SELECTED
ESSAYS

UNIFORM WITH THIS VOLUME.

SCRAMBLES AMONGST THE ALPS. *Edward Whymper.*
THE GREAT BOER WAR. *Arthur Conan Doyle.*
COLLECTIONS AND RECOLLECTIONS. *G. W. E. Russell.*
LIFE OF JOHN NICHOLSON. *Captain Trotter.*
MEMORIES. *Dean Hole.*
LIFE OF GLADSTONE. *Herbert W. Paul.*
THE PSALMS IN HUMAN LIFE. *R. E. Prothero.*
WILD LIFE IN A SOUTHERN COUNTY. *Richard Jefferies.*
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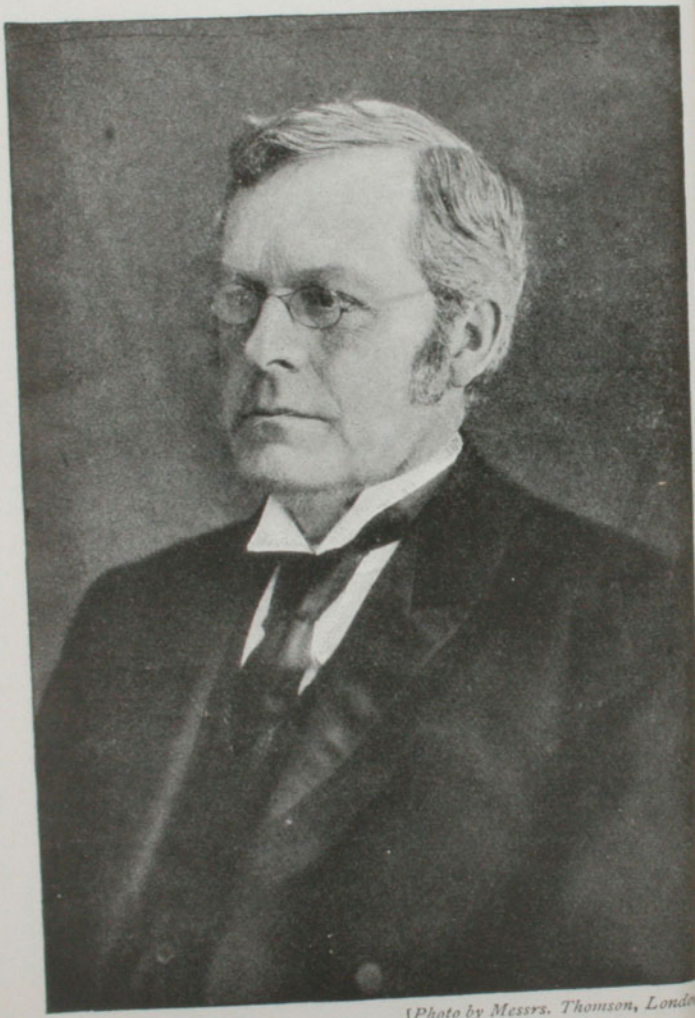
REMINISCENCES. *Sir Henry Hawkins.*
THE FOREST. *Stewart Edward White.*
ADVENTURES OF A MEMSAHIB. *Sara Jeannette Duncan.*
IDYLLS OF THE SEA. *Frank Bullen.*

Others to follow.



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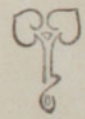
THE RIGHT HON. AUGUSTINE BIRRELL, K.C.

SELECTED ESSAYS

1884–1907

BY

AUGUSTINE BIRRELL



THOMAS NELSON & SONS
LONDON, EDINBURGH, DUBLIN
AND NEW YORK

PREFACE.

WHEN lately asked by my friend Mr. John Buchan to allow a selection from my Essays (made by him) to be added to this series, I readily assented, for when all is said and done, circulation is an author's life. Whilst an author is read he lives, on ceasing to be read he dies; and the more copies there are of his works in existence, the better is his chance of being read somewhere and by somebody.

The other day in a cottage—"a cottage of gentility"—I happened upon a damsel reading Shenstone's Essays. She said she had found them there, and added (defiantly) that she liked them very much. I accounted Shenstone a lucky fellow, considering how slender were his talents, how flimsy are his Essays, and that he died so long ago as February 1763.

I observe signs and symptoms of a recrudescence of the old claim of authors for perpetual copyright, for property, not privilege, in their writings. It is a dream. In the first place, the essence of property, in things not consumable, is the right of total exclusion. "Keep off the grass," "I want my things for myself." But no author really wants to keep his books to himself. Above everything else, he wants the world to read them. Secondly, perpetual copyright would not add a penny piece to the present value of a manuscript—poem, or novel, or history, or metaphysical or scientific

treatise. Publishers are not thinking, and cannot be made to think, of sales a century hence. They know the average life of a book only too well. Thirdly, in the case of those rare authors whom Charles Lamb has called "Great Nature's Stereotypes," posterity will never allow "Paradise Lost" to be the property of Mr. Jacob Tonson and his assigns, or "The Pilgrim's Progress" to belong to Mr. Ponder and his successors in business; and yet, unless works of genius are to be unsaleable and entailed in strict settlement upon the author and his next heirs for ever, this is what must happen.

However, a new discussion about copyright, its duration and conditions, is perhaps overdue. In the meantime, circulation is the thing. Yet let no man presume upon it, or rashly believe his books immune from the ordinary fate. Books, once and long "in widest commonalty" spread, disappear, and go no one knows whither. What can have become of all those copies? Five-and-forty years ago I used to pass an open bookstall almost daily, and knew its varying contents, their outsides at least, pretty well by heart. Rarely was it without, and never was it long without, its Hervey's "Meditations among the Tombs" and its Zimmerman on "Solitude." No books were once oftener exposed for sale. Now, you may look for them almost in vain in catalogue, shop, or stall. Somewhere they must be by the thousand, but their dark hour has come—they have ceased to circulate. As it is with them, so some day must it be with us.

"But ah, not yet, not yet!"

A. B.

SHERINGHAM, *Christmas Day, 1908.*

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SELECTED ESSAYS.

1884–1907.

MILTON.

IT is now many years ago since Mr. Carlyle took occasion to observe, in his Life of Schiller, that, unless it were the Newgate Calendar, there was no more sickening reading than the biographies of authors.

Allowing for the vivacity of the comparison, and only remarking, with reference to the Newgate Calendar, that its compilers have usually been very inferior wits, in fact attorneys, it must be owned that great creative and inventive genius, the most brilliant gifts of bright fancy and happy expression, and a glorious imagination, well-nigh seeming as if it must be inspired, have too often been found most unsuitably lodged in ill-living and scandalous mortals. Though few things, even in what is called Literature, are more disgusting than to hear small critics, who earn their bite and sup by acting as the self-appointed showmen of the works of their betters, heaping terms of moral opprobrium upon those whose genius is, if not exactly a lamp unto our feet, at all events a joy to our hearts—still, not even genius can repeal the Decalogue, or re-write the sentence of doom, "He which is filthy, let him be filthy still." It is therefore permissible to wish that some of our great authors had been better men.

It is possible to dislike John Milton. Men have been

found able to do so, and women too; amongst these latter his daughters, or one of them at least, must even be included. But there is nothing sickening about his biography, for it is the life of one who early consecrated himself to the service of the highest Muses, who took labour and intent study as his portion, who aspired himself to be a noble poem, who, Republican though he became, is what Carlyle called him, the moral king of English literature.

Milton was born in Bread Street, Cheapside, on the 9th of December, 1608. This is most satisfactory, though indeed what might have been expected. There is a notable disposition nowadays, amongst the meaner-minded provincials, to carp and gird at the claims of London to be considered the mother-city of the Anglo-Saxon race, to regret her pre-eminence, and sneer at her fame. In the matters of municipal government, gas, water, fog, and snow, much can be alleged and proved against the English capital; but in the domain of poetry, which I take to be a nation's best guaranteed stock, it may safely be said that there are but two shrines in England whither it is necessary for the literary pilgrim to carry his cockle hat and shoon—London, the birthplace of Chaucer, Spenser, Ben Jonson, Milton, Herrick, Pope, Gray, Blake, Keats, and Browning, and Stratford-upon-Avon, the birthplace of Shakspeare. Of English poets it may be said generally they are either born in London or remote country places. The large provincial towns know them not. Indeed, nothing is more pathetic than the way in which these dim, destitute places hug the memory of any puny whipster of a poet who may have been born within their statutory boundaries. This has its advantages, for it keeps alive in certain localities fames that would otherwise have utterly perished. Parnassus has forgotten all about poor Henry Kirke White, but the lace manufacturers of Nottingham still name him with whatever degree of reverence they may respectively consider to be the due of letters. Manchester

is yet mindful of Dr. John Byrom. Liverpool clings to Roscoe.

Milton remained faithful to his birth-city, though, like many another Londoner, when he was persecuted in one house he fled into another. From Bread Street he moved to St. Bride's Churchyard, Fleet Street; from Fleet Street to Aldersgate Street; from Aldersgate Street to the Barbican; from the Barbican to the south side of Holborn; from the south side of Holborn to what is now called York Street, Westminster; from York Street, Westminster, to the north side of Holborn; from the north side of Holborn to Jewin Street; from Jewin Street to his last abode in Bunhill Fields. These are not vain repetitions if they serve to remind a single reader how all the enchantments of association lie about him. Englishwomen have been found searching about Florence for the street where George Eliot represents Romola as having lived, who have admitted never having been to Jewin Street, where the author of *Lycidas* and *Paradise Lost* did in fact live.

Milton's father was the right kind of father—amiable, accomplished, and well-to-do. He was by business what was then called a scrivener, a term which has received judicial interpretation, and imported a person who arranged loans on mortgage, receiving a commission for so doing. The poet's mother, whose baptismal name was Sarah (his father was, like himself, John), was a lady of good extraction, and approved excellence and virtue. We do not know very much about her, for the poet was one of those rare men of genius who are prepared to do justice to their fathers. Though Sarah Milton did not die till 1637, she only knew her son as the author of *Comus*, though it is surely a duty to believe that no son would have poems like *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* in his desk, and not at least once produce them and read them aloud to his mother. These poems, though not published till 1645, were certainly composed in his mother's life. She died before the troubles began,

the strife and contention in which her well-graced son, the poet, the dreamer of all things beautiful and cultured, the author of the glancing, tripping measure—

> "Haste thee, nymph, and bring with thee
> Jest and youthful jollity"—

was destined to take a part, so eager and so fierce, and for which he was to sacrifice twenty years of a poet's life.

The poet was sent to St. Paul's School, where he had excellent teaching of a humane and expanding character, and he early became, what he remained until his sight left him, a strenuous reader and a late student.

> "Or let my lamp at midnight hour
> Be seen on some high, lonely tower,
> Where I may oft outwatch the Bear."

Whether the maid who was told off by the elder Milton to sit up till twelve or one o'clock in the morning for this wonderful Pauline realised that she was a kind of doorkeeper in the house of genius, and blessed accordingly, is not known, and may be doubted. When sixteen years old Milton proceeded to Christ's College, Cambridge, where his memory is still cherished; and a mulberry-tree, supposed in some way to be his, rather unkindly kept alive. Milton was not a submissive pupil; in fact, he was never a submissive anything, for there is point in Dr. Johnson's malicious remark, that man in Milton's opinion was born to be a rebel, and woman a slave.

But in most cases, at all events, the rebel did well to be rebellious, and perhaps he was never so entirely in the right as when he protested against the slavish traditions of Cambridge educational methods in 1625.

Universities must, however, at all times prove disappointing places to the young and ingenuous soul, who goes up to them eager for literature, seeing in every don a devotee to intellectual beauty, and hoping that lec-

tures will, by some occult process—the *genius loci*—initiate him into the mysteries of taste and the storehouses of culture. And then the improving conversation, the flashing wit, the friction of mind with mind—these are looked for, but hardly found; and the young scholar groans in spirit, and perhaps does as Milton did—quarrels with his tutor. But if he is wise he will, as Milton also did, make it up again, and get the most that he can from his stony-hearted stepmother before the time comes for him to bid her his *Vale vale et æternum vale.*

Milton remained seven years at Cambridge—from 1625 to 1632—from his seventeenth to his twenty-fourth year. Any intention or thought he ever may have had of taking orders he seems early to have rejected with a characteristic scorn. He considered a state of subscription to articles a state of slavery, and Milton was always determined, whatever else he was or might become, to be his own man. Though never in sympathy with the governing tone of the place, there is no reason to suppose that Milton (any more than others) found this lack seriously to interfere with a fair amount of good solid enjoyment from day to day. He had friends who courted his society, and pursuits both grave and gay to occupy his hours of study and relaxation. He was called the "Lady" of his college, on account of his personal beauty and the purity and daintiness of his life and conversation.

After leaving Cambridge Milton began his life, so attractive to one's thoughts, at Horton, in Buckinghamshire, where his father had a house in which his mother was living. Here for five years, from his twenty-fourth to his twenty-ninth year—a period often stormy in the lives of poets—he continued his work of self-education. Some of his Cambridge friends appear to have grown a little anxious, on seeing one who had distinction stamped upon his brow, doing what the world calls nothing; and Milton himself was watchful, and even suspicious. His second sonnet records this state of feeling:

"How soon hath Time, the subtle thief of youth,
Stolen on his wing my three-and-twentieth year!
My hasting days fly on with full career,
But my late spring no bud or blossom shew'th."

And yet no poet had ever a more beautiful springtide, though it was restless, as spring should be, with the promise of greater things and "high midsummer pomps." These latter it was that were postponed almost too long.

Milton at Horton made up his mind to be a great poet—neither more nor less; and with that end in view he toiled unceasingly. A more solemn dedication of a man by himself to the poetical office cannot be imagined. Everything about him became, as it were, pontifical, almost sacramental. A poet's soul must contain the perfect shape of all things good, wise, and just. His body must be spotless and without blemish, his life pure, his thoughts high, his studies intense. There was no drinking at the "Mermaid" for John Milton. His thoughts, like his joys, were not those that

"are in widest commonalty spread."

When in his walks he met the Hodge of his period, he is more likely to have thought of a line in Virgil than of stopping to have a chat with the poor fellow. He became a student of the Italian language, and writes to a friend: "I who certainly have not merely wetted the tip of my lips in the stream of these (the classical) languages, but in proportion to my years have swallowed the most copious draughts, can yet sometimes retire with avidity and delight to feast on Dante, Petrarch, and many others; nor has Athens itself been able to confine me to the transparent waves of its Ilissus, nor ancient Rome to the banks of its Tiber, so as to prevent my visiting with delight the streams of the Arno and the hills of Fæsolæ."

Now it was that he, in his often-quoted words written to the young Deodati, doomed to an early death, was meditating "an immortality of fame," letting his wings

grow and preparing to fly. But dreaming though he ever was of things to come, none the less, it was at Horton he composed *Comus*, *Lycidas*, *L'Allegro*, and *Il Penseroso*, poems which enable us half sadly to realise how much went and how much was sacrificed to make the author of *Paradise Lost*.

After five years' retirement Milton began to feel the want of a little society, of the kind that is "quiet, wise, and good," and he meditated taking chambers in one of the Inns of Court, where he could have a pleasant and shady walk under "immemorial elms," and also enjoy the advantages of a few choice associates at home and an elegant society abroad. The death of his mother in 1637 gave his thoughts another direction, and he obtained his father's permission to travel to Italy, "that woman-country, wooed not wed," which has been the mistress of so many poetical hearts, and was so of John Milton's. His friends and relatives saw but one difficulty in the way. John Milton the younger, though not at this time a Nonconformist, was a stern and unbending Protestant, and was as bitter an opponent of His Holiness the Pope as he certainly would have been, had his days been prolonged, of His Majesty the Pretender.

There is something very characteristic in this almost inflamed hostility in the case of a man with such love of beauty and passion for architecture and music as always abided in Milton, and who could write:

> "But let my due feet never fail
> To walk the studious cloisters' pale,
> And love the high embowèd roof,
> With antique pillars massy-proof,
> And storied windows richly dight,
> Casting a dim religious light.
> There let the pealing organ blow
> To the full-voiced quire below,
> In service high and anthems clear,
> As may with sweetness, through mine ear,
> Dissolve me into ecstasies,
> And bring all heaven before my eyes."

Here surely is proof of an æsthetic nature beyond most

of our modern raptures; but none the less, and at the very same time, Rome was for Milton the "grim wolf" who, "with privy paw, daily devours apace." It is with a sigh of sad sincerity that Dr. Newman admits that Milton breathes through his pages a hatred of the Catholic Church, and consequently the Cardinal feels free to call him a proud and rebellious creature of God. That Milton was both proud and rebellious cannot be disputed. Nonconformists need not claim him for their own with much eagerness. What he thought of Presbyterians we know, and he was never a church member, or indeed a church-goer. Dr. Newman has admitted that the poet Pope was an unsatisfactory Catholic; Milton was certainly an unsatisfactory Dissenter. Let us be candid in these matters. Milton was therefore bidden by his friends, and by those with whom he took counsel, to hold his peace whilst in Rome about the "grim wolf," and he promised to do so, adding, however, the Miltonic proviso that this was on condition that the Papists did not attack his religion first. "If anyone," he wrote, "in the very city of the Pope attacked the orthodox religion, I defended it most freely." To call the Protestant religion, which had not yet attained to its second century, the orthodox religion under the shadow of the Vatican was to have the courage of his opinions. But Milton was not a man to be frightened of schism. That his religious opinions should be peculiar probably seemed to him to be almost inevitable, and not unbecoming. He would have agreed with Emerson, who declares that would man be great he must be a Nonconformist.

There is something very fascinating in the records we have of Milton's one visit to the Continent. A more impressive Englishman never left our shores. Sir Philip Sidney perhaps approaches him nearest. Beautiful beyond praise, and just sufficiently conscious of it to be careful never to appear at a disadvantage, dignified in manners, versed in foreign tongues, yet full of the ancient

learning—a gentleman, a scholar, a poet, a musician, and a Christian—he moved about in a leisurely manner from city to city, writing Latin verses for his hosts and Italian sonnets in their ladies' albums, buying books and music, and creating, one cannot doubt, an all too flattering impression of an English Protestant. To travel in Italy with Montaigne or Milton, or Evelyn or Gray, or Shelley, or, pathetic as it is, with the dying Sir Walter, is perhaps more instructive than to go there for yourself with a tourist's ticket. Old Montaigne, who was but forty-seven when he made his journey, and whom therefore I would not call old had not Pope done so before me, is the most delightful of travelling companions, and as easy as an old shoe. A humaner man than Milton, a wiser man than Evelyn—with none of the constraint of Gray, or the strange, though fascinating, outlandishness of Shelley—he perhaps was more akin to Scott than any of the other travellers; but Scott went to Italy an overwhelmed man, whose only fear was he might die away from the heather and the murmur of Tweed. However, Milton is the most improving companion of them all, and amidst the impurities of Italy, "in all the places where vice meets with so little discouragement, and is protected with so little shame," he remained the Milton of Cambridge and Horton, and did nothing to pollute the pure temple of a poet's mind. He visited Paris, Nice, Genoa, Pisa, and Florence, staying in the last city two months, and living on terms of great intimacy with seven young Italians, whose musical names he duly records. These were the months of August and September, not nowadays reckoned safe months for Englishmen to be in Florence—modern lives being raised in price. From Florence he proceeded through Siena to Rome, where he also stayed two months. There he was present at a magnificent entertainment given by the Cardinal Francesco Barberini in his palace, and heard the singing of the celebrated Leonora Baroni. It is not for one moment to be supposed that he sought an inter-

view with the Pope, as Montaigne had done, who was exhorted by His Holiness "to persevere in the devotion he had ever manifested in the cause of the Church;" and yet perhaps Montaigne by his essays did more to sap the authority of Peter's chair than Milton, however willing, was able to do.

It has been remarked that Milton's chief enthusiasm in Italy was not art, but music, which falls in with Coleridge's *dictum*, that Milton is not so much a picturesque as a musical poet—meaning thereby, I suppose, that the effects which he produces and the scenes which he portrays are rather suggested to us by the rhythm of his lines than by actual verbal descriptions. From Rome Milton went to Naples, whence he had intended to go to Sicily and Greece; but the troubles beginning at home he forewent this pleasure, and consequently never saw Athens, which was surely a great pity. He returned to Rome, where, troubles or no troubles, he stayed another two months. From Rome he went back to Florence, which he found too pleasant to leave under two more months. Then he went to Lucca, and so to Venice, where he was very stern with himself, and only lingered a month. From Venice he went to Milan, and then over the Alps to Geneva, where he had dear friends. He was back in London in August, 1639, after an absence of fifteen months.

The times were troubled enough. Charles I., whose literary taste was so good that one must regret the mischance that placed a crown upon his comely head, was trying hard, at the bidding of a priest, to thrust Episcopacy down Scottish throats, who would not have it at any price. He was desperately in need of money, and the House of Commons (which had then a *raison d'être*) was not prepared to give him any except on terms. Altogether it was an exciting time, but Milton was in no way specially concerned in it. Milton looms so large in our imagination amongst the figures of the period that, despite Dr. Johnson's sneers, we are apt to forget

his political insignificance, and to fancy him curtailing his tour and returning home to take his place amongst the leaders of the Parliament men. Return home he did, but it was, as another pedagogue has reminded us, to receive boys "to be boarded and instructed." Dr. Johnson tells us that we ought not to allow our veneration for Milton to rob us of a joke at the expense of a man "who hastens home because his countrymen are contending for their liberty, and when he reaches the scene of action vapours away his patriotism in a private boarding-school;" but that this observation was dictated by the good Doctor's spleen is made plain by his immediately proceeding to point out, with his accustomed good sense, that there is really nothing to laugh at, since it was desirable that Milton, whose father was alive and could only make him a small allowance, should do something, and there was no shame in his adopting an honest and useful employment.

To be a Parliament man was no part of the ambition of one who still aspired to be a poet; who was not yet blind to the heavenly vision; who was still meditating what should be his theme, and who in the meantime chastised his sister's sons, unruly lads, who did him no credit and bore him no great love.

The Long Parliament met in November, 1640, and began its work—brought Strafford to the scaffold, clapped Laud into the Tower, Archbishop though he was, and secured as best they could the permanency of Parliamentary institutions. None of these things specially concerned John Milton. But there also uprose the eternal Church question, "What sort of Church are we to have?" The fierce controversy raged, and "its fair enticing fruit," spread round "with liberal hand," proved too much for the father of English epic.

> "He scrupled not to eat
> Against his better knowledge."

In other words, he commenced pamphleteer, and between

May, 1641, and the following March he had written five pamphlets against Episcopacy, and used an intolerable deal of bad language, which, however excusable in a heated controversialist, ill became the author of *Comus*.

The war broke out in 1642, but Milton kept house. The "tented field" had no attractions for him.

In the summer of 1643 he took a sudden journey into the country, and returned home to his boys with a wife, the daughter of an Oxfordshire Cavalier. Mary Powell was but seventeen, her poetic lord was thirty-five. From the country-house of a rollicking squire to Aldersgate Street was somewhat too violent a change. She had left ten brothers and sisters behind her, the eldest twenty-one, the youngest four. As one looks upon this picture and on that, there is no need to wonder that the poor girl was unhappy. The poet, though keenly alive to the subtle charm of a woman's personality, was unpractised in the arts of daily companionship. He expected to find much more than he brought of general good-fellowship. He had an ideal ever in his mind of both bodily and spiritual excellence, and he was almost greedy to realise both, but he knew not how. One of his complaints was that his wife was mute and insensate, and sat silent at his board. It must, no doubt, have been deadly dull, that house in Aldersgate Street. Silence reigned, save when broken by the cries of the younger Phillips sustaining chastisement. Milton had none of that noble humanitarian spirit which had led Montaigne long years before him to protest against the cowardly traditions of the schoolroom. After a month of Aldersgate Street, Mrs. Milton begged to go home. Her wish was granted, and she ran back to her ten brothers and sisters, and when her leave of absence was up refused to return. Her husband was furiously angry; and in a time so short as almost to enforce the belief that he began the work during the honeymoon, was ready with his celebrated pamphlet, *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce restored to the*

good of both sexes. He is even said, with his accustomed courage, to have paid attentions to a Miss Davis, who is described as a very handsome and witty gentlewoman, and therefore not one likely to sit silent at his board; but she was a sensible girl as well, and had no notion of a married suitor. Of Milton's pamphlet it is everyone's duty to speak with profound respect. It is a noble and passionate cry for a high ideal of married life, which, so he argued, had by inflexible laws been changed into a drooping and disconsolate household captivity, without refuge or redemption. He shuddered at the thought of a man and woman being condemned, for a mistake of judgment, to be bound together to their unspeakable wearisomeness and despair, for, he says, not to be beloved and yet retained is the greatest injury to a gentle spirit. Our present doctrine of divorce, which sets the household captive free on payment of a broken vow, but on no less ignoble terms, is not founded on the congruous, and is indeed already discredited, if not disgraced.

This pamphlet on divorce marks the beginning of Milton's mental isolation. Nobody had a word to say for it. Episcopalian, Presbyterian, and Independent held this doctrine in as much abhorrence as did the Catholic, and all alike regarded its author as either an impracticable dreamer or worse. It was written certainly in too great haste, for his errant wife, actuated by what motives cannot now be said, returned to her allegiance, was mindful of her plighted troth, and, suddenly entering his room, fell at his feet and begged to be forgiven. She was only nineteen, and she said it was all her mother's fault. Milton was not a sour man, and though perhaps too apt to insist upon repentance preceding forgiveness, yet when it did so he could forgive divinely. In a very short time the whole family of Powells, whom the war had reduced to low estate, were living under his roof in the Barbican, whither he moved on the Aldersgate house proving too small for his

varied belongings. The poet's father also lived with his son.

Mrs. Milton had four children, three of whom, all daughters, lived to grow up. The mother died in childbirth in 1652, being then twenty-six years of age.

The *Areopagitica, a Speech for Unlicensed Printing*, followed the divorce pamphlet, but it also fell upon deaf ears. Of all religious sects the Presbyterians, who were then dominant, are perhaps the least likely to forego the privilege of interference in the affairs of others. Instead of the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of London, instead of "a lordly Imprimatur, one from Lambeth House, another from the west end of Paul's," there was appointed a commission of twenty Presbyterians to act as State Licensers. Then was Milton's soul stirred within him to a noble rage. His was a threefold protest—as a citizen of a State he fondly hoped had been free, as an author, and as a reader. As a citizen he protested against so unnecessary and improper an interference. It is not, he cried, "the unfrocking of a priest, the unmitring of a bishop, that will make us a happy nation," but the practice of virtue, and virtue means freedom to choose. Milton was a manly politician, and detested with his whole soul grandmotherly legislation. "He who is not trusted with his own actions, his drift not being known to be evil, and standing to the hazard of law and penalty, has no great argument to think himself reputed in the commonwealth wherein he was born, for other than a fool or a foreigner." "They are not skilful considerers of human things who imagine to remove sin by removing the matter of sin." "And were I the chooser, a dram of well-doing should be preferred before many times as much the forcible hindrance of evil-doing." These are texts upon which sermons, not inapplicable to our own day, might be preached. Milton has made our first parent so peculiarly his own, that any observations of his about Adam are interesting. "Many there

be that complain of Divine Providence for suffering Adam to transgress. Foolish tongues! When God gave him reason He gave him freedom to choose, for reason is but choosing; he had been else a mere artificial Adam. We ourselves esteem not of that obedience a love or gift which is of force. God therefore left him free, set before him a provoking object ever almost in his eyes; herein consisted his merit, herein the right of his reward, the praise of his abstinence." So that according to Milton even Eden was a state of trial. As an author, Milton's protest has great force. "And what if the author shall be one so copious of fancy as to have many things well worth the adding come into his mind after licensing, while the book is yet under the press, which not seldom happens to the best and diligentest writers, and that perhaps a dozen times in one book? The printer dares not go beyond his licensed copy. So often then must the author trudge to his leave-giver that those his new insertions may be viewed, and many a jaunt will be made ere that licenser—for it must be the same man—can either be found, or found at leisure; meanwhile either the press must stand still, which is no small damage, or the author lose his accuratest thoughts, and send forth the book worse than he made it, which to a diligent writer is the greatest melancholy and vexation that can befall."

Milton would have had no licensers. Every book should bear the printer's name, and "mischievous and libellous books" were to be burnt by the common hangman, not as an effectual remedy, but as the "most effectual remedy man's prevention can use."

The noblest pamphlet in "our English, the language of men ever famous and foremost in the achievements of liberty," accomplished nothing, and its author must already have thought himself fallen on evil days.

In the year 1645, the year of Naseby, as Mr. Pattison reminds us, appeared the first edition of Milton's Poems. Then, for the first time, were printed *L'Allegro* and *Il*

Penseroso, the *Ode on the Morning of Christ's Nativity*, and various of the sonnets. The little volume also contained *Comus* and *Lycidas*, which had been previously printed. With the exception of three sonnets and a few scraps of translation, Milton had written nothing but pamphlets since his return from Italy. At the beginning of the volume, which is a small octavo, was a portrait of the poet, most villainously executed. He was really thirty-seven, but flattered himself, as men of that age will, that he looked ten years younger; he was therefore much chagrined to find himself represented as a grim-looking gentleman of at least fifty. The way he revenged himself upon the hapless artist is well known. The volume, with the portrait, is now very scarce, almost rare.

In 1647 Milton removed from the Barbican, both his father and his father-in-law being dead, to a smaller house in Holborn, backing upon Lincoln's Inn Fields, close to where the Inns of Court Hotel now stands, and not far from the spot which was destined to witness the terrible tragedy which was at once to darken and glorify the life of one of Milton's most fervent lovers, Charles Lamb. About this time he is supposed to have abandoned pedagogy. The habit of pamphleteering stuck to him; indeed, it is one seldom thrown off. It is much easier to throw off the pamphlets.

In 1649 Milton became a public servant, receiving the appointment of Latin Secretary to the Council of Foreign Affairs. He knew some member of the Committee, who obtained his nomination. His duties were purely clerkly. It was his business to translate English despatches into Latin, and foreign despatches into English. He had nothing whatever to do with the shaping of the foreign policy of the Commonwealth. He was not even employed in translating the most important of the State papers. There is no reason for supposing that he even knew the leading politicians of his time. There is a print one sees about, representing Oliver Cromwell dic-

tating a foreign despatch to John Milton; but it is all imagination, nor is there anything to prove that Cromwell and Milton, the body and soul of English Republicanism, were ever in the same room together, or exchanged words with one another. Milton's name does not occur in the great history of Lord Clarendon. Whitelocke, who was the leading member of the Committee which Milton served, only mentions him once. Thurloe spoke of him as a blind man who wrote Latin letters. Richard Baxter, in his folio history of his Life and Times, never mentions Milton at all.* He was just a clerk in the service of the Commonwealth, of a scholarly bent, peculiar habit of thought, and somewhat of an odd temper. He was not the man to cultivate great acquaintances, or to fritter away his time waiting the convenience of other people. When once asked to use his influence to obtain for a friend an appointment, he replied he had no influence, "*propter paucissimas familiaritates meas cum gratiosis, qui domi fere, idque libenter, me contineo.*" The busy great men of the day would have been more than astonished, they would have been disgusted, had they been told that posterity would refer to most of them compendiously, as having lived in the age of Milton. But this need not trouble us.

On the Continent Milton enjoyed a wider reputation, on account of his controversy with the great European scholar, Salmasius, on the sufficiently important and interesting, and then novel, subject of the execution of Charles I. Was it justifiable? Salmasius, a scholar and a Protestant, though of an easy-going description, was employed, or rather, as he had no wages (Milton's hundred *Jacobuses* being fictitious), nominated by Charles, afterwards the Second, to indict the regicides at the bar of European opinion, which accordingly he did in the Latin language. The work reached this country in the autumn of 1649, and it evidently became the duty of somebody to answer it. Two qualifications were neces-

* See note to Mitford's *Milton*, vol. i., clii.

sary—the replier must be able to read Latin, and to write it after a manner which should escape the ridicule of the scholars of Leyden, Geneva, and Paris. Milton occurred to somebody's mind, and the task was entrusted to him. It is not to be supposed that Cromwell was ever at the pains to read Salmasius for himself, but still it would not have done to have it said that the *Defensio Regia* of so celebrated a scholar as Salmasius remained unanswered, and so the appointment was confirmed, and Milton, no new hand at a pamphlet, set to work. In March, 1651, his first *Defence of the English People* was in print. In this great pamphlet Milton asserts, as against the doctrine of the divine right of kings, the undisputed sovereignty of the people; and he maintains the proposition that, as well by the law of God, as by the law of nations, and the law of England, a king of England may be brought to trial and death, the people being discharged from all obligations of loyalty when a lawful prince becomes a tyrant, or gives himself over to sloth and voluptuousness. This noble argument, alike worthy of the man and the occasion, is doubtless overclouded and disfigured by personal abuse of Salmasius, whose relations with his wife had surely as little to do with the head of Charles I. as had poor Mr. Dick's memorial. Salmasius, it appears, was henpecked, and to allow yourself to be henpecked was, in Milton's opinion, a high crime and misdemeanour against humanity, and one which rendered a man infamous, and disqualified him from taking part in debate.

It has always been reported that Salmasius, who was getting on in years, and had many things to trouble him besides his own wife, perished in the effort of writing a reply to Milton, in which he made use of language quite as bad as any of his opponent's; but it now appears that this is not so. Indeed, it is generally rash to attribute a man's death to a pamphlet, or an article, either of his own or anybody else's.

Salmasius, however, died, though from natural causes,

and his reply was not published till after the Restoration, when the question had become, what it has ever since remained, academical.

Other pens were quicker, and to their productions Milton, in 1654, replied with his *Second Defence of the English People*, a tract containing autobiographical details of immense interest and charm. By this time he was totally blind, though, with a touch of that personal sensitiveness ever characteristic of him, he is careful to tell Europe, in the *Second Defence*, that externally his eyes were uninjured, and shone with an unclouded light.

Milton's *Defences of the English People* are rendered provoking by his extraordinary language concerning his opponents. "Numskull," "beast," "fool," "puppy," "knave," "ass," "mongrel-cur," are but a few of the epithets employed. This is doubtless mere matter of pleading, a rule of the forum where controversies between scholars are conducted; but for that very reason it makes the pamphlets as provoking to an ordinary reader as an old bill of complaint in Chancery must have been to an impatient suitor who wanted his money. The main issues, when cleared of personalities, are important enough, and are stated by Milton with great clearness. "Our king made not us, but we him. Nature has given fathers to us all, but we ourselves appointed our own king; so that the people is not for the king, but the king for them." It was made a matter of great offence amongst monarchs and monarchical persons that Charles was subject to the indignity of a trial. With murders and poisonings kings were long familiar. These were part of the perils of the voyage, for which they were prepared, but, as Salmasius put it, "for a king to be arraigned in a court of judicature, to be put to plead for his life, to have sentence of death pronounced against him, and that sentence executed"—oh! horrible impiety. To this Milton replies: "Tell me, thou superlative fool, whether it be not more just, more agreeable to the rules of humanity and the laws of all human

societies, to bring a criminal, be his offence what it will, before a court of justice, to give him leave to speak for himself, and if the law condemns him, then to put him to death as he has deserved, so as he may have time to repent or to recollect himself; than presently, as soon as ever he is taken, to butcher him without more ado?"

But a king of any spirit would probably answer that he preferred to have his despotism tempered by assassination than by the mercy of a court of John Miltons. To which answer Milton would have rejoined, "Despotism, I know you not, since we are as free as any people under heaven."

The weakest part in Milton's case is his having to admit that the Parliament was overawed by the army, which he says was wiser than the senators.

Milton's address to his countrymen, with which he concludes the first defence, is veritably in his grand style:

"He has gloriously delivered you, the first of nations, from the two greatest mischiefs of this life—tyranny and superstition. He has endued you with greatness of mind to be First of Mankind, who after having confined their own king, and having had him delivered into their hands, have not scrupled to condemn him judicially, and pursuant to that sentence of condemnation to put him to death. After performing so glorious an action as this, you ought to do nothing that's mean and little; you ought not to think of, much less do, anything but what is great and sublime. Which to attain to, this is your only way: as you have subdued your enemies in the field, so to make it appear that you of all mankind are best able to subdue Ambition, Avarice, the love of Riches, and can best avoid the corruptions that prosperity is apt to introduce. These are the only arguments by which you will be able to evince that you are not such persons as this fellow represents you, traitors, robbers, murderers, parricides, madmen—that you did not put your king to death out of any ambitious design—that it was not an act of fury or madness, but that it

was wholly out of love to your liberty, your religion, to justice, virtue, and your country, that you punished a tyrant. But if it should fall out otherwise (which God forbid), if, as you have been valiant in war, you should grow debauched in peace, and that you should not have learnt, by so eminent, so remarkable an example before your eyes, to fear God, and work righteousness; for my part I shall easily grant and confess (for I cannot deny it), whatever ill men may speak or think of you, to be very true. And you will find in time that God's displeasure against you will be greater than it has been against your adversaries—greater than His grace and favour have been to yourselves, which you have had larger experience of than any other nation under heaven."

This controversy naturally excited greater interest abroad, where Latin was familiarly known, than ever it did here at home. Though it cost Milton his sight, or at all events accelerated the hour of his blindness, he appears greatly to have enjoyed conducting a high dispute in the face of Europe. "I am," so he says, "spreading abroad amongst the cities, the kingdoms, and nations, the restored culture of civility and freedom of life." We certainly managed in this affair of the execution of Charles to get rid of that note of insularity which renders our politics uninviting to the stranger.

Milton, despite his blindness, remained in the public service until after the death of Cromwell; in fact, he did not formally resign until after the Restoration. He played no part, having none to play, in the performances that occurred between those events. He poured forth pamphlets, but there is no reason to believe that they were read otherwise than carelessly and by few. His ideas were his own, and never had a chance of becoming fruitful. There seemed to him to be a ready and an easy way to establish a free Commonwealth, but on the whole it turned out that the easiest thing to do was to invite Charles Stuart to reascend the throne of his ancestors, which he did, and Milton went into hiding.

It is terrible to think how risky the situation was. Milton was undoubtedly in danger of his life, and *Paradise Lost* was unwritten. He was for a time under arrest. But after all he was not one of the regicides—he was only a scribe who had defended regicide. Neither was he a man well associated. He was a solitary, and, for the most part, an unpopular thinker, and blind withal. He was left alone for the rest of his days. He lived first in Jewin Street, off Aldersgate Street, and finally in Artillery Walk, Bunhill Fields. He had married, four years after his first wife's death, a lady who died within a twelvemonth, though her memory is kept ever fresh, generation after generation, by her husband's sonnet beginning:

"Methought I saw my late espoused saint."

Dr. Johnson, it is really worth remembering, called this a poor sonnet. In 1664 Milton married a third and last wife, a lady he had never seen, and who survived her husband for no less a period than fifty-three years, not dying till the year 1727. The poet's household, like his country, never realised any of his ideals. His third wife took decent care of him, and there the matter ended. He did not belong to the category of adored fathers. His daughters did not love him—it seems even probable they disliked him. Mr. Pattison has pointed out that Milton never was on terms even with the scholars of his age. Political acquaintances he had none. He was, in Puritan language, "unconnected with any place of worship," and had therefore no pastoral visits to receive, or sermons to discuss. The few friends he had were mostly young men who were attracted to him, and were glad to give him their company; and it is well that he had this pleasure, for he was ever in his wishes a social man—not intended to live alone, and blindness must have made society little short of a necessity for him.

Now it was, in the evening of his days, with a Stuart

once more upon the throne, and Episcopacy finally installed, that Milton, a defeated thinker, a baffled pamphleteer—for had not Salmasius triumphed?—with Horton and Italy far, far behind him, set himself to keep the promise of his glorious youth, and compose a poem the world should not willingly let die. His manner of life was this. In summer he rose at four, in winter at five. He went to bed at nine. He began the day with having the Hebrew Scriptures read to him. Then he contemplated. At seven his man came to him again, and he read and wrote till an early dinner. For exercise he either walked in the garden or swung in a machine. Besides conversation, his only other recreation was music. He played the organ and the bass viol. He would sometimes sing himself. After recreation of this kind he would return to his study to be read to till six. After six his friends were admitted, and would sit with him till eight. At eight he had his supper—olives or something light. He was very abstemious. After supper he smoked a pipe of tobacco, drank a glass of water, and went to bed. He found the night a favourable time for composition, and what he composed at night he dictated in the day, sitting obliquely in an elbow chair with his leg thrown over the arm.

In 1664 *Paradise Lost* was finished, but as in 1665 came the Great Plague, and after the Great Plague the Great Fire, it was long before the MS. found its way into the hands of the licenser. It is interesting to note that the first member of the general public who read *Paradise Lost*, I hope all through, was a clergyman of the name of Tomkyns, the deputy of the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. Sheldon. The Archbishop was the State Licenser for religious books, but of course did not do the work himself. Tomkyns did the work, and was for a good while puzzled what to make of the old Republican's poem. At last, and after some singularly futile criticisms, Tomkyns consented to allow the publication of *Paradise Lost*, which accordingly appeared

in 1667, admirably printed, and at the price of 3s. a copy. The author's agreement with the publisher is in writing—as Mr. Besant tells us all agreements with publishers should be—and may be seen in the British Museum. Its terms are clear. The poet was to have £5 down; another £5 when the first edition, which was not to exceed 1,500 copies, was sold; a third £5 when a second edition was sold; and a fourth and last £5 when a third edition was sold. He got his first £5, also his second, and after his death his widow sold all her rights for £3. Consequently £18, which represents perhaps £50 of our present currency, was Milton's share of all the money that has been made by the sale of his great poem. But the praise is still his. The sale was very considerable. The "general reader" no doubt preferred the poems of Cleaveland and Flatman, but Milton found an audience which was fit and not fewer than ever is the case when noble poetry is first produced.

Paradise Regained was begun upon the completion of *Paradise Lost*, and appeared with *Samson Agonistes* in 1671, and here ended Milton's life as a producing poet. He lived on till Sunday, 8th November, 1674, when the gout, or what was then called gout, struck in and he died, and was buried beside his father in the Church of St. Giles's, Cripplegate. He remained laborious to the last, and imposed upon himself all kinds of drudgery, compiling dictionaries, histories of Britain and Russia. He must have worked not so much from love of his subjects as from dread of idleness. But he had hours of relaxation, of social intercourse, and of music; and it is pleasant to remember that one pipe of tobacco. It consecrates your own.

Against Milton's great poem it is sometimes alleged that it is not read; and yet it must, I think, be admitted that for one person who has read Spenser's *Fairy Queen*, ten thousand might easily be found who have read *Paradise Lost*. Its popularity has been widespread. Mr. Mark Pattison and Mr. John Bright measure some

ground between them. No other poem can be mentioned which has so coloured English thought as Milton's, and yet, according to the French senator, whom Mr. Arnold has introduced to the plain reader, "*Paradise Lost* is a false poem, a grotesque poem, a tiresome poem." It is not easy for those who have a touch of Milton's temper, though none of his genius, to listen to this foreign criticism quite coolly. Milton was very angry with Salmasius for venturing to find fault with the Long Parliament for having repealed so many laws, and so far forgot himself as to say, "*Nam nostræ leges, Ole, quid ad te?*" But there is nothing municipal about *Paradise Lost*. All the world has a right to be interested in it and to find fault with it. But the fact that the people for whom primarily it was written have taken it to their hearts and have it on their lips ought to have prevented it being called tiresome by a senator of France.

