possession, but by the investigation, of truth are his powers expanded, wherein alone his ever-growing perfection consists. Possession makes us easy, indolent, proud.

“If God held all truth shut in His right hand, and in His left nothing but the ever-restless instinct for truth, though with the condition of for ever and ever erring, and should say to me, Choose! I should bow humbly to His left hand, and say, Father, give! pure truth is for Thee alone!”

It is not without reason that fame is awarded only after death. The dust-cloud of notoriety which follows and envelopes the men who drive with the wind bewilders contemporary judgment. Lessing, while he lived, had little reward for his labour but the satisfaction inherent in all work faithfully done; the highest, no doubt, of which human nature is capable, and yet perhaps not so sweet as that sympathy of which the world's praise is but an index. But if to perpetuate herself beyond the grave in healthy and ennobling influences be the noblest aspiration of the mind, and its fruition the only reward she would have deemed worthy of herself, then is Lessing to be counted thrice fortunate. Every year since he was laid prematurely in the earth has seen his power for good increase, and made him more precious to the hearts and intellects of men. “Lessing,” said Goethe, “would have declined the lofty title of a Genius; but his

¹ Nothing can be droller than the occasional translation by Vischer of a sentence of Lessing into his own jargon.

enduring influence testifies against himself. On the other hand, we have in literature other and indeed important names of men who, while they lived, were esteemed great geniuses, but whose influence ended with their lives, and who, accordingly, were less than they and others thought. For, as I have said, there is no genius without a productive power that continues for ever operative.”¹

¹ Eckermann, *Gespräche mit Goethe*, iii. 229.

ROUSSEAU AND THE SENTIMENTALISTS¹

“WE have had the great professor and founder of the philosophy of Vanity in England. As I had good opportunities of knowing his proceedings almost from day to day, he left no doubt in my mind that he entertained no principle either to influence his heart or to guide his understanding but vanity; with this vice he was possessed to a degree little short of madness. Benevolence to the whole species, and want of feeling for every individual with whom the professors come in contact, form the character of the new philosophy. Setting up for an unsocial independence, this their hero of vanity refuses the just price of common labour, as well as the tribute which opulence owes to genius, and which, when paid, honours the giver and the receiver, and then pleads his beggary as an excuse for his crimes. He melts with tenderness for those only who touch him by the remotest relation, and then, without one natural pang, casts away, as a sort of offal and excrement, the spawn of his disgustful amours, and sends his children to the hospital of foundlings. The bear loves, licks, and forms her young; but bears are not philosophers.”

This was Burke's opinion of the only contemporary who can be said to rival him in fervid and sustained eloquence, to surpass him in grace and persuasiveness of style. Perhaps we should have been more thankful to him if he had left us instead a record of those “proceedings almost from day to day” which he had such “good opportunities of knowing,” but it probably never entered his head that posterity might care as much about the doings of the citizen of Geneva as about the saying of even a British Right Honourable. Vanity eludes recognition by its victims in more shapes, and more pleasing, than any other passion, and perhaps had Mr. Burke

¹ *Histoire des Idées morales et politiques en France au XVIII^{me} Siècle.* Par M. Jules Barni, Professeur à l'Académie de Genève. Tome ii. Paris. 1867.

been able imaginatively to translate Swiss Jean Jacques into Irish Edmund, he would have found no juster equivalent for the obnoxious trisyllable than "righteous self-esteem." For Burke was himself also, in the subtler sense of the word, a sentimentalist, that is, a man who took what would now be called an æsthetic view of morals and politics. No man who ever wrote English, except perhaps Mr. Ruskin, more habitually mistook his own personal likes and dislikes, tastes and distastes, for general principles, and this, it may be suspected, is the secret of all merely eloquent writing. He hints at madness as an explanation of Rousseau, and it is curious enough that Mr. Buckle was fain to explain *him* in the same way. It is not, we confess, a solution that we find very satisfactory in this latter case. Burke's fury against the French Revolution was nothing more than was natural to a desperate man in self-defence. It was his own life, or, at least, all that made life dear to him, that was in danger. He had all that abstract political wisdom which may be naturally secreted by a magnanimous nature and a sensitive temperament, absolutely none of that rough-and-tumble kind which is so needful for the conduct of affairs. Fastidiousness is only another form of egotism; and all men who know not where to look for truth, save in the narrow well of self, will find their own image at the bottom, and mistake it for what they are seeking. Burke's hatred of Rousseau was genuine and instinctive. It was so genuine and so instinctive as no hatred can be but that of self, of our own weaknesses as we see them in another man. But there was also something deeper in it than this. There was mixed with it the natural dread in the political diviner of the political logician—in the empirical, of the theoretic statesman. Burke, confounding the idea of society with the form of it then existing, would have preserved that as the only specific against anarchy. Rousseau, assuming that society as it then existed was but another name for anarchy, would have reconstituted it on an ideal basis. The one has left behind him some of the profoundest aphorisms of political wisdom; the other, some of the clearest principles of political science. The one, clinging to Divine right, found in the fact that things were, a reason that they ought to be; the other, aiming to solve the problem of the Divine order, would deduce from that abstraction alone the claim of anything to be at all.

There seems a mere oppugnancy of nature between the two, and yet both were, in different ways, the dupes of their own imaginations.

Now let us hear the opinion of a philosopher who *was* a bear, whether bears be philosophers or not. Boswell had genuine relish for what was superior in any way, from genius to claret, and of course he did not let Rousseau escape him. "One evening at the Mitre, Johnson said sarcastically to me, 'It seems, sir, you have kept very good company abroad—Rousseau and Wilkes!' I answered with a smile, 'My dear sir, you don't call Rousseau bad company; do you really think *him* a bad man?' JOHNSON. 'Sir, if you are talking jestingly of this, I don't talk with you. If you mean to be serious, I think him one of the worst of men, a rascal who ought to be hunted out of society, as he has been. Three or four nations have expelled him, and it is a shame that he is protected in this country. Rousseau is a very bad man. I would sooner sign a sentence for his transportation, than that of any felon who has gone from the Old Bailey these many years. Yes, I should like to have him work in the plantations.'" *We* were the plantations then, and Rousseau was destined to work there in another and much more wonderful fashion than the gruff old Ursa Major imagined. However, there is always a refreshing heartiness in his growl, a masculine bass with no snarl in it. The Doctor's logic is of that fine old crusted Port sort, the native manufacture of the British conservative mind. Three or four nations *have*, therefore England ought. A few years later, had the Doctor been living, if three or four nations had treated their kings as France did hers, would he have thought the *ergo* a very stringent one for England?