But what is the matter with our great epic? That nobody ever wished it longer is no real accusation. Nobody ever did wish an epic longer. The most popular books in the world are generally accounted too long—*Don Quixote*, the *Pilgrim's Progress*, *Tom Jones*. But, says Mr. Arnold, the whole real interest of the poem depends upon our being able to take it literally; and again, "Merely as a matter of poetry, the story of the Fall has no special force or effectiveness—its effectiveness for us comes, and can only come, from our taking it all as the literal narrative of what positively happened." These bewildering utterances make one rub one's eyes. Carlyle comes to our relief: "All which propositions I for the present content myself with modestly, but peremptorily and irrevocably denying."

Mr. Pattison surely speaks the language of ordinary good sense when he writes: "For the world of *Paradise Lost* is an ideal, conventional world quite as much as the world of the *Arabian Nights*, or the world of the chivalrous romance, or that of the pastoral novel."

Coleridge, in the twenty-second chapter of the *Biographia Literaria*, points out that the fable and characters of *Paradise Lost* are not derived from Scripture, as in the *Messiah* of Klopstock, but merely suggested by it—the illusion on which all poetry is founded being thus never contradicted. The poem proceeds upon a legend, ancient and fascinating, and to call it a commentary upon a few texts in Genesis is a marvellous criticism.

The story of the Fall of Man, as recorded in the Semitic legend, is to me more attractive as a story than the Tale of Troy, and I find the rebellion of Satan and his dire revenge more to my mind than the circles of Dante. Eve is, I think, more interesting than "Heaven-born Helen, Sparta's queen"—I mean in herself, and as a woman to write poetry about.

The execution of the poem is another matter. So far as style is concerned its merits have not yet been questioned. As a matter of style and diction, Milton is as safe as Virgil. The handling of the story is more vulnerable. The long speeches put in the mouth of the Almighty are never pleasing, and seldom effective. The weak point about argument is that it usually admits of being answered. For Milton to essay to justify the ways of God to man was well and pious enough, but to represent God Himself as doing so by argumentative process was not so well, and was to expose the Almighty to possible rebuff. The king is always present in his own courts, but as judge, not as advocate; hence the royal dignity never suffers.

It is narrated of an eminent barrister, who became a most polished judge, Mr. Knight Bruce, that once, when at the very head of his profession, he was taken in before a Master in Chancery, an office since abolished, and found himself pitted against a little snip of an attorney's clerk, scarce higher than the table, who, nothing daunted, and by the aid of authorities he cited from a bundle of books as big as himself, succeeded in

worsting Knight Bruce, whom he persisted in calling over again and again "my learned friend." Mr. Bruce treated the imp with that courtesy which is always an opponent's due, but he never went before the Masters any more.

The Archangel has not escaped the reproach often brought against affable persons of being a bit of a bore, and though this is to speak unbecomingly, it must be owned that the reader is glad whenever Adam plucks up heart of grace and gets in a word edgeways. Mr. Bagehot has complained of Milton's angels. He says they are silly. But this is, I think, to intellectualise too much. There are some classes who are fairly exempted from all obligation to be intelligent, and these airy messengers are surely amongst that number. The retinue of a prince or of a bride justify their choice if they are well-looking and group nicely.

But these objections do not touch the main issue. Here is the story of the loss of Eden, told enchantingly, musically, and in the grand style. "Who," says M. Scherer, in a passage quoted by Mr. Arnold, "can read the eleventh and twelfth books without yawning?" People, of course, are free to yawn when they please, provided they put their hands to their mouths; but in answer to this insulting question one is glad to be able to remember how Coleridge has singled out Adam's vision of future events contained in these books as especially deserving of attention. But to read them is to repel the charge.

There was no need for Mr. Arnold, of all men, to express dissatisfaction with Milton:

> "Words which no ear ever to hear in heaven
> Expected; least of all from thee, ingrate,
> In place thyself so high above thy peers."

The first thing for people to be taught is to enjoy great things greatly. The spots on the sun may be an interesting study, but anyhow the sun is not all

spots. Indeed, sometimes in the early year, when he breaks forth afresh,

> "And winter, slumbering in the open air,
> Wears on his smiling face a dream of spring,"

we are apt to forget that he has any spots at all, and, as he shines, are perhaps reminded of the blind poet sitting in his darkness, in this prosaic city of ours, swinging his leg over the arm of his chair, and dictating the lines:

> "Seasons return, but not to me returns
> Day, or the sweet approach of even or morn,
> Or sight of vernal bloom or summer's rose,
> Or flocks or herds, or human face divine.
> But cloud instead, and ever-during dark
> Surrounds me—from the cheerful ways of men
> Cut off; and for the book of knowledge fair
> Presented with a universal blank
> Of nature's works, to me expunged and razed,
> And wisdom at one entrance quite shut out.
> So much the rather, Thou, Celestial Light,
> Shine inwards, and the mind through all her powers
> Irradiate—*there* plant eyes; all mist from thence
> Purge and disperse, that I may see and tell
> Of things invisible to mortal sight."

Coleridge added a note to his beautiful poem, *The Nightingale*, lest he should be supposed capable of speaking with levity of a single line in Milton. The note was hardly necessary, but one loves the spirit that prompted him to make it. Sainte-Beuve remarks: "Parler des poètes est toujours une chose bien délicate, et surtout quand on l'a été un peu soi-même." But though it does not matter what the little poets do, great ones should never pass one another without a royal salute.

DR. JOHNSON.

IF we should ever take occasion to say of Dr. Johnson's Preface to Shakspeare what he himself said of a similar production of the poet Rowe, "that it does not discover much profundity or penetration," we ought in common fairness always to add that nobody else has ever written about Shakspeare one-half so entertainingly. If this statement be questioned, let the doubter, before reviling me, re-read the preface, and if, after he has done so, he still demurs, we shall be content to withdraw the observation, which, indeed, has only been made for the purpose of introducing a quotation from the Preface itself.

In that document, Dr. Johnson, with his unrivalled stateliness, writes as follows:—"The poet of whose works I have undertaken the revision may now begin to assume the dignity of an ancient, and claim the privilege of established fame and prescriptive veneration. He has long outlived his century, the term commonly fixed as the test of literary merit."

The whirligig of time has brought in his revenges. The Doctor himself has been dead his century. He died on the 13th of December, 1784. Come, let us criticise him.

Our qualifications for this high office need not be investigated curiously.

"Criticism," writes Johnson in the 60th *Idler*, "is a study by which men grow important and formidable at a very small expense. The power of invention has been conferred by nature upon few, and the labour of learning those sciences which may by mere labour be obtained, is too great to be willingly endured; but every man can exert such judgment as he has upon the

works of others; and he whom nature has made weak, and idleness keeps ignorant, may yet support his vanity by the name of a critick."

To proceed with our task by the method of comparison is to pursue a course open to grave objection, yet it is forced upon us when we find, as we lately did, a writer in the *Times* newspaper, in the course of a not very discriminating review of Mr. Froude's recent volumes, casually remarking, as if it admitted of no more doubt than the day's price of consols, that Carlyle was a greater man than Johnson. It is a good thing to be positive. To be positive in your opinions and selfish in your habits is the best recipe, if not for happiness, at all events for that far more attainable commodity, comfort, with which we are acquainted. "A noisy man," sang Cowper, who could not bear anything louder than the hissing of a tea-urn, "a noisy man is always in the right," and a positive man can seldom be proved wrong. Still, in literature it is very desirable to preserve a moderate measure of independence, and we, therefore, make bold to ask whether it is as plain as the "old hill of Howth," that Carlyle was a greater man than Johnson? Is not the precise contrary the truth? No abuse of Carlyle need be looked for here or from me. When a man of genius and of letters happens to have any striking virtues, such as purity, temperance, honesty, the novel task of dwelling on them has such attraction for us, that we are content to leave the elucidation of his faults to his personal friends, and to stern, unbending moralists like Mr. Edmund Yates and the *World* newspaper.* To love Carlyle is, thanks to Mr. Froude's superhuman ideal of friendship, a task of much heroism, almost meriting a pension; still, it is quite possible for the candid and truth-loving soul. But a greater than Johnson he most certainly was not.

* "The late Mr. Carlyle was a brute and a boor."—*The World*, October 29th, 1884.

There is a story in Lockhart's *Life of Scott* of an ancient beggar-woman, who, whilst asking an alms of Sir Walter, described herself, in a lucky moment for her pocket, as "an old struggler." Scott made a note of the phrase in his diary, and thought it deserved to become classical. It certainly clings most tenaciously to the memory—so picturesquely does it body forth the striving attitude of poor battered humanity. Johnson was "an old struggler." So, too, in all conscience, was Carlyle. The struggles of Johnson have long been historical; those of Carlyle have just become so. We are interested in both. To be indifferent would be inhuman. Both men had great endowments, tempestuous natures, hard lots. They were not amongst Dame Fortune's favourites. They had to fight their way. What they took they took by storm. But—and here is a difference indeed—Johnson came off victorious, Carlyle did not.

Boswell's book is an arch of triumph, through which, as we read, we see his hero passing into eternal fame, to take up his place with those—

> "Dead but sceptred sovereigns who still rule
> Our spirits from their urns."

Froude's book is a tomb over which the lovers of Carlyle's genius will never cease to shed tender but regretful tears.

I doubt whether there is in English literature a more triumphant book than Boswell's. What materials for tragedy are wanting? Johnson was a man of strong passions, unbending spirit, violent temper, as poor as a church-mouse, and as proud as the proudest of church dignitaries; endowed with the strength of a coal-heaver, the courage of a lion, and the tongue of Dean Swift, he could knock down booksellers and silence bargees; he was melancholy almost to madness, "radically wretched," indolent, blinded, diseased. Poverty was long his portion; not that genteel poverty that

is sometimes behindhand with its rent, but that hungry poverty that does not know where to look for its dinner. Against all these things had this "old struggler" to contend; over all these things did this "old struggler" prevail. Over even the fear of death, the giving up of this "intellectual being," which had haunted his gloomy fancy for a lifetime, he seems finally to have prevailed, and to have met his end as a brave man should.

Carlyle, writing to his wife, says, and truthfully enough, "The more the devil worries me the more I wring him by the nose;" but then if the devil's was the only nose that was wrung in the transaction, why need Carlyle cry out so loud? After buffeting one's way through the storm-tossed pages of Froude's *Carlyle*—in which the universe is stretched upon the rack because food disagrees with man and cocks crow—with what thankfulness and reverence do we read once again the letter in which Johnson tells Mrs. Thrale how he has been called to endure, not dyspepsia or sleeplessness, but paralysis itself:

"On Monday I sat for my picture, and walked a considerable way with little inconvenience. In the afternoon and evening I felt myself light and easy, and began to plan schemes of life. Thus I went to bed, and, in a short time, waked and sat up, as has long been my custom; when I felt a confusion in my head which lasted, I suppose, about half a minute. I was alarmed, and prayed God that however much He might afflict my body He would spare my understanding. . . . Soon after I perceived that I had suffered a paralytic stroke, and that my speech was taken from me. I had no pain, and so little dejection, in this dreadful state, that I wondered at my own apathy, and considered that perhaps death itself, when it should come, would excite less horror than seems now to attend it. In order to rouse the vocal organs I took two drams. . . . I then went to bed, and, strange as it may seem, I think, slept. When I saw light it was

time I should contrive what I should do. Though God stopped my speech He left me my hand. I enjoyed a mercy which was not granted to my dear friend Lawrence, who now perhaps overlooks me, as I am writing, and rejoices that I have what he wanted. My first note was necessarily to my servant, who came in talking, and could not immediately comprehend why he should read what I put into his hands. . . . How this will be received by you I know not. I hope you will sympathise with me; but perhaps—

> 'My mistress, gracious, mild, and good,
> Cries—Is he dumb? 'Tis time he shou'd.'

"I suppose you may wish to know how my disease is treated by the physicians. They put a blister upon my back, and two from my ear to my throat, one on a side. The blister on the back has done little, and those on the throat have not risen. I bullied and bounced (it sticks to our last sand), and compelled the apothecary to make his salve according to the Edinburgh dispensatory, that it might adhere better. I have now two on my own prescription. They likewise give me salt of hartshorn, which I take with no great confidence; but I am satisfied that what can be done is done for me. I am almost ashamed of this querulous letter, but now it is written let it go."

This is indeed tonic and bark for the mind.

If, irritated by a comparison that ought never to have been thrust upon us, we ask why it is that the reader of Boswell finds it as hard to help loving Johnson as the reader of Froude finds it hard to avoid disliking Carlyle, the answer must be that, whilst the elder man of letters was full to overflowing with the milk of human kindness, the younger one was full to overflowing with something not nearly so nice; and that whilst Johnson was pre-eminently a reasonable man, reasonable in all his demands and expectations, Carlyle was the most

unreasonable mortal that ever exhausted the patience of nurse, mother, or wife.

Of Dr. Johnson's affectionate nature nobody has written with nobler appreciation than Carlyle himself. "Perhaps it is this Divine feeling of affection, throughout manifested, that principally attracts us to Johnson. A true brother of men is he, and filial lover of the earth."

The day will come when it will be recognised that Carlyle, as a critic, is to be judged by what he himself corrected for the press, and not by splenetic entries in diaries, or whimsical extravagances in private conversation.

Of Johnson's reasonableness nothing need be said, except that it is patent everywhere. His wife's judgment was a sound one: "He is the most sensible man I ever met."

As for his brutality, of which at one time we used to hear a great deal, we cannot say of it what Hookham Frere said of Landor's immorality, that it was

> "Mere imaginary classicality
> Wholly devoid of criminal reality."

It was nothing of the sort. Dialectically the great Doctor was a great brute. The fact is, he had so accustomed himself to wordy warfare, that he lost all sense of moral responsibility, and cared as little for men's feelings as a Napoleon did for their lives. When the battle was over, the Doctor frequently did what no soldier ever did that I have heard tell of—apologised to his victims and drank wine or lemonade with them. It must also be remembered that for the most part his victims sought him out. They came to be tossed and gored. And, after all, are they so much to be pitied? They have our sympathy, and the Doctor has our applause. I am not prepared to say, with the simpering fellow with weak legs whom David Copperfield met at Mr. Waterbrook's dinner-table, that I would sooner be knocked down by a man with blood than picked up by

a man without any; but, argumentatively speaking, I think it would be better for a man's reputation to be knocked down by Dr. Johnson than picked up by Mr. Froude.

Johnson's claim to be the best of our talkers cannot, on our present materials, be contested. For the most part we have only talk about other talkers. Johnson's is matter of record. Carlyle no doubt was a great talker —no man talked against talk or broke silence to praise it more eloquently than he, but unfortunately none of it is in evidence. All that is given us is a sort of Commination Service writ large. We soon weary of it. Man does not live by curses alone.

An unhappier prediction of a boy's future was surely never made than that of Johnson's by his cousin, Mr. Cornelius Ford, who said to the infant Samuel, "You will make your way the more easily in the world as you are content to dispute no man's claim to conversation excellence, and they will, therefore, more willingly allow your pretensions as a writer." Unfortunate Mr. Ford! The man never breathed whose claim to conversation excellence Dr. Johnson did not dispute on every possible occasion, whilst, just because he was admittedly so good a talker, his pretensions as a writer have been occasionally slighted.

Johnson's personal character has generally been allowed to stand high. It, however, has not been submitted to recent tests. To be the first to "smell a fault" is the pride of the modern biographer. Boswell's artless pages afford useful hints not lightly to be disregarded. During some portion of Johnson's married life he had lodgings, first at Greenwich, afterwards at Hampstead. But he did not always go home o' nights; sometimes preferring to roam the streets with that vulgar ruffian Savage, who was certainly no fit company for him. He once actually quarrelled with "Tetty," who, despite her ridiculous name, was a very sensible woman with a very sharp tongue, and for a season, like stars, they dwelt apart.

Of the real merits of this dispute we must resign ourselves to ignorance. The materials for its discussion do not exist; even Croker could not find them. Neither was our great moralist as sound as one would have liked to see him in the matter of the payment of small debts. When he came to die, he remembered several of these outstanding accounts; but what assurance have we that he remembered them all? One sum of £10 he sent across to the honest fellow from whom he had borrowed it, with an apology for his delay; which, since it had extended over a period of twenty years, was not superfluous. I wonder whether he ever repaid Mr. Dilly the guinea he once borrowed of him to give to a very small boy who had just been apprenticed to a printer. If he did not, it was a great shame. That he was indebted to Sir Joshua in a small loan is apparent from the fact that it was one of his three dying requests to that great man that he should release him from it, as, of course, the most amiable of painters did. The other two requests, it will be remembered, were to read his Bible, and not to use his brush on Sundays. The good Sir Joshua gave the desired promises with a full heart, for these two great men loved one another; but subsequently discovered the Sabbatical restriction not a little irksome, and after a while resumed his former practice, arguing with himself that the Doctor really had no business to extract any such promise. The point is a nice one, and perhaps ere this the two friends have met and discussed it in the Elysian fields. If so, I hope the Doctor, grown "angelical," kept his temper with the mild shade of Reynolds better than on the historical occasion when he discussed with him the question of "strong drinks."

Against Garrick, Johnson undoubtedly cherished a smouldering grudge, which, however, he never allowed anyone but himself to fan into flame. His pique was natural. Garrick had been his pupil at Edial, near Lichfield; they had come up to town together with an easy united fortune of fourpence—"current coin o' the

realm." Garrick soon had the world at his feet, and garnered golden grain. Johnson became famous too, but remained poor and dingy. Garrick surrounded himself with what only money can buy, good pictures and rare books. Johnson cared nothing for pictures—how should he? he could not see them; but he did care a great deal about books, and the pernickety little player was chary about lending his splendidly bound rarities to his quondam preceptor. Our sympathies in this matter are entirely with Garrick; Johnson was one of the best men that ever lived, but not to lend books to. Like Lady Slattern, he had a "most observant thumb." But Garrick had no real cause for complaint. Johnson may have soiled his folios and sneered at his trade, but in life Johnson loved Garrick, and in death embalmed his memory in a sentence which can only die with the English language: "I am disappointed by that stroke of death which has eclipsed the gaiety of nations, and impoverished the public stock of harmless pleasure."

Will it be believed that puny critics have been found to quarrel with this colossal compliment on the poor pretext of its falsehood? Garrick's death, urge these dullards, could not possibly have eclipsed the gaiety of nations, since he had retired from the stage months previous to his demise. When will mankind learn that literature is one thing, and sworn testimony another?

Johnson's relations with Burke were of a more crucial character. The author of *Rasselas* and *The English Dictionary* can never have been really jealous of Garrick, or in the very least desirous of "bringing down the house;" but Burke had done nobler things than that. He had made politics philosophical, and had at least tried to cleanse them from the dust and cobwebs of party. Johnson, though he had never sat in the House of Commons, had yet, in his capacity of an unauthorised reporter, put into the mouths of honourable members much better speeches than ever came out of them, and it is no secret that he would have liked to make a speech

or two on his own account. Burke had made many Harder still to bear, there were not wanting good judges to say that, in their opinion, Burke was a better talker than the great Samuel himself. To cap it all, was not Burke a "vile Whig"? The ordeal was an unusually trying one. Johnson emerges triumphant.

Though by no means disposed to hear men made much of, he always listened to praise of Burke with a boyish delight. He never wearied of it. When any new proof of Burke's intellectual prowess was brought to his notice, he would exclaim exultingly, "Did we not always say he was a great man?" And yet how admirably did this "poor scholar" preserve his independence and equanimity of mind! It was not easy to dazzle the Doctor. What a satisfactory story that is of Burke showing Johnson over his fine estate at Beaconsfield, and expatiating in his exuberant style on its "liberties, privileges, easements, rights, and advantages," and of the old Doctor, the tenant of "a two-pair back" somewhere off Fleet Street, peering cautiously about, criticising everything, and observing with much coolness,—

"Non equidem invideo, miror magis."

A friendship like this could be disturbed but by death, and accordingly we read:—

"Mr. Langton one day during Johnson's last illness found Mr. Burke and four or five more friends sitting with Johnson. Mr. Burke said to him, 'I am afraid, sir, such a number of us may be oppressive to you.' 'No, sir,' said Johnson, 'it is not so; and I must be in a wretched state indeed when your company would not be a delight to me.' Mr. Burke, in a tremulous voice, expressive of being very tenderly affected, replied, 'My dear sir, you have always been too good to me.' Immediately afterwards he went away. This was the last circumstance in the acquaintance of these two eminent men."

But this is a well-worn theme, though, like some other well-worn themes, still profitable for edification or rebuke. A hundred years can make no difference to a character like Johnson's, or to a biography like Boswell's. We are not to be robbed of our conviction that this man, at all events, was both great and good.

Johnson the author is not always fairly treated. Phrases are convenient things to hand about, and it is as little the custom to inquire into their truth as it is to read the letterpress on banknotes. We are content to count banknotes, and to repeat phrases. One of these phrases is, that whilst everybody reads Boswell, nobody reads Johnson. The facts are otherwise. Everybody does not read Boswell, and a great many people do read Johnson. If it be asked, What do the general public know of Johnson's nine volumes octavo? I reply, Beshrew the general public! What in the name of the Bodleian has the general public got to do with literature? The general public subscribes to Mudie, and has its intellectual, like its lacteal sustenance, sent round to it in carts. On Saturdays these carts, laden with "recent works in circulation," traverse the Uxbridge Road; on Wednesdays they toil up Highgate Hill, and if we may believe the reports of travellers, are occasionally seen rushing through the wilds of Camberwell and bumping over Blackheath. It is not a question of the general public, but of the lover of letters. Do Mr. Browning, Mr. Arnold, Mr. Lowell, Mr. Trevelyan, Mr. Stephen, Mr. Morley, know their Johnson? "To doubt would be disloyalty." And what these big men know in their big way hundreds of little men know in their little way. We have no writer with a more genuine literary flavour about him than the great Cham of literature. No man of letters loved letters better than he. He knew literature in all its branches—he had read books, he had written books, he had sold books, he had bought books, and he had borrowed them. Sluggish and inert in all other directions, he pranced through

libraries. He loved a catalogue; he delighted in an index. He was, to employ a happy phrase of Dr. Holmes, at home amongst books, as a stable-boy is amongst horses. He cared intensely about the future of literature and the fate of literary men. "I respect Millar," he once exclaimed; "he has raised the price of literature." Now Millar was a Scotchman. Even Horne Tooke was not to stand in the pillory: "No, no, the dog has too much literature for that." The only time the author of *Rasselas* met the author of the *Wealth of Nations* witnessed a painful scene. The English moralist gave the Scotch one the lie direct, and the Scotch moralist applied to the English one a phrase which would have done discredit to the lips of a costermonger; * but this notwithstanding, when Boswell reported that Adam Smith preferred rhyme to blank verse, Johnson hailed the news as enthusiastically as did Cedric the Saxon the English origin of the bravest knights in the retinue of the Norman king. "Did Adam say that?" he shouted: "I love him for it. I could hug him!" Johnson no doubt honestly believed he held George III. in reverence, but really he did not care a pin's fee for all the crowned heads of Europe. All his reverence was reserved for "poor scholars." When a small boy in a wherry, on whom had devolved the arduous task of rowing Johnson and his biographer across the Thames, said he would give all he had to know about the Argonauts, the Doctor was much pleased, and gave him, or got Boswell to give him, a double fare. He was ever an advocate of the spread of knowledge amongst all classes and both sexes. His devotion to letters has received its fitting reward, the love and respect of all "lettered hearts."

Considering him a little more in detail, we find it plain that he was a poet of no mean order. His resonant lines, informed as they often are with the force

* Anyone who does not wish this story to be true will find good reasons for disbelieving it stated in Mr. Napier's edition of Boswell, vol. iv., p. 385.

of their author's character—his strong sense, his fortitude, his gloom—take possession of the memory, and suffuse themselves through one's entire system of thought. A poet spouting his own verses is usually a figure to be avoided; but one could be content to be a hundred and thirty next birthday to have heard Johnson recite, in his full sonorous voice, and with his stately elocution, *The Vanity of Human Wishes*. When he came to the following lines, he usually broke down, and who can wonder?—

"Proceed, illustrious youth,
And virtue guard thee to the throne of truth!
Yet should thy soul indulge the gen'rous heat
Till captive science yields her last retreat;
Should reason guide thee with her brightest ray,
And pour on misty doubt resistless day;
Should no false kindness lure to loose delight,
Nor praise relax, nor difficulty fright;
Should tempting novelty thy cell refrain,
And sloth effuse her opiate fumes in vain;
Should beauty blunt on fops her fatal dart,
Nor claim the triumph of a lettered heart;
Should no disease thy torpid veins invade,
Nor melancholy's phantoms haunt thy shade;
Yet hope not life from grief or danger free,
Nor think the doom of man reversed for thee.
Deign on the passing world to turn thine eyes,
And pause awhile from letters to be wise;
There mark what ills the scholar's life assail,
Toil, envy, want, the patron and the gaol.
See nations, slowly wise and meanly just,
To buried merit raise the tardy bust.
If dreams yet flatter, once again attend,
Hear Lydiat's life, and Galileo's end."

If this be not poetry, may the name perish!

In another style, the stanzas on the young heir's majority have such great merit as to tempt one to say that the author of *The Jolly Beggars*, Robert Burns himself, might have written them. Here are four of them:

"Loosened from the minor's tether,
Free to mortgage or to sell;
Wild as wind and light as feather,
Bid the sons of thrift farewell.

"Call the Betseys, Kates, and Jennies,
All the names that banish care,
Lavish of your grandsire's guineas,
Show the spirit of an heir.

"Wealth, my lad, was made to wander,
Let it wander as it will;
Call the jockey, call the pander,
Bid them come and take their fill.

"When the bonny blade carouses,
Pockets full and spirits high—
What are acres? what are houses?
Only dirt—or wet or dry."

Johnson's prologues, and his lines on the death of Robert Levet, are well known. Indeed, it is only fair to say that our respected friend, the General Public, frequently has Johnsonian tags on its tongue:

"Slow rises worth by poverty depressed."

"The unconquered lord of pleasure and of pain."

"He left the name at which the world grew pale
To point a moral or adorn a tale."

"Death, kind nature's signal of retreat."

"Panting Time toiled after him in vain."

All these are Johnson's, who, though he is not, like Gray, whom he hated so, all quotations, is yet oftener in men's mouths than they perhaps wot of.

Johnson's tragedy, *Irene*, need not detain us. It is unreadable, and to quote his own sensible words, "It is useless to criticise what nobody reads." It was indeed the expressed opinion of a contemporary called Pot that *Irene* was the finest tragedy of modern times; but on this judgment of Pot's being made known to Johnson, he was only heard to mutter, "If Pot says so, Pot lies," as no doubt he did.

Johnson's Latin Verses have not escaped the condemnation of scholars. Whose have? The true mode of critical approach to copies of Latin verse is by the question—How bad are they? Croker took the opinion of the Marquess Wellesley as to the degree of badness

of Johnson's Latin Exercises. Lord Wellesley, as became so distinguished an Etonian, felt the solemnity of the occasion, and, after bargaining for secrecy, gave it as his opinion that they were all very bad, but that some perhaps were worse than others. To this judgment I have nothing to add.

As a writer of English prose, Johnson has always enjoyed a great, albeit a somewhat awful reputation. In childish memories he is constrained to be associated with dust and dictionaries, and those provoking obstacles to a boy's reading—"long words." It would be easy to select from Johnson's writings numerous passages written in that essentially vicious style to which the name Johnsonese has been cruelly given; but the searcher could not fail to find many passages guiltless of this charge. The characteristics of Johnson's prose style are colossal good sense, though with a strong sceptical bias, good humour, vigorous language, and movement from point to point, which can only be compared to the measured tread of a well-drilled company of soldiers. Here is a passage from the preface to Shakspeare:

"Notes are often necessary, but they are necessary evils. Let him that is yet unacquainted with the powers of Shakspeare, and who desires to feel the highest pleasure that the drama can give, read every play from the first scene to the last, with utter negligence of all his commentators. When his fancy is once on the wing, let it not stoop at correction or explanation. When his attention is strongly engaged, let it disdain alike to turn aside to the name of Theobald and of Pope. Let him read on, through brightness and obscurity, through integrity and corruption; let him preserve his comprehension of the dialogue and his interest in the fable. And when the pleasures of novelty have ceased, let him attempt exactness and read the commentators."

Where are we to find better sense, or much better English?

In the pleasant art of chaffing an author Johnson has

hardly an equal. De Quincey too often overdoes it. Macaulay seldom fails to excite sympathy with his victim. In playfulness Mr. Arnold perhaps surpasses the Doctor, but then the latter's playfulness is always leonine, whilst Mr. Arnold's is surely, sometimes, just a trifle kittenish. An example, no doubt a very good one, of Johnson's humour must be allowed me. Soame Jenyns, in his book on the *Origin of Evil*, had imagined that, as we have not only animals for food, but choose some for our diversion, the same privilege may be allowed to beings above us, "who may deceive, torment, or destroy us for the ends only of their own pleasure."

On this hint writes our merry Doctor as follows:

"I cannot resist the temptation of contemplating this analogy, which I think he might have carried further, very much to the advantage of his argument. He might have shown that these 'hunters, whose game is man,' have many sports analogous to our own. As we drown whelps or kittens, they amuse themselves now and then with sinking a ship, and stand round the fields of Blenheim, or the walls of Prague, as we encircle a cockpit. As we shoot a bird flying, they take a man in the midst of his business or pleasure, and knock him down with an apoplexy. Some of them perhaps are virtuosi, and delight in the operations of an asthma, as a human philosopher in the effects of the air-pump. Many a merry bout have these frolick beings at the vicissitudes of an ague, and good sport it is to see a man tumble with an epilepsy, and revive and tumble again, and all this he knows not why. The paroxysms of the gout and stone must undoubtedly make high mirth, especially if the play be a little diversified with the blunders and puzzles of the blind and deaf. . . . One sport the merry malice of these beings has found means of enjoying, to which we have nothing equal or similar. They now and then catch a mortal, proud of his parts, and flattered either by the submission of those who court his kindness, or the notice of those who suffer him to court theirs.

A head thus prepared for the reception of false opinions, and the projection of vain designs, they easily fill with idle notions till, in time, they make their plaything an author; their first diversion commonly begins with an ode or an epistle, then rises perhaps to a political irony, and is at last brought to its height by a treatise of philosophy. Then begins the poor animal to entangle himself in sophisms and to flounder in absurdity."

The author of the philosophical treatise, *A Free Inquiry into the Nature and Origin of Evil*, did not at all enjoy this "merry bout" of the "frolick" Johnson.

The concluding paragraphs of Johnson's Preface to his Dictionary are historical prose, and if we are anxious to find passages fit to compare with them in the melancholy roll of their cadences and in their grave sincerity and manly emotion, we must, I think, take a flying jump from Dr. Johnson to Dr. Newman.

For sensible men the world offers no better reading than the *Lives of the Poets*. They afford an admirable example of the manner of man Johnson was. The subject was suggested to him by the booksellers, whom as a body he never abused. Himself the son of a bookseller, he respected their calling. If they treated him with civility, he responded suitably. If they were rude to him, he knocked them down. These worthies chose their own poets. Johnson remained indifferent. He knew everybody's poetry, and was always ready to write anybody's Life. If he knew the facts of a poet's life—and his knowledge was enormous on such subjects—he found room for them; if he did not, he supplied their place with his own shrewd reflections and sombre philosophy of life. It thus comes about that Johnson is every bit as interesting when he is writing about Sprat, or Smith, or Fenton, as he is when he has got Milton or Gray in hand. He is also much less provoking. My own favourite *Life* is that of Sir Richard Blackmore.

The poorer the poet the kindlier is the treatment he

receives. Johnson kept all his rough words for Shakspeare, Milton, and Gray.

In this trait, surely an amiable one, he was much resembled by that eminent man the late Sir George Jessel, whose civility to a barrister was always in inverse ratio to the barrister's practice; and whose friendly zeal in helping young and nervous practitioners over the stiles of legal difficulty was only equalled by the fiery enthusiasm with which he thrust back the Attorney and Solicitor General and people of that sort.

As a political thinker Johnson has not had justice. He has been lightly dismissed as the last of the old-world Tories. He was nothing of the sort. His cast of political thought is shared by thousands to this day. He represents that vast army of electors whom neither canvasser nor caucus has ever yet cajoled or bullied into a polling-booth. Newspapers may scold, platforms may shake; whatever circulars can do may be done, all that placards can tell may be told; but the fact remains that one-third of every constituency in the realm shares Dr. Johnson's "narcotic indifference," and stays away.

It is, of course, impossible to reconcile all Johnson's recorded utterances with any one view of anything. When crossed in conversation or goaded by folly he was capable of anything. But his dominant tone about politics was something of this sort. Provided a man lived in a State which guaranteed him private liberty and secured him public order, he was very much of a knave or altogether a fool if he troubled himself further. To go to bed when you wish, to get up when you like, to eat and drink and read what you choose, to say across your port or your tea whatever occurs to you at the moment, and to earn your living as best you may—this is what Dr. Johnson meant by private liberty. Fleet Street open day and night—this is what he meant by public order. Give a sensible man these, and take all the rest the world goes round. Tyranny was a bugbear. Either the tyranny was bearable, or it was not.

If it was bearable, it did not matter; and as soon as it became unbearable the mob cut off the tyrant's head, and wise men went home to their dinner. To views of this sort he gave emphatic utterance on the well-known occasion when he gave Sir Adam Ferguson a bit of his mind. Sir Adam had innocently enough observed that the Crown had too much power. Thereupon Johnson:

"Sir, I perceive you are a vile Whig. Why all this childish jealousy of the power of the Crown? The Crown has not power enough. When I say that all governments are alike, I consider that in no government power can be abused long; mankind will not bear it. If a sovereign oppresses his people, they will rise and cut off his head. There is a remedy in human nature against tyranny that will keep us safe under every form of government."

This is not, and never was, the language of Toryism. It is a much more intellectual "ism." It is indifferentism. So, too, in his able pamphlet, *The False Alarm*, which had reference to Wilkes and the Middlesex election, though he no doubt attempts to deal with the constitutional aspect of the question, the real strength of his case is to be found in passages like the following:—

"The grievance which has produced all this tempest of outrage, the oppression in which all other oppressions are included, the invasion which has left us no property, the alarm that suffers no patriot to sleep in quiet, is comprised in a vote of the House of Commons, by which the freeholders of Middlesex are deprived of a Briton's birthright—representation in Parliament. They have, indeed, received the usual writ of election; but that writ, alas! was malicious mockery; they were insulted with the form, but denied the reality, for there was one man excepted from their choice. The character of the man, thus fatally excepted, I have no purpose to delineate. Lampoon itself would disdain to speak ill of him of whom no man speaks well. Every lover of liberty stands doubtful of the fate of posterity, because the

chief county in England cannot take its representative from a gaol."

Temperament was of course at the bottom of this indifference. Johnson was of melancholy humour and profoundly sceptical. Cynical he was not—he loved his fellow-men; his days were full of

> "Little, nameless, unremembered acts
> Of kindness and of love."

But he was as difficult to rouse to enthusiasm about humanity as is Mr. Justice Stephen. He pitied the poor devils, but he did not believe in them. They were neither happy nor wise, and he saw no reason to believe they would ever become either. "Leave me alone," he cried to the sultry mob, bawling "Wilkes and Liberty." "I at least am not ashamed to own that I care for neither the one nor the other."

No man, however, resented more fiercely than Johnson any unnecessary interference with men who were simply going their own way. The Highlanders only knew Gaelic, yet political wiseacres were to be found objecting to their having the Bible in their own tongue. Johnson flew to arms: he wrote one of his monumental letters; the opposition was quelled, and the Gael got his Bible. So too the wicked interference with Irish enterprise, so much in vogue during the last century, infuriated him. "Sir," he said to Sir Thomas Robinson, "you talk the language of a savage. What, sir! would you prevent any people from feeding themselves, if by any honest means they can do so?"

Were Johnson to come to life again, total abstainer as he often was, he would, I expect, denounce the principle involved in "Local Option." I am not at all sure he would not borrow a guinea from a bystander and become a subscriber to the "Property Defence League;" and though it is notorious that he never read any book all through, and never could be got to believe that anybody else ever did, he would, I think,

read a larger fraction of Mr. Spencer's pamphlet, *Man versus the State*, than of any other "recent work in circulation." The state of the Strand, when two vestries are at work upon it, would, I am sure, drive him into open rebellion.

As a letter-writer Johnson has great merits. Let no man despise the epistolary art. It is said to be extinct. I doubt it. Good letters were always scarce. It does not follow that, because our grandmothers wrote long letters, they all wrote good ones, or that nobody nowadays writes good letters because most people write bad ones. Johnson wrote letters in two styles. One was monumental—more suggestive of the chisel than the pen. In the other there are traces of the same style, but, like the old Gothic architecture, it has grown domesticated, and become the fit vehicle of plain tidings of joy and sorrow—of affection, wit, and fancy. The letter to Lord Chesterfield is the most celebrated example of the monumental style. From the letters to Mrs. Thrale many good examples of the domesticated style might be selected. One must suffice:

"Queeney has been a good girl, and wrote me a letter. If Burney said she would write, she told you a fib. She writes nothing to me. She can write home fast enough. I have a good mind not to tell her that Dr. Bernard, to whom I had recommended her novel, speaks of it with great commendation, and that the copy which she lent me has been read by Dr. Lawrence three times over. And yet what a gipsy it is. She no more minds me than if I were a Branghton. Pray, speak to Queeney to write again. . . . Now you think yourself the first writer in the world for a letter about nothing. Can you write such a letter as this? So miscellaneous, with such noble disdain of regularity, like Shakspeare's works; such graceful negligence of transition, like the ancient enthusiasts. The pure voice of Nature and of Friendship. Now, of whom shall I proceed to speak? of whom but Mrs. Montague? Having mentioned Shakspeare

and Nature, does not the name of Montague force itself upon me? Such were the transitions of the ancients, which now seem abrupt, because the intermediate idea is lost to modern understandings."

But the extract had better end, for there are (I fear) "modern understandings" who will not perceive the "intermediate idea" between Shakspeare and Mrs. Montague, and to whom even the name of Branghton will suggest no meaning.

Johnson's literary fame is, in our judgment, as secure as his character. Like the stone which he placed over his father's grave at Lichfield, and which, it is shameful to think, has been removed, it is "too massy and strong" to be ever much affected by the wind and weather of our literary atmosphere. "Never," so he wrote to Mrs. Thrale, "let criticisms operate upon your face or your mind; it is very rarely that an author is hurt by his critics. The blaze of reputation cannot be blown out; but it often dies in the socket. From the author of *Fitzosborne's Letters* I cannot think myself in much danger. I met him only once, about thirty years ago, and in some small dispute soon reduced him to whistle." Dr. Johnson is in no danger from anybody. None but Gargantua could blow him out, and he still burns brightly in his socket.

How long this may continue who can say? It is a far cry to 1985. Science may by that time have squeezed out literature, and the author of the *Lives of the Poets* may be dimly remembered as an odd fellow who lived in the Dark Ages, and had a very creditable fancy for making chemical experiments. On the other hand, the Spiritualists may be in possession, in which case the Cock Lane Ghost will occupy more of public attention than Boswell's hero, who will, perhaps, be reprobated as the profane utterer of these idle words: "Suppose I know a man to be so lame that he is absolutely incapable to move himself, and I find him in a different room from that in which I left him, shall I puzzle myself

with idle conjectures, that perhaps his nerves have by some unknown change all at once become effective? No, sir, it is clear how he got into a different room—he was *carried*."

We here part company with Johnson, bidding him a most affectionate farewell, and leaving him in undisturbed possession of both place and power. His character will bear investigation, and some of his books perusal. The latter, indeed, may be submitted to his own test, and there is no truer one. A book, he wrote, should help us either to enjoy life or to endure it. His frequently do both.

EDWARD GIBBON.

"IT was at Rome, on the 15th of October, 1764, as I sat musing amidst the ruins of the Capitol, while the bare-footed fryars were singing vespers in the Temple of Jupiter, that the idea of writing the Decline and Fall of the City first started to my mind.

"It was on the day, or rather night, of the 27th of June, 1787, between the hours of eleven and twelve, that I wrote the last lines of the last page, in a summer-house in my garden. After laying down my pen I took several turns in a *berceau*, or covered walk of acacias, which commands a prospect of the country, the lake, and the mountains. The air was temperate, the sky was serene, the silver orb of the moon was reflected from the waters, and all nature was silent. I will not dissemble the first emotions of joy on recovery of my freedom and perhaps of the establishment of my fame. But my pride was soon humbled and a sober melancholy was spread over my mind by the idea that I had taken an everlasting leave of an old and agreeable companion, and that whatever might be the future fate of my history, the life of the historian must be short and precarious."

Between these two passages lies the romance of Gibbon's life—a romance which must be looked for, not, indeed, in the volumes, whether the original quartos or the subsequent octavos, of his history, but in the elements which went to make that history what it is: the noble conception, the shaping intellect, the mastered learning, the stately diction and the daily toil.

Mr. Bagehot has declared that the way to reverence Gibbon is not to read him at all, but to look at him,

from outside, in the bookcase, and think how much there is within ; what a course of events, what a muster-roll of names, what a steady solemn sound. All Mr. Bagehot's jokes have a kernel inside them. The supreme merit of Gibbon's history is not to be found in deep thoughts, or in wide views, or in profound knowledge of human nature, or prophetic vision. Seldom was there an historian less well-equipped with these fine things than he. Its glory is its architecture, its structure, its organism. There it is: it is worth looking at, for it is invulnerable, indispensable, immortal. The metaphors which have been showered upon it prove how fond people have been of looking at it from the outside. It has been called a Bridge, less obviously an Aqueduct, more prosaically a Road. We applaud the design and marvel at the execution.

There is something mournful in this chorus of approbation in which it is not difficult to detect the notes of glad surprise. It tells a tale of infirmity both of life and purpose. A complete thing staggers us. We are accustomed to failure.

> "What act proves all its thought had been ?"

The will is weak, opportunities are barren, temper uncertain, and life short.

> "I thought all labour, yet no less,
> Bear up beneath their unsuccess ;
> Look at the end of work : contrast
> The petty done—the undone vast."

It is Gibbon's triumph that he made his thoughts acts. He is not exactly what you call a pious writer, but he is provocative of at least one pious feeling. A Sabbatical calm results from the contemplation of his labours. Succeeding scholars have read his history and pronounced it good. It is likewise finished. Hence this feeling of surprise.

Gibbon's life has the simplicity of an epic. His work

was to write his history. Nothing else was allowed to rob this idea of its majesty. It brooked no rival near its throne. It dominated his life, for though a man of pleasure, and, to speak plainly, a good bit of a coxcomb, he had always the cadences of the *Decline and Fall* in his ears. It has been wittily said of him that he came at last to believe that he was the Roman Empire, or, at all events, something equally majestic and imposing. His life had, indeed, its episodes, but so has an epic. Gibbon's episodes are interesting, abrupt, and always concluded. In his sixteenth year he, without the aid of a priest or the seductions of ritual, read himself into the Church of Rome, and was one fine June morning in 1753 baptized by a Jesuit father. By Christmas, 1754, he had read himself out again. Gibbon's conversion was perfectly genuine, and should never be spoken of otherwise than respectfully, but it was entirely a matter of books and reading. "Persons influence us," cries Dr. Newman, "voices melt us, looks subdue us, deeds inflame us. Many a man will live and die upon a dogma; no man will be a martyr for a conclusion." It takes all sorts to make a world, and our plump historian was one of those whose actions are determined in libraries, whose lives are unswayed by personal influences, to whom conclusions may mean a great deal, but dogmas certainly nothing. Whether Gibbon on leaving off his Catholicism ever became a Protestant again, except in the sense that Bayle declared himself one, is doubtful. But all this makes an interesting episode. The second episode is his well-known love affair with Mademoiselle Curchod, afterwards Madame Necker and the mother of that social portent Madame de Staël. Gibbon, of course, behaved badly in this affair. He fell in love, made known his plight, obtained mademoiselle's consent, and then speeded home to tell his father. "Love," said he, "will make me eloquent." The elder Gibbon would not hear of it: the younger tamely acquiesced. His

very acquiescence, like all else about him, has become classical. "I sighed as a lover, I obeyed as a son." He proceeds: "My wound was insensibly healed by time, absence, and the habits of a new life." It is shocking. Never, surely, was love so flouted before. Gibbon is charitably supposed by some persons to have regretted Paganism, but it was lucky both for him and for me that the gods had abandoned Olympus, since otherwise it would have required the pen of a Greek dramatist to depict the horrors that must have eventually overtaken him for so impious an outrage; as it was, he simply grew fatter every day. A very recent French biographer of Madame Necker, who has published some letters of Gibbon's for the first time, evidently expects his readers to get very angry with this perfidious son of Albion. It is much too late to get angry. Of all the many wrongs women suffer at the hands of men, that of not marrying them is the one they ought to find it easiest to forgive; they generally do forgive. Madame Necker forgave, and if she, why not you and I? Years after she welcomed Gibbon to her house, and there he used to sit, fat and famous, tapping his snuff-box and arranging his ruffles, and watching with a smile of complacency the infantine, yet, I doubt not, the pronounced gambols of the vivacious Corinne. After Necker's fall, Gibbon writes to Madame: "Your husband's condition is always worthy of envy: he knows himself, his enemies respect him, Europe admires him, *you* love him." I decline to be angry with such a man.

His long residence in Switzerland, an unusual thing in those days, makes a third episode, which, in so far as it led him to commence author in the French language, and to study Pascal as a master of style, was not without its effects on his history, but it never diverted him from his studies or changed their channels. Though he lived fifteen years in Lausanne, he never climbed a mountain or ever went to the foot of one, for though not wholly

indifferent to Nature, he loved to see her framed in a window. He actually has the audacity, in a note to his fifty-ninth chapter, to sneer at St. Bernard because that true lover of nature on one occasion, either because his joy in the external world at times interfered with his devotions, or, as I think, because he was bored by the vulgar rhapsodies of his monkish companions, abstained from looking at the Lake of Geneva. Gibbon's note is characteristic: "To admire or despise St. Bernard as he ought, the reader should have before the windows of his library the beauty of that incomparable landscape." St. Bernard was to Gibbon as Wordsworth to Pope,

> "A forest seer,
> A minstrel of the natural year,
> A lover true, who knew by heart
> Each joy the mountain dales impart."

He was proud to confess that whatever knowledge he had of the Scriptures he had acquired chiefly in the woods and the fields, and that beeches and oaks had been his best teachers of the Word of God. One cannot fancy Gibbon in a forest. But if Gibbon had not been fonder of the library than of the lake, though he might have known more than he did of "moral evil and of good," he would hardly have been the author he was.

But the *Decline and Fall* was threatened from a quarter more likely to prove dangerous than the "incomparable landscape." On September 10th, 1774, Gibbon writes:

"Yesterday morning about half-past seven, as I was destroying an army of barbarians, I heard a double rap at the door, and my friend Mr. Eliot was soon introduced. After some idle conversation he told me that if I was desirous of being in Parliament he had an *independent* seat, very much at my service. This is a fine prospect opening upon me, and if next spring I should take my seat and publish my book"—(he meant the first volume only)—"it will be a very memorable

era in my life. I am ignorant whether my borough will be Liskeard or St. Germains."

Mr. Eliot controlled four boroughs, and it was Liskeard that became Gibbon's, and for ten years, though not always for Liskeard, he sat in Parliament. Ten most eventful years they were too, both in our national and parliamentary history. This might have been not an episode, but a catastrophe. Mr. Eliot's untimely entrance might not merely have postponed the destruction of a horde of barbarians, but have destroyed the history itself. However, Mr. Gibbon never opened his mouth in the House of Commons. "I assisted," says he, in his magnificent way, "at" (mark the preposition) "at the debates of a free assembly," that is, he supported Lord North. He was not from the first content to be a mute; he prepared a speech and almost made up his mind to catch Sir Fletcher Norton's eye. The subject, no mean one, was to be the American war; but his courage oozed away, he did not rise in his place. A month after he writes from Boodle's: "I am still a mute; it is more tremendous than I imagined; the great speakers fill me with despair, the bad ones with terror." In 1779 his silent assistance was rewarded with a seat at the Board of Trade, and a salary of between seven and eight hundred a year. Readers of Burke's great speech on Economical Reform will remember the twenty minutes he devoted to this marvellous Board of Trade, with its perpetual virtual adjournment and unbroken sitting vacation. Such was Gibbon's passion for style that he listened to the speech with delight, and gives us the valuable assurance that it was spoken just as it reads, and that nobody enjoyed either hearing or reading it more than he did. What a blessing it is to have a good temper! But Gibbon's constituency did not approve of his becoming a minister's man, and he lost his seat at the general election of 1783. "Mr. Eliot," this is Gibbon's account of it, "Mr. Eliot was now deeply engaged in the measures of opposition, and

the electors of Liskeard are commonly of the same opinion as Mr. Eliot." Lord North found him another seat, and for a short time he sat in the new Parliament for the important seaport of Lymington, but his office being abolished in 1784, he bade Parliament and England farewell, and, taking his library with him, departed for Lausanne to conclude his history.

Gibbon, after completing his history, entertained notions of writing other books, but, as a matter of fact, he had but one thing left him to do in order to discharge his duty to the universe. He had written a magnificent history of the Roman Empire. It remained to write the history of the historian. Accordingly we have the autobiography. These two immortal works act and react upon one another: the history sends us to the autobiography, and the autobiography returns us to the history.

The style of the autobiography is better than that of the history. The awful word "verbose" has been launched against certain pages of the history by a critic, formidable and friendly—the great Porson. There is not a superfluous word in the autobiography. The fact is, in this matter of style, Gibbon took a great deal more pains with himself than he did with the empire. He sent the history, except the first volume, straight to his printer from his first rough copy. He made six different sketches of the autobiography. It is a most studied performance, and may be boldly pronounced perfect. Not to know it almost by heart is to deny yourself a great and wholly innocent pleasure. Of the history it is permissible to say with Mr. Silas Wegg, "I haven't been, not to say right slap through him very lately, having been otherwise employed, Mr. Boffin;" but the autobiography is no more than a good-sized pamphlet. It has had the reward of shortness. It is not only our best, but our best known autobiography. Almost its first sentence is about the style it is to be in: "The style shall be simple and familiar, but style is the image of character, and the

habits of correct writing may produce without labour or design the appearance of art and study." There is nothing artless or unstudied about the autobiography, but is it not sometimes a relief to exchange the quips and cranks of some of our modern writers, whose humour it is to be as it were for ever slapping their readers in the face or grinning at them from unexpected corners, for the stately roll of the Gibbonian sentence? The style settled, he proceeds to say something about the pride of race, but the pride of letters soon conquers it, and as we glance down the page we see advancing to meet us, curling its head, as Shakspeare says of billows in a storm, the god-like sentence which makes it for ever certain, not indeed that there will never be a better novel than *Tom Jones*, for that I suppose is still just possible, but that no novel can ever receive so magnificent a compliment. The sentence is well known but irresistible.

"Our immortal Fielding was of the younger branch of the Earls of Denbigh, who draw their origin from the Counts of Hapsburg. Far different have been the fortunes of the English and German divisions of the family. The former, the knights and sheriffs of Leicestershire, have slowly risen to the dignity of a peerage; the latter, the Emperors of Germany and Kings of Spain, have threatened the liberty of the old and invaded the treasures of the new world. The successors of Charles the Fifth may disdain their brethren of England, but the romance of *Tom Jones*, that exquisite picture of human manners, will outlive the Palace of the Escurial and the imperial eagle of the House of Austria."

Well might Thackeray exclaim in his lecture on Fielding, "There can be no gainsaying the sentence of this great judge. To have your name mentioned by Gibbon is like having it written on the dome of St. Peter's. Pilgrims from all the world admire and behold it."

After all this preliminary magnificence Gibbon condescends to approach his own pedigree. There was not

much to tell, and the little there was he did not know. A man of letters whose memory is respected by all lovers of old books and Elizabethan lyrics, Sir Egerton Brydges, was a cousin of Gibbon's, and as genealogies were this unfortunate man's consuming passion, he of course knew all that Gibbon ought to have known about the family, and speaks with a herald's contempt of the historian's perfunctory investigations. "It is a very unaccountable thing," says Sir Egerton, "that Gibbon was so ignorant of the immediate branch of the family whence he sprang;" but the truth is that Gibbon was far prouder of his Palace of the Escurial and his imperial eagle of the House of Austria than of his family tree, which was indeed of the most ordinary hedgerow description. His grandfather was a South Sea director, and when the bubble burst he was compelled by Act of Parliament to disclose on oath his whole fortune. He returned it at £106,543, 5s. 6d., exclusive of antecedent settlements. It was all confiscated, and then £10,000 was voted the poor man to begin again upon. Such bold oppression, says the grandson, can scarcely be shielded by the omnipotence of Parliament. The old man did not keep his £10,000 in a napkin, and speedily began, as his grandson puts it, to erect on the ruins of the old the edifice of a new fortune. The ruins must, I think, have been more spacious than the affidavit would suggest, for when only sixteen years afterwards the elder Gibbon died, he was found to be possessed of considerable property in Sussex, Hampshire, Buckinghamshire, and the New River Company, as well as of a spacious house with gardens and grounds at Putney. A fractional share of this inheritance secured to our historian the liberty of action so necessary for the accomplishment of his great design. Large fortunes have their uses. Mr. Milton, the scrivener, Mr. Gibbon, the South Sea director, and Dr. Darwin of Shrewsbury, had respectively something to do with *Paradise Lost*, *The Decline and Fall*, and *The Origin of Species*.

The most, indeed the only, interesting fact about the Gibbon *entourage* is that the greatest of English mystics, William Law, the inimitable author of *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life, adapted to the State and Conditions of all Orders of Christians*, was long tutor to the historian's father, and in that capacity accompanied the future historian to Emanuel College, Cambridge, and was afterwards, and till the end of his days, spiritual director to Miss Hester Gibbon, the historian's eccentric maiden aunt.

It is an unpleasing impertinence for anyone to assume that nobody save himself reads any particular book. I read with astonishment the other day that Sir Humphry Davy's *Consolations in Travel; or, The Closing Days of a Philosopher's Life*, was a curious and totally forgotten work. It is, however, always safe to say of a good book that it is not read as much as it ought to be, and of Law's *Serious Call* you may add, "or as much as it used to be." It is a book with a strange and moving spiritual pedigree. Dr. Johnson, one remembers, took it up carelessly at Oxford, expecting to find it a dull book, "as" (the words are his, not mine) "such books generally are;" but, he proceeds, "I found Law an overmatch for me, and this was the first occasion of my thinking in earnest." George Whitfield writes, "Soon after my coming up to the university, seeing a small edition of Mr. Law's *Serious Call* in a friend's hand, I soon purchased it. God worked powerfully upon my soul by that excellent treatise." The celebrated Thomas Scott, of Aston Sandford, with the confidence of his school, dates the beginning of his spiritual life from the hour when he "carelessly," as he says, "took up Mr. Law's *Serious Call*, a book I had hitherto treated with contempt." When we remember how Newman in his *Apologia* speaks of Thomas Scott as the writer "to whom, humanly speaking, I almost owe my soul," we become lost amidst a mazy dance of strange, spectral influences which flit about the centuries and make us what we are. Splendid achievement though

the *History of the Decline and Fall* may be, glorious monument though it is, more lasting than brass, of learning and industry, yet in sundry moods it seems but a poor and barren thing by the side of a book which, like Law's *Serious Call*, has proved its power

"To pierce the heart and tame the will."

But I must put the curb on my enthusiasm, or I shall find myself re-echoing the sentiment of a once celebrated divine who brought down Exeter Hall by proclaiming, at the top of his voice, that he would sooner be the author of *The Washerwoman on Salisbury Plain* than of *Paradise Lost.**

But Law's *Serious Call*, to do it only bare literary justice, is a great deal more like *Paradise Lost* than *The Washerwoman on Salisbury Plain*, and deserves better treatment at the hands of religious people than to be reprinted, as it too often is, in a miserable, truncated, witless form which would never have succeeded in arresting the wandering attention of Johnson or in saving the soul of Thomas Scott. The motto of all books of original genius is :

"Love me or leave me alone."

Gibbon read Law's *Serious Call*, but it left him where it found him. "Had not," so he writes, "Law's vigorous mind been clouded by enthusiasm, he might be ranked with the most agreeable and ingenious writers of his time."

Upon the death of Law in 1761, it is sad to have to state that Miss Hester Gibbon cast aside the severe rule of female dress which he had expounded in his *Serious Call*, and she had practised for sixty years of her life. She now appeared, like Malvolio, resplendent in yellow

* There is no such tract. I have mixed up Miss Hannah More's *Shepherd of Salisbury Plain* with Mr. Thackeray's *Washerwoman of Finchley Common* (see *Vanity Fair*). Several correspondents have called my attention to this. I knew what I was doing, but thought it did not matter. It seems it does.

stockings. Still, it was something to have kept the good lady's feet from straying into such evil garments for so long. Miss Gibbon had a comfortable estate; and our historian, as her nearest male relative, kept his eye upon the reversion. The fifteenth and sixteenth chapters had created a coolness, but he addressed her a letter in which he assured her that, allowing for differences of expression, he had the satisfaction of feeling that practically he and she thought alike on the great subject of religion. Whether she believed him or not I cannot say; but she left him her estate in Sussex. I must stop a moment to consider the hard and far different fate of Porson. Gibbon had taken occasion to refer to the seventh verse of the fifth chapter of the First Epistle of St. John as spurious. It has now disappeared from our Bibles, without leaving a trace even in the margin. So judicious a writer as Dean Alford long ago, in his Greek Testament, observed, "There is not a shadow of a reason for supposing it genuine." An archdeacon of Gibbon's period thought otherwise, and asserted the genuineness of the text, whereupon Porson wrote a book and proved it to be no portion of the inspired text. On this a female relative who had Porson down in her will for a comfortable annuity of £300, revoked that part of her testamentary disposition, and substituted a paltry bequest of £30: "for," said she, "I hear he has been writing against the Holy Scriptures." As Porson only got £16 for writing the book, it certainly cost him dear. But the book remains a monument of his learning and wit. The last quarter of the annuity must long since have been paid.

Gibbon, the only one of a family of five who managed to grow up at all, had no school life; for though a short time at Westminster, his feeble health prevented regularity of attendance. His father never won his respect, nor his mother (who died when he was ten) his affection. "I am tempted," he says, "to enter my protest against the trite and lavish praise of the happiness of our boyish years which is echoed with so much affec-

tation in the world. That happiness I have never known." Upon this passage Sainte-Beuve characteristically remarks "that it is those who have been deprived of a mother's solicitude, of the down and flower of tender affection, of the vague yet penetrating charm of dawning impressions, who are most easily denuded of the sentiment of religion."

Gibbon was, however, born free of the "fair brotherhood" Macaulay so exquisitely described in his famous poem, written after the Edinburgh election. Reading became his sole employment. He enjoyed all the advantages of the most irregular of educations, and in his fifteenth year arrived at Oxford, to use his celebrated words, though for that matter almost every word in the *Autobiography* is celebrated, with a stock of erudition that might have puzzled a doctor, and a degree of ignorance of which a schoolboy would have been ashamed—for example, he did not know the Greek alphabet, nor is there any reason to suppose that he would have been taught it at Oxford.

I do not propose to refer to what he says about his university. I hate giving pain, besides which there have been new statutes since 1752. In Gibbon's time there were no public examinations at all, and no class-lists—a Saturnian reign which I understand it is now sought to restore. Had Gibbon followed his father's example and gone to Cambridge, he would have found the Mathematical Tripos fairly started on its beneficent career, and might have taken as good a place in it as Dr. Dodd had just done, a divine who is still year after year referred to in the University Calendar as the author of *Thoughts in Prison*, the circumstance that the thinker was later on taken from prison, and hung by the neck until he was dead, being no less wisely than kindly omitted from a publication, one of the objects of which is to inspire youth with confidence that the path of mathematics is the way to glory.

On his profession of Catholicism, Gibbon, *ipso facto*,

ceased to be a member of the university, and his father, with a sudden accession of good sense, packed off the young pervert, who at that time had a very big head and a very small body, and was just as full of controversial theology as he could hold, to a Protestant pastor's at Lausanne, where in an uncomfortable house, with an ill-supplied table and a scarcity of pocket-money, the ex-fellow-commoner of Magdalen was condemned to live from his sixteenth to his twenty-first year. His time was mainly spent in reading. Here he learnt Greek; here also he fell in love with Mademoiselle Curchod. In the spring of 1758 he came home. He was at first very shy, and went out but little, pursuing his studies even in lodgings in Bond Street. But he was shortly to be shaken out of his dumps, and made an Englishman and a soldier.

If anything could provoke Gibbon's placid shade, it would be the light and airy way his military experiences are often spoken of, as if, like a modern volunteer, he had but attended an Easter Monday review. I do not believe the history of literature affords an equally striking example of self-sacrifice. He was the most sedentary of men. He hated exercise, and rarely took any. Once after spending some weeks in the summer at Lord Sheffield's country place, when about to go, his hat was missing. "When," he was asked, "did you last see it?" "On my arrival," he replied. "I left it on the hall-table; I have had no occasion for it since." Lord Sheffield's guests always knew that they would find Mr. Gibbon in the library and meet him at the dinner-table. He abhorred a horse. His one vocation, and his only avocation, was reading, not lazy glancing and skipping, but downright savage reading—geography, chronology, and all the tougher sides of history. What glorious, what martial times, indeed, must those have been that made Mr. Gibbon leap into the saddle, desert his books, and for two mortal years and a half live in camps! He was two months at Blandford, three months at Cran-

brook, six months at Dover, four months at Devizes, as many at Salisbury, and six more at Southampton, where the troops were disbanded. During all this time Captain Gibbon was energetically employed. He dictated the orders and exercised the battalion. It did him a world of good. What a pity Carlyle could not have been subjected to the same discipline! The cessation, too, of his habit of continued reading gave him time for a little thinking, and when he returned to his father's house, in Hampshire, he had become fixed in his determination to write a history, though of what was still undecided.

I am rather afraid to say it, for no two men could well be more unlike one another, but Gibbon always reminds me in an odd inverted way of Milton. I suppose it is because as the one is our grandest author, so the other is our most grandiose. Both are self-conscious and make no apology—Milton magnificently self-conscious, Gibbon splendidly so. Everyone knows the great passages in which Milton, in 1642, asked the readers of his pamphlet on the reason of Church government urged against prelacy, to go on trust with him for some years for his great unwritten poem, as "being a work not to be raised from the heat of youth or the vapour of wine, like that which flows at waste from the pen of some vulgar amorist or the trencher fury of a rhyming parasite, nor to be obtained by the invocation of Dame Memory and her seven daughters, but by devout prayer to that Eternal Spirit who can enrich with all utterance and knowledge, and sends out His seraphim with the hallowed fire of His Altar to touch and purify the lips of whom He pleases: to this must be added industrious and select reading, study, observation, and insight into all seemly opinions, arts, and affairs." Different men, different minds. There are things terrestrial as well as things celestial. Certainly Gibbon's *Autobiography* contains no passages like those which are to be found in Milton's pamphlets; but for all that he, in his mundane way, consecrated

himself for his self-imposed task, and spared no toil to equip himself for it. He, too, no less than Milton, had his high hope and his hard attempting. He tells us in his stateliest way how he first thought of one subject and then another, and what progress he had made in his different schemes before he abandoned them, and what reasons induced him so to do. Providence watched over the future historian of the Roman Empire as surely as it did over the future author of *Paradise Lost*, as surely as it does over everyone who has it in him to do anything really great. Milton, we know, in early life was enamoured of King Arthur, and had it in his mind to make that blameless king the hero of his promised epic, but

> "What resounds
> In fable or romance of Uther's son,
> Begirt with British and Armoric knights,"

can brook a moment's comparison with the baffled hero of *Paradise Lost;* so, too, what a mercy that Gibbon did not fritter away his splendid energy, as he once contemplated doing, on Sir Walter Raleigh, or squander his talents on a history of Switzerland or even of Florence!

After the disbanding of the militia Gibbon obtained his father's consent to spend the money it was originally proposed to lay out in buying him a seat in Parliament, upon foreign travel, and early in 1763 he reached Paris, where he abode three months. An accomplished scholar, whose too early death all who knew him can never cease to deplore, Mr. Cotter Morrison, whose sketch of Gibbon is, by general consent, admitted to be one of the most valuable books of a delightful series, does his best, with but partial success, to conceal his annoyance at Gibbon's stupidly placid enjoyment of Paris and French cookery. "He does not seem to be aware," says Mr. Morrison, "that he was witnessing one of the most singular social phases which have ever yet been presented in the history of man." Mr. Morrison does not, indeed, blame Gibbon for this, but having, as he had, the

most intimate acquaintance with this period of French history, and knowing the tremendous issues involved in it, he could not but be chagrined to notice how Gibbon remained callous and impervious. And, indeed, when the Revolution came it took no one more by surprise than it did the man who had written the *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. Writing, in 1792, to Lord Sheffield, Gibbon says, "Remember the proud fabric of the French monarchy: not four years ago it stood founded, and might it not seem on the rock of time, force, and opinion, supported by the triple authority of the Church, the Nobility, and the Parliament?" But the Revolution came for all that; and what, when it did come, did it teach Mr. Gibbon? "Do not, I beseech you, tamper with parliamentary representation. If you begin to improve the Constitution, you may be driven step by step from the disfranchisement of Old Sarum to the King in Newgate; the Lords voted useless, the bishops abolished, the House of Commons *sans culottes*." The importance of shutting off the steam and sitting on the safety-valve was what the French Revolution taught Mr. Gibbon. Mr. Bagehot says: "Gibbon's horror of the French Revolution was derived from the fact that he had arrived at the conclusion that he was the sort of person a populace invariably kills." An excellent reason, in my opinion, for hating revolution, but not for misunderstanding it.

After leaving Paris Gibbon lived nearly a year in Lausanne, reading hard to prepare himself for Italy. He made his own handbook. At last he felt himself fit to cross the Alps, which he did seated in an osier basket planted on a man's shoulders. He did not envy Hannibal his elephant. He lingered four months in Florence, and then entered Rome in a spirit of the most genuine and romantic enthusiasm. His zeal made him positively active, though it is impossible to resist a smile at the picture he draws of himself "treading with a lofty step the ruins of the Forum." He was in Rome eighteen

weeks; there he had, as we saw at the beginning, his heavenly vision, to which he was not disobedient. He paid a visit of six weeks' duration to Naples, and then returned home more rapidly. "The spectacle of Venice," he says, "afforded some hours of astonishment." Gibbon has sometimes been called "long-winded," but when he chooses nobody can be shorter with either a city or a century.

He returned to England in 1765, and for five rather dull years lived in his father's house in the country or in London lodgings. In 1770 his father died, and in 1772 Gibbon took a house in Bentinck Street, Manchester Square, filled it with books—for in those days it must not be forgotten there was no public library of any kind in London—and worked hard at his first volume, which appeared in February, 1775. It made him famous, also infamous, since it concluded with the fifteenth and sixteenth chapters on Christianity. In 1781 two more volumes appeared. In 1783 he gave up Parliament and London, and rolled over Westminster Bridge in a postchaise, on his way to Lausanne, where he had his home for the rest of his days. In May, 1788, the three last volumes appeared. He died in St. James's Street whilst on a visit to London, on the 15th of January, 1794, of a complaint of a most pronounced character, which he had with characteristic and almost criminal indolence totally neglected for thirty years. He was buried in Fletching Churchyard, Sussex, in the family burial-place of his faithful friend and model editor, the first Lord Sheffield. He had not completed his fifty-eighth year.

Before concluding with a few very humble observations on Gibbon's writings, something ought to be said about him as a social being. In this aspect he had distinguished merit, though his fondness of and fitness for society came late. He had no school days, no college days, no gilded youth. From sixteen to twenty-one he

lived poorly in Lausanne, and came home more Swiss than English. Nor was his father of any use to him. It took him a long time to rub off his shyness; but the militia, Paris, and Rome, and, above all, the proud consciousness of a noble design, made a man of him, and after 1772 he became a well-known figure in London society. He was a man of fashion as well as of letters. In this respect, and, indeed, in all others, except their common love of learning, he differed from Dr. Johnson. Lords and ladies, remarked that high authority, don't like having their mouths shut. Gibbon never shut anybody's mouth, and in Johnson's presence rarely opened his own. Johnson's dislike of Gibbon does not seem to have been based upon his heterodoxy, but his ugliness. "He is such an amazing ugly fellow," said that Adonis. Boswell follows suit, and, with still less claim to be critical, complains loudly of Gibbon's ugliness. He also hated him very sincerely. "The fellow poisons the whole club to me," he cries. I feel sorry for Boswell, who has deserved well of the human race. Ironical people like Gibbon are rarely tolerant of brilliant folly. Gibbon, no doubt, was ugly. We get a glance at him in one of Horace Walpole's letters, which, sparkling as it does with vanity, spite, and humour, is always pleasant. He is writing to Mr. Mason.

"You will be diverted to hear that Mr. Gibbon has quarrelled with me. He lent me his second volume in the middle of November; I returned it with a most civil panegyric. He came for more incense. I gave it, but, alas! with too much sincerity; I added: 'Mr. Gibbon, I am sorry *you* should have pitched on so disgusting a subject as the Constantinopolitan history. There is so much of the Arians and Eunomians and semi-Pelagians; and there is such a strange contrast between Roman and Gothic manners, that, though you have written the story as well as it could be written, I fear few will have patience to read it.' He coloured, all his round features squeezed themselves into sharp angles;

he screwed up his button-mouth, and rapping his snuff-box, said, 'It had never been put together before'—so *well* he meant to add, but gulped it. He meant so *well*, certainly, for Tillemont, whom he quotes in every page, has done the very thing. Well, from that hour to this, I have never seen him, though he used to call once or twice a week; nor has he sent me the third volume, as he promised. I well knew his vanity, even about his ridiculous face and person, but thought he had too much sense to avow it so palpably." "So much," adds Walpole, with sublime nescience of the verdict of posterity upon his own most amusing self, "so much for literature and its fops."

Male ugliness is an endearing quality, and in a man of great talents it assists his reputation. It mollifies our inferiority to be able to add to our honest admiration of anyone's great intellectual merit, "But did you ever see such a chin!"

Nobody except Johnson, who was morbid on the subject of looks, liked Gibbon the less for having a button-mouth and a ridiculous nose. He was, Johnson and Boswell apart, a popular member of the club. Sir Joshua and he were, in particular, great cronies, and went about to all kinds of places, and mixed in every sort of society. In May, June, and July, 1779, Gibbon sat for his picture—that famous portrait to be found at the beginning of every edition of the History. Sir Joshua notes in his Diary: "No new sitters—hard at work repainting the 'Nativity,' and busy with sittings of Gibbon."

If we are to believe contemporary gossip, this was not the first time Reynolds had depicted the historian. Some years earlier the great painter had executed a celebrated portrait of Dr. Beattie, still pleasingly remembered by the lovers of old-fashioned poetry as the poet of *The Minstrel*, but who, in 1773, was better known as the author of an *Essay on Truth*. This personage, who in later life, it is melancholy to relate,

took to drinking, is represented in Reynolds's picture in his Oxford gown of Doctor of Laws, with his famous essay under his arm, while beside him is Truth, habited as an angel, holding in one hand a pair of scales, and with the other thrusting down three frightful figures emblematic of Sophistry, Scepticism, and Infidelity That Voltaire and Hume stood for two of these figures was no secret, but it was whispered Gibbon was the third. Even if so, an incident so trifling was not likely to ruffle the composure, or prevent the intimacy, of two such good-tempered men as Reynolds and Gibbon. The latter was immensely proud of Reynolds's portrait—the authorised portrait, of course—the one for which he had paid. He had it hanging up in his library at Lausanne, and, if we may believe Charles Fox, was fonder of looking at it than out of the window upon that incomparable landscape, with indifference to which he had twitted St. Bernard.

But, as I have said, Gibbon was a man of fashion as well as a man of letters. In another volume of Walpole we have a glimpse of him playing a rubber of whist. His opponents were Horace himself and Lady Beck. His partner was a lady whom Walpole irreverently calls the Archbishopess of Canterbury.* At Brooks's, White's, and Boodle's, Gibbon was a prime favourite. His quiet manner, ironical humour, and perpetual good temper made him excellent company. He is, indeed, reported once, at Brooks's, to have expressed a desire to see the heads of Lord North and half a dozen ministers on the table ; but as this was only a few days before he accepted a seat at the Board of Trade at their hands, his wrath was evidently of the kind that does not allow the sun to go down upon it. His moods were usually mild.

> "Soon as to Brooks's thence thy footsteps bend,
> What gratulations thy approach attend !

* By which title he refers to Mrs. Cornwallis, a lively lady who used to get her right reverend lord, himself a capital hand at whist, into great trouble by persisting in giving routs on Sunday.

See Gibbon rap his box, auspicious sign
That classic wit and compliment combine."

To praise Gibbon heartily, you must speak in low tones. "His cheek," says Mr. Morrison, "rarely flushes in enthusiasm for a good cause." He was, indeed, not obviously on the side of the angels. But he was a dutiful son to a trying father, an affectionate and thoughtful stepson to a stepmother who survived him, and the most faithful and warm-hearted of friends. In this article of friendship he not only approaches, but reaches, the romantic. While in his teens he made friends with a Swiss of his own age. A quarter of a century later on, we find the boyish companions chumming together, under the same roof at Lausanne, and delighting in each other's society. His attachment to Lord Sheffield is a beautiful thing. It is impossible to read Gibbon's letters without responding to the feeling which breathes through Lord Sheffield's preface to the miscellaneous writings:

"The letters will prove how pleasant, friendly, and amiable Mr. Gibbon was in private life; and if in publishing letters so flattering to myself I incur the imputation of vanity, I meet the charge with a frank confession that I am indeed highly vain of having enjoyed for so many years the esteem, the confidence, and the affection of a man whose social qualities endeared him to the most accomplished society, whose talents, great as they were, must be acknowledged to have been fully equalled by the sincerity of his friendship."

To have been pleasant, friendly, amiable, and sincere in friendship, to have written the *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, and the *Autobiography*, must be Gibbon's excuse for his unflushing cheek.

To praise Gibbon is not wholly superfluous; to commend his history would be so. It is now well on in its second century. Time has not told upon it. It stands unaltered, and with its authority unimpaired. It would be invidious to name the histories it has seen born and die. Its shortcomings have been

pointed out—it is well; its inequalities exposed—that is fair; its style criticised—that is just. But it is still read. "Whatever else is read," says Professor Freeman, "Gibbon must be."

The tone he thought fit to adopt towards Christianity was, quite apart from all particular considerations, a mistaken one. No man is big enough to speak slightingly of the constructions his fellow-men have from time to time put upon the Infinite. And conduct which in a philosopher is ill-judged, is in a historian ridiculous. Gibbon's sneers could not alter the fact that his History, which he elected to style the *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, might equally well, as Dean Stanley has observed, have been called the "Rise and Progress of the Christian Church." This tone of Gibbon's was the more unfortunate because he was not of those men who are, by the order of their minds, incapable of theology. He was an admirable theologian, and, even as it is, we have Cardinal Newman's authority for the assertion that Gibbon is the only Church historian worthy of the name who has written in English.

Gibbon's love of the unseemly may also be deprecated. His is not the boisterous impropriety which may sometimes be observed staggering across the pages of Mr. Carlyle, but the more offensive variety which is overheard sniggering in the notes.

The importance, the final value of Gibbon's History has been assailed in high quarters. Coleridge, in a well-known passage in his *Table Talk*—too long to be quoted—said Gibbon was a man of immense reading; but he had no philosophy. "I protest," he adds, "I do not remember a single philosophical attempt made throughout the work to fathom the ultimate causes of the decline and fall of the empire." This spoiled Gibbon for Coleridge, who has told us that "though he had read all the famous histories, and he believed some history of every country or nation, that is or ever existed, he had never done so for the story itself—the only thing inter-

esting to him being the principles to be evolved from and illustrated by the facts."

I am not going to insult the majestic though thickly-veiled figure of the Philosophy of History. Every sensible man, though he might blush to be called a philosopher, must wish to be the wiser for his reading; but it may, I think, be fairly said that the first business of a historian is to tell his story, nobly and splendidly, with vivacity and vigour. Then I do not see why we children of a larger growth may not be interested in the annals of mankind simply as a story, without worrying every moment to evolve principles from each part of it. If I choose to be interested in the colour of Mary Queen of Scots' eyes, or the authorship of the *Letters of Junius*, I claim the right to be so. Of course, if I imagine either of these subjects to be matters of importance—if I devote my life to their elucidation, if I bore my friends with presentation pamphlets about them—why, then, I am either a feeble fribble or an industrious fool; but if I do none of these things I ought to be left in peace, and not ridiculed by those who seem to regard the noble stream of events much as Brindley did rivers—mainly as something which fills their ugly canals of dreary and frequently false comment.

But, thirdly, whilst yielding the first place to philosophy, divine philosophy, as I suppose, when one comes to die, one will be glad to have done, it is desirable that the text and the comment should be kept separate and apart. The historian who loads his frail craft with that perilous and shifting freight, philosophy, adds immensely to the dangers of his voyage across the ocean of Time. Gibbon was no fool, yet it is as certain as anything can be, that had he put much of his philosophy into his history, both would have gone to the bottom long ago. For even better philosophy than Gibbon's would have been is apt to grow mouldy in a quarter of a century, and to need three new coats of good oily rhetoric to make it presentable to each new generation.

Gibbon was neither a great thinker nor a great man. He had neither light nor warmth. This is what, doubtless, prompted Sir James Mackintosh's famous exclamation, that you might scoop Gibbon's mind out of Burke's without missing it. But hence, I say, the fitness of things that chained Gibbon to his library chair, and set him as his task to write the history of the Roman Empire, whilst leaving Burke at large to illuminate the problems of his own time.

Gibbon avowedly wrote for fame. He built his History meaning it to last. He got £6,000 for writing it. The booksellers netted £60,000 by printing it. Gibbon did not mind. He knew it would be the volumes of his History, and not the banking books of his publishers, who no doubt ran their trade risks, which would keep their place upon men's shelves. He did an honest piece of work, and he has had a noble reward. Had he attempted to know the ultimate causes of the decline and fall of the Roman Empire, he must have failed, egregiously, childishly. He abated his pretensions as a philosopher, was content to attempt some picture of the thing acted—of the great pageant of history—and succeeded.

WILLIAM COWPER.

THE large and weighty family of Gradgrinds may, from their various well-cushioned coigns of advantage, give forcible utterance to their opinions as to what are the really important things in this life; but the fact remains, distasteful as it may be to those of us who have accomplished the disciplinary end of vexing our fathers' souls by other means than "penning stanzas," that the lives of poets, even of people who have passed for poets, eclipse in general and permanent interest the lives of other men. Whilst above the sod, these poets were often miserable enough. But charm hangs over their graves. The sternest pedestrian, even he who is most bent on making his inn by the precise path he has, with much study of the map, previously prescribed for himself, will yet often veer to the right or to the left to visit the lonely churchyard where, as he hears by the way, lie the ashes of some brother of the tuneful quill. It may well be that this brother's verses are not frequently on our lips. It is not the lot of every bard to make quotations. It may sometimes happen to you, as you stand mournfully surveying the little heap, to rack your brains unavailingly for so much as a single couplet; nay, so treacherous is memory, the very title of his best-known poem may, for the moment, have slipped you. But your heart is melted all the same, and you feel it would indeed have been a churlish thing to go on your original way, unmindful of the fact that

"In yonder grave a Druid lies!"

And you have your reward. When you have reached your desired haven, and are sitting alone after dinner

in the coffee-room, neat-handed Phyllis (were you not fresh from a poet's grave, a homelier name might have served her turn) having administered to your final wants, and disappeared with a pretty flounce, the ruby-coloured wine the dead poet loved, the bottled sunshine of a by-gone summer, glows the warmer in your cup as you muse over minstrels now no more, whether

"Of mighty poets in their misery dead,"

or of such a one as he whose neglected grave you have just visited.

It was a pious act, you feel, to visit that grave. You commend yourself for doing so. As the night draws on, this very simple excursion down a rutty lane and across a meadow begins to wear the hues of devotion and of love; and unless you are very stern with yourself, the chances are that by the time you light your farthing dip, and are proceeding on your dim and perilous way to your bedroom at the end of a creaking passage, you will more than half believe you were that poet's only unselfish friend, and that he died saying so.

All this is due to the charm of poetry. Port has nothing to do with it. Indeed, as a plain matter of fact, who would drink port at a village inn? Nobody feels a bit like this after visiting the tombs of soldiers, lawyers, statesmen, or divines. These pompous places, viewed through the haze of one's recollections of the "careers" of the men whose names they vainly try to perpetuate, seem but, if I may slightly alter some words of Cowley's, "An ill show after a sorry sight."

It would be quite impossible to enumerate one half of the reasons which make poets so interesting. I will mention one, and then pass on to the subject-matter. They often serve to tell you the age of men and books. This is most interesting. There is Mr. Matthew Arnold. How impossible it would be to hazard even a wide solution of the problem of his age, but for the way he has of writing about Lord Byron! Then we know.

"The thought of Byron, of his cry
Stormily sweet, his Titan agony."

And again:

"What boots it now that Byron bore,
With haughty scorn which mocked the smart,
Through Europe to the Ætolian shore,
The pageant of his bleeding heart?"

Ask any man born in the fifties, or even the later forties, what he thinks of Byron's Titan agony, and his features will probably wear a smile. Insist upon his giving his opinion about the pageant of the Childe's bleeding heart, and more likely than not he will laugh outright. But, I repeat, how interesting to be able to tell the age of one distinguished poet from his way of writing of another!

So, too, with books. Miss Austen's novels are dateless things. Nobody in his senses would speak of them as "old novels." *John Inglesant* is an old novel, so is *Ginx's Baby*. But *Emma* is quite new, and, like a wise woman, affords few clues as to her age. But when, taking up *Sense and Sensibility*, we read Marianne Dashwood's account of her sister's lover—

"And besides all this, I am afraid, mamma, he has no real taste. Music seems scarcely to attract him, and though he admires Elinor's drawings very much, it is not the admiration of a person who can understand their worth. He admires as a lover, and not as a connoisseur. Oh, mamma! how spiritless, how tame was Edward's manner in reading last night! I felt for my sister most severely. I could hardly keep my seat to hear those beautiful lines which have frequently almost driven me wild, pronounced with such impenetrable calmness, such dreadful indifference!" "He would certainly" (says Mrs. Dashwood) "have done more justice to simple and elegant prose. I thought so, at the time, but you *would* give him Cowper." "Nay, mamma, if he is not to be animated by Cowper!"—when we read this, we know pretty well when Miss Austen was born. It is surely pleasant to be reminded of a time when sentimental girls

used Cowper as a test of a lover's sensibility. One of our modern swains is no more likely to be condemned as a Philistine for not reading *The Task* with unction, than he is to be hung for sheep-stealing, or whipped at the cart's tail for speaking evil of constituted authorities; but the position probably still has its perils, and the Marianne Dashwoods of the hour are quite capable of putting their admirers on to *Rose Mary*, or *The Blessed Damosel*, and then flouting their insensibility. The fact, of course, is, that each generation has a way of its own, and poets are interesting because they are the mirrors in which their generation saw its own face; and what is more, they are magic mirrors, since they retain the power of reflecting the image long after what was pleased to call itself the substance has disappeared into thin air.

There is no more interesting poet than Cowper, and hardly one the area of whose influence was greater. No man, it is unnecessary to say, courted popularity less, yet he threw a very wide net, and caught a great shoal of readers. For twenty years after the publication of *The Task* in 1785, his general popularity never flagged, and even when in the eyes of the world it was eclipsed, when Cowper became, in the opinion of fierce Byronians and moss-trooping Northerners, "a coddled Pope," and a milksop, our great, sober, Puritan middle-class took him to their warm firesides for two generations more. Some amongst these were not, it must be owned, lovers of poetry at all; they liked Cowper because he is full of a peculiar kind of religious phraseology, just as some of Burns's countrymen love Burns because he is full of a peculiar kind of strong drink called whisky. This was bad taste; but it made Cowper all the more interesting, as he thus became, by a kind of compulsion, the favourite because the only poet of all these people's children; and the children of the righteous do not wither like the green herb, neither do they beg their bread from door to door, but they live in slated houses and are known to read at times. No doubt, by the time it came to these

children's children the spell was broken, and Cowper went out of fashion when Sunday travelling and play-going came in again. But his was a long run, and under peculiar conditions. Signs and tokens are now abroad, whereby the judicious are beginning to infer that there is a renewed disposition to read Cowper and to love him, not for his faults, but for his great merits, his observing eye, his playful wit, his personal charm.

Hayley's *Life of Cowper* is now obsolete, though since it is adorned with vignettes by Blake it is prized by the curious. Hayley was a kind friend to Cowper, but he possessed, in a highly developed state, that aversion to the actual facts of a case which is unhappily so characteristic of the British biographer. Southey's *Life* is horribly long-winded and stuffed out; still, like Homer's *Iliad*, it remains the best. It was long excluded from strict circles because of its worldly tone, and also because it more than hinted that the Rev. John Newton was to blame for his mode of treating the poet's delusions. Its place was filled by the Rev. Mr. Grimshaw's *Life* of the poet, which is not a nice book. Mr. Benham's recent *Life*, to be found in the cheap Globe edition of *Cowper's Poems*, is marvellously good and compressed. Mr. Goldwin Smith's account of the poet in Mr. Morley's series could not fail to be interesting, though it created in the minds of some readers a curious sensation of immense distance from the object described. Mr. Smith seemed to discern Cowper clearly enough, but as somebody very far off. This, however, may be fancy.