Mr. Burke, who could speak with studied respect of the Prince of Wales, and of his vices with that charity which thinketh no evil and can afford to think no evil of so important a living member of the British Constitution, surely could have no unmixed moral repugnance for Rousseau's "disgustful amours." It was because they were *his* that they were so loathsome. Mr. Burke was a snob, though an inspired one. Dr. Johnson, the friend of that wretchedest of lewd fellows, Richard Savage, and of that gay man about town, Topham Beauclerk—himself sprung from an amour that would have been disgustful had it not been royal—must also have felt

something more in respect of Rousseau than the mere repugnance of virtue for vice. We must sometimes allow to personal temperament its right of peremptory challenge. Johnson had not that fine sensitiveness to the political atmosphere which made Burke presageful of coming tempest, but both of them felt that there was something dangerous in this man. Their dislike has in it somewhat of the energy of fear. Neither of them had the same feeling toward Voltaire, the man of supreme talent, but both felt that what Rousseau was possessed by was genius, with its terrible force either to attract or repel.

"By the pricking of my thumbs,
Something wicked this way comes."

Burke and Johnson were both of them sincere men, both of them men of character as well as of intellectual force; and we cite their opinions of Rousseau with the respect which is due to an honest conviction which has apparent grounds for its adoption, whether we agree with it or no. But it strikes us as a little singular that one whose life was so full of moral inconsistency, whose character is so contemptible in many ways, in some we might almost say so revolting, should yet have exercised so deep and lasting an influence, and on minds so various, should still be an object of minute and earnest discussion—that he should have such vigour in his intellectual loins as to have been the father of Châteaubriand, Byron, Lamartine, George Sand, and many more in literature, in politics of Jefferson and Thomas Paine—that the spots he had haunted should draw pilgrims so unlike as Gibbon and Napoleon, nay, should draw them still, after the lapse of near a century. Surely there must have been a basis of sincerity in this man seldom matched, if it can prevail against so many reasons for repugnance, aversion, and even disgust. He could not have been the mere sentimentalist and rhetorician for which the rough-and-ready understanding would at first glance be inclined to condemn him. In a certain sense he was both of these, but he was something more. It will bring us a little nearer to the point we are aiming at if he quote one other and more recent English opinion of him.

Mr. Thomas Moore, returning pleasantly in a travelling-carriage from a trip to Italy, in which he had never forgotten the poetical shop at home, but had carefully noted down all the pretty images that occurred to him for future use—Mr.

Thomas Moore, on his way back from a visit to his noble friend Byron, at Venice, who had there been leading a life so gross as to be talked about, even amid the crash of Napoleon's fall, and who was just writing *Don Juan* for the improvement of the world—Mr. Thomas Moore, fresh from the reading of Byron's *Memoirs*, which were so scandalous that, by some hocus-pocus, three thousand guineas afterward found their way into his own pocket for consenting to suppress them—Mr. Thomas Moore, the *ci-devant* friend of the Prince Regent, and the author of *Little Poems*, among other objects of pilgrimage visits *Les Charmettes*, where Rousseau had lived with Madame de Warens. So good an opportunity for occasional verses was not to be lost, so good a text for a little virtuous moralising not to be thrown away; and accordingly Mr. Moore pours out several pages of octosyllabic disgust at the sensuality of the dead man of genius. There was no horror for Byron. Toward him all was suavity and decorous *bienséance*. That lively sense of benefits to be received made the Irish Anacreon wink with both his little eyes. In the judgment of a liberal like Mr. Moore, were not the errors of a lord excusable? But with poor Rousseau the case was very different. The son of a watchmaker, an outcast from boyhood up, always on the perilous edge of poverty—what right had he to indulge himself in any immoralities? So it is always with the sentimentalists. It is never the thing in itself that is bad or good, but the thing in its relation to some conventional and mostly selfish standard. Moore could be a moralist, in this case, without any trouble, and with the advantage of winning Lord Lansdowne's approval; he could write some graceful verses which everybody would buy, and for the rest it is not hard to be a stoic in eight-syllable measure and a travelling-carriage. The next dinner at Bowood will taste none the worse. Accordingly he speaks of

“ The mire, the strife
 And vanities of this man's life,
 Who more than all that e'er have glowed
 With fancy's flame (and it was his
 In fullest warmth and radiance) showed
 What an impostor Genius is;
 How, with that strong mimetic art
 Which forms its life and soul, it takes
 All shapes of thought, all hues of heart,
 Nor feels itself one throb it wakes;

How like a gem, its light may shine,
 O'er the dark path by mortals trod,
 Itself as mean a worm the while
 As crawls at midnight o'er the sod;

How, with the pencil hardly dry
 From colouring up such scenes of love
 And beauty as make young hearts sigh,
 And dream and think through heaven they rove," etc., etc.

Very spirited, is it not? One has only to overlook a little threadbareness in the similes, and it is very good oratorical verse. But would we believe in it, we must never read Mr. Moore's own journal and find out how thin a piece of veneering his own life was—how he lived in sham till his very nature had become subdued to it, till he could persuade himself that a sham could be written into a reality, and actually made experiment thereof in his Diary.

One verse in this diatribe deserves a special comment,—

“What an impostor Genius is!”