The wise man will not trouble the biographers. He will make for himself a short list of dates, so that he may know where he is at any particular time, and then, poking the fire and (his author notwithstanding) lighting his pipe—

> "Oh, pernicious weed, whose scent the fair annoys"—

he will read Cowper's letters. There are five volumes of them in Southey's edition. It would be to exaggerate

to say you wish there were fifty, but you are, at all events, well content there should be five. In the course of them Cowper will tell you the story of his own life, as it ought to be told, as it alone can be told, in the purest of English and with the sweetest of smiles. For a combination of delightful qualities, Cowper's letters have no rivals. They are playful, witty, loving, sensible, ironical, and, above all, as easy as an old shoe. So easy, indeed, that after you have read half a volume or so, you begin to think their merits have been exaggerated, and that anybody could write letters as good as Cowper's. Even so the man who never played billiards, and who sees Mr. Roberts play that game, might hastily opine that he, too, could go and do likewise.

To form anything like a fair estimate of Cowper, it is wise to ignore as much as possible his mental disease, and always to bear in mind the manner of man he naturally was. He belonged essentially to the order of wags. He was, it is easy to see, a lover of trifling things, elegantly finished. He hated noise, contention, and the public gaze, but society he ever insisted upon.

> "I praise the Frenchman, his remark was shrewd
> How sweet, how passing sweet, is solitude!
> But grant me still a friend in my retreat,
> Whom I may whisper—'solitude is sweet.'"

He loved a jest, a barrel of oysters, and a bottle of wine. His well-known riddle on a kiss is Cowper from top to toe:

> "I am just two and two; I am warm, I am cold,
> And the parent of numbers that cannot be told.
> I am lawful, unlawful, a duty, a fault,
> I am often sold dear, good for nothing when bought,
> An extraordinary boon, and a matter of course,
> And yielded with pleasure when taken by force."

Why, it is a perfect dictionary of kisses in six lines!

Had Cowper not gone mad in his thirty-second year, and been frightened out of the world of trifles, we should have had another Prior, a wittier Gay, an earlier Praed,

an English La Fontaine. We do better with *The Task* and the *Lines to Mary*, but he had a light touch.

> "'Tis not that I design to rob
> Thee of thy birthright, gentle Bob,
> For thou art born sole heir and single
> Of dear Mat Prior's easy jingle.
> Not that I mean while thus I knit
> My threadbare sentiments together,
> To show my genius or my wit,
> When God and you know I have neither,
> Or such as might be better shown
> By letting poetry alone."

This lightness of touch, this love of trifling, never deserted Cowper, not even when the pains of hell gat hold of him, and he believed himself the especially accursed of God. In 1791, when things were very black, we find him writing to his good Dissenting friend, the Rev. William Bull ("Carissime Taurorum"), as follows: "Homer, I say, has all my time, except a little that I give every day to no very cheering prospects of futurity. I would I were a Hottentot, or even a Dissenter, so that my views of an hereafter were more comfortable. But such as I am, Hope, if it please God, may visit even me. Should we ever meet again, possibly we may part no more. Then, if Presbyterians ever find their way to heaven, you and I may know each other in that better world, and rejoice in the recital of the terrible things that we endured in this. I will wager sixpence with you now, that when that day comes you shall acknowledge my story a more wonderful one than yours; only order your executors to put sixpence in your mouth when they bury you, that you may have wherewithal to pay me."

Whilst living in the Temple, which he did for twelve years, chiefly, it would appear, on his capital, he associated with a race of men, of whom report has reached us, called "wits." He belonged to the Nonsense Club; he wrote articles for magazines. He went to balls, to Brighton, to the play. He went once, at all events, to

the gallery of the House of Commons, where he witnessed an altercation between a placeman and an alderman—two well-known types still in our midst. The placeman had misquoted Terence, and the alderman had corrected him; whereupon the ready placeman thanked the worthy alderman for teaching him Latin, and volunteered in exchange to teach the alderman English. Cowper must at this time have been a considerable reader, for all through life he is to be found quoting his authors, poets, and playwrights, with an easy appositeness, all the more obviously genuine because he had no books in the country to refer to. "I have no English History," he writes, "except Baker's *Chronicle*, and that I borrowed three years ago from Mr. Throckmorton." This was wrong, but Baker's *Chronicle* (Sir Roger de Coverley's favourite Sunday reading) is not a book to be returned in a month.

After this easy fashion Cowper acquired what never left him—the style and manner of an accomplished worldling.

The story of the poet's life does not need telling; but as Owen Meredith says, probably not even for the second time, "after all, old things are best." Cowper was born in the rectory at Great Berkhampstead in 1735. His mother dying when he was six years old, he was despatched to a country academy, where he was horribly bullied by one of the boys, the reality of whose persecution is proved by one terrible touch in his victim's account of it: "I had such a dread of him, that I did not dare lift my eyes to his face. I knew him best by his shoe-buckle." The odious brute! Cowper goes on to say he had forgiven him, which I can believe; but when he proceeds to ejaculate a wish to meet his persecutor again in heaven, doubt creeps in. When ten years old he was sent to Westminster, where there is nothing to show that he was otherwise than fairly happy; he took to his classics very kindly, and (so he says) excelled in cricket and football. This is evidence, but as Dr. Johnson once confessed about the evidence for the

immortality of the soul, "one would like more." He was for some time in the class of Vincent Bourne, who, though born in 1695, and a Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge, ranks high amongst the Latin poets. Whether Cowper was bullied at Westminster is a matter of controversy. Bourne was bullied. About that there can be no doubt. Cowper loved him, and relates with delight how on one occasion the Duke of Richmond (Burke's Duke, I suppose) set fire to the greasy locks of this latter-day Catullus, and then, alarmed at the spread of the conflagration, boxed his master's ears to put it out. At eighteen Cowper left Westminster, and after doing nothing (at which he greatly excelled) for nine months in the country, returned to town, and was articled to an attorney in Ely Place, Holborn, for three years. At the same time, being intended for the Bar, he was entered at the Middle, though he subsequently migrated to the Inner Temple. These three years in Ely Place Cowper fribbled away agreeably enough. He had as his desk-companion Edward Thurlow, the most tremendous of men. Hard by Ely Place is Southampton Row, and in Southampton Row lived Ashley Cowper, the poet's uncle, with a trio of affable daughters, Theodora Jane, Harriet, afterwards Lady Hesketh, and a third, who became the wife of Sir Archer Croft. According to Cowper, a great deal of giggling went on in Southampton Row. He fell in love with Theodora, and Theodora fell in love with him. He wrote her verses enough to fill a volume. She was called Delia in his lays. In 1752, his articles having expired, he took chambers in the Temple, and in 1754 was called to the Bar. Ashley Cowper, a very little man, who used to wear a white hat lined with yellow silk, and was on that account likened by his nephew to a mushroom, would not hear of his daughter marrying her cousin; and being a determined little man, he had his own way, and the lovers were parted and saw one another no more. Theodora Cowper wore the willow all the rest of her long

life. Her interest in her cousin never abated. Through her sister, Lady Hesketh, she contributed in later years generously to his support. He took the money and knew where it came from, but they never wrote to one another, nor does her name ever appear in Cowper's correspondence. She became, so it is said, morbid on the subject during her latter days, and dying twenty-four years after her lover, she bequeathed to a nephew a mysterious packet she was known to cherish. It was found to contain Cowper's love-verses.

In 1756 Cowper's father died, and the poet's patrimony proved to be a very small one. He was made a Commissioner of Bankrupts. The salary was £60 a year. He knew one solicitor, but whether he ever had a brief is not known. He lived alone in his chambers till 1763, when, under well-known circumstances, he went raving mad, and attempted to hang himself in his bedroom, and very nearly succeeded. He was removed to Dr. Cotton's asylum, where he remained a year. This madness, which in its origin had no more to do with religion than it had with the Binomial Theorem, ultimately took the turn of believing that it was the will of God that he should kill himself, and that as he had failed to do so he was damned everlastingly. In this faith, diversified by doubt, Cowper must be said henceforth to have lived and died.

On leaving St. Albans, the poet, in order to be near his only brother, the Rev. John Cowper, Fellow of Corpus, Cambridge, and a most delightful man, had lodgings in Huntingdon; and there, one eventful Tuesday in 1765, he made the acquaintance of Mary Unwin. Mrs. Unwin's husband, a most scandalously non-resident clergyman—whom, however, Cowper composedly calls a veritable Parson Adams—was living at this time, not in his Norfolk rectory of Grimston, but contentedly enough in Huntingdon, where he took pupils. Cowper became a lodger in the family, which consisted of the rector and his wife, a son at Cambridge,

and a daughter, also one or two pupils. In 1767 Mr. Unwin was thrown from his horse and fractured his skull. Church-reformers pointed out, at the time, that had the rector of Grimston been resident, this accident could not have occurred in Huntingdon. They then went on to say, but less convincingly, that Mr. Unwin's death was the judgment of Heaven upon him. Mr. Unwin dead, the poet and the widow moved to Olney, where they lived together for nineteen years in a tumble-down house, and on very slender means. Their attraction to Olney was in the fact that John Newton was curate-in-charge. Olney was not an ideal place by any means. Cowper and Mrs. Unwin lived in no fools' paradise, for they visited the poor and knew the manner of their lives. The inhabitants were mostly engaged in lace-making and straw-plaiting; they were miserably poor, immoral, and drunken. There is no idyllic nonsense in Cowper's poetry.

In 1773 he had another most violent attack of suicidal mania, and attempted his life more than once. Writing in 1786 to Lady Hesketh, Cowper gives her an account of his illness, of which at the time she knew nothing, as her acquaintance with her cousin was not renewed till 1785:

"Know then, that in the year '73, the same scene that was acted at St. Albans opened upon me again at Olney, only covered with a still deeper shade of melancholy, and ordained to be of much longer duration. I believed that everybody hated me, and that Mrs. Unwin hated me most of all; was convinced that all my food was poisoned, together with ten thousand megrims of the same stamp. Dr. Cotton was consulted. He replied that he could do no more for me than might be done at Olney, but recommended particular vigilance, lest I should attempt my life; a caution for which there was the greatest occasion. At the same time that I was convinced of Mrs. Unwin's aversion to me I could endure no other companion. The whole management

of me consequently devolved upon her, and a terrible task she had; she performed it, however, with a cheerfulness hardly ever equalled on such an occasion, and I have often heard her say that if ever she praised God in her life, it was when she found she was to have all the labour. She performed it accordingly, but, as I hinted once before, very much to the hurt of her own constitution."

Just before this outbreak, Cowper and Mrs. Unwin had agreed to marry, but after it they felt the subject was not to be approached, and so the poor things spoke of it no more. Still, it was well they had spoken out. "Love me, and tell me so," is a wise maxim of behaviour.

Stupid people, themselves leading, one is glad to believe, far duller lives than Cowper and Mary Unwin, have been known to make dull, ponderous jokes about this *ménage* at Olney—its country walks, its hymn tunes, its religious exercises. But it is pleasant to note how quick Sainte-Beuve, whose three papers on Cowper are amongst the glories of the *Causeries du Lundi*, is to recognise how much happiness and pleasantness was to be got out of this semi-monastic life and close social relation. Cowper was indeed the very man for it. One can apply to him his own well-known lines about the winter season, and crown him

> "King of intimate delights,
> Fireside enjoyments, homeborn happiness."

No doubt he went mad at times. It was a terrible affliction. But how many men have complaints of the liver, and are as cheerful to live with as the Black Death, or Young's *Night Thoughts*. Cowper had a famous constitution. Not even Dr. James's powder, or the murderous practices of the faculty, could undermine it. Sadness is not dulness.

> "Dear saints, it is not sorrow, as I hear,
> Nor suffering that shuts up eye and ear

To all which has delighted them before,
And lets us be what we were once no more!
No! we may suffer deeply, yet retain
Power to be moved and soothed, for all our pain,
By what of old pleased us, and will again.
No! 'tis the gradual furnace of the world,
In whose hot air our spirits are upcurled
Until they crumble, or else grow like steel,
Which kills in us the bloom, the youth, the spring,
Which leaves the fierce necessity to feel,
But takes away the power—this can avail,
By drying up our joy in everything,
To make our former pleasures all seem stale."

I can think of no one to whom these beautiful lines of Mr. Arnold's are so exquisitely appropriate as to Cowper. Nothing could knock the humanity out of him. Solitude, sorrow, madness found him out, threw him down and tore him, as did the devils their victims in the days of old; but when they left him for a season, he rose from his misery as sweet and as human, as interested and as interesting as ever. His descriptions of natural scenery and countryside doings are amongst his best things. He moralises enough, heaven knows! but he keeps his morality out of his descriptions. This is rather a relief after overdoses of Wordsworth's pantheism and Keats' paganism. Cowper's Nature is plain county Bucks.

"The sheepfold here
Pours out its fleecy tenants o'er the glebe.
At first progressive as a stream, they seek
The middle field; but scattered by degrees,
Each to his choice, soon whiten all the land."

The man who wrote that had his eye on the object; but lest the quotation be thought too woolly by a generation which has a passion for fine things, I will allow myself another:

"Nor rural sights alone, but rural sounds,
Exhilarate the spirit and restore
The tone of languid nature, mighty winds
That sweep the skirt of some far-spreading wood
Of ancient growth, make music not unlike
The dash of ocean on his winding shore

. . . . . .
. . . . . of rills that slip
Through the cleft rock, and chiming as they fall
Upon loose pebbles, lose themselves at length
In matted grass, that with a livelier green
Betrays the secret of their silent course."

In 1781 began the episode of Lady Austen. That lady was doing some small shopping in Olney, in company with her sister, the wife of a neighbouring clergyman, when our poet first beheld her. She pleased his eye. Whether in the words of one of his early poems he made free to comment on her shape I cannot say; but he hurried home and made Mrs. Unwin ask her to tea. She came. Cowper was seized with a fit of shyness, and very nearly would not go into the room. He conquered the fit, went in, and swore eternal friendship. To the very end of her days Mrs. Unwin addressed the poet, her true lover though he was, as "Mr. Cowper." In a week, Lady Austen and he were "Sister Ann" and "William" one to another. Sister Ann had a furnished house in London. She gave it up. She came to live in Olney, next door. She was pretty, she was witty, she played, she sang. She told Cowper the story of John Gilpin, she inspired his *Wreck of the Royal George*. *The Task* was written at her bidding. Day in and day out, Cowper and Lady Austen and Mrs. Unwin were together. One turns instinctively to see what Sainte-Beuve has to say about Lady Austen. "C'était Lady Austen, veuve d'un baronet. Cette rare personne était douée des plus heureux dons; elle n'était plus très-jeune ni dans la fleur de beauté; elle avait ce qui est mieux, une puissance d'attraction et d'enchantement qui tenait à la transparence de l'âme, une faculté de reconnaissance, de sensibilité émue jusqu'aux larmes pour toute marque de bienveillance dont elle était l'objet. Tout en elle exprimait une vivacité pure, innocente et tendre. C'était une créature *sympathique*, et elle devait tout-à-fait justifier dans le cas présent ce mot de Bernardin de Saint-Pierre: 'Il y a dans la

femme une gaieté légère qui dissipe la tristesse de l'homme.' "

That odd personage, Alexander Knox, who had what used to be called a " primitive," that is, a fourth-century mind, and on whom the Tractarian movement has been plausibly grandfathered, and who was (incongruously) employed by Lord Castlereagh to help through the Act of Union with Ireland, of which we have lately heard, but who remained all the time primitively unaware that any corruption was going on around him—this odd person, I say, was exercised in his mind about Lady Austen, of whom he had been reading in Hayley's *Life*. In October, 1806, he writes to Bishop Jebb in a solemn strain : " I have rather a severer idea of Lady A. than I should wish to put into writing for publication. I almost suspect she was a very artful woman. But I need not enlarge." He puts it rather differently from Sainte-Beuve, but I dare say they both meant much the same thing. If Knox meant more it would be necessary to get angry with him. That Lady Austen fell in love with Cowper and would have liked to marry him, but found Mrs. Unwin in the way, is probable enough ; but where was the artfulness ? Poor Cowper was no catch. The grandfather of Tractarianism would have been better employed in unmasking the corruption amongst which he had lived, than in darkly suspecting a lively lady of designs upon a penniless poet, living in the utmost obscurity, on the charity of his relatives.*

But this state of things at Olney did not last very

* In the fourth volume of Knox's *Remains*, in a note on page 539, is to be found Lord Castlereagh's very strange letter urging Knox to become the historian and apologist of the Union. " And I really think it would come with great advantage before the world in your name, as you are known to be incapable of stating what you do not believe to be true." " But," says Knox himself, " though I was well acquainted with the spirit and intention which actuated Lord C. at that time (and I may truly say all the persons in power), yet the evidence I could bear would be limited to my own honest impressions, for of the details of measures or exigencies I could from memory state nothing." But to get a nervous saint to puff the Union was a good idea.

long. "Of course not," cackle a chorus of cynics. "It could not!" The Historical Muse, ever averse to theory, is content to say, "It did not," but as she writes the words she smiles. The episode began in 1781, it ended in 1784. It became necessary to part. Cowper may have had his qualms, but he concealed them manfully and remained faithful to Mrs. Unwin—

"The patient flower
Who possessed his darker hour."

Lady Austen flew away, and afterwards, as if to prove her levity incurable, married a Frenchman. She died in 1802. English literature owes her a debt of gratitude. Her name is writ large over much that is best in Cowper's poetry. Not, indeed, over the very best; *that* bears the inscription *To Mary*. And it was right that it should be so, for Mrs. Unwin had to put up with a good deal.

The Task and *John Gilpin* were published together in 1785, and some of Cowper's old friends (notably Lady Hesketh) rallied round the now known poet once more. Lady Hesketh soon begins to fill the chair vacated by Lady Austen, and Cowper's letters to her are amongst his most delightful. Her visits to Olney were eagerly expected, and it was she who persuaded the pair to leave the place for good and all, and move to Weston, which they did in 1786. The following year Cowper went mad again, and made another most desperate attempt upon his life. Again Mary Unwin stood by the poor maniac's side, and again she stood alone. He got better, and worked away at his translation of Homer as hard and wrote letters as charming as ever. But Mrs. Unwin was well-nigh worn out. Cowper published his Homer by subscription, and must be pronounced an adept in the somewhat ignoble art of collecting subscribers. I am not sure that he could not have given Pope points. Pope had a great acquaintance, but he had barely six hundred subscribers. Cowper scraped

together upwards of five hundred. As a beggar he was unabashed. He quotes in one of his letters, and applies to himself patly enough, Ranger's observation in the *Suspicious Husband:* "There is a degree of assurance in you modest men that we impudent fellows can never arrive at!" The University of Oxford was, however, too much for him. He beat her portals in vain. She had but one answer, "We subscribe to nothing." Cowper was very angry, and called her "a rich old vixen." She did not mind. The book appeared in 1791. It has many merits, and remains unread.

The clouds now gathered heavily over the biography of Cowper. Mrs. Unwin had two paralytic strokes; the old friends began to torture one another. She was silent save when she was irritable, indifferent except when exacting. At last, not a day too soon, Lady Hesketh came to Weston. They were moved into Norfolk—but why prolong the tale? Mrs. Unwin died at East Dereham on the 17th of December, 1796. Thirty-one years had gone since the poet and she first met by chance in Huntingdon. Cowper himself died in April, 1800. His last days were made physically comfortable by the kindness of some Norfolk cousins, and the devotion of a Miss Perowne. But he died in wretchedness and gloom.

The *Castaway* was his last original poem:

> "I therefore purpose not or dream
> Descanting on his fate,
> To give the melancholy theme
> A more enduring date;
> But misery still delights to trace
> Its semblance in another's case."

Everybody interested in Cowper has of course to make out, as best he may, a picture of the poet for his own use. It is curious how sometimes little scraps of things serve to do this better than deliberate efforts. In 1800, the year of Cowper's death, his relative, a Dr. Johnson, wrote a letter to John Newton, sending

good wishes to the old gentleman, and to his niece, Miss Catlett; and added: "Poor dear Mr. Cowper, oh that he were as tolerable as he was, even in those days, when, dining at his house in Buckinghamshire with you and that lady, I could not help smiling to see his pleasant face when he said, 'Miss Catlett, shall I give you a piece of cutlet?'" It was a very small joke indeed, and it is a very humble little quotation, but for me it has long served, in the mind's eye, for a vignette of the poet, doomed yet *debonnaire*. Romney's picture, with that frightful nightcap and eyes gleaming with madness, is a pestilent thing one would forget if one could. Cowper's pleasant face when he said, "Miss Catlett, shall I give you a piece of cutlet?" is a much more agreeable picture to find a small corner for in one's memory.

JOHN WESLEY.

SOME ASPECTS OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY IN ENGLAND.

IT was a fortunate thing for historians, moralists, philosophers, and every other kind of bookmaker when it became the habit to chop up the annals of mankind into centuries. It is a meaningless division save for the purpose of counting, and yet such is our passion for generalisation, so fond are we of distinguishing and differentiating, that we all of us have long ago endowed each one of the nineteen Christian centuries (to wander back no farther) with its own characteristics and attributes. These arbitrary divisions of time have thus become sober realities; they stalk majestically across the stage of memory, they tread the boards each in its own garb, making appropriate gestures and uttering familiar catch-words. Lord Clarendon's history is not more unlike Gibbon's, Bishop Ken is not more unlike Bishop Hoadly, Prince Rupert is not more unlike John Churchill, than is the seventeenth century as we choose to depict it unlike the eighteenth. And yet full well do we know in the bottom of our hearts those unpleasing depths where we seldom dredge for fear of the consequences, how impossible it is to compress into the lines of a single figure, however animated its countenance or mobile its features, the vast tide of human existence as it flows gigantically along regardless of methods of counting time.

The eighteenth century in England does not lack its historians and painters who have treated their great subject sometimes after a Pre-Raphaelite fashion, and

sometimes after the manner of the impressionists. It has been loaded with abuse by picturesque historians and high-flying divines and romantic poets. Its political franchise was certainly restricted, while its civil list was unduly extended. It whitewashed its churches, and even sought to rationalise its religion. No less emancipated an intelligence than Mark Pattison's pronounced the first half of the eighteenth century to be "an age destitute of faith and earnestness—an age whose poetry was without romance, whose philosophy was without insight, and whose public men were without character." Harsh words indeed, but not lightly written.

Yet when abandoning generalities and dwelling on the details of the time as it was then spent in England, it is difficult to reconcile all one's reading with any very sweeping assertions. It was a brutal age, no doubt—an age of the press-gang, of the whipping-post, of gaol-fever, and all the horrors of the criminal code; an ignorant age, when the population, lords and louts alike, drank with great freedom and reckoned cock-fighting among the more innocent joys of life; when education of the kind called popular, or, more correctly, primary—for popular it is not and never will be—was hardly thought of; a corrupt age, when offices and votes were bought and sold, and bishops owed their sees to the King's women.

Brutal, ignorant, and corrupt. That the eighteenth century in England was all this, is it not written in the storied page of Hogarth? Charles Lamb quotes with critical approval the answer of the man who, when asked to name his favourite author, replied: "Next to Shakspeare, Hogarth." We all love a crowded gallery —people coming, going, incidents, emotions, passions evil as well as good, for there is nothing we cannot forgive humanity—and Hogarth's gallery teems with the life of the eighteenth century; catches, as only great painters can, its most evanescent glances, and records its desperate efforts to amuse itself or forget itself be-

tween two eternities. And though so true a humourist could not be oblivious of the kindly side of life or be without some gracious touches and affectionate portrayals, still, roughly speaking, the great historian of the eighteenth century in England affirms the brutal view of it, its cruelty, its horror. How people can frame Hogarth's prints and hang them up in their rooms is more than I can say.

But there are other authorities, other aspects, other books. Two of the catchwords of the eighteenth century are *sentimentality* and *enthusiasm*. The first of the two is supposed to have been invented by the famous author of the *History of Clarissa Harlowe, a Series of Letters*. He it was, that little printer and warden of a city company, who first opened the rusty floodgates of English tears and taught the South Briton how to weep as he had never wept before. But it is with *enthusiasm* I would deal to-day. During the eighteenth century enthusiasm is a word of almost as frequent occurrence as either wit or parts. It has been pointed out by an ingenious friend of my own that Pope, in his *Essay on Criticism*, employs the word "wit" forty-seven times and in at least seven different senses;* and as for "parts," though the word may be found in Sidney and Spenser, the eighteenth century made it peculiarly its own. But "enthusiasm" is also a very frequent word. Lord Shaftesbury, the third Earl and the author of the *Characteristicks*, before the century was in its teens, wrote his famous *Letter Concerning Enthusiasm*, in which he is supposed to have said: "Ridicule is the test of truth." He never said so anywhere in so many words, but he gets very near it in this letter in which he describes enthusiasm as one of the dangers of the age, a terrible distemper, almost as bad as the small-pox. In the opinion of my lord enthusiasm is a modification of the

* Pope's *Essay on Criticism*, edited by A. S. West. Cambridge University Press, 1896.

spleen, having its centre in an ill-regulated religion. True religion, in the opinion of that third Lord Shaftesbury, is based on good humour. He observes in his fashionable way: "'Tis in adversity chiefly or in ill-health, under affliction or disturbance of mind or discomposure of temper, that we have recourse to religion, though in reality we are never so unfit to think of it as at such a dark and heavy hour. We can never be fit to contemplate anything above us when we are in no condition to look into ourselves and calmly examine the temper of our own minds and passions, for then it is we see wrath and fury and revenge and terror in the Deity when we are full of disturbances and fears within, and have by suffering and anxiety lost so much of the natural calm and easiness of our temper."

Thus did the infant century at the very outset of its journey meet, in the shape of this elegant peer, its Mr. Worldly-Wiseman, who, you will remember, in reply to Christian's distracted "I know what I would obtain; it is ease for my heavy burden," observes in the same sense as Shaftesbury, though in homelier language: "But why wilt thou seek for ease in this way, seeing so many dangers attend it, especially since (hadst thou but patience to hear me) I could direct thee to the obtaining of what thou desirest, without the dangers that thou in this way wilt run thyself into—yea, and the remedy is at hand? Besides, I will add that instead of those dangers, thou shalt meet with much safety, friendship, and content."

Why wilt thou seek for ease in this way when if you will only be good-humoured, sensible, and let the world wag, you will meet with much safety, friendship, and content?

All through the eighteenth century, from Lord Shaftesbury at the beginning to Bishop Lavington nearer its close, enthusiasm continued the *bête noire* of all those decent people who think that as God made the world He should be left alone to mend it. The inherent ab-

surdity of enthusiasm seldom failed to illuminate the good-natured countenance of David Hume with a smile half a philosopher's and half a man of the world's, while it provoked a not ill-natured sneer from Gibbon, who, though he wrote the history of the fall of the Roman Empire, was taken quite by surprise, and, indeed, terribly put out, by the fall of the French monarchy in his own day. He, while referring to the author of *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life*, one of the most characteristic books of the eighteenth century, observes in that way of his so suggestive of a snug corner and a library chair: "Had not Law's vigorous mind been clouded by enthusiasm, he might be ranked with the most agreeable and ingenious writers of his time." Devoutness, holiness, the inward life, the flight from wrath to come, the horror of sin, the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, raptures, transports, fancies, visions, voices—all these things and more are included in that word "enthusiasm," which is for ever cropping up in this eighteenth century, the reason being that the century was full of it, and during its years countless thousands of pilgrims not only played the fool in Vanity Fair and made beasts of themselves in Gin Lane, but with groans and trembling passed through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, and caught glimpses of the towers and palaces of the city of God.

We have too few books which bring home to us in concrete form the lives and thoughts of our forefathers. Historians we know, good, bad, and indifferent, the learned but dull, the dull but conscientious, the picturesque but false; the historian who writes his history because he has a grudge against the Church of England, whose Orders he has renounced; his Anglican rival, who writes his because he resents as a personal affront the attitude of the Church of Rome to the English branch; the Nonconformist historian, who has his quarrel both with the Vatican and Lambeth, and is better read in his Calamy's *Nonconformist Memorial* than in his Walker's

Sufferings of the Clergy. They all have their value, these historians, and their vogue. Gladly do I give them place. But they none of them supply us with what we want. Suppose, for example, I want to be infected with the learning and the leisure of the eighteenth century: the generalisations of the regular historian are of no use to me. Their pages contain no microbes, distil no perfumes. If Mr. Austin Dobson's poems are by my side or his prose studies, they will for a brief season lay me low; but a resurrectionary *tour de force* has never the reposeful air of Nature. For such a purpose as I have just indicated there is nothing quite so good as the seventeen volumes of Nichols's *Anecdotes and Literary History of the Eighteenth Century*. In a sense, and a very real sense, too, these portly tomes may be called utterly insignificant. They rarely recall a name of first-class importance or record a fact in itself worth mentioning. They force you to spend your time in the company of historians, not of empires, but of counties, of typographers, antiquaries, classical scholars, lettered divines, librarians at great houses, learned tradesmen (for such freaks existed in the eighteenth century); they tell you of lives wasted in colleges and country rectories; they remind you of forgotten controversies and foolish personal enmities; they are full of Latin epitaphs. And every now and again in your country wanderings the originals of these epitaphs will stare at you from some snug transept corner, or meet your eye as you wander westward down the nave of an abbey church or other old world burying-place. You will not be troubled with enthusiasm in Mr. Nichols's collections, but to read them is to live in the eighteenth century. In sundry moods they will serve your turn well enough, but the reaction must come, when you will grow impatient of all this trifling, and demand to be quit of tiresome coteries and tenth-rate literature, and to be admitted into the life of the nation. Then, if you are wise, you will carefully replace Mr. Nichols on the shelf (for it is childish to knock

books about, and the mood will recur), and take down *The Journal of the Reverend John Wesley, A.M., sometime Fellow of Lincoln College, Oxford.*

John Wesley, born as he was in 1703, and dying as he did in 1791, covers as nearly as mortal man may the whole of the eighteenth century, of which he was one of the most typical figures, and certainly the most strenuous. He began his published Journal on October 14, 1735, and its last entry is under date Sunday, October 24, 1790, when in the morning he explained to a numerous congregation in Spitalfields Church "The Whole Armour of God," and in the afternoon enforced to a still larger audience in St. Paul's, Shadwell, the great truth, "One thing is needful," the last words of the Journal being: "I hope many even then resolved to choose the better part."

Between those two Octobers there lies the most amazing record of human exertion ever penned or endured. I do not know whether I am likely to have among my readers anyone who has ever contested an English or Scotch county in a Parliamentary Election since household suffrage. If I have, that tired soul will know how severe is the strain of its three weeks, and how impossible it seemed at the end of the first week that you should be able to keep it going for another fortnight, and how when the last night arrived you felt that had the strife been accidentally prolonged another seven days you must have perished by the wayside. Well, John Wesley contested the three kingdoms in the cause of Christ during a campaign which lasted forty years. He did it for the most part on horseback. He paid more turnpikes than any man who ever bestrode a beast. Eight thousand miles was his annual record for many a long year, during each of which he seldom preached less frequently than a thousand times. Had he but preserved his scores at all the inns where he lodged, they would have made by themselves a history of prices.

And throughout it all he never knew what depression of spirits meant, though he had much to try him—suits in Chancery and a jealous wife.

In the course of this unparalleled contest Wesley visited again and again the most out-of-the-way districts, the remotest corners of England—places which to-day lie far removed even from the searcher after the picturesque. Even now, when the map of England looks like a gridiron of railways, none but the sturdiest of pedestrians, the most determined of cyclists, can retrace the steps of Wesley and his horse and stand by the rocks and the natural amphitheatres in Cornwall and Northumberland, in Lancashire and Berkshire, where he preached his Gospel to the heathen. Exertion so prolonged, enthusiasm so sustained, argues a remarkable man, while the organisation he created, the system he founded, the view of life he promulgated, is still a great fact among us. No other name than Wesley's lies embalmed as his does. Yet he is not a popular figure. Our standard historians—save, indeed, Mr. Lecky—have dismissed him curtly. The fact is, Wesley puts your ordinary historian out of conceit with himself. How much easier to weave into your page the gossip of Horace Walpole, to enliven it with a heartless jest of George Selwyn's, to make it blush with sad stories of the extravagance of Fox, to embroider it with the rhetoric of Burke, to humanise it with the talk of Johnson, to discuss the rise and fall of administrations, the growth and decay of the constitution, than to follow John Wesley into the streets of Bristol or on to the bleak moors near Burslem, where he met face to face in all their violence, all their ignorance, and all their generosity the living men, women, and children who made up the nation!

It has perhaps also to be admitted that to found great organisations is to build your tomb. A splendid tomb it may be, a veritable sarcophagus, but none the less a tomb. John Wesley's chapels lie a little heavily on

John Wesley. Even so do the glories of Rome make us forgetful of the grave in Syria.

It has been said that Wesley's character lacks charm, that mighty antiseptic. It is not easy to define charm, which is not a catalogue of qualities, but a mixture. Let no one deny charm to Wesley who has not read his Journal. Southey's Life is a dull, almost a stupid, book, which happily there is no need to read. Read the Journal, which is a book full of plots and plays and novels, which quivers with life, and is crammed full of character.

John Wesley came of a stock which had been much harassed and put about by our unhappy religious difficulties. Politics, business, and religion are the three things Englishmen are said to worry themselves about. The Wesleys early took up with religion. John Wesley's great-grandfather and grandfather were both ejected from their livings in 1662, and the grandfather was so bullied and oppressed by the Five Mile Act that he early gave up the ghost, whereupon his remains were refused what is called Christian burial, though a holier and more primitive man never drew breath. This poor persecuted spirit left two sons according to the flesh, Matthew and Samuel; and Samuel it was who in his turn became the father of John and Charles Wesley.

Samuel Wesley, though minded to share the lot, hard though that lot was, of his progenitors, had the moderation of mind, the Christian conservatism, perhaps even the disposition to Toryism, which marked the family, and being sent to a Dissenting college, became disgusted with the ferocity and bigotry he happened there to encounter. Those were the days of the Calf's Head Club and feastings on the 29th of January, graceless meals for which Samuel Wesley had no stomach. His turn was for the things that are "quiet, wise, and good." He departed from the Dissenting seminary, and in 1685 entered himself as a poor scholar at Exeter College, Oxford. He brought £2, 6s. with him, and as for prospects, he had

none. Exeter received him. During the eighteenth century our two Universities, famous despite their faults, were always open to the poor scholar who was ready to subscribe, not to boat clubs or cricket clubs, but to the Thirty-nine Articles. Three Archbishops of Canterbury during the eighteenth century were the sons of small tradesmen. There was, in fact, much less snobbery and money-worship during the century when the British Empire was being won than during the century when it is being talked about. Samuel Wesley was allowed to remain at Oxford, where he supported himself by devices known to his tribe, and when he left the University to be ordained he had clear in his pouch, after discharging his few debts, £10, 15s. He had thus made £8, 9s. out of his University, and had his education, as it were, thrown in for nothing. He soon obtained a curacy in London, and married a daughter of the well-known ejected clergyman, Dr. Annesley, about whom you may read in another eighteenth-century book, *The Life and Errors of John Dunton.*

The mother of the Wesleys was a remarkable woman, though cast in a mould not much to our minds nowadays. She had nineteen children, and greatly prided herself on having taught them, one after another, by frequent chastisements, to—what do you think?—cry softly. She had theories of education, and strength of will and of arm, too, to carry them out. She knew Latin and Greek, and though a stern, forbidding, almost an unfeeling parent, she was successful in winning and retaining, not only the respect, but the affection of such of her huge family as lived to grow up. But out of the nineteen thirteen early succumbed. Infant mortality was one of the great facts of the eighteenth century, whose Rachels had to learn to cry softly over their dead babes. The mother of the Wesleys thought more of her children's souls than of their bodies.

The revolution of 1688 threatened to disturb the early married life of Samuel Wesley and his spouse. The

husband wrote a pamphlet in which he defended revolution principles, but the wife secretly adhered to the old cause; nor was it until a year before Dutch William's death that the Rector made the discovery that the wife of his bosom, who had sworn to obey him and regard him as her overlord, was not in the habit of saying "Amen" to his fervent prayers on behalf of his suffering Sovereign. An explanation was demanded and the truth extracted, namely, that in the opinion of the Rector's wife her true King lived over the water. The Rector at once refused to live with Mrs. Wesley any longer until she recanted. This she refused to do, and for a twelvemonth the couple dwelt apart, when William III. having the good sense to die, a reconciliation became possible. If John Wesley was occasionally a little pig-headed, need one wonder? The story of the fire at Epworth Rectory and the miraculous escape of the infant John was once a tale as well known as Alfred in the neat-herd's hut, and pictures of it still hang up in many a collier's home.

John Wesley received a sound classical education at Charterhouse and Christ Church, and remained all his life very much the scholar and the gentleman. No company was too good for John Wesley, and nobody knew better than he did that had he cared to carry his powerful intelligence, his flawless constitution, and his infinite capacity for taking pains into any of the markets of the world, he must have earned for himself place, fame, and fortune.

Coming, however, as he did of a theological stock, having a saint for a father and a notable devout woman for a mother, Wesley from his early days learned to regard religion as the business of his life, just as the younger Pitt came to regard the House of Commons as the future theatre of his actions. After a good deal of heart-searching and theological talk with his mother, Wesley was ordained a deacon by the excellent Potter, afterward Primate, but then (1725) Bishop of Oxford.

In the following year Wesley was elected a Fellow of Lincoln, to the great delight of his father. "Whatever I am," said the good old man, "my Jack is Fellow of Lincoln."

In trying to form even a glimmering idea of the state of the Church of England in 1725, when Wesley took Orders, there are some incidents in its past history which must not be overlooked. I mean its repeated purgings. Evictions are, of course, of frequent occurrence in all Church histories, but the Church of England has been peculiarly unlucky in this respect. Let me, in a handful of sentences, recall the facts. I pass over the puzzling and unedifying events of King Henry VIII.'s time, the Protestant rule of his short-lived son, the frank Romanism of his eldest daughter, and begin with Elizabeth, who succeeded in November, 1558. Crowned though she was according to the Catholic ceremonial, including the unction and the Pontifical Mass, it appears to have been well understood by those in high place that England, having got a new master, must be prepared once more for new men and new measures. They were indeed strange times. Can it be that the country did not care about the continuity of its Church? The Act of Supremacy soon made its appearance, annexing to the Crown all jurisdictions, spiritual and ecclesiastical, for the visitation and reformation of the ecclesiastical state and persons, and of all errors, heresies, and schisms. The inevitable oath was directed to be taken under the usual penalties—first, loss of property, then loss of life. When Queen Mary died there were but fifteen Anglican bishops alive. Of these, fourteen refused the oath, and were turned neck-and-crop out of their sees. They went away quickly enough, and disappeared into obscurity. Elizabeth called them a lazy set of scamps. We have no evidence that they were anything of the kind. Hardships and indignities were heaped upon them. Some died in prison, others in retirement; one or two escaped abroad. It seems to be the fact that they all died in

their beds. They had no mind either to burn or hang. Jeremy Collier gives us, in addition to those fourteen prelates, a list of three bishops-elect, one abbot, one abbess, four priors, twelve deans, fourteen archdeacons, sixty canons, one hundred priests, all well preferred, fifteen heads of colleges, and about twenty doctors of both faculties—all what one may call stationary people hard to move, who were at this same time deprived of their places, profits, and dignities. It does not seem a great many out of the nine thousand spiritual places in England. Still, to lose its whole hierarchy (except the Bishop of Llandaff) at one blow was a shrewd knock, nor, we may be sure, did the bishops-elect, the deans, the archdeacons and canons, the heads of houses and doctors of divinity, and the one hundred well-preferred priests go out without rendings of the heart and bitter reflections. There were no newspapers to record their emotions or to summarise their losses under the heading "Crisis in the Church;" but we may be sure they were pious men, sick of shuffles and crowned heads, while of those who remained, who can tell with what uneasiness of mind, with what pangs of conscience, they did so?

This is Purge No. 1, and it got rid of the old Roman pietist; and let no man deny to the Church of Rome one of the notes of a true Church—the capacity to breed saints.

Purge No. 2 was numerically more important. Charles I. got into those difficulties which brought his comely head to the scaffold, and the beneficed clergy were made subject to visitation by order of the House of Commons and in large numbers turned adrift. That many of these clergy were illiterate and unfit for their office is true enough, but in the teeth of the protests made by the best men among the Puritan party, other tests than those of learning and piety were imposed and enforced. Loyalty to the dead King, or malignancy as it was termed, was counted to be a disqualification for a country par-

son; a sour observance of Sunday was reckoned as piety, and many a good man who had earned and deserved the love of his parishioners was evicted to make way for a Presbyterian. How many parsons were turned out during the Commonwealth it is hard to say, but many hundreds there certainly were, and among them were numbered some of the very choicest spirits of the age.

Purge No. 3 is the one best known in Nonconformist circles. It occurred after the restoration of the Stuarts, when two thousand of the clergy, including a large number of the intruders of the Commonwealth, were turned out of their livings for refusing to take the oath required by the Act of Uniformity. The celebrated Richard Baxter (who refused a bishopric) tells us in his Life, which is one of the best books in existence, how these evicted tenants were made up. The passage is too long to be here quoted, and it is enough to say that by this purge the Church of England lost a host of her clergy who had no objection to Bishops or to a Liturgy, who had never signed the Solemn League and Covenant, who had been against the Civil War, but who were unwilling, because unable, to give their unfeigned assent and consent to all and everything contained in the Book of Common Prayer. But they had to go. They were devout, they were learned, they were peaceful, they were sensible. It mattered not; out they went like Wesley's own grandfather, and were hunted from place to place like wolves.

Purge No. 4 has still to be endured. The Stuarts ran their destined course. The blessed restoration was in less than thirty years succeeded by the glorious revolution, and a fresh oath had, of course, to be invented as a burden upon the conscience of the established clergy. It was in form simple enough: "I, A. B., do sincerely promise and swear to bear true allegiance to their Majesties King William and Queen Mary." But to appreciate its horrid significance, we must remember that the now mouldy doctrines of "Divine right" and "passive

obedience" were then as much the talk of the clergy of the Church of England as incense, lights, and the sacramental theory are to-day. The books and pamphlets on these subjects may still be counted, though hardly read, in thousands. The Archbishop of Canterbury (Dr. Sancroft) and five of his brethren, including Bishop Ken, were deprived of their sees, and at least four hundred divines followed them into exile. These were the non-jurors, men of fabulous learning and primitive piety, who added evangelical fervour and simplicity to High Church doctrine. To read the lives of these men is to live among the saints and doctors, and their expulsion from the Church they alone loved and they alone could properly defend diverted into alien channels the very qualities we find so sorely lacking in the Anglican Church of the eighteenth century. How absurd to grumble at the Hoadlys and Watsons, the Hurds and the Warburtons! They were all that was left. Faith and fervour, primitive piety, Puritan zeal, Catholic devotion—each in its turn had been decimated and cast out. What a history it is! Whether you read it in the Roman page of Lingard and Dodd and Morris, or in the Anglican record of Collier, or turn over the biographies to be found in our old friends Walker and Calamy, what can you do but hold up your hands in horror and amazement? Wherever and whenever there was goodness, piety, faith, devotion, out it had to go. It was indeed as into a dungeon, stripped, swept, and bare, that the Church of England stepped at the revolution, and in that dungeon she lay for a hundred years. Since then many things have happened. There has been a revival of faith and fervour in the Church of England, so much so that Purge No. 5 may shortly be expected.

The reason why I have dwelt at great length on these facts of Church history is because we should have them in mind if we are to understand what may be called the *status quo ante bellum* John Wesley waged with the Devil in Great Britain.

Wesley's motive never eludes us. In his early manhood, after being greatly affected by Jeremy Taylor's *Holy Living and Dying* and the *Imitatio Christi*, and by Law's *Serious Call* and *Christian Perfection*, he met "a serious man," who said to him: "Sir, you wish to serve God and go to heaven. Remember, you cannot serve Him alone. You must therefore find companions or make them. The Bible knows nothing of solitary religion." He was very confident, this serious man, and Wesley never forgot his message: "You must find companions or make them. The Bible knows nothing of solitary religion." These words for ever sounded in Wesley's ears, determining his theology, which rejected the stern individualism of Calvin, and fashioning his whole polity, his famous class meetings, and generally gregarious methods.

> "Therefore to him it was given
> Many to save with himself."

We may continue the quotation and apply to Wesley the words of Mr. Arnold's memorial to his father:

> "Languor was not in his heart,
> Weakness not in his word,
> Weariness not on his brow."

If you ask what is the impression left upon the reader of the Journals as to the condition of England question, the answer will vary very much with the tenderness of the reader's conscience and with the extent of his acquaintance with the general behaviour of mankind at all times and in all places. Wesley himself is no alarmist, no sentimentalist; he never gushes, seldom exaggerates, and always writes on an easy level. Naturally enough he clings to the supernatural, and is always disposed to believe in the *bona fides* of ghosts and the diabolical origin of strange noises; but outside this realm of speculation Wesley describes things as he saw them. In the first published words of his friend Dr. Johnson,

"he meets with no basilisks that destroy with their eyes, his crocodiles devour their prey without tears, and his cataracts fall from the rocks without deafening the neighbouring inhabitants."

Wesley's humour is of the species donnish, and his modes and methods quietly persistent.

"On Thursday, the 20th May (1742), I set out. The next afternoon I stopped a little at Newport-Pagnell, and then rode on till I overtook a serious man, with whom I immediately fell into conversation. He presently gave me to know what his opinions were, therefore I said nothing to contradict them. But that did not content him. He was quite uneasy to know 'whether I held the doctrines of the decrees as he did;' but I told him over and over: 'We had better keep to practical things, lest we should be angry at one another.' And so we did for two miles, till he caught me unawares, and dragged me into the dispute before I knew where I was. He then grew warmer and warmer; told me I was rotten at heart, and supposed I was one of John Wesley's followers. I told him 'No. I am John Wesley himself.' Upon which

> 'Improvisum aspris Veluti qui sentibus anguem Presset——'

he would gladly have run away outright, but being the better mounted of the two I kept close to his side, and endeavoured to show him his heart till we came into the street of Northampton."

What a picture have we here of a fine May morning in 1742, the unhappy Calvinist trying to shake off the Arminian Wesley! But he cannot do it. *John Wesley is the better mounted of the two*, and so they scamper together into Northampton.

The England described in the Journal is an England still full of theology. All kinds of queer folk abound; strange subjects are discussed in odd places. There was drunkenness and cock-fighting, no doubt, but there were

also Deists, Mystics, Swedenborgians, Antinomians, Necessitarians, Anabaptists, Quakers, nascent heresies, and slow-dying delusions. Villages were divided into rival groups, which fiercely argued the nicest points in the aptest language. Nowadays in one's rambles a man is as likely to encounter a gray badger as a black Calvinist.

The clergy of the Established Church were jealous of Wesley's interference in their parishes, nor was this unnatural; he was not a Nonconformist, but a brother Churchman. What right had he to be so peripatetic? But Wesley seldom records any instance of gross clerical misconduct. Of one drunken parson he does indeed tell us, and he speaks disapprovingly of another whom he found one very hot day consuming a pot of beer in a lone ale-house. I am bound to confess I have never had any but kindly feelings toward that thirsty ecclesiastic. What, I wonder, was he thinking of as Wesley rode by? *Méditations Libres d'un Solitaire Inconnu*—unpublished!

When Wesley, with that dauntless courage of his—a courage which never forsook him, which he wore on every occasion with the delightful ease of a soldier—pushed his way into fierce districts, amid rough miners dwelling in their own village communities almost outside the law, what most strikes one with admiration, not less in Wesley's Journal than in George Fox's (a kindred though earlier volume), is the essential fitness for freedom of our rudest populations. They were coarse and brutal and savage, but rarely did they fail to recognise the high character and lofty motives of the dignified mortal who had travelled so far to speak to them. Wesley was occasionally hustled, and once or twice pelted with mud and stones, but at no time were his sufferings at the hands of the mob to be compared with the indignities it was long the fashion to heap upon the heads of Parliamentary candidates. The mob knew and appreciated the difference between a Bubb Dodington and a John Wesley.

I do not think any ordinary Englishman will be much

horrified at the demeanour of the populace. If there was disturbance it was usually quelled. At Norwich two soldiers who disturbed a congregation were seized and carried before their commanding officer, who ordered them to be soundly whipped. In Wesley's opinion they richly deserved all they got. He was no sentimentalist, although an enthusiast.

Where the reader of the Journal will be shocked is when his attention is called to the public side of the country—to the state of the gaols, to Newgate, to Bethlehem, to the criminal code, to the brutality of so many of the judges and the harshness of the magistrates, to the supineness of the bishops, to the extinction in high places of the missionary spirit—in short, to the heavy slumber of humanity.

Wesley was full of compassion—of a compassion wholly free from hysterics and credulity. In public affairs his was the composed zeal of a Howard. His efforts to penetrate the dark places were long in vain. He says in his dry way: "They won't let me go to Bedlam because they say I make the inmates mad, or into Newgate because I make them wicked." The reader of the Journal will be at no loss to see what these sapient magistrates meant. Wesley was a terribly exciting preacher, quiet though his manner was. He pushed matters home without flinching. He made people cry out and fall down, nor did it surprise him that they should. You will find some strange biographies in the Journal. Consider that of John Lancaster for a moment. He was a young fellow who fell into bad company, stole some velvet, and was sentenced to death, and lay for awhile in Newgate awaiting his hour. A good Methodist woman, Sarah Peters, obtained permission to visit him, though the fever was raging in the prison at the time. Lancaster had no difficulty in collecting six or seven other prisoners, all like himself waiting to be strangled, and Sarah Peters prayed with them and sang hymns, the clergy of the diocese being otherwise occupied.

When the eve of their execution arrived, the poor creatures begged that Sarah Peters might be allowed to remain with them to continue her exhortations; but this could not be. In her absence, however, they contrived to console one another, for that devilish device of a later age, solitary confinement, was then unknown. When the bellman came round at midnight to tell them, "Remember you are to die to-day," they cried out: "Welcome news—welcome news!" How they met their deaths you can read for yourselves in the Journal, which concludes the narrative with a true eighteenth century touch: "John Lancaster's body was carried away by a company hired by the surgeons, but a crew of sailors pursued them, took it from them by force, and delivered it to his mother, by which means it was decently interred in the presence of many who praised God on his behalf."

If you want to get into the last century, to feel its pulses throb beneath your finger, be content sometimes to leave the letters of Horace Walpole unturned, resist the drowsy temptation to waste your time over the learned triflers who sleep in the seventeen volumes of Nichols—nay, even deny yourself your annual reading of Boswell or your biennial retreat with Sterne, and ride up and down the country with the greatest force of the eighteenth century in England.

No man lived nearer the centre than John Wesley, neither Clive nor Pitt, neither Mansfield nor Johnson. You cannot cut him out of our national life. No single figure influenced so many minds, no single voice touched so many hearts. No other man did such a life's work for England. As a writer he has not achieved distinction. He was no Athanasius, no Augustine. He was ever a preacher and an organiser, a labourer in the service of humanity; but, happily for us, his Journals remain, and from them we can learn better than from anywhere else what manner of man he was, and the character of the times during which he lived and moved and had his being.

GEORGE BORROW.

MR. ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON, in his delightful *Memories and Portraits*, takes occasion to tell us, amongst a good many other things of the sort, that he has a great fancy for *The Bible in Spain*, by Mr. George Borrow. He has not, indeed, read it quite so often as he has Mr. George Meredith's *Egoist*, but still he is very fond of it. It is interesting to know this, interesting, that is, to the great Clan Stevenson who owe suit and service to their liege lord; but so far as Borrow is concerned, it does not matter, to speak frankly, two straws. The author of *Lavengro*, *The Romany Rye*, *The Bible in Spain*, and *Wild Wales* is one of those kings of literature who never need to number their tribe. His personality will always secure him an attendant company, who, when he pipes, must dance. A queer company it is too, even as was the company he kept himself, composed as it is of saints and sinners, gentle and simple, master and man, mistresses and maids; of those who, learned in the tongues, have read everything else, and of those who have read nothing else and do not want to. People there are for whom Borrow's books play the same part as did horses and dogs for the gentleman in the tall white hat whom David Copperfield met on the top of the Canterbury coach. "'Orses and dorgs," said that gentleman, "is some men's fancy. They are wittles and drink to me, lodging, wife and children, reading, writing, and 'rithmetic, snuff, tobacker, and sleep."

Nothing, indeed, is more disagreeable, even offensive, than to have anybody else's favourite author thrust down your throat. "Love me, love my dog," is a maxim of behaviour which deserves all the odium Charles Lamb

has heaped upon it. Still, it would be hard to go through life arm-in-arm with anyone who had stuck in the middle of *Guy Mannering*, or had bidden a final farewell to Jeannie Deans in the barn with the robbers near Gunnerly Hill in Lincolnshire. But, oddly enough, Borrow excites no such feelings. It is quite possible to live amicably in the same house with a person who has stuck hopelessly in the middle of *Wild Wales*, and who braves it out (what impudence !) by the assertion that the book is full of things like this : " Nothing worthy of commemoration took place during the two following days, save that myself and family took an evening walk on the Wednesday up the side of the Berwyn, for the purpose of botanising, in which we were attended by John Jones. There, amongst other plants, we found a curious moss which our good friend said was called in Welsh Corn Carw, or deer's horn, and which he said the deer were very fond of. On the Thursday he and I started on an expedition on foot to Ruthyn, distant about fourteen miles, proposing to return in the evening."

The book *is* full of things like this, and must be pronounced as arrant a bit of book-making as ever was. But judgment is not always followed by execution, and a more mirth-provoking error can hardly be imagined than for anyone to suppose that the admission of the fact—sometimes doubtless a damaging fact—namely, book-making, will for one moment shake the faithful in their certitude that *Wild Wales* is a delightful book ; not so delightful, indeed, as *Lavengro*, *The Romany Rye*, or *The Bible in Spain*, but still delightful because issuing from the same mint as they, stamped with the same physiognomy, and bearing the same bewitching inscription.

It is a mercy the people we love do not know how much we must forgive them. Oh the liberties they would take, the things they would do, were it to be revealed to them that their roots have gone far too deep into our soil for us to disturb them under any provocation whatsoever !

George Borrow has to be forgiven a great deal. The Appendix to *The Romany Rye* contains an assault upon the memory of Sir Walter Scott, of which every word is a blow. It is savage, cruel, unjustifiable. There is just enough of what base men call truth in it to make it one of the most powerful bits of devil's advocacy ever penned. Had another than Borrow written thus of the good Sir Walter, some men would travel far to spit upon his tomb. Quick and easy would have been his descent to the Avernus of oblivion. His books, torn from the shelf, should have long stood neglected in the shop of the second-hand, till the hour came for them to seek the stall, where, exposed to wind and weather, they should dolefully await the sack of the paper-merchant, whose holy office it should be to mash them into eternal pulp. But what rhodomontade is this! No books are more, in the vile phrase of the craft, "esteemed" than Borrow's. The prices demanded for the early editions already impinge upon the absurd, and are steadily rising. The fact is, there is no use blinking it, mankind cannot afford to quarrel with George Borrow, and will not do so. It is bad enough what he did, but when we remember that whatever he had done, we must have forgiven him all the same, it is just possible to thank Heaven (feebly) that it was no worse. He might have robbed a church!

Borrow is indeed one of those lucky men who, in Bagehot's happy phrase, "keep their own atmosphere," and as a consequence, when in the destined hour the born Borrovian—for men are born Borrovians, not made—takes up a volume of him, in ten minutes (unless it be *Wild Wales*, and then twenty must be allowed) the victory is won; down tumbles the standard of Respectability which through a virtuous and perhaps long life has braved the battle and the breeze; up flutters the lawless pennon of the Romany Chal, and away skims the reader's craft over seas, hitherto untravelled, in search of adventures, manifold and marvellous, nor in vain.

If one was in search of a single epithet most properly

descriptive of Borrow's effect upon his reader, perhaps it would best be found in the word "contagious." He is one of the most "catching" of our authors. The most inconsistent of men, he compels those who are born subject to his charm to share his inconsistencies. He was an agent of the Bible Society, and his extraordinary adventures in Spain were encountered, so at least his title-page would have us believe, in an attempt to circulate the Scriptures in the Peninsula. He was a sound Churchman, and would have nothing to do with Dissent, even in Wild Wales, but he had also a passion for the ring. Mark his devastations. It is as bad as the pestilence. A gentle lady, bred amongst the Quakers, a hater of physical force, with eyes brimful of mercy, was lately heard to say, in heightened tones, at a dinner-table, where the subject of momentary conversation was a late prize-fight: "Oh! pity was it that ever corruption should have crept in amongst them." "Amongst whom?" inquired her immediate neighbour. "Amongst the bruisers of England," was the terrific rejoinder. Deep were her blushes—and yet how easy to forgive her! The gentle lady spoke as one does in dreams; for, you must know, she was born a Borrovian, and only that afternoon had read for the first time the famous twenty-fifth chapter of *Lavengro*:

"But what a bold and vigorous aspect pugilism wore at that time! And the great battle was just then coming off; the day had been decided upon, and the spot—a convenient distance from the old town (Norwich); and to the old town were now flocking the bruisers of England, men of tremendous renown. Let no one sneer at the bruisers of England; what were the gladiators of Rome, or the bull-fighters of Spain, in its palmiest days, compared to England's bruisers? Pity that ever corruption should have crept in amongst them—but of that I wish not to talk. There they come, the bruisers from far London, or from wherever else they might chance to be at the time, to the great

rendezvous in the old city; some came one way, some another: some of tip-top reputation came with peers in their chariots, for glory and fame are such fair things that even peers are proud to have those invested therewith by their sides; others came in their own gigs, driving their own bits of blood; and I heard one say: 'I have driven through at a heat the whole hundred and eleven miles, and only stopped to bait twice!' Oh! the blood horses of old England! but they too have had their day—for everything beneath the sun there is a season and a time. . . . So the bruisers of England are come to be present at the grand fight speedily coming off; there they are met in the precincts of the old town, near the field of the chapel, planted with tender saplings at the restoration of sporting Charles, which are now become venerable elms, as high as many a steeple; there they are met at a fitting rendezvous, where a retired coachman with one leg keeps an hotel and a bowling-green. I think I now see them upon the bowling-green, the men of renown, amidst hundreds of people with no renown at all, who gaze upon them with timid wonder. Fame, after all, is a glorious thing, though it lasts only for a day. There's Cribb, the champion of England, and perhaps the best man in England—there he is, with his huge, massive figure, and face wonderfully like that of a lion. There is Belcher the younger—not the mighty one, who is gone to his place, but the Teucer Belcher, the most scientific pugilist that ever entered a ring, only wanting strength to be—I won't say what. . . . But how shall I name them all? They were there by dozens, and all tremendous in their way. There was Bulldog Hudson and fearless Scroggins, who beat the conqueror of Sam the Jew. There was Black Richmond—no, he was not there, but I knew him well. He was the most dangerous of blacks, even with a broken thigh. There was Purcell, who could never conquer till all seemed over with him. There was—what! shall I name thee last? Ay, why

not? I believe that thou art the last of all that strong family still above the sod, where may'st thou long continue—true piece of English stuff, Tom of Bedford, sharp as Winter, kind as Spring!"

No wonder the gentle lady was undone. It is as good as Homer.

Diderot, it will be remembered, once wrote a celebrated eulogium on Richardson, which some have thought exaggerated, because he says in it that, on the happening of certain events, in themselves improbable, he would keep *Clarissa* and *Sir Charles* on the same shelf with the writings of Moses, Homer, Euripides, and Sophocles. Why a literary man should not be allowed to arrange his library as he chooses, without being exposed to so awful a charge as that of exaggeration, it is hard to say. But no doubt the whole eulogium is pitched in too high a key for modern ears; still, it contains sensible remarks, amongst them this one: that he had observed that in a company where the writings of Richardson were being read, either privately or aloud, the conversation became at once interesting and animated. Books cannot be subjected to a truer test. Will they bear talking about? A parcel of friends can talk about Borrow's books for ever. The death of his father, as told in the last chapter of *Lavengro*. Is there anything of the kind more affecting in the library? Somebody is almost sure to say, "Yes, the death of Le Fevre in *Tristram Shandy*." A third, who always (provoking creature) likes best what she read last, will wax eloquent over the death of the little princess in Tolstoi's great book. The character-sketch of Borrow's elder brother, the self-abnegating artist who declined to paint the portrait of the Mayor of Norwich because he thought a friend of his could do it better, suggests De Quincey's marvellous sketch of his elder brother. And then, what about Benedict Moll, Joey the dog-fancier of Westminster, and that odious wretch the London publisher? You had need to be a deaf mute

to avoid taking part in a conversation like this. Who was Mary Fulcher? All the clocks in the parish will have struck midnight before that question has been answered. It is not to take a gloomy view of the world to say that there are few pleasanter things in it than a good talk about George Borrow.

For invalids and delicate persons leading retired lives, there are no books like Borrow's. Lassitude and Languor, horrid hags, simply pick up their trailing skirts and scuttle out of any room into which he enters. They cannot abide him. A single chapter of Borrow is air and exercise; and, indeed, the exercise is not always gentle. "I feel," said an invalid, laying down *The Bible in Spain*, as she spoke, upon the counterpane, "as if I had been gesticulating violently for the space of two hours." She then sank into deep sleep, and is now hale and hearty. Miss Martineau, in her *Life in the Sick Room*, invokes a blessing upon the head of Christopher North. But there were always those who refused to believe in Miss Martineau's illness, and certainly her avowed preference for the man whom Macaulay in his wrath, writing to Napier in Edinburgh, called "your grog-drinking, cock-fighting, cudgel-playing Professor of Moral Philosophy," is calculated to give countenance to this unworthy suspicion. It was an odd taste for an invalid who, whilst craving for vigour, must necessarily hate noise. Borrow is a vigorous writer, Wilson a noisy one. It was, however, his *Recreations*, and not the *Noctes Ambrosianæ*, that Miss Martineau affected. Still the *Recreations* are noisy too, and Miss Martineau must find her best excuse, and I am determined to find an excuse for her—for did she not write the *Feats on the Fiord?*—in the fact that when she wrote her *Life in the Sick Room* (a pleasant little book to read when in rude health), Borrow had published nothing of note. Had he done so, she would have been of my way of thinking.

How much of Borrow is true and how much is false

is one of those questions which might easily set all mankind by the ears, but for the pleasing circumstance that it does not matter a dump. Few things are more comical than to hear some douce body, unread in Borrow, gravely inquiring how far his word may be relied upon. The sole possible response takes the exceptionable shape of loud peals of laughter. And yet, surely, it is a most reasonable question, or query, as the Scotch say. So it is; but after you have read your author you won't ask it—you won't want to. The reader can believe what he likes, and as much as he likes. In the old woman on London Bridge and her convict son, in the man in black (how unlike Goldsmith's !), in the *Flaming Tinman*, in Ursula, the wife of Sylvester. There is but one person in whom you must believe, every hour of the day and of the night, else are you indeed unworthy —you must believe in Isopel Berners. A stranger and more pathetic figure than she is not to be seen flitting about in the great shadow-dance men call their life. Born and bred though she was in a workhouse, where she learnt to read and sew, fear God, and take her own part, a nobler, more lovable woman never crossed man's path. Her introduction to her historian was quaint. "Before I could put myself on my guard, she struck me a blow on the face, which had nearly brought me to the ground." Alas, poor Isopel ! Borrow returned the blow, a deadlier, fiercer blow, aimed not at the face but at the heart. Of their life in the Dingle let no man speak; it must be read in the last chapters of *Lavengro*, and the early ones of *The Romany Rye*. Borrow was certainly irritating. One longs to shake him. He was what children call "a tease." He teased poor Isopel with his confounded philology. Whether he simply made a mistake, or whether the girl was right in her final surmise, that he was "at the root mad," who can say? He offered her his hand, but at too late a stage in the proceedings. Isopel Berners left the Dingle to go to America, and we hear of her no more. That she lived

to become a happy "house-mother," and to start a line of brave men and chaste women, must be the prayer of all who know what it is to love a woman they have never seen. Of the strange love-making that went on in the Dingle no idea can or ought to be given save from the original.

"Thereupon I descended into the Dingle. Belle was sitting before the fire, at which the kettle was boiling. 'Were you waiting for me?' I inquired. 'Yes,' said Belle, 'I thought you would come, and I waited for you.' 'That was very kind,' said I. 'Not half so kind,' said she, 'as it was of you to get everything ready for me in the dead of last night, when there was scarcely a chance of my coming.' The tea-things were brought forward, and we sat down. 'Have you been far?' said Belle. 'Merely to that public-house,' said I, 'to which you directed me on the second day of our acquaintance.' 'Young men should not make a habit of visiting public-houses,' said Belle; 'they are bad places.' 'They may be so to some people,' said I, 'but I do not think the worst public-house in England could do me any harm.' 'Perhaps you are so bad already,' said Belle with a smile, 'that it would be impossible to spoil you.' 'How dare you catch at my words?' said I; 'come, I will make you pay for doing so—you shall have this evening the longest lesson in Armenian which I have yet inflicted upon you.' 'You may well say inflicted,' said Belle, 'but pray spare me. I do not wish to hear anything about Armenian, especially this evening.' 'Why this evening?' said I. Belle made no answer. 'I will not spare you,' said I; 'this evening I intend to make you conjugate an Armenian verb.' 'Well, be it so,' said Belle, 'for this evening you shall command.' 'To command is hramah-yel,' said I. 'Ram her ill indeed,' said Belle, 'I do not wish to begin with that.' 'No,' said I, 'as we have come to the verbs we will begin regularly: hramahyel is a verb of the second conjugation. We will begin with

the first.' 'First of all, tell me,' said Belle, 'what a verb is.' 'A part of speech,' said I, 'which, according to the dictionary, signifies some action or passion; for example, "I command you, or I hate you."' 'I have given you no cause to hate me,' said Belle, looking me sorrowfully in the face.

"'I was merely giving two examples,' said I, 'and neither was directed at you. In those examples, to command and hate are verbs. Belle, in Armenian there are four conjugations of verbs; the first ends in al, the second in yel, the third in oul, and the fourth in il. Now, have you understood me?'

"'I am afraid, indeed, it will all end ill,' said Belle. 'Hold your tongue!' said I, 'or you will make me lose my patience.' 'You have already made me nearly lose mine,' said Belle. 'Let us have no unprofitable interruptions,' said I. 'The conjugations of the Armenian verbs are neither so numerous nor so difficult as the declensions of the nouns. Hear that and rejoice. Come, we will begin with the verb hntal, a verb of the first conjugation, which signifies to rejoice. Come along: hntam, I rejoice; hntas, thou rejoicest. Why don't you follow, Belle?'

"'I am sure I don't rejoice, whatever you may do,' said Belle. 'The chief difficulty, Belle,' said I, 'that I find in teaching you the Armenian grammar proceeds from your applying to yourself and me every example I give. Rejoice, in this instance, is merely an example of an Armenian verb of the first conjugation, and has no more to do with your rejoicing than lal, which is also a verb of the first conjugation, and which signifies to weep, would have to do with your weeping, provided I made you conjugate it. Come along: hntam, I rejoice; hntas, thou rejoicest; hnta, he rejoices; hntamk, we rejoice. Now repeat those words.' 'I can't bear this much longer,' said Belle. 'Keep yourself quiet,' said I. 'I wish to be gentle with you, and to convince you, we will skip hntal, and also, for the

present, verbs of the first conjugation, and proceed to the second. Belle, I will now select for you to conjugate the prettiest verb in Armenian, not only of the second, but also of all the four conjugations. That verb is siriel. Here is the present tense: siriem, siries, sire, siriemk, sirèk, sirien. Come on, Belle, and say siriem.' Belle hesitated. 'Pray oblige me, Belle, by saying siriem.' Belle still appeared to hesitate. 'You must admit, Belle, that it is softer than hntam.' 'It is so,' said Belle, 'and to oblige you I will say siriem.' 'Very well indeed, Belle,' said I; 'and now to show you how verbs act upon pronouns in Armenian, I will say siriem zkiez. Please to repeat siriem zkiez.' 'Siriem zkiez,' said Belle; 'that last word is very hard to say.' 'Sorry that you think so, Belle,' said I. 'Now, please to say siriá zis.' Belle did so. 'Exceedingly well,' said I. 'Now say girani thè sireir zis.' 'Girane thè sireir zis,' said Belle. 'Capital!' said I. 'You have now said, I love you—love me. Ah! would that you would love me!'

"'And I have said all these things?' said Belle. 'Yes,' said I. 'You have said them in Armenian.' 'I would have said them in no language that I understood,' said Belle. 'And it was very wrong of you to take advantage of my ignorance, and make me say such things!' 'Why so?' said I. 'If you said them, I said them too.'"

"Was ever woman in this humour wooed?"

It is, I believe, the opinion of the best critics that *The Bible in Spain* is Borrow's masterpiece. It very likely is so. At the present moment I feel myself even more than usually disqualified for so grave a consideration, by my overpowering delight in its dear deluding title. A quarter of a century ago, in all decent homes, a boy's reading was, by the stern decree of his elders, divided rigorously, though at the same time it must be admitted crudely, into Sunday books and week-day books. "What have you got there?" has before now been an inquiry addressed on a Sunday afternoon to

some youngster, suspiciously engrossed in a book. "Oh, *The Bible in Spain*," would be the reply. "It is written by a Mr. Borrow, you know, and it is all about" —(then the title-page would come in useful) "his attempts 'to circulate the Scriptures in the Peninsula!'" "Indeed! Sounds most suitable," answers the gulled authority, some foolish sisters'-governess or the like illiterate, and moves off. And then the happy boy would wriggle in his chair, and, as if thirsting to taste the first fruits of his wile, hastily seek out a streaky page, and there read, for perhaps the hundredth time, the memorable words:

"'Good are the horses of the Moslems,' said my old friend; 'where will you find such? They will descend rocky mountains at full speed, and neither trip nor fall; but you must be cautious with the horses of the Moslems, and treat them with kindness, for the horses of the Moslems are proud, and they like not being slaves. When they are young and first mounted, jerk not their mouths with your bit, for be sure if you do, they will kill you; sooner or later, you will perish beneath their feet. Good are our horses, and good our riders. Yea, very good are the Moslems at mounting the horse; who are like them? I once saw a Frank rider compete with a Moslem on this beach, and at first the Frank rider had it all his own way and he passed the Moslem, but the course was long, very long, and the horse of the Frank rider, which was a Frank horse also, panted; but the horse of the Moslem panted not, for he was a Moslem also, and the Moslem rider at last gave a cry, and the horse sprang forward and he overtook the Frank horse, and then the Moslem rider stood up in his saddle. How did he stand? Truly he stood on his head, and these eyes saw him; he stood on his head in the saddle as he passed the Frank rider; and he cried ha! ha! as he passed the Frank rider; and the Moslem horse cried ha! ha! as he passed the Frank breed, and the Frank lost by a far distance. Good are the Franks,

good their horses; but better are the Moslems, and better the horses of the Moslems.'"

That boy, as he lay curled up in his chair, doting over the enchanted page, knew full well, else had he been no Christian boy, that it was not a Sunday book which was making his eyes start out of his head; yet, reckless, he cried, "ha! ha!" and read on, and as he read he blessed the madcap Borrow for having called his romance by the sober-sounding, propitiatory title of *The Bible in Spain!*

"Creeds pass, rites change, no altar standeth whole."

In a world of dust and ashes it is a foolish thing to prophesy immortality, or even a long term of years, for any fellow-mortal. Good luck does not usually pursue such predictions. England can boast few keener, better-qualified critics than that admirable woman, Mrs. Barbauld, or, not to dock her of her accustomed sizings, Mrs. Anna Lætitia Barbauld. And yet what do we find her saying? "The young may melt into tears at *Julia Mandeville*, and *The Man of Feeling*, the romantic will shudder at *Udolpho*, but those of mature age who know what human nature is will take up again and again Dr. Moore's *Zeluco*." One hates to contradict a lady like Mrs. Barbauld, or to speak in terms of depreciation of any work of Mrs. Radcliffe's, whose name is still as a pleasant savour in the nostrils; therefore I will let *Udolpho* alone. As for Henry Mackenzie's *Man of Feeling*, what was good enough for Sir Walter Scott ought surely to be good enough for us, most days. I am no longer young, and cannot therefore be expected to melt into tears at *Julia Mandeville*, but here my toleration is exhausted. Dr. Moore's *Zeluco* is too much; maturity has many ills to bear, but repeated perusals of this work cannot fairly be included amongst them.

Still, though prediction is to be avoided, it is impossible to feel otherwise than very cheerful about George Borrow. His is a good life. Anyhow, he will outlive most people, and that at all events is a comfort.

CARLYLE.

THE accomplishments of our race have of late become so varied, that it is often no easy task to assign him whom we would judge to his proper station among men; and yet, until this has been done, the guns of our criticism cannot be accurately levelled, and as a consequence the greater part of our fire must remain futile. He, for example, who would essay to take account of Mr. Gladstone, must read much else besides Hansard; he must brush up his Homer, and set himself to acquire some theology. The place of Greece in the providential order of the world, and of laymen in the Church of England, must be considered, together with a host of other subjects of much apparent irrelevance to a statesman's life. So too in the case of his distinguished rival, whose death eclipsed the gaiety of politics and banished epigram from Parliament: keen must be the critical faculty which can nicely discern where the novelist ended and the statesman began in Benjamin Disraeli.

Happily, no such difficulty is now before us. Thomas Carlyle was a writer of books, and he was nothing else. Beneath this judgment he would have winced, but have remained silent, for the facts are so.

Little men sometimes, though not perhaps so often as is taken for granted, complain of their destiny, and think they have been hardly treated, in that they have been allowed to remain so undeniably small; but great men, with hardly an exception, nauseate their greatness, for not being of the particular sort they most fancy. The poet Gray was passionately fond, so his biographers tell us, of military history; but he took no Quebec. General Wolfe took Quebec, and whilst he was taking it, recorded

the fact that he would sooner have written Gray's *Elegy;* and so Carlyle—who panted for action, who hated eloquence, whose heroes were Cromwell and Wellington, Arkwright and the "rugged Brindley," who beheld with pride and no ignoble envy the bridge at Auldgarth his mason-father had helped to build half a century before, and then exclaimed, "A noble craft, that of a mason; a good building will last longer than most books—than one book in a million;" who despised men of letters, and abhorred the "reading public;" whose gospel was Silence and Action—spent his life in talking and writing; and his legacy to the world is thirty-four volumes octavo.

There is a familiar melancholy in this; but the critic has no need to grow sentimental. We must have men of thought as well as men of action: poets as much as generals; authors no less than artisans; libraries at least as much as militia; and therefore we may accept and proceed critically to examine Carlyle's thirty-four volumes, remaining somewhat indifferent to the fact that, had he had the fashioning of his own destiny, we should have had at his hands blows instead of books.

Taking him, then, as he was—a man of letters—perhaps the best type of such since Dr. Johnson died in Fleet Street, what are we to say of his thirty-four volumes?

In them are to be found criticism, biography, history, politics, poetry, and religion. I mention this variety because of a foolish notion, at one time often found suitably lodged in heads otherwise empty, that Carlyle was a passionate old man, dominated by two or three extravagant ideas, to which he was for ever giving utterance in language of equal extravagance. The thirty-four volumes octavo render this opinion untenable by those who can read. Carlyle cannot be killed by an epigram, nor can the many influences that moulded him be referred to any single source. The rich banquet his genius has spread for us is of many courses. The fire and fury of the Latter-Day pamphlets may be disregarded by the peaceful soul, and the preference given to the

"Past" of *Past and Present*, which, with its intense and sympathetic mediævalism, might have been written by a Tractarian. The *Life of Sterling* is the favourite book of many who would sooner pick oakum than read *Frederick the Great* all through; whilst the mere student of *belles lettres* may attach importance to the essays on Johnson, Burns, and Scott, on Voltaire and Diderot, on Goethe and Novalis, and yet remain blankly indifferent to *Sartor Resartus* and the *French Revolution*.

But true as this is, it is none the less true that, excepting possibly the *Life of Schiller*, Carlyle wrote nothing not clearly recognisable as his. All his books are his very own—bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh. They are not stolen goods, nor elegant exhibitions of recently and hastily acquired wares.

This being so, it may be as well if, before proceeding any further, I attempt, with a scrupulous regard to brevity, to state what I take to be the invariable indications of Mr. Carlyle's literary handiwork—the tokens of his presence—"Thomas Carlyle, his mark."

First of all, it may be stated, without a shadow of a doubt, that he is one of those who would sooner be wrong with Plato than right with Aristotle; in one word, he is a mystic. What he says of Novalis may with equal truth be said of himself: "He belongs to that class of persons who do not recognise the syllogistic method as the chief organ for investigating truth, or feel themselves bound at all times to stop short where its light fails them. Many of his opinions he would despair of proving in the most patient court of law, and would remain well content that they should be disbelieved there." In philosophy we shall not be very far wrong if we rank Carlyle as a follower of Bishop Berkeley; for an idealist he undoubtedly was. "Matter," says he, "exists only spiritually, and to represent some idea, and body it forth. Heaven and Earth are but the time-vesture of the Eternal. The Universe is but one vast symbol of God; nay, if thou wilt have it, what is man

himself but a symbol of God? Is not all that he does symbolical, a revelation to sense of the mystic God-given force that is in him?—a gospel of Freedom, which he, the 'Messias of Nature,' preaches as he can by act and word." "Yes, Friends," he elsewhere observes, "not our logical mensurative faculty, but our imaginative one, is King over us, I might say Priest and Prophet, to lead us heavenward, or magician and wizard to lead us hellward. The understanding is indeed thy window—too clear thou canst not make it; but phantasy is thy eye, with its colour-giving retina, healthy or diseased." It would be easy to multiply instances of this, the most obvious and interesting trait of Mr. Carlyle's writing; but I must bring my remarks upon it to a close by reminding you of his two favourite quotations, which have both significance. One from Shakspeare's *Tempest*:

> "We are such stuff
> As dreams are made of, and our little life
> Is rounded with a sleep;"

the other, the exclamation of the Earth-spirit, in Goethe's *Faust*:

> "'Tis thus at the roaring loom of Time I ply,
> And weave for God the garment thou seest Him by."

But this is but one side of Carlyle. There is another as strongly marked, which is his second note; and that is what he somewhere calls "his stubborn realism." The combination of the two is as charming as it is rare. No one at all acquainted with his writings can fail to remember his almost excessive love of detail; his lively taste for facts, simply as facts. Imaginary joys and sorrows may extort from him nothing but grunts and snorts; but let him only worry out for himself, from that great dust-heap called "history," some undoubted fact of human and tender interest, and, however small it may be, relating possibly to some one hardly known, and playing but a small part in the events he is recording,

and he will wax amazingly sentimental, and perhaps shed as many real tears as Sterne or Dickens do sham ones over their figments. This realism of Carlyle's gives a great charm to his histories and biographies. The amount he tells you is something astonishing—no platitudes, no rigmarole, no common-form, articles which are the staple of most biography, but, instead of them, all the facts and features of the case—pedigree, birth, father and mother, brothers and sisters, education, physiognomy, personal habits, dress, mode of speech; nothing escapes him. It was a characteristic criticism of his, on one of Miss Martineau's American books, that the story of the way Daniel Webster used to stand before the fire with his hands in his pockets was worth all the politics, philosophy, political economy, and sociology to be found in other portions of the good lady's writings. Carlyle's eye was indeed a terrible organ: he saw everything. Emerson, writing to him, says: "I think you see as pictures every street, church, Parliament-house, barracks, baker's shop, mutton-stall, forge, wharf, and ship, and whatever stands, creeps, rolls, or swims thereabout, and make all your own." He crosses over, one rough day, to Dublin; and he jots down in his diary the personal appearance of some unhappy creatures he never saw before or expected to see again; how men laughed, cried, swore, were all of huge interest to Carlyle. Give him a fact, he loaded you with thanks; propound a theory, you were rewarded with the most vivid abuse.

This intense love for, and faculty of perceiving, what one may call the "concrete picturesque," accounts for his many hard sayings about fiction and poetry. He could not understand people being at the trouble of inventing characters and situations when history was full of men and women; when streets were crowded and continents were being peopled under their very noses. Emerson's sphynx-like utterances irritated him at times, as they well might; his orations and the like. "I long," he says, "to see some *concrete thing*, some

Event—Man's Life, American Forest, or piece of Creation which this Emerson loves and wonders at, well *Emersonised*, depicted by Emerson—filled with the life of Emerson, and cast forth from him then to live by itself." * But Carlyle forgot the sluggishness of the ordinary imagination, and, for the moment, the stupendous dulness of the ordinary historian. It cannot be matter for surprise that people prefer Smollett's *Humphrey Clinker* to his *History of England*.

The third and last mark to which I call attention is his humour. Nowhere, surely, in the whole field of English literature, Shakspeare excepted, do you come upon a more abundant vein of humour than Carlyle's, though I admit that the quality of the ore is not of the finest. His every production is bathed in humour. This must never be, though it often has been, forgotten. He is not to be taken literally. He is always a humourist, not unfrequently a writer of burlesque, and occasionally a buffoon.

Although the spectacle of Mr. Swinburne taking Mr. Carlyle to task, as he recently did, for indelicacy, has an oddity all its own, so far as I am concerned I cannot but concur with this critic in thinking that Carlyle has laid himself open, particularly in his *Frederick the Great*, to the charge one usually associates with the great and terrible name of Dean Swift; but it is the Dean with a difference, and the difference is all in Carlyle's favour. The former deliberately pelts you with dirt, as did in

* One need scarcely add, nothing of the sort ever proceeded from Emerson. How should it? Where was it to come from? When, to employ language of Mr. Arnold's own, "any poor child of nature" overhears the author of *Essays in Criticism* telling two worlds that Emerson's *Essays* are the most valuable prose contributions to the literature of the century, his soul is indeed filled "with an unutterable sense of lamentation and mourning and woe." Mr. Arnold's silence was once felt to be provoking. Wordsworth's lines kept occurring to one's mind—

> "Poor Matthew, all his frolics o'er,
> Is silent as a standing pool."

But it was better so.

old days gentlemen electors their parliamentary candidates; the latter only occasionally splashes you, as does a public vehicle pursuing on a wet day its uproarious course.

These, then, I take to be Carlyle's three principal marks or notes: mysticism in thought, realism in description, and humour in both.

To proceed now to his actual literary work.

First, then, I would record the fact that he was a great critic, and this at a time when our literary criticism was a scandal. He more than any other has purged our vision and widened our horizons in this great matter. He taught us there was no sort of finality, but only nonsense, in that kind of criticism which was content with laying down some foreign masterpiece with the observation that it was not suited for the English taste. He was, if not the first, almost the first critic, who pursued in his criticism the historical method, and sought to make us understand what we were required to judge. It has been said that Carlyle's criticisms are not final, and that he has not said the last word about Voltaire, Diderot, Richter, and Goethe. I can well believe it. But reserving "last words" for the use of the last man (to whom they would appear to belong), it is surely something to have said the *first* sensible words uttered in English on these important subjects. We ought not to forget the early days of the *Foreign and Quarterly Review*. We have critics now, quieter, more reposeful souls, taking their ease on Zion, who have entered upon a world ready to welcome them, whose keen rapiers may cut velvet better than did the two-handed broadsword of Carlyle, and whose later date may enable them to discern what their forerunner failed to perceive; but when the critics of this century come to be criticised by the critics of the next, an honourable, if not the highest place will be awarded to Carlyle.

Turn we now to the historian and biographer. History and biography much resemble one another in the pages

of Carlyle, and occupy more than half his thirty-four volumes; nor is this to be wondered at, since they afford him fullest scope for his three strong points—his love of the wonderful; his love of telling a story, as the children say, "from the very beginning;" and his humour. His view of history is sufficiently lofty. History, says he, is the true epic poem, a universal divine scripture whose plenary inspiration no one out of Bedlam shall bring into question. Nor is he quite at one with the ordinary historian as to the true historical method. "The time seems coming when he who sees no world but that of courts and camps, and writes only how soldiers were drilled and shot, and how this ministerial conjurer out-conjured that other, and then guided, or at least held, something which he called the rudder of Government, but which was rather the spigot of Taxation, wherewith in place of steering he could tax, will pass for a more or less instructive Gazetteer, but will no longer be called an Historian."

Nor does the philosophical method of writing history please him any better:

"Truly if History is Philosophy teaching by examples, the writer fitted to compose history is hitherto an unknown man. Better were it that mere earthly historians should lower such pretensions, more suitable for omniscience than for human science, and aiming only at some picture of the things acted, which picture itself will be a poor approximation, leave the inscrutable purport of them an acknowledged secret—or at most, in reverent faith, pause over the mysterious vestiges of Him whose path is in the great deep of Time, whom History indeed reveals, but only all History and in Eternity will clearly reveal."