In two respects there is nothing to be objected to in it. It is of eight syllables, and “is” rhymes unexceptionably with “his.” But is there the least filament of truth in it? We venture to assert, not the least. It was not Rousseau's genius that was an impostor. It was the one thing in him that was always true. We grant that, in allowing that a man has genius. Talent is that which is in a man's power; genius is that in whose power a man is. That is the very difference between them. We might turn the tables on Moore, the man of talent, and say truly enough, What an impostor talent is! Moore talks of the mimetic power with a total misapprehension of what it really is. The mimetic power had nothing whatever to do with the affair. Rousseau had none of it; Shakespeare had it in excess; but what difference would it make in our judgment of *Hamlet* or *Othello* if a manuscript of Shakespeare's memoirs should turn up, and we should find out that he had been a pitiful fellow? None in the world; for he is not a professed moralist, and his life does not give the warrant to his words. But if Demosthenes, after all his Philippics, throws away his shield and runs, we feel the contemptibleness of the contradiction. With genius itself we never find any fault. It would be an over-nicety that would do that. We do not get invited to nectar and ambrosia so often that we think of grumbling and

saying we have better at home. No; the same genius that mastered him who wrote the poem masters us in reading it, and we care for nothing outside the poem itself. How the author lived, what he wore, how he looked—all that is mere gossip, about which we need not trouble ourselves. Whatever he was or did, somehow or other God let him be worthy to write *this*, and that is enough for us. We forgive everything to the genius; we are inexorable to the man. Shakespeare, Goethe, Burns—what have their biographies to do with us? Genius is not a question of character. It may be sordid, like the lamp of Aladdin, in its externals; what care we, while the touch of it builds palaces for us, makes us rich as only men in dream-land are rich, and lords to the utmost bound of imagination? So when people talk of the ungrateful way in which the world treats its geniuses, they speak unwisely. There is no work of genius which has not been the delight of mankind, no word of genius to which the human heart and soul have not, sooner or later, responded. But the man whom the genius takes possession of for its pen, for its trowel, for its pencil, for its chisel, *him* the world treats according to his deserts. Does Burns drink? It sets him to gauging casks of gin. For, remember, it is not to the practical world that the genius appeals; it *is* the practical world which judges of the man's fitness for its uses, and has a right so to judge. No amount of patronage could have made distilled liquors less toothsome to Robbie Burns, as no amount of them could make a Burns of the Ettrick Shepherd.

There is an old story in the *Gesta Romanorum* of a priest who was found fault with by one of his parishioners because his life was in painful discordance with his teaching. So one day he takes his critic out to a stream, and, giving him to drink of it, asks him if he does not find it sweet and pure water. The parishioner, having answered that it was, is taken to the source, and finds that what had so refreshed him flowed from between the jaws of a dead dog. "Let this teach thee," said the priest, "that the very best doctrine may take its rise in a very impure and disgusting spring, and that excellent morals may be taught by a man who has no morals at all." It is easy enough to see the fallacy here. Had the man known beforehand from what a carrion fountain-head the stream issued, he could not have drunk of it without loathing. Had the priest merely bidden him to *look* at the

stream and see how beautiful it was, instead of tasting it, it would have been quite another matter. And this is precisely the difference between what appeals to our æsthetic and to our moral sense, between what is judged of by the taste and the conscience.

It is when the sentimentalist turns preacher of morals that we investigate his character, and are justified in so doing. He may express as many and as delicate shades of feeling as he likes—for this the sensibility of his organisation perfectly fits him, as no other person could do it so well—but the moment he undertakes to establish his feeling as a rule of conduct, we ask at once, How far are his own life and deed in accordance with what he preaches? For every man feels instinctively that all the beautiful sentiments in the world weigh less than a single lovely action; and that while tenderness of feeling and susceptibility to generous emotions are accidents of temperament, goodness is an achievement of the will and a quality of the life. Fine words, says our homely old proverb, butter no parsnips; and if the question be how to render those vegetables palatable, an ounce of butter would be worth more than all the orations of Cicero. The only conclusive evidence of a man's sincerity is that he give *himself* for a principle. Words, money, all things else are comparatively easy to give away; but when a man makes a gift of his daily life and practice, it is plain that the truth, whatever it may be, has taken possession of him. From that sincerity his words gain the force and pertinency of deeds, and his money is no longer the pale drudge 'twixt man and man, but, by a beautiful magic, what erewhile bore the image and superscription of Cæsar seems now to bear the image and superscription of God. It is thus that there is a genius for goodness, for magnanimity, for self-sacrifice, as well as for creative art; and it is thus that by a more refined sort of Platonism the Infinite Beauty dwells in and shapes to its own likeness the soul which gives it body and individuality. But when Moore charges genius with being an impostor, the confusion of his ideas is pitiable. There is nothing so true, so sincere, so downright and forthright, as genius. It is always truer than the man himself is, greater than he. If Shakespeare the man had been as marvellous a creature as the genius that wrote his plays, that genius so comprehensive in its intelligence, so wise even in

its play, that its clowns are moralists and philosophers, so penetrative that a single one of its phrases reveals to us the secret of our own character, would his contemporaries have left us so wholly without record of him as they have done, distinguishing him in no wise from his fellow-players?

Rousseau, no doubt, was weak, nay, more than that, was sometimes despicable, but yet is not fairly to be reckoned among the herd of sentimentalists. It is shocking that a man whose preaching made it fashionable for women of rank to nurse their own children should have sent his own, as soon as born, to the foundling hospital; still more shocking that, in a note to his *Discours sur l'Inégalité*, he should speak of this crime as one of the consequences of our social system. But for all that, there was a faith and an ardour of conviction in him that distinguish him from most of the writers of his time. Nor were his practice and his preaching always inconsistent. He contrived to pay regularly, whatever his own circumstances were, a pension of one hundred *livres* a year to a maternal aunt who had been kind to him in childhood. Nor was his asceticism a sham. He might have turned his gift into laced coats and *châteaux* as easily as Voltaire, had he not held it too sacred to be bartered away in any such losing exchange.