This same transcendental way of looking at things is very noticeable in the following view of Biography: "For, as the highest gospel was a Biography, so is the life of every good man still an indubitable gospel, and preaches to the eye and heart and whole man, so that

devils even must believe and tremble, these gladdest tidings. Man is heaven-born—not the thrall of circumstances, of necessity, but the victorious subduer thereof." These, then, being his views, what are we to say of his works? His three principal historical works are, as every one knows, *Cromwell*, *The French Revolution*, and *Frederick the Great*, though there is a very considerable amount of other historical writing scattered up and down his works. But what are we to say of these three? If he, by virtue of them, entitled to the rank and influence of a great historian? What have we a right to demand of an historian? First, surely, stern veracity, which implies not merely knowledge but honesty. An historian stands in a fiduciary position towards his readers, and if he withholds from them important facts likely to influence their judgment, he is guilty of fraud, and, when justice is done in this world, will be condemned to refund all moneys he has made by his false professions, with compound interest. This sort of fraud is unknown to the law, but to nobody else. "Let me know the facts!" may well be the agonised cry of the student who finds himself floating down what Arnold has called "the vast Mississippi of falsehood, History." Secondly comes a catholic temper and way of looking at things. The historian should be a gentleman and possess a moral breadth of temperament. There should be no bitter protesting spirit about him. He should remember the world he has taken upon himself to write about is a large place, and that nobody set him up over us. Thirdly, he must be a born story-teller. If he is not this, he has mistaken his vocation. He may be a great philosopher, a useful editor, a profound scholar, and anything else his friends like to call him, except a great historian. How does Carlyle meet these requirements? His veracity, that is, his laborious accuracy, is admitted by the only persons competent to form an opinion, namely, independent investigators who have followed in his track; but what may be called the internal evidence of the case also

supplies a strong proof of it. Carlyle was, as every one knows, a hero-worshipper. It is part of his mysticism. With him man, as well as God, is a spirit, either of good or evil, and as such should be either worshipped or reviled. He is never himself till he has discovered or invented a hero; and, when he has got him, he tosses and dandles him as a mother her babe. This is a terrible temptation to put in the way of an historian, and few there be who are found able to resist it. How easy to keep back an ugly fact, sure to be a stumbling-block in the way of weak brethren! Carlyle is above suspicion in this respect. He knows no reticence. Nothing restrains him; not even the so-called proprieties of history. He may, after his boisterous fashion, pour scorn upon you for looking grave, as you read in his vivid pages of the reckless manner in which too many of his heroes drove coaches-and-six through the Ten Commandments. As likely as not he will call you a blockhead, and tell you to close your wide mouth and cease shrieking. But, dear me! hard words break no bones, and it is an amazing comfort to know the facts. Is he writing of Cromwell?—down goes everything—letters, speeches, as they were written, as they were delivered. Few great men are edited after this fashion. Were they to be so—Luther, for example—many eyes would be opened very wide. Nor does Carlyle fail in comment. If the Protector makes a somewhat distant allusion to the Barbadoes, Carlyle is at your elbow to tell you it means his selling people to work as slaves in the West Indies. As for Mirabeau, "our wild Gabriel Honoré," well! we are told all about him; nor is Frederick let off a single absurdity or atrocity. But when we have admitted the veracity, what are we to say of the catholic temper, the breadth of temperament, the wide Shakspearian tolerance? Carlyle ought to have them all. By nature he was tolerant enough; so true a humourist could never be a bigot. When his war-paint is not on, a child might lead him. His judgments are gracious, chivalrous, tinged

with a kindly melancholy and divine pity. But this mood is never for long. Some gadfly stings him: he seizes his tomahawk and is off on the trail. It must sorrowfully be admitted that a long life of opposition and indigestion, of fierce warfare with cooks and Philistines, spoilt his temper, never of the best, and made him too often contemptuous, savage, unjust. His language then becomes unreasonable, unbearable, bad. Literature takes care of herself. You disobey her rules: well and good, she shuts her door in your face; you plead your genius: she replies, "Your temper," and bolts it. Carlyle has deliberately destroyed, by his own wilfulness, the value of a great deal he has written. It can never become classical. Alas! that this should be true of too many eminent Englishmen of our time. Language such as was, at one time, almost habitual with Mr. Ruskin, is a national humiliation, giving point to the Frenchman's sneer as to our distinguishing literary characteristic being "*la brutalité*." In Carlyle's case much must be allowed for his rhetoric and humour. In slang phrase, he always "piles it on." Does a bookseller misdirect a parcel, he exclaims, "My malison on all Blockheadisms and Torpid Infidelities of which this world is full." Still, all allowances made, it is a thousand pities; and one's thoughts turn away from this stormy old man and take refuge in the quiet haven of the Oratory at Birmingham, with his great Protagonist, who, throughout an equally long life spent in painful controversy, and wielding weapons as terrible as Carlyle's own, has rarely forgotten to be urbane, and whose every sentence is a "thing of beauty." It must, then, be owned that too many of Carlyle's literary achievements "lack a gracious somewhat." By force of his genius he "smites the rock and spreads the water;" but then, like Moses, "he desecrates, belike, the deed in doing."

Our third requirement was, it may be remembered, the gift of the story-teller. Here one is on firm ground.

Where is the equal of the man who has told us the story of *The Diamond Necklace?*

It is the vogue, nowadays, to sneer at picturesque writing. Professor Seeley, for reasons of his own, appears to think that whilst politics, and, I presume, religion, may be made as interesting as you please, history should be as dull as possible. This, surely, is a jaundiced view. If there is one thing it is legitimate to make more interesting than another, it is the varied record of man's life upon earth. So long as we have human hearts and await human destinies, so long as we are alive to the pathos, the dignity, the comedy of human life, so long shall we continue to rank above the philosopher, higher than the politician, the great artist, be he called dramatist or historian, who makes us conscious of the divine movement of events, and of our fathers who were before us. Of course we assume accuracy and labour in our animated historian; though, for that matter, other things being equal, I prefer a lively liar to a dull one.

Carlyle is sometimes as irresistible as "The Campbells are Coming," or "Auld Lang Syne." He has described some men and some events once and for all, and so takes his place with Thucydides, Tacitus and Gibbon. Pedants may try hard to forget this, and may in their laboured nothings seek to ignore the author of *Cromwell* and *The French Revolution;* but as well might the pedestrian in Cumberland or Inverness seek to ignore Helvellyn or Ben Nevis. Carlyle is *there*, and will remain there, when the pedant of to-day has been superseded by the pedant of to-morrow.

Remembering all this, we are apt to forget his faults, his eccentricities, and vagaries, his buffooneries, his too-outrageous cynicisms and his too-intrusive egotisms, and to ask ourselves—if it be not this man, who is it then to be? Macaulay, answer some; and Macaulay's claims are not of the sort to go unrecognised in a world which loves clearness of expression and of view only too well. Macaulay's position never admitted of doubt. We know

what to expect, and we always get it. It is like the old days of W. G. Grace's cricket. We went to see the leviathan slog for six, and we saw it. We expected him to do it, and he did it. So with Macaulay—the good Whig, as he takes up the History, settles himself down in his chair, and knows it is going to be a bad time for the Tories. Macaulay's style—his much-praised style—is ineffectual for the purpose of telling the truth about anything. It is splendid, but *splendide mendax*, and in Macaulay's case the style was the man. He had enormous knowledge, and a noble spirit; his knowledge enriched his style and his spirit consecrated it to the service of Liberty. We do well to be proud of Macaulay; but we must add that, great as was his knowledge, great also was his ignorance, which was none the less ignorance because it was wilful; noble as was his spirit, the range of subject over which it energised was painfully restricted. He looked out upon the world, but, behold, only the Whigs were good. Luther and Loyola, Cromwell and Claverhouse, Carlyle and Newman—they moved him not; their enthusiasms were delusions, and their politics demonstrable errors. Whereas, of Lord Somers and Charles first Earl Grey it is impossible to speak without emotion. But the world does not belong to the Whigs; and a great historian must be capable of sympathising both with delusions and demonstrable errors. Mr. Gladstone has commented with force upon what he calls Macaulay's invincible ignorance, and further says that to certain aspects of a case (particularly those aspects most pleasing to Mr. Gladstone) Macaulay's mind was hermetically sealed. It is difficult to resist these conclusions; and it would appear no rash inference from them, that a man in a state of invincible ignorance and with a mind hermetically sealed, whatever else he may be—orator, advocate, statesman, journalist, man of letters—can never be a great historian. But, indeed, when one remembers Macaulay's limited range of ideas: the commonplaceness of his morality, and of

his descriptions ; his absence of humour, and of pathos—for though Miss Martineau says she found one pathetic passage in the History, I have often searched for it in vain ; and then turns to Carlyle—to his almost bewildering affluence of thought, fancy, feeling, humour, pathos—his biting pen, his scorching criticism, his world-wide sympathy (save in certain moods) with everything but the smug commonplace—to prefer Macaulay to him, is like giving the preference to Birket Foster over Salvator Rosa. But if it is not Macaulay, who is it to be ? Mr. Hepworth Dixon or Mr. Froude ? Of Bishop Stubbs and Professor Freeman it behoves every ignoramus to speak with respect. Horny-handed sons of toil, they are worthy of their wage. Carlyle has somewhere struck a distinction between the historical artist and the historical artisan. The bishop and the professor are historical artisans; artists they are not—and the great historian is a great artist.

England boasts two such artists: Edward Gibbon and Thomas Carlyle. The elder historian may be compared to one of the great Alpine roadways—sublime in its conception, heroic in its execution, superb in its magnificent uniformity of good workmanship. The younger resembles one of his native streams, pent in at times between huge rocks, and tormented into foam, and then effecting its escape down some precipice, and spreading into cool expanses below ; but however varied may be its fortunes—however startling its changes—always in motion, always in harmony with the scene around. Is it gloomy ? It is with the gloom of the thunder-cloud. Is it bright ? It is with the radiance of the sun.

It is with some consternation that I approach the subject of Carlyle's politics. One handles them as does an inspector of police a parcel reported to contain dynamite. The Latter Day Pamphlets might not unfitly be labelled "Dangerous Explosives."

In this matter of politics there were two Carlyles ; and, as generally happens in such cases, his last state was worse than his first. Up to 1843, he not unfairly

might be called a Liberal—of uncertain vote it may be—a man difficult to work with, and impatient of discipline, but still aglow with generous heat; full of large-hearted sympathy with the poor and oppressed, and of intense hatred of the cruel and shallow sophistries that then passed for maxims, almost for axioms, of government. In the year 1819, when the yeomanry round Glasgow was called out to keep down some dreadful monsters called "Radicals," Carlyle describes how he met an advocate of his acquaintance hurrying along, musket in hand, to his drill on the Links. "You should have the like of this," said he, cheerily patting his gun. "Yes," was the reply, "but I haven't yet quite settled on which side." And when he did make his choice, on the whole he chose rightly. The author of that noble pamphlet "Chartism," published in 1840, was at least once a Liberal. Let me quote a passage that has stirred to effort many a generous heart now cold in death: "Who would suppose that Education were a thing which had to be advocated on the ground of local expediency, or indeed on any ground? As if it stood not on the basis of an everlasting duty, as a prime necessity of man! It is a thing that should need no advocating; much as it does actually need. To impart the gift of thinking to those who cannot think, and yet who could in that case think: this, one would imagine, was the first function a government had to set about discharging. Were it not a cruel thing to see, in any province of an empire, the inhabitants living all mutilated in their limbs, each strong man with his right arm lamed? How much crueller to find the strong soul with its eyes still sealed—its eyes extinct, so that it sees not! Light has come into the world; but to this poor peasant it has come in vain. For six thousand years the sons of Adam, in sleepless effort, have been devising, doing, discovering; in mysterious, infinite, indissoluble communion, warring, a little band of brothers, against the black empire of necessity and night; they have accomplished such a

conquest and conquests; and to this man it is all as if it had not been. The four-and-twenty letters of the alphabet are still runic enigmas to him. He passes by on the other side; and that great spiritual kingdom, the toil-won conquest of his own brothers, all that his brothers have conquered, is a thing not extant for him. An invisible empire; he knows it not—suspects it not. And is not this his withal; the conquest of his own brothers, the lawfully acquired possession of all men? Baleful enchantment lies over him, from generation to generation; he knows not that such an empire is his—that such an empire is his at all. . . . Heavier wrong is not done under the sun. It lasts from year to year, from century to century; the blinded sire slaves himself out, and leaves a blinded son: and men, made in the image of God, continue as two-legged beasts of labour: and in the largest empire of the world it is a debate whether a small fraction of the revenue of one day shall, after thirteen centuries, be laid out on it, or not laid out on it. Have we governors? Have we teachers? Have we had a Church these thirteen hundred years? What is an overseer of souls, an archoverseer, archiepiscopus? Is he something? If so, let him lay his hand on his heart and say what thing!"

Nor was the man who in 1843 wrote as follows altogether at sea in politics:

"Of Time Bill, Factory Bill, and other such Bills, the present editor has no authority to speak. He knows not, it is for others than he to know, in what specific ways it may be feasible to interfere with legislation between the workers and the master-workers—knows only and sees that legislative interference, and interferences not a few, are indispensable. Nay, interference has begun; there are already factory inspectors. Perhaps there might be mine inspectors too. Might there not be furrow-field inspectors withal, to ascertain how, on 7s. 6d. a week, a human family does live? Again, are not sanitary regulations possible for a legislature? Baths, free air, a

wholesome temperature, ceilings twenty feet high, might be ordained by Act of Parliament in all establishments licensed as mills. There are such mills already extant—honour to the builders of them. The legislature can say to others, 'Go you and do likewise—better if you can.'"

By no means a bad programme for 1843; and a good part of it has been carried out, but with next to no aid from Carlyle.

The Radical party has struggled on as best it might, without the author of *Chartism* and *The French Revolution*—

"They have marched prospering, not through his presence;"

and it is no party spirit that leads one to regret the change of mind which prevented the later public life of this great man, and now the memory of it, from being enriched with something better than a five-pound note for Governor Eyre.

But it could not be helped. What brought about the rupture was his losing faith in the ultimate destiny of man upon earth. No more terrible loss can be sustained. It is of both heart and hope. He fell back upon heated visions of heaven-sent heroes, devoting their early days for the most part to hoodwinking the people, and their latter ones, more heroically, to shooting them.

But it is foolish to quarrel with results, and we may learn something even from the later Carlyle. We lay down John Bright's Reform Speeches, and take up Carlyle and light upon a passage like this: "Inexpressibly delirious seems to me the puddle of Parliament and public upon what it calls the Reform Measure, that is to say, the calling in of new supplies of blockheadism, gullibility, bribability, amenability to beer and balderdash, by way of amending the woes we have had from previous supplies of that bad article." This view must be accounted for as well as Mr. Bright's. We shall do well to remember, with Carlyle, that the best of all Reform Bills is that which each citizen passes in his own breast, where it is pretty sure to meet with strenuous

opposition. The reform of ourselves is no doubt an heroic measure never to be overlooked, and, in the face of accusations of gullibility, bribability, amenability to beer and balderdash, our poor humanity can only stand abashed, and feebly demur to the bad English in which the charges are conveyed. But we can't all lose hope. We remember Sir David Ramsay's reply to Lord Rea, once quoted by Carlyle himself. Then said his lordship: "Well, God mend all." "Nay, by God, Donald, we must help Him to mend it!" It is idle to stand gaping at the heavens, waiting to feel the thong of some hero of questionable morals and robust conscience; and therefore, unless Reform Bills can be shown to have checked purity of election, to have increased the stupidity of electors, and generally to have promoted corruption—which notoriously they have not—we may allow Carlyle to make his exit "swearing," and regard their presence in the Statute Book, if not with rapture, at least with equanimity.

But it must not be forgotten that the battle is still raging—the issue is still uncertain. Mr. Froude is still free to assert that the "*post-mortem*" will prove Carlyle was right. His political sagacity no reader of *Frederick* can deny; his insight into hidden causes and far-away effects was keen beyond precedent—nothing he ever said deserves contempt, though it may merit anger. If we would escape his conclusion, we must not altogether disregard his premises. Bankruptcy and death are the final heirs of imposture and make-believes. The old faiths and forms are worn too threadbare by a thousand disputations to bear the burden of the new democracy, which, if it is not merely to win the battle but to hold the country, must be ready with new faiths and forms of her own. They are within her reach if she but knew it; they lie to her hand: surely they will not escape her grasp! If they do not, then, in the glad day when worship is once more restored to man, he will with becoming generosity forget much that Carlyle has

written, and remembering more, rank him amongst the prophets of humanity.

Carlyle's poetry can only be exhibited in long extracts, which would be here out of place, and might excite controversy as to the meaning of words, and draw down upon me the measureless malice of the metricists. There are, however, passages in *Sartor Resartus* and *The French Revolution* which have long appeared to me to be the sublimest poetry of the century; and it was therefore with great pleasure that I found Mr. Justice Stephen, in his book on *Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity*, introducing a quotation from the 8th chapter of the 3rd book of *Sartor Resartus*, with the remark that "it is perhaps the most memorable utterance of the greatest poet of the age."

As for Carlyle's religion, it may be said he had none, inasmuch as he expounded no creed and put his name to no confession. This is the pedantry of the schools. He taught us religion, as cold water and fresh air teach us health, by rendering the conditions of disease well nigh impossible. For more than half a century, with superhuman energy, he struggled to establish the basis of all religions, "reverence and godly fear." "Love not pleasure, love God; this is the everlasting Yea."

One's remarks might here naturally come to an end, with a word or two of hearty praise of the brave course of life led by the man who awhile back stood the acknowledged head of English letters. But the present time is not the happiest for a panegyric on Carlyle. It would be in vain to deny that the brightness of his reputation underwent an eclipse, visible everywhere, by the publication of his *Reminiscences*. They surprised most of us, pained not a few, and hugely delighted that ghastly crew, the wreckers of humanity, who are never so happy as when employed in pulling down great reputations to their own miserable levels. When these "baleful creatures," as Carlyle would have called them, have lit upon any passage indicative of conceit or jealousy or spite, they have fastened upon it and screamed over it, with

a pleasure but ill-concealed and with a horror but ill-feigned. "Behold," they exclaim, "your hero robbed of the nimbus his inflated style cast around him—this preacher and fault-finder reduced to his principal parts: and lo! the main ingredient is most unmistakably 'bile!'"

The critic, however, has nought to do either with the sighs of the sorrowful, "mourning when a hero falls," or with the scorn of the malicious, rejoicing, as did Bunyan's Juryman, Mr. Live-loose, when Faithful was condemned to die: "I could never endure him, for he would always be condemning my way."

The critic's task is to consider the book itself, *i.e.*, the nature of its contents, and how it came to be written at all.

When this has been done, there will not be found much demanding moral censure; whilst the reader will note with delight, applied to the trifling concerns of life, those extraordinary gifts of observation and apprehension which have so often charmed him in the pages of history and biography.

These peccant volumes contain but four sketches: one of his father, written in 1832; the other three, of Edward Irving, Lord Jeffrey, and Mrs. Carlyle, all written after the death of the last-named, in 1866.

The only fault that has been found with the first sketch is, that in it Carlyle hazards the assertion that Scotland does not now contain his father's like. It ought surely to be possible to dispute this opinion without exhibiting emotion. To think well of their forbears is one of the few weaknesses of Scotchmen. This sketch, as a whole, must be carried to Carlyle's credit. It is pious, after the high Roman fashion. It satisfies our finest sense of the fit and proper. Just exactly so should a literate son write of an illiterate peasant father. How immeasurable seems the distance between the man from whom proceeded the thirty-four volumes we have been writing about and the Calvinistic mason who didn't even know his Burns!—and yet here we find the whole distance spanned by filial love.

The sketch of Lord Jeffrey is inimitable. One was getting tired of Jeffrey, and prepared to give him the go-by, when Carlyle creates him afresh, and, for the first time, we see the bright little man bewitching us by what he is, disappointing us by what he is not. The spiteful remarks the sketch contains may be considered along with those of the same nature to be found only too plentifully in the remaining two papers.

After careful consideration of the worst of these remarks, Mrs. Oliphant's explanation seems the true one; they are most of them sparkling bits of Mrs. Carlyle's conversation. She, happily for herself, had a lively wit, and, perhaps not so happily, a biting tongue, and was, as Carlyle tells us, accustomed to make him laugh, as they drove home together from London crushes, by far from genial observations on her fellow-creatures, little recking—how should she?—that what was so lightly uttered was being engraven on the tablets of the most marvellous of memories, and was destined long afterwards to be written down in grim earnest by a half-frenzied old man, and printed, in cold blood, by an English gentleman.

The horrible description of Mrs. Irving's personal appearance, and the other stories of the same connection, are recognised by Mrs. Oliphant as in substance Mrs. Carlyle's; whilst the malicious account of Mrs. Basil Montague's head-dress is attributed by Carlyle himself to his wife. Still, after dividing the total, there is a good helping for each, and blame would justly be Carlyle's due if we did not remember, as we are bound to do, that, interesting as these three sketches are, their interest is pathological, and ought never to have been given us. Mr. Froude should have read them in tears, and burnt them in fire. There is nothing surprising in the state of mind which produced them. They are easily accounted for by our sorrow-laden experience. It is a familiar feeling which prompts a man, suddenly bereft of one whom he alone really knew and loved, to turn

in his fierce indignation upon the world, and deride its idols whom all are praising, and which yet to him seem ugly by the side of one of whom no one speaks. To be angry with such a sentence as "scribbling Sands and Eliots, not fit to compare with my incomparable Jeannie," is at once inhuman and ridiculous. This is the language of the heart, not of the head. It is no more criticism than is the trumpeting of a wounded elephant zoology.

Happy is the man who at such a time holds both peace and pen; but unhappiest of all is he who, having dipped his sorrow into ink, entrusts the manuscript to a romantic historian.

The two volumes of the *Life*, and the three volumes of Mrs. Carlyle's *Correspondence*, unfortunately, did not pour oil upon the troubled waters. The partisanship they evoked was positively indecent. Mrs. Carlyle had her troubles and her sorrows, as have most women who live under the same roof with a man of creative genius; but of one thing we may be quite sure, that she would have been the first, to use her own expressive language, to require God "particularly to damn" her impertinent sympathisers. As for Mr. Froude, he may yet discover his Nemesis in the spirit of an angry woman whose privacy he has invaded, and whose diary he has most wantonly published.

These dark clouds are ephemeral. They will roll away, and we shall once more gladly recognise the lineaments of an essentially lofty character, of one who, though a man of genius and of letters, neither outraged society nor stooped to it; was neither a rebel nor a slave; who in poverty scorned wealth; who never mistook popularity for fame; but from the first assumed, and throughout maintained, the proud attitude of one whose duty it was to teach and not to tickle mankind.

Brother-dunces, lend me your ears! not to crop, but that I may whisper into their furry depths: "Do not quarrel with genius. We have none ourselves, and yet are so constituted that we cannot live without it."

ROBERT BROWNING.

"THE sanity of true genius" was a happy phrase of Charles Lamb's. Our greatest poets were our sanest men. Chaucer, Spenser, Shakspeare, Milton, and Wordsworth might have defied even a mad doctor to prove his worst.

To extol sanity ought to be unnecessary in an age which boasts its realism; but yet it may be doubted whether, if the author of the phrase just quoted were to be allowed once more to visit the world he loved so well and left so reluctantly, and could be induced to forswear his Elizabethans and devote himself to the literature of the day, he would find many books which his fine critical faculty would allow him to pronounce "healthy," as he once pronounced *John Buncle* to be in the presence of a Scotchman, who could not for the life of him understand how a book could properly be said to enjoy either good or bad health.

But, however this may be, this much is certain, that lucidity is one of the chief characteristics of sanity. A sane man ought not to be unintelligible. Lucidity is good everywhere, for all time and in all things, in a letter, in a speech, in a book, in a poem. Lucidity is not simplicity. A lucid poem is not necessarily an easy one. A great poet may tax our brains, but he ought not to puzzle our wits. We may often have to ask in humility, What *does* he mean? but not in despair, What *can* he mean?

Dreamy and inconclusive the poet sometimes, nay, often, cannot help being, for dreaminess and inconclusiveness are conditions of thought when dwelling on the very subjects that most demand poetical treatment.

Misty, therefore, the poet has our kind permission sometimes to be; but muddy, never! A great poet, like a great peak, must sometimes be allowed to have his head in the clouds, and to disappoint us of the wide prospect we had hoped to gain; but the clouds which envelop him must be attracted to, and not made by him.

In a sentence, though the poet may give expression to what Wordsworth has called "the heavy and the weary weight of all this unintelligible world," we, the much-enduring public who have to read his poems, are entitled to demand that the unintelligibility of which we are made to feel the weight, should be all of it the world's, and none of it merely the poet's.

We should not have ventured to introduce our subject with such very general and undeniable observations, had not experience taught us that the best way of introducing any subject is by a string of platitudes, delivered after an oracular fashion. They arouse attention, without exhausting it, and afford the pleasant sensation of thinking, without any of the trouble of thought. But, the subject once introduced, it becomes necessary to proceed with it.

In considering whether a poet is intelligible and lucid, we ought not to grope and grub about his work in search of obscurities and oddities, but should, in the first instance at all events, attempt to regard his whole scope and range; to form some estimate, if we can, of his general purport and effect, asking ourselves, for this purpose, such questions as these: How are we the better for him? Has he quickened any passion, lightened any burden, purified any taste? Does he play any real part in our lives? When we are in love, do we whisper him in our lady's ear? When we sorrow, does he ease our pain? Can he calm the strife of mental conflict? Has he had anything to say, which wasn't twaddle, on those subjects which, elude analysis as they may, and defy demonstration as they do, are yet alone of perennial interest—

"On man, on nature, and on human life,"

on the pathos of our situation, looking back on to the irrevocable and forward to the unknown? If a poet has said, or done, or been any of these things to an appreciable extent, to charge him with obscurity is both folly and ingratitude.

But the subject may be pursued further, and one may be called upon to investigate this charge with reference to particular books or poems. In Browning's case this fairly may be done; and then another crop of questions arises, such as: What is the book about, *i.e.*, with what subject does it deal, and what method of dealing does it employ? Is it didactical, analytical, or purely narrative? Is it content to describe, or does it aspire to explain? In common fairness these questions must be asked and answered, before we heave our critical half-bricks at strange poets. One task is of necessity more difficult than another. Students of geometry, who have pushed their researches into that fascinating science so far as the fifth proposition of the first book, commonly called the *Pons Asinorum* (though now that so many ladies read Euclid, it ought, in common justice to them, to be at least sometimes called the *Pons Asinarum*), will agree that though it may be more difficult to prove that the angles at the base of an isosceles triangle are equal, and that if the equal sides be produced, the angles on the other side of the base shall be equal, than it was to describe an equilateral triangle on a given finite straight line; yet no one but an ass would say that the fifth proposition was one whit less intelligible than the first. When we consider Mr. Browning in his later writings, it will be useful to bear this distinction in mind.

Our first duty, then, is to consider Mr. Browning in his whole scope and range, or, in a word, generally. This is a task of such dimensions and difficulty as, in the language of joint-stock prospectuses, "to transcend individual enterprise," and consequently, as we all know, a company has been recently floated, or a society

established, having Mr. Browning for its principal object. It has a president, two secretaries, male and female, and a treasurer. You pay a guinea, and you become a member. A suitable reduction is, I believe, made in the unlikely event of all the members of one family flocking to be enrolled. The existence of this society is a great relief, for it enables us to deal with our unwieldy theme in a light-hearted manner, and to refer those who have a passion for solid information and profound philosophy to the printed transactions of this learned society, which, lest we should forget all about it, we at once do.

When you are viewing a poet generally, as is our present plight, the first question is: When was he born? The second, When did he (to use a favourite phrase of the last century, now in disuse)—When did he commence author? The third, How long did he keep at it? The fourth, How much has he written? And the fifth may perhaps be best expressed in the words of Southey's little Peterkin:

"'What good came of it all at last?'
Quoth little Peterkin."

Mr. Browning was born in 1812; he commenced author with the fragment called *Pauline*, published in 1833. He is still writing,* and his works, as they stand upon my shelves—for editions vary—number twenty-three volumes. Little Peterkin's question is not so easily answered; but, postponing it for a moment, the answers to the other four show that we have to deal with a poet, more than seventy years old, who has been writing for half a century, and who has filled twenty-three volumes. The Browning Society at all events has assets. The way I propose to deal with this literary mass is to divide it in two, taking the year 1864 as the line of cleavage. In that year the volume called *Dramatis Personæ* was

* Written in 1884.

published, and then nothing happened till the year 1868, when our poet presented the astonished English language with four volumes and the 21,116 lines called *The Ring and the Book*, a poem which it may be stated, for the benefit of that large, increasing, and highly interesting class of persons who prefer statistics to poetry, is longer than Pope's *Homer's Iliad* by exactly 2,171 lines. We thus begin with *Pauline* in 1833, and end with *Dramatis Personæ* in 1864. We then begin again with *The Ring and the Book*, in 1868; but when or where we shall end cannot be stated.* *Sordello*, published in 1840, is better treated apart, and is therefore excepted from the first period, to which chronologically it belongs.

Looking then at the first period, we find in its front eight plays:

1. *Strafford*, written in 1836, when its author was twenty-four years old, and put upon the boards of Covent Garden Theatre on the 1st of May, 1837, Macready playing Strafford, and Miss Helen Faucit Lady Carlisle. It was received by all who saw it with enthusiasm; but the Company, for reasons unconnected with the play, was rebellious; and after running five nights, the man who played Pym threw up his part, and the theatre was closed.
2. *Pippa Passes.*
3. *King Victor and King Charles.*
4. *The Return of the Druses.*
5. *A Blot in the 'Scutcheon.*

This beautiful and pathetic play was put on the stage of Drury Lane on the 11th of February, 1843, with Phelps as Lord Tresham, Miss Helen Faucit as Mildred Tresham, and Mrs. Stirling as Guendolen. It was a brilliant success. Mr. Browning was in the stage-box; and if it is any satisfaction for a poet to hear a crowded house cry "Author, author!" that satisfaction has belonged to Mr.

* It can now, with *Asolando*, in 1889.

Browning. The play ran at Drury Lane till the 3rd of June, 1843, and was subsequently revived by Mr. Phelps during his "memorable management" of Sadlers' Wells.

6. *Colombe's Birthday.*

Miss Helen Faucit put this upon the stage in 1852, when it was reckoned a success.

7. *Luria.*

8. *A Soul's Tragedy.*

To call any of these plays unintelligible is ridiculous; and nobody who has ever read them ever did, and why people who have not read them should abuse them is hard to see. Were society put upon its oath, we should be surprised to find how many people in high places have not read *All's Well that Ends Well*, or *Timon of Athens;* but they don't go about saying these plays are unintelligible. Like wise folk, they pretend to have read them, and say nothing. In Browning's case they are spared the hypocrisy. No one need pretend to have read *A Soul's Tragedy;* and it seems, therefore, inexcusable for anyone to assert that one of the plainest, most pointed, and piquant bits of writing in the language is unintelligible. But surely something more may be truthfully said of these plays than that they are comprehensible. First of all, they are *plays*, and not *works*—like the dropsical dramas of Sir Henry Taylor and Mr. Swinburne. Some of them have stood the ordeal of actual representation; and though it would be absurd to pretend that they met with that overwhelming measure of success our critical age has reserved for such dramatists as the late Lord Lytton, the author of *Money*, the late Tom Taylor, the author of *The Overland Route*, the late Mr. Robertson, the author of *Caste*, Mr. H. Byron, the author of *Our Boys*, Mr. Wills, the author of *Charles I.*, Mr. Burnand, the author of *The Colonel*, and Mr. Gilbert, the author of so much that is great and glorious in our national drama; at all events they proved themselves able to arrest and retain

the attention of very ordinary audiences. But who can deny dignity and even grandeur to *Luria*, or withhold the meed of a melodious tear from *Mildred Tresham?* What action of what play is more happily conceived or better rendered than that of *Pippa Passes?*—where innocence and its reverse, tender love and violent passion, are presented with emphasis, and yet blended into a dramatic unity and a poetic perfection, entitling the author to the very first place amongst those dramatists of the century who have laboured under the enormous disadvantage of being poets to start with.

Passing from the plays, we are next attracted by a number of splendid poems, on whose base the structure of Mr. Browning's fame perhaps rests most surely—his dramatic pieces—poems which give utterance to the thoughts and feelings of persons other than himself, or, as he puts it, when dedicating a number of them to his wife:

> "Love, you saw me gather men and women,
> Live or dead, or fashioned by my fancy,
> Enter each and all, and use their service,
> Speak from every mouth the speech—a poem;"

or, again, in *Sordello:*

> "By making speak, myself kept out of view
> The very man, as he was wont to do."

At a rough calculation, there must be at least sixty of these pieces. Let me run over the names of a very few of them. *Saul*, a poem beloved by all true women; *Caliban*, which the men, not unnaturally perhaps, often prefer. The *Two Bishops;* the sixteenth century one ordering his tomb of jasper and basalt in St. Praxed's Church, and his nineteenth century successor rolling out his post-prandial *Apologia*. *My Last Duchess*, the *Soliloquy in a Spanish Cloister*, *Andrea del Sarto*, *Fra Lippo Lippi*, *Rabbi Ben Ezra*, *Cleon*, *A Death in the Desert*, *The Italian in England*, and *The Englishman in Italy*.

It is plain truth to say that no other English poet,

living or dead, Shakspeare excepted, has so heaped up human interest for his readers as has Robert Browning.

Fancy stepping into a room and finding it full of Shakspeare's principal characters! What a babel of tongues! What a jostling of wits! How eagerly one's eye would go in search of Hamlet and Sir John Falstaff, but droop shudderingly at the thought of encountering the distraught gaze of Lady Macbeth! We should have no difficulty in recognising Beatrice in the central figure of that lively group of laughing courtiers; whilst did we seek Juliet, it would, of course, be by appointment on the balcony. To fancy yourself in such company is pleasant matter for a midsummer's night's dream. No poet has such a gallery as Shakspeare, but of our modern poets Browning comes nearest him.

Against these dramatic pieces the charge of unintelligibility fails as completely as it does against the plays. They are all perfectly intelligible; but—and here is the rub—they are not easy reading, like the estimable writings of the late Mrs. Hemans. They require the same honest attention as it is the fashion to give to a lecture of Professor Huxley's or a sermon of Canon Liddon's: and this is just what too many persons will not give to poetry. They

> "Love to hear
> A soft pulsation in their easy ear;
> To turn the page, and let their senses drink
> A lay that shall not trouble them to think."

It is no great wonder it should be so. After dinner, when disposed to sleep, but afraid of spoiling our night's rest, behold the witching hour reserved by the nineteenth century for the study of poetry! This treatment of the muse deserves to be held up to everlasting scorn and infamy in a passage of Miltonic strength and splendour. We, alas! must be content with the observation, that such an opinion of the true place of poetry in the life of a man excites, in the breasts of the rightminded, feelings akin to those which Charles Lamb ascribes to the

immortal Sarah Battle, when a young gentleman of a literary turn, on taking a hand in her favourite game of whist, declared that he saw no harm in unbending the mind, now and then, after serious studies, in recreations of that kind. She could not bear, so Elia proceeds, "to have her noble occupation, to which she wound up her faculties, considered in that light. It was her business, her duty—the thing she came into the world to do—and she did it: she unbent her mind, afterwards, over a book!" And so the lover of poetry and Browning, after winding-up his faculties over *Comus* or *Paracelsus*, over *Julius Cæsar* or *Strafford*, may afterwards, if he is so minded, unbend himself over the *Origin of Species*, or that still more fascinating record which tells us how little curly worms, only give them time enough, will cover with earth even the larger kind of stones.

Next to these dramatic pieces come what we may be content to call simply poems: some lyrical, some narrative. The latter are straightforward enough, and, as a rule, full of spirit and humour; but this is more than can always be said of the lyrical pieces. Now, for the first time, in dealing with this first period, excluding *Sordello*, we strike difficulty. The Chinese puzzle comes in. We wonder whether it all turns on the punctuation. And the awkward thing for Mr. Browning's reputation is this, that these bewildering poems are, for the most part, very short. We say awkward, for it is not more certain that Sarah Gamp liked her beer drawn mild, than it is that your Englishman likes his poetry cut short; and so, accordingly, it often happens that some estimable paterfamilias takes up an odd volume of Browning his volatile son or moonstruck daughter has left lying about, pishes and pshaws! and then, with an air of much condescension and amazing candour, remarks that he will give the fellow another chance, and not condemn him unread. So saying, he opens the book, and carefully selects the very shortest poem he can find; and in a moment, without sign or signal, note or warning,

the unhappy man is floundering up to his neck in lines like these, which are the third and final stanza of a poem called *Another Way of Love:*

"And after, for pastime
If June be refulgent
With flowers in completeness,
All petals, no prickles,
Delicious as trickles
Of wine poured at mass-time,
And choose One indulgent
To redness and sweetness;
Or if with experience of man and of spider,
She use my June lightning, the strong insect-ridder
To stop the fresh spinning,—why June will consider."

He comes up gasping, and more than ever persuaded that Browning's poetry is a mass of inconglomerate nonsense, which nobody understands—least of all members of the Browning Society.

We need be at no pains to find a meaning for everything Mr. Browning has written. But when all is said and done—when these few freaks of a crowded brain are thrown overboard to the sharks of verbal criticism who feed on such things—Mr. Browning and his great poetical achievement remain behind to be dealt with and accounted for. We do not get rid of Tennyson by quoting:

"O darling room, my heart's delight!
Dear room, the apple of my sight,
With thy two couches soft and white,
There is no room so exquisite—
No little room so warm and bright
Wherein to read, wherein to write;"

or of Wordsworth by quoting:

"At this, my boy hung down his head:
He blushed with shame, nor made reply,
And five times to the child I said,
'Why, Edward? tell me why?'"—

or of Keats by remembering that he once addressed a young lady as follows:

> "O come, Georgiana! the rose is full blown,
> The riches of Flora are lavishly strown:
> The air is all softness and crystal the streams,
> The west is resplendently clothed in beams."

The strength of a rope may be but the strength of its weakest part; but poets are to be judged in their happiest hours, and in their greatest works.

Taking, then, this first period of Mr. Browning's poetry as a whole, and asking ourselves if we are the richer for it, how can there be any doubt as to the reply? What points of human interest has he left untouched? With what phase of life, character, or study does he fail to sympathise? So far from being the rough-hewn block "dull fools" have supposed him, he is the most dilettante of great poets. Do you dabble in art and perambulate picture-galleries? Browning must be your favourite poet: he is art's historian. Are you devoted to music? So is he: and alone of our poets has sought to fathom in verse the deep mysteries of sound. Do you find it impossible to keep off theology? Browning has more theology than most bishops—could puzzle Gamaliel and delight Aquinas. Are you in love? Read *A Last Ride Together, Youth and Art, A Portrait, Christine, In a Gondola, By the Fireside, Love amongst the Ruins, Time's Revenges, The Worst of It,* and a host of others, being careful always to end with *A Madhouse Cell;* and we are much mistaken if you do not put Browning at the very head and front of the interpreters of passion. The many moods of sorrow are reflected in his verse, whilst mirth, movement, and a rollicking humour abound everywhere.

I will venture upon but three quotations, for it is late in the day to be quoting Browning. The first shall be a well-known bit of blank verse about art from *Fra Lippo Lippi:*

> "For, don't you mark, we're made so that we love
> First when we see them painted, things we have passed
> Perhaps a hundred times, nor cared to see:
> And so they are better painted—better to us,

Which is the same thing. Art was given for that—
God uses us to help each other so,
Lending our minds out. Have you noticed now
Your cullion's hanging face? A bit of chalk,
And, trust me, but you should though. How much more
If I drew higher things with the same truth!
That were to take the prior's pulpit-place—
Interpret God to all of you! Oh, oh!
It makes me mad to see what men shall do,
And we in our graves! This world's no blot for us,
Nor blank: it means intensely, and means good.
To find its meaning is my meat and drink."

The second is some rhymed rhetoric from *Holy Cross Day*—the testimony of the dying Jew in Rome:

"This world has been harsh and strange,
Something is wrong: there needeth a change.
But what or where? at the last or first?
In one point only we sinned at worst.

"The Lord will have mercy on Jacob yet,
And again in his border see Israel set.
When Judah beholds Jerusalem,
The stranger seed shall be joined to them:
To Jacob's house shall the Gentiles cleave:
So the prophet saith, and his sons believe.

"Ay, the children of the chosen race
Shall carry and bring them to their place;
In the land of the Lord shall lead the same,
Bondsmen and handmaids. Who shall blame
When the slaves enslave, the oppressed ones o'er
The oppressor triumph for evermore?

"God spoke, and gave us the word to keep:
Bade never fold the hands, nor sleep
'Mid a faithless world, at watch and ward,
Till the Christ at the end relieve our guard.
By His servant Moses the watch was set:
Though near upon cockcrow, we keep it yet.

"Thou! if Thou wast He, who at mid-watch came,
By the starlight naming a dubious Name;
And if we were too heavy with sleep, too rash
With fear—O Thou, if that martyr-gash
Fell on Thee, coming to take Thine own,
And we gave the Cross, when we owed the throne:

"Thou art the Judge. We are bruised thus.
But, the Judgment over, join sides with us!

Thine, too, is the cause ! and not more Thine
Than ours is the work of these dogs and swine,
Whose life laughs through and spits at their creed,
Who maintain Thee in word, and defy Thee in deed.

" We withstood Christ then ? Be mindful how
At least we withstand Barabbas now !
Was our outrage sore ? But the worst we spared
To have called these—Christians—had we dared
Let defiance to them pay mistrust of Thee,
And Rome make amends for Calvary !

" By the torture, prolonged from age to age ;
By the infamy, Israel's heritage ;
By the Ghetto's plague, by the garb's disgrace,
By the badge of shame, by the felon's place,
By the branding-tool, the bloody whip,
And the summons to Christian fellowship,

" We boast our proof, that at least the Jew
Would wrest Christ's name from the devil's crew."

The last quotation shall be from the veritable Browning—of one of those poetical audacities none ever dared but the Danton of modern poetry. Audacious in its familiar realism, in its total disregard of poetical environment, in its rugged abruptness : but supremely successful, and alive with emotion :

" What is he buzzing in my ears ?
Now that I come to die,
Do I view the world as a vale of tears ?
Ah, reverend sir, not I.

" What I viewed there once, what I view again
Where the physic bottles stand
On the table's edge, is a suburb lane,
With a wall to my bedside hand.

" That lane sloped, much as the bottles do,
From a house you could descry
O'er the garden-wall. Is the curtain blue
Or green to a healthy eye ?

" To mine, it serves for the old June weather,
Blue above lane and wall ;
And that farthest bottle, labelled ' Ether,'
Is the house o'ertopping all.

" At a terrace somewhat near its stopper,
There watched for me, one June,

A girl—I know, sir, it's improper:
My poor mind's out of tune.

"Only there was a way—you crept
Close by the side, to dodge
Eyes in the house—two eyes except.
They styled their house 'The Lodge.'

"What right had a lounger up their lane?
But by creeping very close,
With the good wall's help their eyes might strain
And stretch themselves to oes,

"Yet never catch her and me together,
As she left the attic—there,
By the rim of the bottle labelled 'Ether'—
And stole from stair to stair,

"And stood by the rose-wreathed gate. Alas!
We loved, sir; used to meet.
How sad and bad and mad it was!
But then, how it was sweet!"

The second period of Mr. Browning's poetry demands a different line of argument; for it is, in my judgment, folly to deny that he has of late years written a great deal which makes very difficult reading indeed. No doubt you may meet people who tell you that they read *The Ring and the Book* for the first time without much mental effort; but you will do well not to believe them. These poems are difficult—they cannot help being so. What is *The Ring and the Book?* A huge novel in 20,000 lines—told after the method not of Scott but of Balzac; it tears the hearts out of a dozen characters; it tells the same story from ten different points of view. It is loaded with detail of every kind and description: you are let off nothing. As with a schoolboy's life at a large school, if he is to enjoy it at all, he must fling himself into it, and care intensely about everything—so the reader of *The Ring and the Book* must be interested in everybody and everything, down to the fact that the eldest son of the counsel for the defence of Guido is eight years old on the very day he is writing his speech, and that he is going to have fried liver and parsley for his supper.

If you are prepared for this, you will have your reward; for the *style*, though rugged and involved, is throughout, with the exception of the speeches of counsel, eloquent, and at times superb; and as for the *matter*, if your interest in human nature is keen, curious, almost professional —if nothing man, woman, or child has been, done, or suffered, or conceivably can be, do, or suffer, is without interest for you; if you are fond of analysis, and do not shrink from dissection—you will prize *The Ring and the Book* as the surgeon prizes the last great contribution to comparative anatomy or pathology.

But this sort of work tells upon style. Browning has, I think, fared better than some writers. To me, at all events, the step from *A Blot in the 'Scutcheon* to *The Ring and the Book* is not so marked as is the *mauvais pas* that lies between *Amos Barton* and *Daniel Deronda*. But difficulty is not obscurity. One task is more difficult than another. The angles at the base of the isosceles triangles are apt to get mixed, and to confuse us all—man and woman alike. *Prince Hohenstiel* something or another is a very difficult poem, not only to pronounce but to read; but if a poet chooses as his subject Napoleon III.—in whom the cad, the coward, the idealist, and the sensualist were inextricably mixed —and purports to make him unbosom himself over a bottle of Gladstone claret in a tavern in Leicester Square, you cannot expect that the product should belong to the same class of poetry as Mr. Coventry Patmore's admirable *Angel in the House*.

It is the method that is difficult. Take the husband in *The Ring and the Book*. Mr. Browning remorselessly hunts him down, tracks him to the last recesses of his mind, and there bids him stand and deliver. He describes love, not only broken but breaking; hate in its germ; doubt at its birth. These are difficult things to do either in poetry or prose, and people with easy, flowing Addisonian or Tennysonian styles cannot do them.

I seem to overhear a still, small voice asking, But are

they worth doing? or at all events is it the province of art to do them? The question ought not to be asked. It is heretical, being contrary to the whole direction of the latter half of this century. The chains binding us to the rocks of realism are faster riveted every day; and the Perseus who is destined to cut them is, I expect, some mischievous little boy at a Board-school. But as the question has been asked, I will own that sometimes, even when deepest in works of this, the now orthodox school, I have been harassed by distressing doubts whether, after all, this enormous labour is not in vain; and, wearied by the effort, overloaded by the detail, bewildered by the argument, and sickened by the pitiless dissection of character and motive, have been tempted to cry aloud, quoting—or rather, in the agony of the moment, misquoting—Coleridge:

"Simplicity—
Thou better name than all the family of Fame."

But this ebullition of feeling is childish and even sinful. We must take our poets as we do our meals—as they are served up to us. Indeed, you may, if full of courage, give a cook notice, but not the time-spirit who makes our poets. We may be sure—to appropriate an idea of the late Sir James Stephen—that if Robert Browning had lived in the sixteenth century, he would not have written a poem like *The Ring and the Book*; and if Edmund Spenser had lived in the nineteenth century he would not have written a poem like the *Faerie Queen*.

It is therefore idle to arraign Mr. Browning's later method and style for possessing difficulties and intricacies which are inherent to it. The method, at all events, has an interest of its own, a strength of its own, a grandeur of its own. If you do not like it, you must leave it alone. You are fond, you say, of romantic poetry; well, then, take down your Spenser and qualify yourself to join "the small transfigured band" of those who are able to take their Bible-oaths they have read

their *Faerie Queen* all through. The company, though small, is delightful, and you will have plenty to talk about without abusing Browning, who probably knows his Spenser better than you do. Realism will not for ever dominate the world of letters and art—the fashion of all things passeth away—but it has already earned a great place: it has written books, composed poems, painted pictures, all stamped with that "greatness" which, despite fluctuations, nay, even reversals of taste and opinion, means immortality.

But against Mr. Browning's later poems it is sometimes alleged that their meaning is obscure because their grammar is bad. A cynic was once heard to observe with reference to that noble poem *The Grammarian's Funeral*, that it was a pity the talented author had ever since allowed himself to remain under the delusion that he had not only buried the grammarian, but his grammar also. It is doubtless true that Mr. Browning has some provoking ways, and is something too much of a verbal acrobat. Also, as his witty parodist, the pet poet of six generations of Cambridge undergraduates, reminds us:

> "He loves to dock the smaller parts of speech,
> As we curtail the already curtailed cur."

It is perhaps permissible to weary a little of his *i*'s and *o*'s, but we believe we cannot be corrected when we say that Browning is a poet whose grammar will bear scholastic investigation better than that of most of Apollo's children.

A word about *Sordello*. One half of *Sordello*, and that, with Mr. Browning's usual ill-luck, the first half, is undoubtedly obscure. It is as difficult to read as *Endymion* or the *Revolt of Islam*, and for the same reason—the author's lack of experience in the art of composition. We have all heard of the young architect who forgot to put a staircase in his house, which contained fine rooms, but no way of getting into them.

Sordello is a poem without a staircase. The author, still in his twenties, essayed a high thing. For his subject—

> "He singled out
> Sordello compassed murkily about
> With ravage of six long sad hundred years."

He partially failed; and the British public, with its accustomed generosity, and in order, I suppose, to encourage the others, has never ceased girding at him, because in 1840 he published, at his own charges, a little book of two hundred and fifty pages, which even such of them as were then able to read could not understand.

Poetry should be vital—either stirring our blood by its divine movement, or snatching our breath by its divine perfection. To do both is supreme glory; to do either is enduring fame.

There is a great deal of beautiful poetical writing to be had nowadays from the booksellers. It is interesting reading, but as one reads one trembles. It smells of mortality. It would seem as if, at the very birth of most of our modern poems,

> "The conscious Parcæ threw
> Upon their roseate lips a Stygian hue."

That their lives may be prolonged is my pious prayer. In these bad days, when it is thought more educationally useful to know the principle of the common pump than Keats's *Ode on a Grecian Urn*, one cannot afford to let any good poetry die.

But when we take down Browning, we cannot think of him and the "wormy bed" together. He is so unmistakably and deliciously alive. Die, indeed! when one recalls the ideal characters he has invested with reality; how he has described love and joy, pain and sorrow, art and music; as poems like *Childe Roland, Abt Vogler, Evelyn Hope, The Worst of It, Pictor Ignotus, The Lost Leader, Home Thoughts from Abroad, Old Pictures in Florence, Herve Riel, A Householder, Fears and*

Scruples, come tumbling into one's memory, one over another—we are tempted to employ the language of hyperbole, and to answer the question "Will Browning die?" by exclaiming, "Yes; when Niagara stops." In him indeed we can

> "Discern
> Infinite passion and the pain
> Of finite hearts that yearn."

But love of Mr. Browning's poetry is no exclusive cult. Of Lord Tennyson it is needless to speak. Even forty years of popularity and mimicry cannot rob his verse of distinction.

Mr. Arnold may have a limited poetical range and a restricted style, but within that range and in that style, surely we must exclaim:

> "Whence that completed form of all completeness?
> Whence came that high perfection of all sweetness?"

Rossetti's luscious lines seldom fail to cast a spell by which

> "In sundry moods 'tis pastime to be bound."

William Morris has a sunny slope of Parnassus all to himself, and Mr. Swinburne has written some verses over which the world will long love to linger.

Dull must he be of soul who can take up Cardinal Newman's *Verses on Various Occasions*, or Miss Christina Rossetti's poems, and lay them down without recognising their diverse charm.

Let us be Catholics in this great matter, and burn our candles at many shrines. In the pleasant realms of poesy, no liveries are worn, no paths prescribed; you may wander where you will, stop where you like, and worship whom you love. Nothing is demanded of you, save this, that in all your wanderings and worships, you keep two objects steadily in view—two, and two only, truth and beauty.

CARDINAL NEWMAN.

I.

THERE are some men whose names are inseparably and exclusively associated with movements; there are others who are for ever united in human memories with places; it is the happy fortune of the distinguished man whose name is at the top of this page to be able to make good both titles to an estate in our minds and hearts; for whilst his fierce intellectual energy made him the leader of a great movement, his rare and exquisite tenderness has married his name to a lovely place. Whenever men's thoughts dwell upon the revival of Church authority in England and America during the nineteenth century, they will recall the Vicar of St. Mary's, Oxford, who lived to become a Cardinal of Rome, and whenever the lover of all things that are quiet and gentle and true in life and literature visits Oxford, he will find himself wondering whether snap-dragon still grows outside the windows of the rooms in Trinity where once lived the author of the *Apologia*.

The Rev. John Wesley was a distinguished man, if ever there was one, and his name is associated with a movement certainly as remarkable as, and a great deal more useful than, the one connected with the name of Newman. Wesley's great missionary tours in Devon and Cornwall, and the wild, remote parts of Lancashire, lack no single element of sublimity. To this day the memories of those apostolic journeys are green and precious, and a source of strength and joy: the portrait of the eager preacher hangs up in almost every miner's cottage, whilst his name is pronounced with reverence by a hundred thousand lips. "You seem a very tem-

perate people here," once observed a thirsty pedestrian (who was, indeed, none other than the present writer) to a Cornish miner; "how did it happen?" He replied solemnly, raising his cap, "There came a man amongst us once, and his name was John Wesley." Wesley was an Oxford man, but he is not much in men's thoughts as they visit that city of enchantment. Why is this? It is because, great as Wesley was, he lacked charm. As we read his diaries and letters, we are interested, we are moved, but we are not pleased. Now, Oxford pleases and charms. Therefore it is, that when we allow ourselves a day in her quadrangles we find ourselves thinking of Dr. Newman and his Trinity snap-dragon, and how the Rev. William James, "some time in the year 1823," taught him the doctrine of Apostolic Succession in the course of a walk round Christchurch Meadow, rather than of Wesley and his prayer-meetings at Lincoln, which were proclaimed by the authorities as savouring of sedition.

A strong personal attachment of the kind which springs up from reading an author, which is distilled through his pages, and turns his foibles, even his follies, into pleasant things we would not for the world have altered, is apt to cause the reader who is thus affected to exaggerate the importance of any intellectual movement with which the author happened to be associated. There are, I know, people who think this is notably so in Dr. Newman's case. Crusty men are to be met with, who rudely say they have heard enough of the Oxford movement, and that the time is over for penning ecstatic paragraphs about Dr. Newman's personal appearance in the pulpit at St. Mary's. I think these crusty people are wrong. The movement was no doubt an odd one in some of its aspects—it wore a very academic air indeed; and to be academic is to be ridiculous, in the opinion of many. Our great Northern towns lived their grimy lives, amidst the whirl of their machinery, quite indifferent to the movement. Our huge Nonconformist

bodies knew no more of the University of Oxford in those days than they did of the University of Tübingen. This movement sent no missionaries to the miners, and its tracts were not of the kind that are served suddenly upon you in the streets like legal process, but were, in fact, bulky treatises stuffed full of the dead languages. London, of course, heard about the movement, and, so far as she was not tickled by the comicality of the notion of anything really important happening outside her cab-radius, was irritated by it. Mr. Henry Rogers poked heavy fun at it in the *Edinburgh Review*. Mr. Isaac Taylor wrote two volumes to prove that ancient Christianity was a drivelling and childish superstition, and in the opinion of some pious Churchmen succeeded in doing so. But for the most part people left the movement alone, unless they happened to be Bishops or very clerically connected. "The bishops," says Dr. Newman, "began charging against us." But bishops' charges are amongst the many seemingly important things that do not count in England. It is said to be the duty of an archdeacon to read his bishop's charge, but it is undoubted law that a mandamus will not be granted to compel him to do so.

But notwithstanding this aspect of the case, it was a genuine thought-movement in propagating which these long-coated parsons, with their dry jokes, strange smiles, and queer notions, were engaged. They used to drive about the country in gigs, from one parsonage to another, and leave their tracts behind them. They were not concerned with the flocks—their message was to the shepherds. As for the Dissenters, they had nothing to say to them, except that their very presence in a parish was a plenary argument for the necessity of the movement.

The Tractarians met with the usual fortune of those who peddle new ideas. Some rectors did not want to be primitive—more did not know what it meant; but enough were found pathetically anxious to read a mean-

ing into their services and offices, to make it plain that the *Tracts* really were "for" and not "against" the times.

The great plot, plan, or purpose, call it what you will, of the Tractarian movement was to make Churchmen believe with a personal conviction that the Church of England was not a mere National Institution, like the House of Commons or the game of cricket, but a living branch of that Catholic Church which God had, from the beginning, endowed with sacramental gifts and graces, with a Priesthood apostolically descended, with a Creed, precise and specific, which it was the Church's duty to teach and man's to believe, and with a ritual and discipline to be practised and maintained with daily piety and entire submission.

These were new ideas in 1833. When Dr. Newman was ordained in 1824, he has told us, he did not look on ordination as a sacramental rite, nor did he ascribe to baptism any supernatural virtue.

It cannot be denied that the Tractarians had their work before them. But they had forces on their side.

It is always pleasant to rediscover the meaning of words and forms which have been dulled by long usage. This is why etymology is so fascinating. By the natural bent of our minds we are lovers of whatever things are true and real. We hanker after facts. To get a grip of reality is a pleasure so keen—most of our faith is so desperate a "make-believe," that it is not to be wondered at that pious folk should have been found who rejoiced to be told that what they had been saying and doing all the years of their lives really had a meaning and a history of its own. One would have to be very unsympathetic not to perceive that the time we are speaking of must have been a very happy one for many a devout soul. The dry bones lived—formal devotions were turned into joyous acts of faith and piety. The Church became a Living Witness to the Truth. She could be interrogated—she could answer. The old

calendar was revived, and Saint's Day followed Saint's Day, and season season, in the sweet procession of the Christian Year. Pretty girls got up early, made the sign of the Cross, and, unscared by devils, tripped across the dewy meadows to Communion. Grave men read the Fathers, and found themselves at home in the Fourth Century.

A great writer had, so it appears, all unconsciously prepared the way for this Neo-Catholicism. Dr. Newman has never forgotten to pay tribute to Sir Walter Scott.

Sir Walter's work has proved to be of so permanent a character, his insight into all things Scotch so deep and true, and his human worth and excellence so rare and noble, that it has hardly been worth while to remember the froth and effervescence he at first occasioned; but that he did create a movement in the Oxford direction is certain. He made the old Catholic times interesting. He was not indeed, like the Tractarians, a man of "primitive" mind; but he was romantic, and it all told. For this we have the evidence not only of Dr. Newman (a very nice observer), but also of the delightful, the bewitching, the never sufficiently-to-be-praised George Borrow—Borrow, the Friend of Man, at whose bidding lassitude and languor strike their tents and flee; and health and spirits, adventure and human comradeship, take up the reins of life, whistle to the horses, and away you go!

Borrow has indeed, in the Appendix to *The Romany Rye*, written of Sir Walter after a fashion for which I hope he has been forgiven. A piece of invective more terrible, more ungenerous, more savagely and exultingly cruel, is nowhere to be found. I shudder when I think of it. Had another written it, nothing he ever wrote should be in the same room with the *Heart of Midlothian*, *Redgauntlet*, and *The Antiquary*. I am not going to get angry with George Borrow. I say at once—I cannot afford it. But neither am I going to quote from the Appendix. God forbid! I can find elsewhere what

will suit my purpose just as well. Readers of *Lavengro* will remember the Man in Black. It is hard to forget him, the scandalous creature, or his story of the ironmonger's daughter at Birmingham "who screeches to the piano the Lady of the Lake's hymn to the Virgin Mary, always weeps when Mary Queen of Scots is mentioned, and fasts on the anniversary of the death of that very wise martyr, Charles I. Why, said the Man in Black, I would engage to convert such an idiot to popery in a week, were it worth my trouble. O Cavaliere Gualtereo, avete fatto molto in favore della Santa Sede."

Another precursor was Coleridge, who (amongst other things) called attention to the writings of the earlier Anglican divines—some of whom were men of primitive tempers and Catholic aspirations. Andrews and Laud, Jackson, Bull, Hammond, and Thorndyke—sound divines to a man—found the dust brushed off them. The second-hand booksellers, a wily and observant race, became alive to the fact that though Paley and Warburton, Horsley and Hoadley, were not worth the brown paper they came wrapped up in, seventeenth-century theology would bear being marked high.

Thus was the long Polar Winter that had befallen Anglican theology broken up, and the icebergs began moving about after a haphazard and even dangerous fashion—but motion is always something.

What has come to the Movement? It is hard to say. Its great leader has written a book of fascinating interest to prove that it was not a genuine Anglican movement at all; that it was foreign to the National Church, and that neither was its life derived from, nor was its course in the direction of, the National Church. But this was after he himself had joined the Church of Rome. Nobody, however, ventured to contradict him, nor is this surprising when we remember the profusion of argument and imagery with which he supported his case.

A point was reached, and then things were allowed to drop. The Church of Rome received some distinguished converts with her usual well-bred composure, and gave them little things to do in their new places. The *Tracts for the Times*, neatly bound, repose on many shelves. Tract No. 90, that fierce bomb-shell which once scattered confusion through clerical circles, is perhaps the only bit of Dr. Newman's writing one does not, on thinking of, wish to sit down at once to re-read. The fact is that the movement, as a movement with a terminus *ad quem*, was fairly beaten by a power fit to be matched with Rome herself—John Bullism. John Bull could not be got to assume a Catholic demeanour. When his judges denied that the grace of Baptism was a dogma of his faith, Bull, instead of behaving as did the people of Milan when Ambrose was persecuted by an Arian Government, was hugely pleased, clapped his thigh, and exclaimed, through the mouth of Lord John Russell, that the ruling was "sure to give general satisfaction," as indeed it did.

The work of the movement can still be seen in the new spirit that has descended upon the Church of England and in the general heightening of Church principles; but the movement itself is no longer to be seen, or much of the temper or modes of thought of the Tractarians. The High Church clergyman of to-day is no Theologian—he is an Opportunist. The Tractarian took his stand upon Antiquity—he laboured his points, he was always ready to prove his Rule of Faith and to define his position. His successor, though he has appropriated the results of the struggle, does not trouble to go on waging it. He is as a rule no great reader—you may often search his scanty library in vain for the works of Dean Jackson. Were you to ask for them, it is quite possible he would not know to what dean of that name you were referring. He is as hazy about the Hypostatic Union as are many laymen about the Pragmatic Sanction. He is all for the People and for

filling his Church. The devouring claims of the Church of Rome do not disturb his peace of mind. He thinks it very rude of her to dispute the validity of his orders —but, then, foreigners are rude! And so he goes on his hard-working way, with his high doctrines and his early services, and has neither time nor inclination for those studies that lend support to his priestly pretensions.

This temper of mind has given us peace in our time, and has undoubtedly promoted the cause of Temperance and other good works; but some day or another the old questions will have to be gone into again, and the Anglican claim to be a Church, Visible, Continuous, Catholic, and Gifted, investigated—probably for the last time.

Cynics may declare that it will be but a storm in a teacup—a dispute in which none but "women, priests, and peers" will be called upon to take part—but it is not an obviously wise policy to be totally indifferent to what other people are thinking about—simply because your own thoughts are running in other directions.

But all this is really no concern of mine. My object is to call attention to Dr. Newman's writings from a purely literary point of view.

The charm of Dr. Newman's style necessarily baffles description: as well might one seek to analyse the fragrance of a flower, or to expound in words the jumping of one's heart when a beloved friend unexpectedly enters the room. It is hard to describe charm. Mr. Matthew Arnold, who is a poet, gets near it:

> "And what but gentleness untired,
> And what but noble feeling warm,
> Wherever seen, howe'er inspired,
> Is grace, is charm?"

One can, of course, heap on words. Dr. Newman's style is pellucid, it is animated, it is varied; at times icy cold, it oftener glows with a fervent heat; it employs

as its obedient and well-trained servant a vast vocabulary, and it does so always with the ease of the educated gentleman, who by a sure instinct ever avoids alike the ugly pedantry of the book-worm, the forbidding accents of the lawyer, and the stiff conceit of the man of scientific theory. Dr. Newman's sentences sometimes fall upon the ear like well-considered and final judgments, each word being weighed and counted out with dignity and precision; but at other times the demeanour and language of the judge are hastily abandoned, and, substituted for them, we encounter the impetuous torrent—the captivating rhetoric, the brilliant imagery, the frequent examples, the repetition of the same idea in different words, of the eager and accomplished advocate addressing men of like passions with himself.

Dr. Newman always aims at effect, and never misses it. He writes as an orator speaks, straight at you. His object is to convince, and to convince by engaging your attention, exciting your interest, enlivening your fancy. It is not his general practice to address the pure reason. He knows (he well may) how little reason has to do with men's convictions. "I do not want," he says, "to be converted by a smart syllogism." In another place he observes: "The heart is commonly reached not through the reason—but through the imagination by means of direct impressions, by the testimony of facts and events, by history and by description. Persons influence us, voices melt us, books subdue us, deeds inflame us." I have elsewhere ventured upon a comparison between Burke and Newman. Both men, despite their subtlety and learning and super-refinement, their love of fine points and their splendid capacity for stating them in language so apt as to make one's admiration breathless, took very broad, common-sense, matter-of-fact views of humanity, and ever had the ordinary man and woman in mind as they spoke and wrote. Politics and Religion existed, in their opinion, for the benefit of plain folk, for Richard and for

Jane, or, in other words, for living bundles of hopes and fears, doubts and certainties, prejudices and passions. Anarchy and Atheism are in their opinion the two great enemies of the Human Race. How are they to be frustrated and confounded, men and women being what they are? Dr. Newman, recluse though he is, has always got the world stretched out before him; its unceasing roar sounds in his ear as does the murmur of ocean in the far inland shell. In one of his Catholic Sermons, the sixth of his Discourses to Mixed Congregations, there is a gorgeous piece of rhetoric in which he describes the people looking in at the shop-windows and reading advertisements in the newspapers. Many of his pages positively glow with light and heat and colour. One is at times reminded of Fielding. And all this comparing, and distinguishing, and illustrating, and appealing, and describing, is done with the practised hand of a consummate writer and orator. He is as subtle as Gladstone, and as moving as Erskine; but whereas Gladstone is occasionally clumsy, and Erskine was frequently crude, Newman is never clumsy, Newman is never crude, but always graceful, always mellowed.

Humour he possesses in a marked degree. A quiet humour, of course, as befits his sober profession and the gravity of the subjects on which he loves to discourse. It is not the humour that is founded on a lively sense of the incongruous. This kind, though the most delightful of all, is apt, save in the hands of the great masters, the men whom you can count upon your fingers, to wear a slightly professional aspect. It happens unexpectedly, but all the same we expect it to happen, and we have got our laughter ready. Newman's quiet humour always takes us unawares, and is accepted gratefully, partly on account of its intrinsic excellence, and partly because we are glad to find that the

"Pilgrim pale with Paul's sad girdle bound"

has room for mirth in his heart.

In sarcasm Dr. Newman is pre-eminent. Here his extraordinary powers of compression, which are little short of marvellous in one who has also such a talent for expansion, come to his aid and enable him to squeeze into a couple of sentences pleadings, argument, judgment, and execution. Had he led the secular life, and adopted a Parliamentary career, he would have been simply terrific, for his weapons of offence are both numerous and deadly. His sentences stab—his invective destroys. The pompous high-placed imbecile mouthing his platitudes, the wordy sophister with his oven full of half-baked thoughts, the ill-bred rhetorician with his tawdry aphorisms, the heartless hate-producing satirist, would have gone down before his sword and spear. But God was merciful to these sinners: Newman became a Priest and they Privy Councillors.

And lastly, all these striking qualities and gifts float about in a pleasant atmosphere. As there are some days even in England when merely to go out and breathe the common air is joy, and when, in consequence, that grim tyrant, our bosom's lord,

"Sits lightly in his throne,"

so, to take up almost any one of Dr. Newman's books, and they are happily numerous—between twenty and thirty volumes—is to be led away from "evil tongues," and the "sneers of selfish men," from the mud and the mire, the shoving and pushing that gather and grow round the pig-troughs of life, into a diviner ether, a purer air, and is to spend your time in the company of one who, though he may sometimes astonish, yet never fails to make you feel (to use Carlyle's words about a very different author) "that you have passed your evening well and nobly, as in a temple of wisdom, not ill and disgracefully as in brawling tavern supper-rooms with fools and noisy persons."

The tendency to be egotistical noticeable in some persons who are free from the faintest taint of egotism

is a tendency hard to account for—but delightful to watch.

"Anything," says glorious John Dryden, "though ever so little, which a man speaks of himself—in my opinion, is still too much." A sound opinion most surely, and yet how interesting are the personal touches we find scattered up and down Dryden's noble prefaces. So with Newman—his dignity, his self-restraint, his taste, are all the greatest stickler for a stiff upper lip and the consumption of your own smoke could desire, and yet the personal note is frequently sounded. He is never afraid to strike it when the perfect harmony that exists between his character and his style demands its sound, and so it has come about that we love what he has written because he wrote it, and we love him who wrote it because of what he has written.

I now approach by far the pleasantest part of my task, namely, the selection of two or three passages from Dr. Newman's books by way of illustrating what I have taken the liberty to say are notable characteristics of his style.

Let me begin with a chance specimen of the precision of his language. The passage is from the prefatory notice the Cardinal prefixed to the Rev. William Palmer's *Notes of a Visit to the Russian Church in the Years* 1840, 1841. It is dated 1882, and is consequently the writing of a man over eighty years of age: "William Palmer was one of those earnest-minded and devout men, forty years since, who, deeply convinced of the great truth that our Lord had instituted, and still acknowledges and protects, a Visible Church—one, individual, and integral; Catholic, as spread over the earth, Apostolic, as coeval with the Apostles of Christ, and Holy, as being the dispenser of His Word and Sacraments—considered it at present to exist in three main branches, or rather in a triple presence, the Latin, the Greek, and the Anglican, these three being one and the same Church distinguishable from each other by secondary, fortuitous,

and local, though important characteristics. And whereas the whole Church in its fulness was, as they believed, at once and severally Anglican, Greek, and Latin, so in turn each one of those three was the whole Church; whence it followed that, whenever any one of the three was present, the other two, by the nature of the case, were absent, and therefore the three could not have direct relations with each other, as if they were three substantive bodies, there being no real difference between them except the external accident of place. Moreover, since, as has been said, on a given territory there could not be more than one of the three, it followed that Christians generally, wherever they were, were bound to recognise, and had a claim to be recognised by, that one; ceasing to belong to the Anglican Church, as Anglican, when they were at Rome, and ignoring Rome, as Rome, when they found themselves at Moscow. Lastly, not to acknowledge this inevitable outcome of the initial idea of the Church, viz., that it was both everywhere and one, was bad logic, and to act in opposition to it was nothing short of setting up altar against altar, that is the hideous sin of schism, and a sacrilege. This I conceive to be the formal teaching of Anglicanism."

The most carefully considered judgments of Lord Westbury or Lord Cairns may be searched in vain for finer examples of stern accuracy and beautiful aptness of language.

For examples of what may be called Newman's oratorical rush, one has not far to look—though when torn from their context and deprived of their conclusion they are robbed of three-fourths of their power. Here is a passage from his second lecture addressed to the Anglican Party of 1833. It is on the Life of the National Church of England.

"Doubtless the National religion is alive. It is a great power in the midst of us, it wields an enormous influence; it represses a hundred foes; it conducts a hundred undertakings; it attracts men to it, uses them,

rewards them; it has thousands of beautiful homes up and down the country where quiet men may do its work and benefit its people; it collects vast sums in the shape of voluntary offerings, and with them it builds churches, prints and distributes innumerable Bibles, books, and tracts, and sustains missionaries in all parts of the earth. In all parts of the earth it opposes the Catholic Church, denounces her as anti-christian, bribes the world against her, obstructs her influence, apes her authority, and confuses her evidence. In all parts of the world it is the religion of gentlemen, of scholars, of men of substance, and men of no personal faith at all. If this be life, if it be life to impart a tone to the Court and Houses of Parliament, to Ministers of State, to law and literature, to universities and schools, and to society, if it be life to be a principle of order in the population, and an organ of benevolence and almsgiving towards the poor, if it be life to make men decent, respectable, and sensible, to embellish and reform the family circle, to deprive vice of its grossness and to shed a glow over avarice and ambition; if, indeed, it is the life of religion to be the first jewel in the Queen's crown, and the highest step of her throne, then doubtless the National Church is replete, it overflows with life; but the question has still to be answered: life of what kind?"

For a delightful example of Dr. Newman's humour, which is largely, if not entirely, a playful humour, I will remind the reader of the celebrated imaginary speech against the British Constitution attributed to "a member of the junior branch of the Potemkin family," and supposed to have been delivered at Moscow in the year 1850. It is too long for quotation, but will be found in the first of the *Lectures on the Present Position of Catholics in England*. The whole book is one of the best humoured books in the English language.

Of his sarcasm, the following example, well-known as it is, must be given. It occurs in the *Essay on the*

Prospects of the Anglican Church, which is reprinted from the *British Critic* in the first volume of the *Essays Critical and Historical*.

"In the present day mistiness is the mother of wisdom. A man who can set down half a dozen general propositions, which escape from destroying one another only by being diluted into truisms, who can hold the balance between opposites so skilfully as to do without fulcrum or beam, who never enunciates a truth without guarding himself from being supposed to exclude the contradictory, who holds that Scripture is the only authority, yet that the Church is to be deferred to, that faith only justifies, yet that it does not justify without works, that grace does not depend on the sacraments, yet is not given without them, that bishops are a divine ordinance, yet those who have them not are in the same religious condition as those who have—this is your safe man and the hope of the Church; this is what the Church is said to want, not party men, but sensible, temperate, sober, well-judging persons to guide it through the channel of No-meaning, between the Scylla and Charybdis of Aye and No. But, alas! reading sets men thinking. They will not keep standing in that very attitude, which you please to call sound Church-of-Englandism or orthodox Protestantism. It tires them, it is so very awkward, and for the life of them they cannot continue in it long together, where there is neither article nor canon to lean against—they cannot go on for ever standing on one leg, or sitting without a chair, or walking with their legs tied, or grazing like Tityrus's stags on the air. Premises imply conclusions—germs lead to developments; principles have issues; doctrines lead to action."

Of the personal note to which I have made reference, no examples need or should be given. Such things must not be transplanted from their own homes.

"The delicate shells lay on the shore;
The bubbles of the latest wave

Fresh pearl to their enamel gave ;
And the bellowing of the savage sea
Greeted their safe escape to me.
I wiped away the weeds and foam
And brought my sea-born treasures home :
But the poor, unsightly noisome things
Had left their beauty on the shore,
With the sun and the sand and the wild uproar."

If I may suppose this paper read by someone who is not yet acquainted with Newman's writings, I would advise him, unless he is bent on theology, to begin not with the *Sermons*, not even with the *Apologia*, but with the *Lectures on the Present Position of Catholics in England*. Then let him take up the *Lectures on the Idea of a University*, and on *University Subjects*. These may be followed by *Discussions and Arguments*, after which he will be well disposed to read the *Lectures on the Difficulties felt by Anglicans*. If after he has despatched these volumes he is not infected with what one of those charging Bishops called "Newmania," he is possessed of a devil of obtuseness no wit of man can expel.

Of the strength of Dr. Newman's philosophical position, which he has explained in his *Grammar of Assent*, it would ill become me to speak. He there strikes the shield of John Locke. *Non nostrum est tantas componere lites*. But it is difficult for the most ignorant of us not to have shy notions and lurking suspicions even about such big subjects and great men. Locke maintained that a man's belief in a proposition really depended upon and bore a relation to the weight of evidence forthcoming in its favour. Dr. Newman asserts that certainty is a quality of propositions, and he has discovered in man "an illative sense" whereby conclusions are converted into dogmas and a measured concurrence into an unlimited and absolute assurance. This illative sense is hardly a thing (if I may use an expression for ever associated with Lord Macaulay) to be cocksure about. Wedges, said the mediæval mechanic to his pupils, split wood by virtue of a wood-splitting

quality in wedges—but now we are indisposed to endow wedges with qualities, and if not wedges, why propositions? But the *Grammar of Assent* is a beautiful book, and with a quotation from it I will close my quotations: "Thus it is that Christianity is the fulfilment of the promise made to Abraham and of the Mosaic revelations; this is how it has been able from the first to occupy the world, and gain a hold on every class of human society to which its preachers reached; this is why the Roman power and the multitude of religions which it embraced could not stand against it; this is the secret of its sustained energy, and its never-flagging martyrdoms; this is how at present it is so mysteriously potent, in spite of the new and fearful adversaries which beset its path. It has with it that gift of stanching and healing the one deep wound of human nature, which avails more for its success than a full encyclopædia of scientific knowledge and a whole library of controversy, and therefore it must last while human nature lasts."

It is fitting that our last quotation should be one which leaves the Cardinal face to face with his faith.

Dr. Newman's poetry cannot be passed over without a word, though I am ill-fitted to do it justice. "Lead, kindly light" has forced its way into every hymn-book and heart. Those who go, and those who do not go to church, the fervent believer and the tired-out sceptic, here meet on common ground. The language of the verses in their intense sincerity seems to reduce all human feelings, whether fed on dogmas and holy rites or on man's own sad heart, to a common denominator.

> "The night is dark, and I am far from home,
> Lead Thou me on."

The believer can often say no more. The unbeliever will never willingly say less.

Amongst Dr. Newman's *Verses on Various Occasions*—though in some cases the earlier versions to be met

with in the *Lyra Apostolica* are to be preferred to the later — poems will be found by those who seek, conveying sure and certain evidence of the possession by the poet of the true lyrical gift—though almost cruelly controlled by the course of the poet's thoughts and the nature of his subjects. One is sometimes constrained to cry, "Oh, if he could only get out into the wild blowing airs, how his pinions would sweep the skies!" but such thoughts are unlicensed and unseemly. That we have two such religious poets as Cardinal Newman and Miss Christina Rossetti is or ought to be matter for sincere rejoicing.

II.

To the inveterate truth-hunter there has been much of melancholy in the very numerous estimates, hasty estimates no doubt, but all manifestly sincere, which the death of Cardinal Newman has occasioned.

The nobility of the pursuit after truth wherever the pursuit may lead has been abundantly recognised. Nobody has been base enough or cynical enough to venture upon a sneer. It has been marvellous to notice what a hold an unpopular thinker, dwelling very far apart from the trodden paths of English life and thought, had obtained upon men's imaginations. The "man in the street" was to be heard declaring that the dead Cardinal was a fine fellow. The newspaper-makers were astonished at the interest displayed by their readers. How many of these honest mourners, asked the *Globe*, have read a page of Newman's writings? It is a vain inquiry. Newman's books have long had a large and increasing sale. They stand on all sorts of shelves, and wherever they go a still, small voice accompanies them. They are speaking books; an air breathes from their pages.

> "Again I saw and I confess'd
> Thy speech was rare and high,
> And yet it vex'd my burden'd breast,
> And scared I knew not why."

It is a strange criticism that recently declared Newman's style to lack individuality. Oddity it lacked, and mannerisms, but not, so it seems to us, individuality.

But this wide recognition of Newman's charm both of character and style cannot conceal from the anxious truth-hunter that there has been an almost equally wide recognition of the futility of Newman's method and position.

Method and position? These were sacred words with the Cardinal. But a few days ago he seemed securely posed before the world. It cannot surely have been his unrivalled dialectics only that made men keep civil tongues in their heads or hesitate to try conclusions with him. It was rather, we presume, that there was no especial occasion to speak of him otherwise than with the respect and affection due to honoured age. But when he is dead—it is different. It is necessary then to gauge his method and to estimate his influence, not as a living man, but as a dead one.

And what has that estimate been? The saintly life, the mysterious presence, are admitted, and well-nigh nothing else. All sorts of reasons are named, some plausible, all cunningly contrived, to account for Newman's quarrel with the Church of his baptism. A writer in the *Guardian* suggests one, a writer in the *Times* another, a writer in the *Saturday Review* a third, and so on.

However much these reasons may differ one from another, they all agree in this, that of necessity they have ceased to operate. They were personal reasons, and perished with the man whose faith and actions they controlled. Nobody else, it has been throughout assumed, will become a Romanist for the same reasons as John Henry Newman. If he had not been brought up an Evangelical, if he had learnt German, if he had married, if he had been made an archdeacon, all would have been different.

There is something positively terrible in this natural

history of opinion. All the passion and the pleading of a life, the thought and the labour, the sustained argument, the library of books, reduced to what ?—a series of accidents !

Newman himself well knew this aspect of affairs. No one's plummet since Pascal's had taken deeper soundings of the infirmity—the oceanic infirmity—of the intellect. What actuary, he asks contemptuously, can appraise the value of a man's opinions ? In how many a superb passage does he exhibit the absurd, the haphazard fashion in which men and women collect the odds and ends, the bits and scraps they are pleased to place in the museum of their minds, and label, in all good faith, their convictions ! Newman almost revels in such subjects. The solemn pomposity which so frequently dignifies with the name of research or inquiry feeble scratchings amongst heaps of verbosity had no more determined foe than the Cardinal.

But now the same measure is being meted out to him, and we are told of a thinker's life—it is nought.

He thought he had constructed a way of escape from the City of Destruction for himself and his followers across the bridge of that illative sense which turns conclusions into assents, and opinions into faiths—but the bridge seems no longer standing.

The writer in the *Guardian*, who attributes Newman's restlessness in the English Church to the smug and comfortable life of many of its clergy rather than to any especial craving after authority, no doubt wrote with knowledge.

A married clergy seemed always to annoy Newman. Readers of *Loss and Gain* are not likely to forget the famous " pork chop " passage, which describes a young parson and his bride bustling into a stationer's shop to buy hymnals and tracts. What was once only annoyance at some of the ways of John Bull on his knees, soon ripened into something not very unlike hatred. Never was any invention less *ben trovato* than that

which used to describe Newman as pining after the "incomparable liturgy" or the "cultured society" of the Church of England. He hated *ex animo* all those aspects of Anglicanism which best recommend it to Erastian minds. A church of which sanctity is *not* a note is sure to have many friends.

The *Saturday Review* struck up a fine, national tune:

"An intense but narrow conception of personal holiness, and personal satisfaction with dogma, ate him (Newman) up—the natural legacy of the Evangelical school in which he had been nursed, the great tradition of Tory Churchmanship, *of pride in the Church of England, as such*, of determination to stand shoulder to shoulder in resisting the foreigner, whether he came from Rome or from Geneva, from Tübingen or from Saint Sulpice, of the union of all social and intellectual culture with theological learning—the idea which, alone of all such ideas, has made education patriotic, and orthodoxy generous, made insufficient appeal to him, and for want of it he himself made shipwreck."

Here is John Bullism, bold and erect. If the Ark of Peter won't hoist the Union Jack, John Bull must have an ark to himself, with patriotic clergy of his own manufacture tugging at the oar, and with nothing foreign in the hold save some sound old port. "It will always be remembered to Newman's credit," says this same reviewer, "that he knew good wine if he did not drink much." Mark the "If;" there is much virtue in it.

We are now provided with two causes of Newman's discomfort in the Church of England—its too comfortable clergy, and its too frequent introduction of the lion and the unicorn amongst the symbols of religion—both effective causes, as may be proved by many passages; but to say that either or both availed to drive him out, and compelled him to seek shelter at the hands of one whom he had long regarded as a foe, is to go very far indeed.

It should not be overlooked that these minimisers of

Newman's influence are all firmly attached for different reasons to the institution Newman left. Their judgments therefore cannot be allowed to pass unchallenged. What Disraeli meant when he said that Newman's secession had dealt the Church of England a blow under which it still reeled, was that by this act Newman expressed before the whole world his profound conviction that our so-called National Church was not a branch of the Church Catholic. And this really is the point of weakness upon which Newman hurled himself. This is the damage he did to the Church of this island. Throughout all his writings, in a hundred places, in jests and sarcasms as well as in papers and arguments, there crops up this settled conviction that England is not a Catholic country, and that John Bull is not a member of the Catholic Church.

This may not matter much to the British electorate; but to those who care about such things, who rely upon the validity of orders and the efficacy of sacraments, who need a pedigree for their faith, who do not agree with Emerson that if a man would be great he must be a Nonconformist—over these people it would be rash to assume that Newman's influence is spent. The general effect of his writings, the demands they awaken, the spirit they breathe, are all hostile to Anglicanism. They create a profound dissatisfaction with, a distaste for, the Church of England as by law established. Those who are affected by this spirit will no longer be able comfortably to enjoy the maimed rites and practices of their Church. They will feel their place is elsewhere, and sooner or later they will pack up and go. It is far too early in the day to leave Newman out of sight.

But to end where we began. There has been scant recognition in the Cardinal's case of the usefulness of devoting life to anxious inquiries after truth. It is very noble to do so, and when you come to die, the newspapers, from the *Times* to the *Sporting Life*, will, in the first place, point out, after their superior fashion, how

much better was this pure-minded and unworldly thinker than the soiled politician, full of opportunism and inconsistency, trying hard to drown the echoes of his past with his loud vociferations, and then proceed in a few short sentences to establish how out of date is this Thinker's thought, how false his reasoning, how impossible his conclusions, and lastly, how dead his influence.

It is very puzzling and difficult, and drives some men to collect butterflies and beetles. Thinkers are not, however, to be disposed of by scratches of the pen. A Cardinal of the Roman Church is not, to say the least of it, more obviously a shipwreck than a dean or even a bishop of the English establishment. Character, too, counts for something. Of Newman it may be said:

> "Fate gave what chance shall not control,
> His sad lucidity of soul."

But the truth-hunter is still unsatisfied.

MATTHEW ARNOLD.

I.

THE news of Mr. Arnold's sudden death at Liverpool struck a chill into many hearts, for although a somewhat constrained writer (despite his playfulness) and certainly the least boisterous of men, he was yet most distinctly on the side of human enjoyment. He conspired and contrived to make things pleasant. Pedantry he abhorred. He was a man of this life and this world. A severe critic of the world he indeed was, but finding himself in it and not precisely knowing what is beyond it, like a brave and true-hearted man he set himself to make the best of it. Its sight and sounds were dear to him. The "uncrumpling fern," the eternal moonlit snow, "Sweet William with its homely cottage-smell," "the red grouse springing at our sound," the tinkling bells of the "high-pasturing kine," the vagaries of men, women, and dogs, their odd ways and tricks, whether of mind or manner, all delighted, amused, tickled him. Human loves, joys, sorrows, human relationships, ordinary ties interested him:

> "The help in strife,
> The thousand sweet still joys of such
> As hand in hand face earthly life."

In a sense of the words which is noble and blessed, he was of the Earth Earthy.