But what is worthy of especial remark is this—that in nearly all that he wrote his leading object was the good of his kind, and that through all the vicissitudes of a life which illness, sensibility of temperament, and the approaches of insanity rendered wretched—the associate of infidels, the foundling child, as it were, of an age without belief, least of all in itself—he professed and evidently felt deeply a faith in the goodness both of man and of God. There is no such thing as scoffing in his writings. On the other hand, there is no stereotyped morality. He does not ignore the existence of scepticism; he recognises its existence in his own nature, meets it frankly face to face, and makes it confess that there are things in the teaching of Christ that are deeper than its doubt. The influence of his early education at Geneva is apparent here. An intellect so acute as his, trained in the school of Calvin in a republic where theological discussion was as much the amusement of the people as the opera was at Paris, could not fail to be a good logician. He had the fortitude to follow his logic wherever it led him. If the very

impressibility of character which quickened his perception of the beauties of nature, and made him alive to the charm of music and musical expression, prevented him from being in the highest sense an original writer, and if his ideas were mostly suggested to him by books, yet the clearness, consecutiveness, and eloquence with which he stated and enforced them made them his own. There was at least that original fire in him which could fuse them and run them in a novel mould. His power lay in this very ability of manipulating the thoughts of others. Fond of paradox he doubtless was, but he had a way of putting things that arrested attention and excited thought.

It was, perhaps, this very sensibility of the surrounding atmosphere of feeling and speculation, which made Rousseau more directly influential on contemporary thought (or perhaps we should say sentiment) than any writer of his time. And this is rarely consistent with enduring greatness in literature. It forces us to remember, against our will, the oratorical character of his works. They were all pleas, and he a great advocate, with Europe in the jury-box. Enthusiasm begets enthusiasm, eloquence produces conviction for the moment, but it is only by truth to nature and the everlasting intuitions of mankind that those abiding influences are won that enlarge from generation to generation. Rousseau was in many respects—as great pleaders always are—a man of the day, who must needs become a mere name to posterity; yet he could not but have had in him some not inconsiderable share of that principle by which man eternises himself. For it is only to such that the night cometh not in which no man shall work, and he is still operative both in politics and literature by the principles he formulated or the emotions to which he gave a voice so piercing and so sympathetic.

In judging Rousseau, it would be unfair not to take note of the malarious atmosphere in which he grew up. The constitution of his mind was thus early infected with a serious taint that made him shiveringly sensitive to a temperature which hardier natures found bracing. To him this rough world was but too literally a rack. Good-humoured Mother Nature commonly imbeds the nerves of her children in a padding of self-conceit that serves as a buffer against the ordinary shocks to which even a life of routine is liable, and it would seem at first sight as if Rousseau had been better

cared for than usual in this regard. But as his self-conceit was enormous, so was the reaction from it proportionate, and the fretting suspiciousness of temper, sure mark of an unsound mind, which rendered him incapable of intimate friendship, while passionately longing for it, became inevitably, when turned inward, a tormenting self-distrust. To dwell in unrealities is the doom of the sentimentalist; but it should not be forgotten that the same fitful intensity of emotion which makes them real as the means of elation, gives them substance also for torture. Too irritably jealous to endure the rude society of men, he steeped his senses in the enervating incense that women are only too ready to burn. If their friendship be a safeguard to the other sex, their homage is fatal to all but the strongest, and Rousseau was weak both by inheritance and early training. His father was one of those feeble creatures for whom a fine phrase could always satisfactorily fill the void that non-performance leaves behind it. If he neglected duty, he made up for it by that cultivation of the finer sentiments of our common nature which waters flowers of speech with the brineless tears of a flabby remorse, without one fibre of resolve in it, and which impoverishes the character in proportion as it enriches the vocabulary. He was a very Apicius in that digestible kind of woe which makes no man leaner, and had a favourite receipt for cooking you up a sorrow *à la douleur inassouvie* that had just enough delicious sharpness in it to bring tears into the eyes by tickling the palate. "When he said to me, 'Jean Jacques, let us speak of thy mother,' I said to him, 'Well, father, we are going to weep, then;' and this word alone drew tears from him. 'Ah!' said he, groaning, 'give her back to me, console me for her, fill the void she has left in my soul!'" Alas! in such cases, the void she leaves is only that she found. The grief that seeks any other than its own society will ere long want an object. This admirable parent allowed his son to become an outcast at sixteen, without any attempt to reclaim him, in order to enjoy unmolested a petty inheritance to which the boy was entitled in right of his mother. "This conduct," Rousseau tells us, "of a father whose tenderness and virtue were so well known to me, caused me to make reflections on myself which have not a little contributed to make my heart sound. I drew from it this great maxim of morals, the only one perhaps

serviceable in practice, to avoid situations which put our duties in opposition to our interest, and which show us our own advantage in the wrong of another, sure that in such situations, *however sincere may be one's love of virtue*, it sooner or later grows weak without our perceiving it, *and that we become unjust and wicked in action without having ceased to be just and good in soul.*"

This maxim may do for that "fugitive and cloistered virtue, unexercised and unbreathed, that never sallies out and seeks its adversary," which Milton could not praise—that is, for a manhood whose distinction it is not to be manly—but it is chiefly worth notice as being the characteristic doctrine of sentimentalism. This disjoining of deed from will, of practice from theory, is to put asunder what God has joined by an indissoluble sacrament. The soul must be tainted before the action become corrupt; and there is no self-delusion more fatal than that which makes the conscience dreamy with the anodyne of lofty sentiments, while the life is grovelling and sensual—witness Coleridge. In his case we feel something like disgust. But where, as in his son Hartley, there is hereditary infirmity, where the man sees the principle that might rescue him slip from the clutch of a nerveless will, like a rope through the fingers of a drowning man, and the confession of faith is the moan of despair, there is room for no harsher feeling than pity. Rousseau showed through life a singular proneness for being convinced by his own eloquence; he was always his own first convert; and this reconciles his power as a writer with his weakness as a man. He and all like him mistake emotion for conviction, velleity for resolve, the brief eddy of sentiment for the mid-current of ever-gathering faith in duty that draws to itself all the affluents of conscience and will, and gives continuity of purpose to life. They are like men who love the stimulus of being under conviction, as it is called, who, for ever getting religion, never get capital enough to retire upon and spend for their own need and the common service.

The sentimentalist is the spiritual hypochondriac, with whom fancies become facts, while facts are a discomfort because they will not be evaporated into fancy. In his eyes, Theory is too fine a dame to confess even a country-cousinship with coarse-handed Practice, whose homely ways would disconcert her artificial world. The very susceptibility that

makes him quick to feel, makes him also incapable of deep and durable feeling. He loves to think he suffers, and keeps a pet sorrow, a blue-devil familiar, that goes with him everywhere, like Paracelsus's black dog. He takes good care, however, that it shall not be the true sulphurous article that sometimes takes a fancy to fly away with his conjurer. René says: "In my madness I had gone so far as even to wish I might experience a misfortune, so that my suffering might at least have a real object." But no; selfishness is only active egotism, and there is nothing and nobody, with a single exception, which this sort of creature will not sacrifice, rather than give any other than an imaginary pang to his idol. Vicarious pain he is not unwilling to endure, nay, will even commit suicide by proxy, like the German poet who let his wife kill herself to give him a sensation. Had young Jerusalem been anything like Goethe's portrait of him in *Werther*, he would have taken very good care not to blow out the brains which he would have thought only too precious. Real sorrows are uncomfortable things, but purely æsthetic ones are by no means unpleasant, and I have always fancied the handsome young Wolfgang writing those distracted letters to Auguste Stolberg with a looking-glass in front of him to give back an image of his desolation, and finding it rather pleasant than otherwise to shed the tear of sympathy with self that would seem so bitter to his fair correspondent. The tears that have real salt in them will keep; they are the difficult, manly tears that are shed in secret; but the pathos soon evaporates from that fresh-water with which a man can bedew a dead donkey in public, while his wife is having a good cry over his neglect of her at home. We do not think the worse of Goethe for hypothetically desolating himself in the fashion aforesaid, for with many constitutions it is as purely natural a crisis as dentition, which the stronger worry through, and turn out very sensible, agreeable fellows. But where there is an arrest of development, and the heart-break of the patient is audibly prolonged through life, we have a spectacle which the toughest heart would wish to get as far away from as possible.

We would not be supposed to overlook the distinction, too often lost sight of, between sentimentalism and sentiment, the latter being a very excellent thing in its way, as genuine things are apt to be. Sentiment is intellectualised emotion,

emotion precipitated, as it were, in pretty crystals by the fancy. This is the delightful staple of the poets of social life like Horace and Béranger, or Thackeray, when he too rarely played with verse. It puts into words for us that decorous average of feeling to the expression of which society can consent without danger of being indiscreetly moved. It is excellent for people who are willing to save their souls alive to any extent that shall not be discomposing. It is even satisfying till some deeper experience has given us a hunger which what we so glibly call "the world" cannot sate, just as a water-ice is nourishment enough to a man who has had his dinner. It is the sufficing lyrical interpreter of those lighter hours that should make part of every healthy man's day, and is noxious only when it palls men's appetite for the truly profound poetry which is very passion of very soul sobered by afterthought and embodied in eternal types by imagination. True sentiment is emotion ripened by a slow ferment of the mind and qualified to an agreeable temperance by that taste which is the conscience of polite society. But the sentimentalist always insists on taking his emotion neat, and, as his sense gradually deadens to the stimulus, increases his dose till he ends in a kind of moral deliquium. At first the debaucher, he becomes at last the victim of his sensations.

Among the ancients we find no trace of sentimentalism. Their masculine mood both of body and mind left no room for it; and hence the bracing qualities of their literature compared with that of recent times, its tonic property, that seems almost too astringent to palates relaxed by a daintier diet. The first great example of the degenerate modern tendency was Petrarch, who may be said to have given it impulse and direction. A more perfect specimen of the type has not since appeared. An intellectual voluptuary, a moral *dilletante*, the first instance of that character, since too common, the gentleman in search of a sensation, seeking a solitude at Vacluse because it made him more likely to be in demand at Avignon, praising philosophic poverty with a sharp eye to the next rich benefice in the gift of his patron, commending a good life but careful first of a good living, happy only in seclusion but making a dangerous journey to enjoy the theatrical show of a coronation in the Capitol, cherishing a fruitless passion which broke his heart three

or four times a year and yet could not make an end of him till he had reached the ripe age of seventy and survived his mistress a quarter of a century—surely a more exquisite perfection of inconsistency would be hard to find.

When Petrarch returned from his journey into the North of Europe in 1332, he balanced the books of his unrequited passion, and, finding that he had now been in love seven years, thought the time had at last come to call deliberately on Death. Had Death taken him at his word, he would have protested that he was only in fun. For we find him always taking good care of an excellent constitution, avoiding the plague with commendable assiduity, and, in the very year when he declares it absolutely essential to his peace of mind to die for good and all, taking refuge in the fortress of Capranica, from a wholesome dread of having his throat cut by robbers. There is such a difference between dying in a sonnet with a cambric handkerchief at one's eyes and the prosaic reality of demise certified in the parish register! Practically it is inconvenient to be dead. Among other things, it puts an end to the manufacture of sonnets. But there seems to have been an excellent understanding between Petrarch and Death, for he was brought to that grisly monarch's door so often, that, otherwise, nothing short of a miracle or the nine lives of that animal whom love also makes lyrical could have saved him. "I consent," he cries, "to live and die in Africa among its serpents, upon Caucasus, or Atlas, if, while I live, to breathe a pure air, and after my death a little corner of earth where to bestow my body, may be allowed me. This is all I ask, but this I cannot obtain. Doomed always to wander, and to be a stranger everywhere, O Fortune, Fortune, fix me at last to some one spot! I do not covet thy favours. Let me enjoy a tranquil poverty, let me pass in this retreat the few days that remain to me!" The pathetic stop of Petrarch's poetical organ was one he could pull out at pleasure—and indeed we soon learn to distrust literary tears, as the cheap subterfuge for want of real feeling with natures of this quality. Solitude with him was but the pseudonyme of notoriety. Poverty was the archdeaconry of Parma, with other ecclesiastical pickings. During his retreat at Vacluse, in the very height of that divine sonnetting love of Laura, of that sensitive purity

which called Avignon Babylon, and rebuked the sinfulness of Clement, he was himself begetting that kind of children which we spell with a *b*. We believe that, if Messer Francesco had been present when the woman was taken in adultery, he would have flung the first stone without the slightest feeling of inconsistency, nay, with a sublime sense of virtue. The truth is, that it made very little difference to him what sort of proper sentiment he expressed, provided he could do it elegantly and with unction.

Would any one feel the difference between his faint abstractions and the Platonism of a powerful nature fitted alike for the withdrawal of ideal contemplation and for breasting the storms of life—would any one know how wide a depth divides a noble friendship based on sympathy of pursuit and aspiration, on that mutual help which souls capable of self-sustainment are the readiest to give or to take, and a stimulated passion, true neither to the spiritual nor the sensual part of man—let him compare the sonnets of Petrarch with those which Michel Angelo addressed to Vittoria Colonna. In them the airiest pinnacles of sentiment and speculation are buttressed with solid mason-work of thought, and of an actual, not fancied experience, and the depth of feeling is measured by the sobriety and reserve of expression, while in Petrarch's all ingenuousness is frittered away into ingenuity. Both are cold, but the coldness of the one is self-restraint, while the other chills with pretence of warmth. In Michel Angelo's you feel the great architect; in Petrarch's the artist who can best realise this conception in the limits of a cherry-stone. And yet this man influenced literature longer and more widely than almost any other in modern times. So great is the charm of elegance, so unreal is the larger part of what is written!

Certainly I do not mean to say that a work of art should be looked at by the light of the artist's biography, or measured by our standard of his character. Nor do I reckon what was genuine in Petrarch—his love of letters, his refinement, his skill in the superficial graces of language, that rhetorical art by which the music of words supplants their meaning, and the verse moulds the thought instead of being plastic to it—after any such fashion. I have no ambition for that character of *valet de chambre* which is said to disenchant the most heroic figures into mere every-day personages, for

it implies a mean soul no less than a servile condition. But we have a right to demand a certain amount of reality, however small, in the emotion of a man who makes it his business to endeavour at exciting our own. We have a privilege of nature to shiver before a painted flame, how cunningly soever the colours be laid on. Yet our love of minute biographical detail, our desire to make ourselves spies upon the men of the past, seems so much of an instinct in us, that we must look for the spring of it in human nature, and that somewhat deeper than mere curiosity or love of gossip. It should seem to arise from what must be considered on the whole a creditable feeling, namely, that we value character more than any amount of talent—the skill to *be* something above that of doing anything but the best of its kind. The highest creative genius, and that only, is privileged from arrest by this personality, for there the thing produced is altogether disengaged from the producer. But in natures incapable of this escape from themselves, the author is inevitably mixed with his work, and we have a feeling that the amount of his sterling character is the security for the notes he issues. Especially we feel so when truth to self, which is always self-forgetful, and not truth to nature, makes an essential part of the value of what is offered us; as where a man undertakes to narrate personal experience or to enforce a dogma. This is particularly true as respects sentimentalists, because of their intrusive self-consciousness; for there is no more universal characteristic of human nature than the instinct of men to apologise to themselves for themselves, and to justify personal failings by generalising them into universal laws. A man would be the keenest devil's advocate against himself, were it not that he has always taken a retaining fee for the defence; for we think that the indirect and mostly unconscious pleas in abatement which we read between the lines in the works of many authors are oftener written to set themselves right in their own eyes than in those of the world. And in the real life of the sentimentalist it is the same. He is under the wretched necessity of keeping up, at least in public, the character he has assumed, till he at last reaches that last shift of bankrupt self-respect, to play the hypocrite with himself. Lamartine, after passing round the hat in Europe and America, takes to his bed from wounded pride

when the French Senate votes him a subsidy, and sheds tears of humiliation. Ideally he resents it; in practical coin, he will accept the shame without a wry face.

George Sand, speaking of Rousseau's *Confessions*, says that an autobiographer always makes himself the hero of his own novel, and cannot help idealising, even if he would. But the weak point of all sentimentalists is that they always have been, and always continue under every conceivable circumstance to be, their own ideals, whether they are writing their own lives or no. Rousseau opens his book with the statement: "I am not made like any of those I have seen; I venture to believe myself unlike any that exist. If I am not worth more, at least I am different." O exquisite cunning of self-flattery! It is this very imagined difference that makes us worth more in our own foolish sight. For while all men are apt to think, or to persuade themselves that they think, all other men their accomplices in vice or weakness, they are not difficult of belief that they are singular in any quality or talent on which they hug themselves. More than this; people who are truly original are the last to find it out, for the moment we become conscious of a virtue it has left us or is getting ready to go. Originality does not consist in a fidgety assertion of selfhood, but in the faculty of getting rid of it altogether, that the truer genius of the man, which commences with universal nature and with other souls through a common sympathy with that, may take all his powers wholly to itself—and the truly original man could no more be jealous of his peculiar gift, than the grass could take credit to itself for being green. What is the reason that all children are geniuses (though they contrive so soon to outgrow that dangerous quality), except that they never cross-examine themselves on the subject? The moment that process begins, their speech loses its gift of unexpectedness, and they become as tediously impertinent as the rest of us.

If there never was any one like him, if he constituted a genius in himself, to what end write confessions in which no other human being could ever be in a condition to take the least possible interest? All men are interested in Montaigne in proportion as all find more of themselves in him, and all men see but one image in the glass which the greatest of poets

holds up to nature, an image which at once startles and charms them with its familiarity. Fabulists always endow their animals with the passions and desires of men. But if an ox could dictate his confessions, what glimmer of understanding should we find in those bovine confidences, unless on some theory of pre-existence, some blank misgiving of a creature moving about in worlds not realised? The truth is, that we recognise the common humanity of Rousseau in the very weakness that betrayed him into this conceit of himself; we find he is just like the rest of us in this very assumption of essential difference, for among all animals man is the only one who tries to pass for more than he is, and so involves himself in the condemnation of seeming less.

But it would be sheer waste of time to hunt Rousseau through all his doublings of inconsistency, and run him to earth in every new paradox. His first two books attacked—one of them literature, and the other society. But this did not prevent him from being diligent with his pen, nor from availing himself of his credit with persons who enjoyed all the advantages of that inequality whose evils he had so pointedly exposed. Indeed, it is curious how little practical communism there has been, how few professors it has had who would not have gained by a general dividend. It is perhaps no frantic effort of generosity in a philosopher with ten crowns in his pocket, when he offers to make common stock with a neighbour who has ten thousand of yearly income; nor is it an uncommon thing to see such theories knocked clean out of a man's head by the descent of a thumping legacy. But, consistent or not, Rousseau remains permanently interesting as the highest and most perfect type of the sentimentalist of genius. His was perhaps the acutest mind that was ever mated with an organisation so diseased, the brain most far-reaching in speculation that ever kept itself steady and worked out its problems amid such disordered tumult of the nerves.¹ His letter to the Archbishop of Paris, admirable for its lucid power and soberness of tone, and his *Rousseau juge de Jean Jacques*, which no man can read and believe him to have been sane, show him to us in his strength and weakness, and give us a more charitable—let us hope, therefore, a truer—notion of him than his own apology for himself. That he was a man of genius appears

¹ Perhaps we should except Newton.

unmistakably in his impressibility by the deeper meaning of the epoch in which he lived. Before an eruption, clouds steeped through and through with electric life gather over the crater, as if in sympathy and expectation. As the mountain heaves and cracks, these vapoury masses are seamed with fire, as if they felt and answered the dumb agony that is struggling for utterance below. Just such flashes of eager sympathetic fire break continually from the cloudy volumes of Rousseau, the result at once and the warning of that convulsion of which Paris was to be the crater, and all Europe to feel the spasm. There are symptoms enough elsewhere of that want of faith in the existing order which made the Revolution inevitable—even so shallow an observer as Horace Walpole could forbode it so early as 1765—but Rousseau more than all others is the unconscious expression of the groping after something radically new, the instinct for a change that should be organic, and pervade every fibre of the social and political body. Freedom of thought owes far more to the jester Voltaire, who also had his solid kernel of earnest, than to the sombre Genevese, whose earnestness is of the deadly kind. Yet, for good or evil, the latter was the father of modern democracy, and without him our Declaration of Independence would have wanted some of those sentences in which the immemorial longings of the poor and the dreams of solitary enthusiasts were at last affirmed as axioms in the manifesto of a nation, so that all the world might hear.

Though Rousseau, like many other fanatics, had a remarkable vein of common sense in him (witness his remarks on duelling, on landscape-gardening, on French poetry, and much of his thought on education), we cannot trace many practical results to his teaching, least of all in politics. For the great difficulty with his system, if system it may be called, is that, while it professes to follow nature, it not only assumes as a starting-point that the individual man may be made over again, but proceeds to the conclusion that man himself, that human nature, must be made over again, and governments remodelled on a purely theoretic basis. But when something like an experiment in this direction was made in 1789, not only did it fail as regarded man in general, but even as regards the particular variety of man that

inhabited France. The Revolution accomplished many changes, and beneficent ones, yet it left France peopled, not by a new race without traditions, but by Frenchmen. Still, there could not but be a wonderful force in the words of a man who, above all others, had the secret of making abstractions glow with his own fervour; and his ideas—dispersed now in the atmosphere of thought—have influenced, perhaps still continue to influence, speculative minds, which prefer swift and sure generalisation to hesitating and doubtful experience.

Rousseau has, in one respect, been utterly misrepresented and misunderstood. Even Châteaubriand most unfilially classes him and Voltaire together. It appears to me that the inmost core of his being was religious. Had he remained in the Catholic Church, he might have been a saint. Had he come earlier, he might have founded an order. He was precisely the nature on which religious enthusiasm takes the strongest hold—a temperament which finds a sensuous delight in spiritual things, and satisfies its craving for excitement with celestial debauch. He had not the iron temper of a great reformer and organiser like Knox, who, true Scotchman that he was, found a way to weld this world and the other together in a cast-iron creed; but he had as much as any man ever had that gift of a great preacher to make the oratorical fervour which persuades himself while it lasts into the abiding conviction of his hearers. That very persuasion of his, that the soul could remain pure while the life was corrupt, is not unexampled among men who have left holier names than he. His *Confessions*, also, would assign him to that class with whom the religious sentiment is strong, and the moral nature weak. They are apt to believe that they may, as special pleaders say, confess and avoid. Hawthorne has admirably illustrated this in the penance of Mr. Dimmesdale. With all the soil that is upon Rousseau, I cannot help looking on him as one capable beyond any in his generation of being divinely possessed; and if it happened otherwise, when we remember the much that hindered and the little that helped in a life and time like his, we shall be much readier to pity than to condemn. It was his very fitness for being something better that makes him able to shock us so with what in too many respects he unhappily was.

Less gifted, he had been less hardly judged. More than any other of the sentimentalists, except possibly Sterne, he had in him a staple of sincerity. Compared with Châteaubriand, he is honesty; compared with Lamartine, he is manliness itself. His nearest congener in our own tongue is Cowper.

In the whole school there is a sickly taint. The strongest mark which Rousseau has left upon literature is a sensibility to the picturesque in Nature, not with Nature as a strengthener and consoler, a wholesome tonic for a mind ill at ease with itself, but with Nature as a kind of feminine echo to the mood, flattering it with sympathy rather than correcting it with rebuke or lifting it away from its unmanly depression, as in the wholesomer fellow-feeling of Wordsworth. They seek in her an accessory, and not a reproof. It is less a sympathy with Nature than a sympathy with ourselves as we compel her to reflect us. It is solitude, Nature for her estrangement from man, not for her companionship with him—it is desolation and ruin, Nature as she has triumphed over man—with which this order of mind seeks communion and in which it finds solace. It is with the hostile and destructive power of matter, and not with the spirit of life and renewal that dwells in it, that they ally themselves. And in human character it is the same. St. Preux, René, Werther, Manfred, Quasimodo, they are all anomalies, distortions, ruins—so much easier is it to caricature life from our own sickly conception of it, than to paint it in its noble simplicity; so much cheaper is unreality than truth.

Every man is conscious that he leads two lives—the one trivial and ordinary, the other sacred and recluse; one which he carries to society and the dinner-table, the other in which his youth and aspiration survive for him, and which is a confidence between himself and God. Both may be equally sincere, and there need be no contradiction between them, any more than in a healthy man between soul and body. If the higher life be real and earnest, its result, whether in literature or affairs, will be real and earnest too. But no man can produce great things who is not thoroughly sincere in dealing with himself, who would not exchange the finest show for the poorest reality, who does not so love his work that he is not only glad to give himself for it, but finds rather a gain than a sacrifice in the surrender. The sentimentalist

does not think of what he does so much as of what the world will think of what he does. He translates should into would, looks upon the spheres of duty and beauty as alien to each other, and can never learn how life rounds itself to a noble completeness between these two opposite but mutually sustaining poles of what we long for and what we must.

Did Rousseau, then, lead a life of this quality? Perhaps, when we consider the contrast which every man who looks backward must feel between the life he planned and the life which circumstance within him and without him has made for him, we should rather ask, Was this the life he meant to lead? Perhaps, when we take into account his faculty of self-deception—it may be no greater than our own—we should ask, Was this the life he believed he led? Have we any right to judge this man after our blunt English fashion, and condemn him, as we are wont to do, on the finding of a jury of average householders? Is French reality precisely our reality? Could we tolerate tragedy in rhymed alexandrines, instead of blank verse? The whole life of Rousseau is pitched on this heroic key, and for the most trivial occasion he must be ready with the sublime sentiments that are supposed to suit him rather than it. It is one of the most curious features of the sentimental ailment, that, while it shuns the contact of men, it courts publicity. In proportion as solitude and communion with self lead the sentimentalist to exaggerate the importance of his own personality, he comes to think that the least event connected with it is of consequence to his fellow-men. If he change his shirt, he would have mankind aware of it. Victor Hugo, the greatest living representative of the class, considers it necessary to let the world know by letter from time to time his opinions on every conceivable subject about which it is not asked nor is of the least value unless we concede to him an immediate inspiration. We men of colder blood, in whom self-consciousness takes the form of pride, and who have defied *mauvaise honte* as if our defect were our virtue, find it especially hard to understand that artistic impulse of more southern races to *pose* themselves properly on every occasion, and not even to die without some tribute of deference to the taste of the world they are leaving. Was not even mighty Cæsar's last thought of his drapery? Let us not condemn Rousseau


for what seems to us the indecent exposure of himself in his *Confessions*.

Those who allow an oratorical and purely conventional side disconnected with our private understanding of the facts, and with life, in which everything has a wholly parliamentary sense, where truth is made subservient to the momentary exigencies of eloquence, should be charitable to Rousseau. While we encourage a distinction which establishes two kinds of truth, one for the world, and another for the conscience, while we take pleasure in a kind of speech that has no relation to the real thought of speaker or hearer, but to the rostrum only, we must not be hasty to condemn a sentimentalism which we do our best to foster. We listen in public with the gravity of augurs to what we smile at when we meet a brother adept. France is the native land of eulogy, of truth padded out to the size and shape demanded by *comme-il-faut*. The French Academy has, perhaps, done more harm by the vogue it has given to this style, than it has done good by its literary purism; for the best purity of a language depends on the limpidity of its source in veracity of thought. Rousseau was in many respects a typical Frenchman, and it is not to be wondered at if he too often fell in with the fashion of saying what was expected of him, and what he thought due to the situation, rather than what would have been true to his inmost consciousness. Perhaps we should allow something also to the influence of a Calvinistic training, which certainly helps men who have the least natural tendency towards it to set faith above works, and to persuade themselves of the efficacy of an inward grace to offset an outward and visible defection from it.

As the sentimentalist always takes a fanciful, sometimes an unreal, life for an ideal one, it would be too much to say that Rousseau was a man of earnest convictions. But he was a man of fitfully intense ones, as suited so mobile a temperament, and his writings, more than those of any other of his tribe, carry with them that persuasion that was in him while he wrote. In them at least he is as consistent as a man who admits new ideas can ever be. The children of his brain he never abandoned, but clung to them with paternal fidelity. Intellectually he was true and fearless; constitutionally timid, contradictory, and weak; but never, if we under-

stand him rightly, false. He was a little too credulous of sonorous sentiment, but he was never, like Châteaubriand or Lamartine, the lackey of fine phrases. If, as some fanciful physiologists have assumed, there be a masculine and feminine lobe of the brain, it would seem that in men of sentimental turn the masculine half fell in love with and made an idol of the other, obeying and admiring all the pretty whims of this *folle du logis*. In Rousseau the mistress had some noble elements of character, and less taint of the *demi-monde* than is visible in more recent cases of the same illicit relation.





EVERYMAN,
I WILL GO WITH
-THEE,
& BE THY GUIDE
-IN THY MOST NEED
TO GO BY THY SIDE