In his earlier days Mr. Arnold was much misunderstood. That rowdy Philistine the *Daily Telegraph* called him "a prophet of the kid-glove persuasion," and his own too frequent iteration of the somewhat

dandiacal phrase "sweetness and light" helped to promote the notion that he was a fanciful, finikin Oxonian,

"A fine puss gentleman that's all perfume,"

quite unfit for the most ordinary wear and tear of life. He was in reality nothing of the kind, though his literary style was a little in keeping with this false conception. His mind was based on the plainest possible things. What he hated most was the fantastic—the far-fetched, all elaborated fancies, and strained interpretations. He stuck to the beaten track of human experience, and the broader the better. He was a plain-sailing man. This is his true note. In his much-criticised, but as I think admirable introduction to the selection he made from Wordsworth's poems, he admits that the famous *Ode on Intimations of Immortality from Recollections in Early Childhood* is not one of his prime favourites, and in that connection he quotes from Thucydides the following judgment on the early exploits of the Greek Race and applies it to these intimations of immortality in babies: "It is impossible to speak with certainty of what is so remote, but from all that we can really investigate I should say that they were no very great things."

This quotation is in Mr. Arnold's own vein. His readers will have no difficulty in calling to mind numerous instances in which his dislike of everything not broadly based on the generally admitted facts of sane experience manifests itself. Though fond—perhaps exceptionally fond—of pretty things and sayings, he had a severe taste, and hated whatever struck him as being in the least degree sickly, or silly, or over-heated. No doubt he may often have considered that to be sickly or silly which in the opinion of others was pious and becoming. It may be that he was over-impatient of men's flirtations with futurity. As his paper on Professor Dowden's *Life of Shelley* shows, he disapproved of "irregular relations." He considered we were all

married to plain Fact, and objected to our carrying on a flirtation with mystic maybe's and calling it Religion. Had it been a man's duty to believe in a specific revelation it would have been God's duty to make that revelation credible. Such, at all events, would appear to have been the opinion of this remarkable man, who, though he had even more than his share of an Oxonian's reverence for the great Bishop of Durham, was unable to admit the force of the main argument of *The Analogy*. Mr. Arnold was indeed too fond of parading his inability for hard reasoning. I am not, he keeps saying, like the Archbishop of York, or the Bishop of Gloucester and Bristol. There was affectation about this, for his professed inferiority did not prevent him from making it almost excruciatingly clear that in his opinion those gifted prelates were, whilst exercising their extraordinary powers, only beating the air, or in plainer words busily engaged in talking nonsense. But I must not wander from my point, which simply is that Arnold's dislike of anything recondite or remote was intense, genuine, and characteristic.

He always asserted himself to be a good Liberal. So in truth he was. A better Liberal than many a one whose claim to that title it would be thought absurd to dispute. He did not indeed care very much about some of the articles of the Liberal creed as now professed. He had taken a great dislike to the Deceased Wife's Sister Bill. He wished the Church and the State to continue to recognise each other. He had not that jealousy of State interference in England which used to be (it is so no longer) a note of political Liberalism. He sympathised with Italian national aspirations because he thought it wrong to expect a country with such a past as Italy to cast in her lot with Austria. He did not sympathise with Irish national aspirations because he thought Ireland ought to be willing to admit that she was relatively to England an inferior and less interesting country, and therefore one which had no

moral claim for national institutions. He may have been right or wrong on these points without affecting his claim to be considered a Liberal. Liberalism is not a creed, but a frame of mind. Mr. Arnold's frame of mind was Liberal. No living man is more deeply permeated with the grand doctrine of Equality than was he. He wished to see his countrymen and countrywomen all equal: Jack as good as his master, and Jack's master as good as Jack; and neither talking clap-trap. He had a hearty un-English dislike of anomalies and absurdities. He fully appreciated the French Revolution and was consequently a Democrat. He was not a Democrat from irresistible impulse, or from love of mischief, or from hatred of priests, or, like the average British workman, from a not unnatural desire to get something on account of his share of the family inheritance—but all roads lead to Rome, and Mr. Arnold was a Democrat from a sober and partly sorrowful conviction that no other form of government was possible. He was an Educationalist, and Education is the true Leveller. His almost passionate cry for better middle-class education arose from his annoyance at the exclusion of large numbers of this great class from the best education the country afforded. It was a ticklish job telling this great, wealthy middle class—which according to the newspapers had made England what she is and what everybody else wished to be—that it was, from an educational point of view, beneath contempt. "I hear with surprise," said Sir Thomas Bazley at Manchester, "that the education of our great middle class requires improvement." But Mr. Arnold had courage. Indeed, he carried one kind of courage to a heroic pitch. I mean the courage of repeating yourself over and over again. It is a sound forensic maxim: Tell a judge twice whatever you want him to hear. Tell a special jury thrice, and a common jury half-a-dozen times the view of a case you wish them to entertain. Mr. Arnold treated the middle class as a common jury, and hammered away at them remorse-

lessly and with the most unblushing iteration. They groaned under him, they snorted, and they sniffed—but they listened, and, what was more to the purpose, their children listened, and with filial frankness told their heavy sires that Mr. Arnold was quite right, and that their lives were dull, and hideous, and arid, even as he described them as being. Mr. Arnold's work as a School Inspector gave him great opportunities of going about amongst all classes of the people. Though not exactly apostolic in manner or method, he had something to say both to and of everybody. The aristocracy were polite and had ways he admired, but they were impotent of ideas and had a dangerous tendency to become studiously frivolous. Consequently the Future did not belong to them. Get ideas and study gravity was the substance of his discourse to the Barbarians, as, with that trick of his of miscalling God's creatures, he had the effrontery to dub our adorable nobility. But it was the middle class upon whom fell the full weight of his discourse. His sermons to them would fill a volume. Their great need was culture, which he declared to be *a study of perfection*, the sentiment for beauty and sweetness, the sentiment against hideousness and rawness. The middle class, he protested, needed to know all the best things that have been said and done in the world since it began, and to be thereby lifted out of their holes and corners, private academies and chapels in side streets, above their tenth-rate books and miserable preferences, into the main stream of national existence. The lower orders he judged to be a mere rabble, and thought it was as yet impossible to predict whether or not they would hereafter display any aptitude for Ideas, or passion for Perfection. But in the meantime he bade them learn to cohere, and to read and write, and above all he conjured them not to imitate the middle classes.

It is not easy to know everything about everybody, and it may be doubted whether Mr. Arnold did not over-

rate the degree of acquaintance with his countrymen that his peregrinations among them had conferred upon him. In certain circles he was supposed to have made the completest possible diagnosis of dissent, and was credited with being able, after five minutes' conversation with any individual Nonconformist, unerringly to assign him to his particular chapel, Independent, Baptist, Primitive Methodist, Unitarian, or whatever else it might be, and this though they had only been talking about the weather. To people who know nothing about Dissenters, Mr. Arnold might well seem to know everything. However, he did know a great deal, and used his knowledge with great cunning and effect, and a fine instinctive sense of the whereabouts of the weakest points. Mr. Arnold's sense for equality and solidarity was not impeded by any exclusive tastes or hobbies. Your collector, even though it be but of butterflies, is rarely a democrat. One of Arnold's favourite lines in Wordsworth was—

"Joy that is in widest commonalty spread."

The collector's joys are not of that kind. Mr. Arnold was not, I believe, a collector of anything. He certainly was not of books. I once told him I had been reading a pamphlet, written by him in 1859, on the Italian Question. He inquired how I came across it. I said I had picked it up in a shop. "Oh yes," said he, "some old curiosity shop, I suppose." Nor was he joking. He seemed quite to suppose that old books, and old clothes, and old chairs were huddled together for sale in the same resort of the curious. He did not care about such things. The prices given for the early editions of his own poems seemed to tease him. His literary taste was broadly democratic. He had no mind for fished-up authors, nor did he ever indulge in swaggering rhapsodies over second-rate poets. The best was good enough for him. "The best poetry" was what he wanted, "a clearer, deeper sense of the best

in poetry, and of the strength and joy to be drawn from it." So he wrote in his general introduction to Mr. Ward's *Selections from the English Poets*. The best of everything for everybody. This was his gospel and his prayer.

Approaching Mr. Arnold's writings more nearly, it seems inevitable to divide them into three classes: his poems, his theological excursions, and his criticism, using the last word in a wide sense as including a criticism of life and of politics as well as of books and style.

Of Mr. Arnold's poetry it is hard for anyone who has felt it to the full during the most impressionable period of life to speak without emotion overcoming reason.

> "Hardly shall I tell my joys and sorrows,
> Hopes and fears, belief and unbelieving."

It is easy to admit, in general terms, its limitations. Mr. Arnold is the last man in the world anybody would wish to shove out of his place. A poet at all points, armed cap-à-pie against criticism, like Lord Tennyson, he certainly was not. Nor had his verse any share of the boundless vitality, the fierce pulsation, so nobly characteristic of Mr. Browning. But these admissions made, we decline to parley any further with the enemy. We cast him behind us. Mr. Arnold, to those who cared for him at all, was the most *useful* poet of his day. He lived much nearer us than poets of his distinction usually do. He was neither a prophet nor a recluse. He lived neither above us, nor away from us. There are two ways of being a recluse—a poet may live remote from men, or he may live in a crowded street but remote from their thoughts. Mr. Arnold did neither, and consequently his verse tells and tingles. None of it is thrown away. His readers feel that he bore the same yoke as themselves. Theirs is a common bondage with his. Beautiful, surpassingly beautiful some of Mr. Arnold's poetry is, but we seize upon the *thought* first and delight in the *form* afterwards. No doubt the form

is an extraordinary comfort, for the thoughts are often, as thoughts so widely spread could not fail to be, the very thoughts that are too frequently expressed rudely, crudely, indelicately. To open Mr. Arnold's poems is to escape from a heated atmosphere and a company not wholly free from offence even though composed of those who share our opinions—from loud-mouthed random talking men into a well-shaded retreat which seems able to impart, even to our feverish persuasions and crude conclusions, something of the coolness of falling water, something of the music of rustling trees. This union of thought, substantive thought, with beauty of form —of strength with elegance—is rare. I doubt very much whether Mr. Arnold ever realised the devotedness his verse inspired in the minds of thousands of his countrymen and countrywomen, both in the old world and the new. He is not a bulky poet. Three volumes contain him. But hardly a page can be opened without the eye lighting on verse which at one time or another has been, either to you or to some one dear to you, strength or joy. *The Buried Life, A Southern Night, Dover Beach, A Wanderer is Man from his Birth, Rugby Chapel, Resignation.* How easy to prolong the list, and what a list it is! Their very names are dear to us, even as are the names of Mother Churches and Holy Places to the Votaries of the old Religion. I read the other day in the *Spectator* newspaper an assertion that Mr. Arnold's poetry had never consoled anybody. A falser statement was never made innocently. It may never have consoled the writer in the *Spectator*, but because the stomach of a dram-drinker rejects cold water is no kind of reason for a sober man abandoning his morning tumbler of the pure element. Mr. Arnold's poetry has been found full of consolation. It would be strange if it had not been. It is

"No stretched metre of an antique song,"

but quick and to the point. There are finer sonnets in

the English language than the two following, but there are no better sermons. And if it be said that sermons may be found in stones, but ought not to be in sonnets, I fall back upon the fact which Mr. Arnold himself so cheerfully admitted, that the middle classes, who in England, at all events, are Mr. Arnold's chief readers, are serious, and love sermons. Some day perhaps they will be content with metrical exercises, ballades, and roundels.

EAST LONDON.

"'Twas August, and the fierce sun overhead
Smote on the squalid streets of Bethnal Green,
And the pale weaver, through his windows seen
In Spitalfields, looked thrice dispirited.

"I met a preacher there I knew, and said:
'Ill and o'erworked, how fare you in this scene?'
'Bravely!' said he; 'for I of late have been
Much cheered with thoughts of Christ, *the living bread*.'

"O human soul! as long as thou canst so
Set up a mark of everlasting light,
Above the howling senses' ebb and flow,
To cheer thee, and to right thee if thou roam—
Not with lost toil thou labourest through the night!
Thou mak'st the heaven thou hop'st indeed thy home."

THE BETTER PART.

"Long fed on boundless hopes, O race of man,
How angrily thou spurn'st all simpler fare!
'Christ,' some one says, 'was human as we are;
No judge eyes us from Heaven, our sin to scan;

"'We live no more, when we have done our span.'—
'Well, then, for Christ,' thou answerest, 'who can care?
From Sin, which Heaven records not, why forbear?
Live we like brutes our life without a plan!'

"So answerest thou; but why not rather say:
'Hath man no second life?—*Pitch this one high!*
Sits there no judge in Heaven, our sin to see?

"'*More strictly, then, the inward judge obey!*
Was Christ a man like us?—*Ah! let us try*
If we then, too, can be such men as he!'"

Mr. Arnold's love of Nature, and poetic treatment of Nature, was to many a vexed soul a great joy and an

intense relief. Mr. Arnold was a genuine Wordsworthian —being able to read everything Wordsworth ever wrote except *Vaudracour and Julia*. The influence of Wordsworth upon him was immense, but he was enabled, by the order of his mind, to reject with the heartiest goodwill the cloudy pantheism which robs so much of Wordsworth's best verse of the heightened charm of reality, for, after all, poetry, like religion, must be true, or it is nothing. This strong aversion to the unreal also prevented Mr. Arnold, despite his love of the classical forms, from a nonsensical neo-paganism. His was a manlier attitude. He had no desire to keep tugging at the dry breasts of an outworn creed, nor any disposition to go down on his knees, or *hunkers* * as the Scotch more humorously call them, before plaster casts of Venus, or even of "Proteus rising from the sea." There was something very refreshing about this. In the long run even a gloomy truth is better company than a cheerful falsehood. The perpetual strain of living down to a lie, the depressing atmosphere of a circumscribed intelligence, tell upon the system, and the cheerful falsehood soon begins to look puffy and dissipated.

THE YOUTH OF NATURE.

"For, oh! is it you, is it you,
Moonlight, and shadow, and lake,
And mountains, that fill us with joy,
Or the poet who sings you so well?
. . . . . .
. . . . . .
More than the singer are these
. . . . . .
. . . . . .
Yourselves and your fellows ye know not; and me,
The mateless, the one, will ye know?
Will ye scan me, and read me, and tell

* Hunkers is not Scotch for knees, but it signifies an attitude put in Scotland to devotional use. Canon Ainger told me that when in Scotland in charge of an Episcopalian Chapel he was followed by urchins singing,

"'Pisky! 'Pisky! say Amen,
Down on your hunkers and up again."

Of the thoughts that ferment in my breast,
My longing, my sadness, my joy?
Will ye claim for your great ones the gift
To have rendered the gleam of my skies,
To have echoed the moan of my seas,
Uttered the voice of my hills?
When your great ones depart, will ye say
All things have suffered a loss,
Nature is hid in their grave?

"Race after race, man after man,
Have thought that my secret was theirs,
Have dreamed that I lived but for them,
That they were my glory and joy.
They are dust, they are changed, they are gone!
I remain."

When a poet is dead we turn to his verse with quickened feelings. He rests from his labours. We still

"Stem across the sea of life by night,"

and the voice, once the voice of the living, of one who stood by our side, has for a while an unfamiliar accent, coming to us as it does no longer from our friendly earth but from the strange cold caverns of death.

"Joy comes and goes, hope ebbs and flows
Like the wave,
Change doth unknit the tranquil strength of men.
Love lends life a little grace,
A few sad smiles; and then,
Both are laid in one cold place,
In the grave.

"Dreams dawn and fly, friends smile and die
Like spring flowers;
Our vaunted life is one long funeral.
Men dig graves with bitter tears
For their dead hopes; and all,
Mazed with doubts and sick with fears,
Count the hours.

"We count the hours! These dreams of ours,
False and hollow,
Do we go hence and find they are not dead?
Joys we dimly apprehend,
Faces that smiled and fled,
Hopes born here, and born to end,
Shall we follow?"

In a poem like this Mr. Arnold is seen at his best; he fairly forces himself into the very front ranks. In form almost equal to Shelley, or at any rate not so very far behind him, whilst of course in reality, in wholesome thought, in the pleasures that are afforded by thinking, it is of incomparable excellence.

We die as we do, not as we would. Yet on reading again Mr. Arnold's *Wish*, we feel that the manner of his death was much to his mind.

A Wish.

"I ask not that my bed of death
From bands of greedy heirs be free:
For these besiege the latest breath
Of fortune's favoured sons, not me.

"I ask not each kind soul to keep
Tearless, when of my death he hears.
Let those who will, if any—weep!
There are worse plagues on earth than tears.

"I ask but that my death may find
The freedom to my life denied;
Ask but the folly of mankind
Then—then at last to quit my side.

"Spare me the whispering, crowded room,
The friends who come, and gape, and go;
The ceremonious air of gloom—
All which makes death a hideous show!

"Nor bring to see me cease to live
Some doctor full of phrase and fame,
To shake his sapient head and give
The ill he cannot cure a name.

"Nor fetch to take the accustomed toll
Of the poor sinner bound for death
His brother doctor of the soul
To canvass with official breath

"The future and its viewless things—
That undiscovered mystery
Which one who feels death's winnowing wings
Must needs read clearer, sure, than he!

Bring none of these; but let me be,
While all around in silence lies,

Moved to the window near, and see
Once more before my dying eyes,

" Bathed in the sacred dews of morn,
The wide aërial landscape spread—
The world which was ere I was born,
The world which lasts when I am dead ;

" Which never was the friend of *one*,
Nor promised love it could not give,
But lit for all its generous sun,
And lived itself and made us live.

" Then let me gaze—till I become
In soul, with what I gaze on, wed !
To feel the universe my home ;
To have before my mind—instead

" Of the sick room, the mortal strife,
The turmoil for a little breath—
The pure eternal course of life,
Not human combatings with death !

" Thus feeling, gazing, let me grow
Composed, refreshed, ennobled, clear—
Then willing let my spirit go
To work or wait, elsewhere or here ! "

To turn from Arnold's poetry to his theological writings—if so grim a name can be given to these productions—from *Rugby Chapel* to *Literature and Dogma*, from *Obermann* to *God and the Bible*, from *Empedocles on Etna* to *St. Paul and Protestantism*, is to descend from the lofty table-lands,

" From the dragon-wardered fountains
Where the springs of knowledge are,
From the watchers on the mountains
And the bright and morning star,"

to the dusty highroad. It cannot, I think, be asserted that either the plan or the style of these books was in keeping with their subjects. It was characteristic of Mr. Arnold, and like his practical turn of mind, to begin *Literature and Dogma* in the *Cornhill Magazine*. A book rarely shakes off the first draft—*Literature and Dogma* never did. It is full of repetitions and weari-

some recapitulations, well enough in a magazine, where each issue is sure to be read by many who will never see another number, but which disfigure a book. The style is likewise too jaunty. Bantering the Trinity is not yet a recognised English pastime. Bishop-baiting is, but this notwithstanding, most readers of *Literature and Dogma* grew tired of the Bishop of Gloucester and Bristol and of his alleged desire to do something for the honour of the Godhead long before Mr. Arnold showed any signs of weariness. But making all these abatements, and fully admitting that *Literature and Dogma* is not likely to prove permanently interesting to the English reader, it must be pronounced a most valuable and useful book, and one to which the professional critics and philosophers never did justice. The object of *Literature and Dogma* was no less than the restoration of the use of the Bible to the sceptical laity. It was a noble object, and it was in a great measure, as thousands of quiet people could testify, attained. It was not a philosophical treatise. In its own way it was the same kind of thing as many of Cardinal Newman's writings. It started with an assumption, namely, that it is impossible to believe in the miracles recorded in the Old and New Testaments. There is no laborious attempt to distinguish between one miracle and another, or to lighten the burden of faith in any particular. Nor is any serious attempt made to disprove miracles. Mr. Arnold did not write for those who find no difficulty in believing in the first chapter of St. Luke's gospel, or the sixteenth chapter of St. Mark's, but for those who simply cannot believe a word of either the one chapter or the other. Mr. Arnold knew well that this inability to believe is apt to generate in the mind of the unbeliever an almost physical repulsion to open books which are full of supernatural events. Mr. Arnold knew this and lamented it. His own love of the Bible was genuine and intense. He could read even Jeremiah and Habakkuk. As he loved Homer with one

side of him, so he loved the Bible with the other. He saw how men were crippled and maimed through growing up in ignorance of it, and living all the days of their lives outside its influence. He longed to restore it to them, to satisfy them that its place in the mind of man —that its educational and moral power—was not due to the miracles it records nor to the dogmas that Catholics have developed or Calvinists extracted from its pages, but to its literary excellence and to the glow and enthusiasm it has shed over conduct, self-sacrifice, humanity, and holy living. It was at all events a worthy object and a most courageous task. It exposed him to a heavy cross-fire. The Orthodox fell upon his book and abused it, unrestrainedly abused it, for its familiar handling of their sacred books. They almost grudged Mr. Arnold his great acquaintance with the Bible, just as an Englishman might be annoyed at finding Moltke acquainted with all the roads from Dover to London. This feeling was natural, and on the whole I think it creditable to the orthodox party that a book so needlessly pain-giving as *Literature and Dogma* did not goad them into any personal abuse of its author. But they could not away with the book. Nor did the philosophical sceptic like it much better. The philosophical sceptic is too apt to hate the Bible, even as the devil was reported to hate holy water. Its spirit condemns him. Its devout, heart-stirring, noble language creates an atmosphere which is deadly for pragmatic egotism. To make men once more careful students of the Bible was to deal a blow at materialism, and consequently was not easily forgiven. "Why can't you leave the Bible alone?" they grumbled. "What have we to do with it?" But Pharisees and Sadducees do not exhaust mankind, and Mr. Arnold's contributions to the religious controversies of his time were very far from the barren things that are most contributions, and indeed most controversies on such subjects. I believe I am right when I say that he

induced a very large number of persons to take up again and make a daily study of the books both of the Old and the New Testament.

As a literary critic Mr. Arnold had at one time a great vogue. His *Essays in Criticism*, first published in 1865, made him known to a larger public than his poems or his delightful lectures on translating Homer had succeeded in doing. He had the happy knack of starting interesting subjects and saying all sorts of interesting things by the way. There was the French Academy. Would it be a good thing to have an English Academy? He started the question himself and answered it in the negative. The public took it out of his mouth and proceeded to discuss it for itself, always on the assumption that he had answered it in the affirmative. But that is the way with the public. No sensible man minds it. To set something going is the most anybody can hope to do in this world. Where it will go to, and what sort of moss it will gather as it goes, for despite the proverb there is nothing incompatible between moss and motion, no one can say. In this volume, too, he struck the note, so frequently and usefully repeated, of self-dissatisfaction. To make us dissatisfied with ourselves, alive to our own inferiority—not absolute, but in important respects; to check the chorus, then so loud, of self-approval of our majestic selves; to make us understand why nobody who is not an Englishman wants to be one—this was another of the tasks of this militant man. We all remember how *Wragg* * *is in custody*. The papers on Heine and Spinoza and Marcus Aurelius were read with eagerness, with an enjoyment, with a sense of widening horizons too rare to be easily forgotten. They were light and graceful, but it would, I think, be unjust to call them slender. They were not written for specialists or even for students, but for ordinary men and women, particularly for young men and women, who carried away with them from the

* See *Essays in Criticism*, p. 23.

reading of *Essays in Criticism* something they could not have found anywhere else, and which remained with them for the rest of their days, namely, a way of looking at things. A perfectly safe critic Mr. Arnold hardly was. Even in this volume he fusses too much about the De Guérins. To some later judgments of his it would be unkind to refer. It was said of the late Lord Justice Mellish by Lord Cairns that he went right instinctively. That is, he did not flounder into truth. Mr. Arnold never floundered, but he sometimes fell. A more delightful critic of literature we have not had for long. What pleasant reading are his *Lectures on Translating Homer*, which ought to be at once reprinted. How full of good things! Not perhaps fit to be torn from their contexts, or paraded in a commonplace book, but of the kind which give a reader joy—which make literature tempting—which revive, even in dull middle-age, something of the enthusiasm of the love-stricken boy. Then, too, his *Study of Celtic Literature*. It does not matter much whether you can bring yourself to believe in the *Eisteddfod* or not. In fact Mr. Arnold did not believe in it. He knew perfectly well that better poetry is to be found every week in the poet's corner of every county newspaper in England than is produced annually at the *Eisteddfod*. You need not even share Mr. Arnold's opinion as to the inherent value of Celtic Literature, though this is of course a grave question, worthy of all consideration—but his *Study* is good enough to be read for love. It is full of charming criticism. Most critics are such savages—or, if they are not savages, they are full of fantasies—and are capable at any moment of calling *Tom Jones* dull, or Sydney Smith a bore. Mr. Arnold was not a savage, and could no more have called *Tom Jones* dull or Sydney Smith a bore, than Homer heavy or Milton vulgar. He was no gloomy specialist. He knew it took all sorts to make a world. He was alive to life. Its great movement fascinated him, even as it had done Burke,

even as it did Cardinal Newman. He watched the rushing stream, the "stir of existence," the good and the bad, the false and the true, with an interest that never flagged. In his last words on translating Homer he says: "And thus false tendency as well as true, vain effort as well as fruitful, go together to produce that great movement of life, to present that immense and magic spectacle of human affairs, which from boyhood to old age fascinates the gaze of every man of imagination, and which would be his terror if it were not at the same time his delight."

Mr. Arnold never succeeded in getting his countrymen to take him seriously as a practical politician. He was regarded as an unauthorized practitioner whose prescriptions no respectable chemist would consent to make up. He had not the diploma of Parliament, nor was he able, like the Secretary of an Early Closing Association, to assure any political aspirant that he commanded enough votes to turn an election. When Mr. John Morley took occasion after Mr. Arnold's death to refer to him in Parliament, the name was received respectfully but coldly. And yet he was eager about politics, and had much to say about political questions. His work in these respects was far from futile. What he said was never inept. It coloured men's thoughts, and contributed to the formation of their opinions far more than even public meetings. His introduction to his *Report on Popular Education in France*, published in 1861, is as instructive a piece of writing as is to be found in any historical disquisition of the last three decades. The paper on "My Countrymen" in that most amusing book *Friendship's Garland* is full of point.

But it is time to stop. It is only possible to stop where we began. Matthew Arnold is dead. He would have been the last man to expect anyone to grow hysterical over the circumstance, and the first to denounce any strained emotion. *Il n'y a pas d'homme*

nécessaire. No one ever grasped this great, this comforting, this cooling, this self-destroying truth more cordially than he did. As I write the words, I remember how he employed them in his preface to the second edition of *Essays in Criticism*, where he records a conversation, I doubt not an imaginary one, between himself and a portly jeweller from Cheapside—his fellow-traveller on the Woodford branch of the Great Eastern line. The traveller was greatly perturbed in his mind by the murder then lately perpetrated in a railway carriage by the notorious Müller. Mr. Arnold plied him with consolation. "Suppose the worst to happen," I said, "suppose even yourself to be the victim—*il n'y a pas d'homme nécessaire*—we should miss you for a day or two on the Woodford Branch, but the great mundane movement would still go on, the gravel walks of your villa would still be rolled, dividends would still be paid at the bank, omnibuses would still run, there would still be the old crush at the corner of Fenchurch Street."

And so it proves for all—for portly jewellers and lovely poets.

> "The Pillar still broods o'er the fields
> Which border Ennerdale Lake,
> And Egremont sleeps by the sea—
> Nature is fresh as of old,
> Is lovely; a mortal is dead."

II.

Lord Byron's antipathies were, as a rule, founded on some sound human basis, and it may well be that he was quite right for hating an author who was all author and nothing else. He could not have hated Matthew Arnold on that score, at all events, though perhaps he might have found some other ground for gratifying a feeling very dear to his heart. Mr. Arnold was many other things as well as a poet, so many other things that we need sometimes to be reminded that he was a poet. He allowed himself to be distracted in a variety of ways, he poured himself out in many strifes; though

not exactly eager, he was certainly active. He discoursed on numberless themes, and was interested in many things of the kind usually called "topics."

Personally, we cannot force ourselves to bewail his agility, this leaping from bough to bough of the tree of talk and discussion. It argues an interest in things, a wide-eyed curiosity. If you find yourself in a village fair you do well to examine the booths, and when you bring your purchases home, the domestic authority will be wise not to scan too severely the trivial wares never meant to please a critical taste or to last a lifetime. Mr. Arnold certainly brought home some very queer things from his village fair, and was perhaps too fond of taking them for the texts of his occasional discourses. But others must find fault, we cannot. There is a pleasant ripple of life through Mr. Arnold's prose writings. His judgments are human judgments. He did not care for strange, out-of-the-way things; he had no odd tastes. He drank wine, so he once said, because he liked it—good wine, that is. And it was the same with poetry and books. He liked to understand what he admired, and the longer it took him to understand anything the less disposed he was to like it. Plain things suited him best. What he hated most was the far-fetched. He had the greatest respect for Mr. Browning, and was a sincere admirer of much of his poetry, but he never made the faintest attempt to read any of the poet's later volumes. The reason probably was that he could not be bothered. Hazlitt, in a fine passage descriptive of the character of a scholar, says: "Such a one lives all his life in a dream of learning, and has never once had his sleep broken by a real sense of things." Mr. Arnold had a real sense of things. The writings of such a man could hardly fail to be interesting, whatever they might be about, even the burial of Dissenters or the cock of a nobleman's hat.

But for all that we are of those who, when we name the name of Arnold, mean neither the headmaster of

Rugby nor the author of *Culture and Anarchy* and *Literature and Dogma*, but the poet who sung, not, indeed, with Wordsworth, "The wonder and bloom of the world," but a severer, still more truthful strain, a life whose secret is not joy, but peace.

Standing on this high breezy ground, we are not disposed to concede anything to the enemy, unless, indeed, it be one somewhat ill-defended outpost connected with metre. The poet's ear might have been a little nicer. Had it been so, he would have spared his readers an occasional jar and a panegyric on Lord Byron's poetry. There are, we know, those who regard this outpost we have so lightly abandoned as the citadel. These rhyming gentry scout what Arnold called the terrible sentence passed on a French poet—*il dit tout ce qu'il veut, mais malheureusement il n'a rien à dire.* They see nothing terrible in a sentence which does but condemn them to nakedness. Thought is cumbersome. You skip best with nothing on. But the sober-minded English people are not the countrymen of Milton and Cowper, of Crabbe and Wordsworth, for nothing. They like poetry to be serious. We are fond of sermons. We may quarrel with the vicar's five-and-twenty minutes, but we let Carlyle go on for twice as many years, and until he had filled thirty-four octavo volumes.

The fact is that, though Arnold was fond of girding at the Hebrew in us, and used to quote his own Christian name with humorous resignation as only an instance of the sort of thing he had to put up with, he was a Puritan at heart, and would have been as ill at ease at a Greek festival as Newman at a Spanish *auto da fé*.

What gives Arnold's verse its especial charm is his grave and manly sincerity. He is a poet without artifice or sham. He does not pretend to find all sorts of meanings in all sorts of things. He does not manipulate the universe and present his readers with any bottled elixir. This has been cast up against him as a reproach. His poetry, so we have been told, has no consolation in it.

Here is a doctor, it is said, who makes up no drugs, a poet who does not proclaim that he sees God in the avalanche or hears Him in the thunder. The world will not, so we are assured, hang upon the lips of one who bids them not to be too sure that the winds are wailing man's secret to the complaining sea, or that nature is nothing but a theme for poets. These people may be right. In any event it is unwise to prophesy. What will be, will be. Nobody can wish to be proved wrong. It is best to be on the side of truth, whatever the truth may be. The real atheism is to say, as men are found to do, that they would sooner be convicted of error they think pleasing, than have recognised an unwelcome truth a moment earlier than its final demonstration, if, indeed, such a moment should ever arrive for souls so craven. In the meantime, this much is plain, that there is no consolation in non-coincidence with fact, and no sweetness which does not chime with experience. Therefore, those who have derived consolation from Mr. Arnold's noble verse may take comfort. Religion, after all, observes Bishop Butler in his tremendous way, is nothing if it is not true. The same may be said of the poetry of consolation.

The pleasure it is lawful to take in the truthfulness of Mr. Arnold's poetry should not be allowed to lead his lovers into the pleasant paths of exaggeration. The Muses dealt him out their gifts with a somewhat niggardly hand. He had to cultivate his Sparta. No one of his admirers can assert that in Arnold

> "The force of energy is found,
> And the sense rises on the wings of sound."

He is no builder of the lofty rhyme. This he was well aware of. But neither had he any ample measure of those "winged fancies" which wander at will through the pages of Apollo's favourite children. His strange indifference to Shelley, his severity towards Keats, his lively sense of the wantonness of Shakspeare and the

Elizabethans, incline us to the belief that he was not quite sensible of the advantages of a fruitful as compared with a barren soil. His own crop took a good deal of raising, and he was perhaps somewhat disposed to regard luxuriant growths with disfavour.

But though severe and restricted, and without either grandeur or fancy, Arnold's poetry is most companionable. It never teases you—there he has the better of Shelley—or surfeits you—there he prevails over Keats. As a poet, we would never dare or wish to class him with either Shelley or Keats, but as a companion to slip in your pocket before starting to spend the day amid

"The cheerful silence of the fells,"

you may search far before you find anything better than either of the two volumes of Mr. Arnold's poems.

His own enjoyment of the open air is made plain in his poetry. It is no borrowed rapture, no mere bookish man's clumsy joy in escaping from his library, but an enjoyment as hearty and honest as Izaak Walton's. He has a quick eye for things, and rests upon them with a quiet satisfaction. No need to give instances; they will occur to all. Sights and sounds alike pleased him well. So obviously genuine, so real, though so quiet, was his pleasure in our English lanes and dells, that it is still difficult to realize that his feet can no longer stir the cowslips or his ear hear the cuckoo's parting cry.

Amidst the melancholy of his verse, we detect deep human enjoyment and an honest human endeavour to do the best he could whilst here below. The best he could do was, in our opinion, his verse, and it is a comfort, amidst the wreckage of life, to believe he made the most of his gift, cultivating it wisely and well, and enriching man's life with some sober, serious, and beautiful poetry. The times are ripening for his poetry, which is full of foretastes of the morrow. As we read we are not carried back by the reflection, "so men once thought," but rather forward along the paths, dim

and perilous it may be, but still the paths mankind is destined to tread. Truthful, sober, severe, with a capacity for deep, if placid, enjoyment of the pageant of the world, and a quick eye for its varied sights and an eager ear for its delightful sounds, Matthew Arnold is a poet whose limitations we may admit without denying his right. Our passion for him is a loyal passion for a most temperate king. There is an effort on his brow, we must admit it. It would never do to mistake his poetry for what he called the best, and which he was ever urging upon a sluggish populace. It intellectualises far too much; its method is a known method, not a magical one. But though effort may be on his brow, it is a noble effort and has had a noble result.

"For most men in a brazen prison live,
Where in the sun's hot eye,
With heads bent o'er their toil, they languidly
Their lives to some unmeaning task-work give,
Dreaming of nought beyond their prison wall.
And as, year after year,
Fresh products of their barren labour fall
From their tired hands, and rest
Never yet comes more near,
Gloom settles slowly down over their breast;
And while they try to stem
The waves of mournful thought by which they are prest,
Death in their prison reaches them
Unfreed, having seen nothing, still unblest."

Or if not a slave he is a madman, sailing where he will on the wild ocean of life.

"And then the tempest strikes him, and between
The lightning bursts is seen
Only a driving wreck,
And the pale master on his spar-strewn deck,
With anguished face and flying hair,
Grasping the rudder hard,
Still bent to make some port he knows not where,
Still standing for some false impossible shore;
And sterner comes the roar
Of sea and wind, and through the deepening gloom
Fainter and fainter wreck and helmsman loom,
And he too disappears and comes no more."

To be neither a rebel nor a slave is the burden of much of Mr. Arnold's verse—his song we cannot call it. It will be long before men cease to read their Arnold; even the rebel or the slave will occasionally find a moment for so doing, and when he does it may be written of him:

> "And then arrives a lull in the hot race
> Wherein he doth for ever chase
> That flying and illusive shadow Rest.
> An air of coolness plays upon his face,
> And an unwonted calm pervades his breast,
> And then he thinks he knows
> The hills where his life rose
> And the sea where it goes."

WALTER BAGEHOT.

AN ADDRESS DELIVERED AT LEIGHTON HOUSE, 5TH MARCH, 1901.

AT the very outset it is proper I should state I never saw Mr. Bagehot. I know him, if I do know him, through his books alone. There are in this room those who knew and loved the living man. His modes of speech, his manners and customs, his ways and habits, how he talked and laughed and held his peace, how he entered a room, how he sat at meat—all the countless pleasant things, the admirable strengths, the agreeable weaknesses that went to make up his personality, they know, and I do not. What a warning to be silent! To put myself even for a few minutes in competition with such memories, such knowledge, seems ridiculous, and yet perhaps it is not so very ridiculous after all. Unless an English author has had his portrait painted by Reynolds or his life written by Boswell, he has small chance of being remembered (apart from the recollections of a small and ever-dwindling group of friends), save by his books. They are, indeed, his only chance. I do not say it is a good chance. I have fallen asleep over too many books to say that. What I do say is, it is his only chance.

You can know a man from his books, and if he is a writer of good faith and has the knack, you may know him very well; better it well may be than did his co-directors or his partners in business, or even—for I am here to tell the truth—his own flesh and blood. It is easier for an author to take in his brother than a really astute well-seasoned reader. I am not disposed to think

overmuch of the insight of relations. Joseph Bonaparte has left on record his opinion of his famous brother. "He was," so said this sapient though not hereditary monarch—"he was not so much what I should call a great, as a good man."

It is amazing what things your confirmed author will say in print. The shyest of men when under the literary impulse will tear down the veils behind which men are usually only too well content to live. Mr. Bagehot has himself said in his own picturesque way, "We all come down to dinner, but each has a room to himself." In his books an author will often take you into this solitary chamber.

I have enjoyed on rare occasions the conversation of two distinguished poets, Mr. Browning and Mr. Arnold. To both I felt myself under a huge personal obligation. I longed to hear them even distantly approach the subject-matter of *Christmas Eve* or *Rugby Chapel;* they never did in my hearing. "Hardly," says Browning, "will a man tell his joys and sorrows, hopes and fears, beliefs and unbelievings." No! a man will not *tell* these things, but if he is a true author he will *print* them.

However, everyone who has read Mr. Bagehot's books will agree at once that he is an author who can be known from his books.

I suppose the only classification of authors of first-rate importance is into good authors and bad ones—a literary not a moral distinction. But other classifications have their use. There are, for example, personal authors and impersonal ones. A personal author is not necessarily one who babbles to his readers about himself and his belongings, his likes and dislikes, but he is one whose spirit hovers and broods over his own page; with whose treatise is bound up a living thing. Take an author about whom Mr. Bagehot has written with deep feeling and great acumen, the sombre spirit who composed the *Analogy of Religion* and preached the *Fifteen Sermons* As Mr. Bagehot has observed, there is no positive direct

evidence that Bishop Butler ever spoke to anybody all his life through, except on two occasions to Queen Caroline. You cannot guess what books he had in his library, for he hardly ever makes a quotation. "No man," says Mr. Bagehot, "would ever guess from Butler's writings that he ever had the disposal of five pounds. It is odd to think what he did with the mining profits and landed property, the royalties and rectories, coal-dues and curacies, that he must have heard of from morning to night." And yet this reticence and deep shadow of seclusiveness has not availed to hide from the sympathetic reader—despite, too, the clouded difficult style; for, again to quote Bagehot, "Butler, so far from having the pleasures of eloquence, had not even the comfort of perspicuity"—a strong, permanent, personal impression of an entirely honest thinker. I feel far more certain that I know what manner of man Butler was, than I do about Saint Augustine, for all his fine *Confessions*.

Mr. Bagehot was a personal author, though he tells us very little directly about himself.

Now, I am going to begin quoting in real earnest.

In the year 1853 Bagehot, who was then twenty-seven years of age, had the courage, for his was a dauntless spirit, to write an essay on Shakspeare; not on his plays, nor on his characters, nor on his sonnets, nor on his investments, but on himself—on Shakspeare. To be able to write a good essay on Shakspeare is in my opinion the best possible test of an English man of letters. Had we an Academy and an examination for admission, no other demand need be made. But who should be the examiners?

Mr. Bagehot began his essay by boldly asserting that it is quite possible to know Shakspeare, and then proceeds:

"Some extreme sceptics, we know, doubt if it is possible to deduce anything as to an author's character from his works. Yet surely people do not keep a tame steam-engine to write their books, and if these books

were really written by a man, he must have been a man who could write them; he must have had the thoughts which they express, have acquired the knowledge they contain, have possessed the style in which we read them. The difficulty is a defect of the critics. A person who knows nothing of an author he has read will not know much of an author he has seen.

"First of all, it may be said that Shakspeare's works could only be produced by a first-rate imagination working on a first-rate experience. It is often difficult to make out whether the author of a poetic creation is drawing from fancy or drawing from experience; but for art on a certain scale the two must concur. Out of nothing nothing can be created. Some plastic power is required, however great may be the material. And when such a work as *Hamlet* or *Othello*, still more when both of them and others not unequal have been created by a single mind, it may be fairly said that not only a great imagination, but a full conversancy with the world, was necessary to their production. The whole powers of man under the most favourable circumstances are not too great for such an effort. We may assume that Shakspeare had a great experience.

"To a great experience one thing is essential, an experiencing nature. It is not enough to have opportunity, it is essential to feel it. Some occasions come to all men; but to many they are of little use, and to some they are none. What, for example, has experience done for the distinguished Frenchman, the name of whose essay is prefixed to this paper? M. Guizot is the same man that he was in 1820, or, we believe, as he was in 1814. Take up one of his lectures, published before he was a practical statesman; you will be struck with the width of view, the amplitude and the solidity of the reflections; you will be amazed that a mere literary teacher could produce anything so wise. But take up afterwards an essay published since his fall, and you will be amazed to find no more. Napoleon the First is

come and gone, the Bourbons of the old régime have come and gone, the Bourbons of the new régime have had their turn. M. Guizot has been first minister of a citizen king; he has led a great party; he has pronounced many a great *discours* that was well received by the second elective assembly in the world. But there is no trace of this in his writings. No one would guess from them that their author had ever left the professor's chair. It is the same, we are told, with small matters: when M. Guizot walks the street he seems to see nothing; the head is thrown back, the eye fixed, and the mouth working. His mind is no doubt at work, but it is not stirred by what is external. Perhaps it is the internal activity of mind that overmasters the perceptive power. Anyhow, there might have been an *émeute* in the street and he would not have known it; there have been revolutions in his life, and he is scarcely the wiser. Among the most frivolous and fickle of civilised nations he is alone. They pass from the game of war to the game of peace, from the game of science to the game of art, from the game of liberty to the game of slavery, from the game of slavery to the game of license. He stands like a schoolmaster in the playground, without sport and without pleasure, firm and sullen, slow and awful" (*Literary Studies*, i. 126–128).

From this quotation we take away the notion of an *experiencing nature*. Shakspeare had what Guizot (it appears) had not, an experiencing nature.

I will now take up Bagehot's essay on Macaulay, written in 1856, when the great history was volume by volume taking the town by storm. It is easier to write well about Macaulay than about Shakspeare, but perhaps it is not so very easy, though it is no longer personally dangerous. I need not premise that Bagehot had an enormous admiration for Macaulay, who supplied him with what a few men love better than their dinner, *intellectual entertainment*. But Bagehot was a critic, and he writes: