And so on through a series of unequal but often lovely stanzas. So, too, does *Love's Horoscope*. His epitaphs are among the sweetest and most artistic even of that age, so cunning in such kind of verse. For instance, that on a young gentleman:

> Eyes are vocal, tears have tongues,
> And there be words not made with lungs—
> Sententious showers; O let them fall!
> Their cadence is rhetorical!

With what finer example can I end than the close of *The Flaming Heart*, Crashaw's second hymn to St Teresa?

> Oh, thou undaunted daughter of desires!
> By all thy dower of lights and fires;
> By all the eagle in thee, all the dove;
> By all thy lives and deaths of love;
> By thy large draughts of intellectual day,
> And by thy thirsts of love more large than they;
> By all thy brim-filled bowls of fierce desire,
> By thy last morning's draught of liquid fire;
> By the full kingdom of that final kiss,
> That seized thy parting soul, and sealed thee His;
> By all the Heaven thou hast in Him
> (Fair Sister of the seraphim!)
> By all of Him we have in thee;
> Leave nothing of myself in me.
> Let me so read thy life, that I
> Unto all life of mine may die.

It has all the ardour and brave-soaring transport of the highest lyrical inspiration.

COLERIDGE

COLERIDGE is (with the exception of Pope) perhaps the only poet who was a genius to his schoolfellows—and, more wonderful still, to his schoolmaster. At Christ's Hospital his Greek and philosophy were things sensational to all. How he afterwards left Cambridge and enlisted, how he made an indifferent trooper and was bought out, how he came in contact with Southey and later with Wordsworth; of the Pantisocratic scheme and its failure; of the *Lyrical Ballads* and their failure, Macaulay's schoolboy would think it trite to speak. Those were the golden days of the *Ancient Mariner* and *Christabel;* the days when even women like Dorothy Wordsworth sat entranced while the young man eloquent poured out talk the report of which is immortal.

Of that Coleridge one could wish a Sargent or Watts to have left us a portrait, to settle, for one thing, whether his eyes were brown, as some observers say, or grey, as others declare—though it is by a curious error that even De Quincey attaches to him the famous line of Wordsworth about the 'noticeable man with large grey eyes.'* Then came ill-health and opium. Laudanum by the wine-glassful and half-pint at a time soon reduced him to the jour-

* As De Quincey himself shows elsewhere, the passage in question refers probably to Sir Humphry Davy—certainly not to Coleridge.

nalist lecturer and philosopher who projected all things, executed nothing; only the eloquent tongue left. So he perished—the mightiest intellect of his day; and great was the fall thereof. There remain of him his poems, and a quantity of letters painful to read. They show him wordy, full of weak lamentation, deplorably strengthless.

No other poet, perhaps, except Spenser, has been an initial influence, a generative influence, on so many poets. Having with that mild Elizabethan much affinity, it is natural that he also should be 'a poets' poet' in the rarer sense—the sense of fecundating other poets. As with Spenser, it is not that other poets have made him their model, have reproduced essentials of his style (accidents no great poet will consciously perpetuate). The progeny are sufficiently unlike the parent. It is that he has incited the very sprouting in them of the laurel-bough, has been to them a fostering sun of song. Such a primary influence he was to Rossetti—Rossetti, whose model was far more Keats than Coleridge. Such he was to Coventry Patmore, in whose work one might trace many masters rather than Coleridge. 'I did not try to imitate his style,' said that great singer. 'I can hardly explain *how* he influenced me: he was rather an ideal of perfect style than a model to imitate; but in some indescribable way he did influence my development more than any other poet.'

No poet, indeed, has been senseless enough to imitate the inimitable. One might as well try to paint air as to catch a style so void of all manner that it is visible, like air, only in its results. All other poets have not only a style, but a manner; not only style, but features of style. The style of Coleridge is bare of manner, without feature, not 'distinguishable in member, joint, and limb'; it is, in the Roman sense of *merum*, mere style; style unalloyed and integral. Imitation has no foothold; it would tread on glass. Therefore poets, diverse beyond other men in their appreciation of poets, have agreed with a single mind in their estimate of this poet; no artist could refrain his homage to the miracle of such utterance. To the critic has been left the peculiar and purblind shame of finding eccentricity in this speech unflawed. It seems beyond belief; yet we could point to an edition of Coleridge, published during his lifetime, and preceded by a would-be friendly memoir, which justifies our saying, 'Be thou as chaste as ice, as pure as snow, thou shalt not escape calumny.' The admiring critic complains of Mr Coleridge's affectations and wilful fantasticalness of style; and he dares to cite as example that wonderfully perfect union of language and metre:

> The night is chill, the forest bare;
> Is it the wind that moaneth bleak?
> There is not wind enough in the air

To move away the ringlet curl
From the lovely lady's cheek—
There is not wind enough to twirl
The one red leaf, the last of its clan,
That dances as often as dance it can,
Hanging so light, and hanging so high,
On the topmost twig that looks up at the sky.

Critics wrapped in 'cocksureness'—to warn, not to discourage you, poets branded with affectation—to give you heart, not recklessness, we recall the fact that this lovely passage was once thought affected and fantastic. There is not one great poet who has escaped the charge of obscurity, fantasticalness, or affectation of utterance. It was hurled, at the outset of their careers, against Coleridge, Wordsworth, Shelley, Keats, Tennyson, Browning. Wordsworth wrote simple diction, and his simplicity was termed affected; Shelley gorgeous diction, and his gorgeousness was affected; Keats rich diction, and his richness was affected; Tennyson cunning diction, and his cunning was affected; Browning rugged diction, and his ruggedness was affected. Why Coleridge was called affected passes the wit of man, except it be that he did not write like Pope or the elegant Mr Rogers—or, indeed, that all critical tradition would be outraged if a mere recent poet were not labelled with the epithet made and provided for him by wise critical precedent. If this old shoe were not thrown at the

wedding of every poet with the Muse, what would become of our ancient English customs?

But critic and poet, lion and lamb, have now lain down together in their judgement of Coleridge; and abundance of the most excellent appreciation has left no new word about him possible. The critic, it is to be supposed, feels much the same delicacy in praising a live poet as in eulogizing a man to his face: when the poet goes out of the room, so to speak, and the door of the tomb closes behind him, the too sensitive critic breathes freely, and finds vent for his suppressed admiration. For at least thirty years criticism has unburdened its suppressed feelings about Coleridge, which it considerately spared him while he was alive; and his position is clear, unquestioned; his reputation beyond the power of wax or wane. Alone of modern poets, his fame sits above the power of fluctuation. Wordsworth has fluctuated; Tennyson stands not exactly as he did; there is reaction in some quarters against the worship of Shelley; though all are agreed Keats is a great poet, not all are agreed as to his place. But around Coleridge the clamour of partisans is silent: none attacks, none has need to defend. *The Ancient Mariner*, *Christabel*, *Kubla Khan*, *Genevieve*, are recognized as perfectly unique masterpieces of triumphant utterance and triumphant imagination of a certain kind. They bring down magic to the earth. Shelley has followed it to the skies; but not all can

companion him in that rarefied ether, and breathe. Coleridge brings it in to us, floods us round with it, makes it native and apprehensible as the air of our own earth. To do so he seeks no remote splendours of language, uses no brazier of fuming imagery. He waves his wand, and the miracle is accomplished before our eyes in the open light of day; he takes words which have had the life used out of them by the common cry of poets, puts them into relation, and they rise up like his own dead mariners, wonderful with a supernatural animation.

The poems take the reason prisoner, and the spell is renewed as often as they are read. The only question on which critics differ is the respective places of the two longer poems. *The Ancient Mariner* has the advantage of completion, and its necromancy is performed, so to speak, more in the sight of the reader, with a more absolutely simple diction, and a simpler metre. The apparatus—if we may use such a degrading image—is less. *Christabel* is not only a fragment, but incapable of being anything else. Not even Coleridge, we do believe, could have maintained through the intricacies of plot and in *dénouement* the expectations aroused by the opening. The second part, as has been said, declines its level in portions. Yet, in opposition to the general opinion, we think that a more subtle magic is effected in the first part than in *The Ancient Mariner*—marvellous though that be. *The Ancient*

Mariner passes in a region of the supernatural; *Christabel* brings the supernatural into the regions of everyday. Nor can we see, as some critics have seen, any flaw in the success with which this is done. Yet, perhaps, there are a few—chiefly poetic—readers to whom the most unique and enthralling achievement of all is *Kubla Khan*. The words, the music—one and indivisible—come through the gates of dream as never has poem come before or since. This, we believe, might have been completed, so far as a dream is ever completed; that is to say, there might have been more of it. Obviously, the thing has no plot, difficult sustainedly to execute. It is pure lyrism; and the tapestry of shifting vision might unroll indefinitely to the point at which the dream melted. For, unlike many, we have no difficulty in believing Coleridge's account of how the poem arose. We should feel it difficult to believe any other origin. We could no more see a shower without postulating a cloud than we could doubt this poem to have been rained out of dream. If there were a day of judgement against the preventers of poetry, heavy would be the account of that unnamed visitor who interrupted Coleridge in the transcription of his dream-music, and lost to the world for ever the remainder of *Kubla Khan*. In the other world, we trust, this wretched individual will be condemned eternally to go out of ear-shot when the angels prelude on

their harps; together with all those who by choice enter concert-rooms during the divinest passage of a symphony.

The minor poems of this great poet are minor indeed. *Youth and Age*, *Frost at Midnight*, passages of *The Nightingale* and one or two more which might be named, in spite of a real measure of quiet beauty, could never support a great reputation. The *Ode to Dejection* has unquestionably fine passages, but hardly aims at sustained power. The Odes *To France* and *The Departing Year* are terrible bombast, though here again occur fine lines. The fingers of one hand number the poems on which Coleridge's fame is adamantinely based; and they were all written in about two years of his youth.

A portrait shows the Coleridge of those younger days, with the poet not yet burned out in him; when we are told his face had beauty in the eyes of many women. But it is of the later Coleridge that we possess the most luminous descriptions. A slack, shambling man, flabby in face and form and character, redeemed by noble brow and dim yet luminous eyes; womanly and unstayed of nature, torrentuous of golden talk, the poet submerged and feebly struggling in opium-darkened oceans of German philosophy, amid which he finally foundered, striving to the last to fish up gigantic projects from the bottom of a daily half-pint of laudanum. And over that wreck

most piteous and terrible in all our literary history, shines, and will shine for ever, the five-pointed star of his glorious youth; those poor five resplendent poems, for which he paid the devil's price of a desolated life and unthinkably blasted powers. Other poets may have done greater things; none a thing more perfect and uncompanioned. Other poets belong to this class or that; he to the class of Samuel Taylor Coleridge.

BACON

FIRST and before all things, Francis Bacon, Lord Verulam, was a great philosopher. In saying this we make no pretension to estimate the value of his philosophy, regarded as an exposition of truth. But it is the acknowledged fact that he is the founder, the *fons et origo*, of that utilitarian school of philosophy which is peculiarly English. We do not say that without him we should have had no Scottish school of philosophy; no Hume, no Bain, no Reid; that without him we should have had no Locke, no John Stuart Mill, no Herbert Spencer—who, though very different from the utilitarian school, is nevertheless essentially English, and could not have arisen without the various English philosophers (whether strictly English or Scottish) who had preceded him. That school was in the air, and was bound to come. It is perhaps only in the case of a Shakespeare that we can say a whole literature—nay, almost a whole nation—would have been different if he had not appeared. But as things have been arranged, the whole temper of the British school of philosophy looks back to Bacon as its starting-point.

Far more, in our opinion, must it be said that the whole of English physical science must acknowledge Bacon as its very Adam and progenitor. Not because Bacon was himself a great

physical investigator; but because he first pointed out the aims and the temper of the physical investigator. Cowley stated the truth, with the usual perspicacity of the poet. Bacon did not enter the Promised Land, but he had the vision of it, and pointed the way to it. His whole aim was to start a new philosophical school, which should antithesize the philosophy of the scholastics and the ancients by proceeding from without inwards, instead of from within outwards; from phenomena to essence, not from essence to phenomena. Physical investigation was but a branch of this new departure, as he conceived it. Yet, in laying down this principle, he unwittingly became the patriarch of our modern scientists. Huxley was bred from his loins, and men greater in physical science than Huxley. This, we unhesitatingly aver, seems to us a greater achievement than the authorship of the British school of philosophy. Already there is a reaction towards the recognition of that very scholastic school which Bacon, the philosopher, lived only to destroy and bring into contempt. But there is not, nor ever will be, any reaction from the temper of physical research which he first inculcated. Other views may arise as to the value of the principle he laid down in regard to philosophy. There can be no other view as to the value of the principle he laid down in regard to physical science.

Here, however, we are not concerned with

him on these grounds. We are concerned with him solely as one of the explorers in English prose. And here his name is not so great. He wrote many things, including the not very successful attempt to follow the path of Plato and Sir Thomas More, in the *New Atlantis*. But he survives chiefly by his Essays. They mainly show Bacon the chancellor, the courtier, and man of the world. They are full of very shrewd wisdom, of a devious and not over-principled kind. No attempt is there in them at deep truths, such as you might expect from a philosopher. Not truth, but expediency; the truth of self-interest and worldly consideration, is their aim. They show Bacon as an opportunist of the first water, a respectable British Machiavel. If to be a sage in the art of 'getting on' constitutes greatness, then, and not otherwise, they are great. As regards their style, they are doubtless what he would himself call very pithy, pregnant, and sententious. The sentences are short, clear, well-knit, unsuperfluous. But there is no attempt at the more complex evolutions of style; and the succession of short barks (so to speak) is apt to get as tiresome as the utterances of a dog, though he barked like the hoariest sage in kenneldom. There is one exception; and that (if we remember rightly) is the first essay in the collection. But though the earliest (or almost the earliest, if our memory should deceive us) in the book, it is stated by editors to be the latest

written. We can well believe it. For here Bacon ascends to an altogether higher level in subject-matter; and naturally, therefore, to an altogether higher level in style. In the sustained dignity of its sentences, as in the sustained dignity of its thought, it is altogether worthy of Sir Thomas Browne, and might not unhappily be taken for the work of that later and greater master of prose.

Otherwise, even as regards the terseness and weight of wisdom in individual sentences (the excellence in which Bacon excels), the palm must be given to his phiolsophical works, in spite of their alien language. For example:

> Present justice is in your power; for that which is to come you have no security.

Or again:

> Men believe that their reason governs words. But it is also true that words, like the arrows from a Tartar bow, are shot back, and react on the mind.

And yet again (though it is a precept which has its exceptions, in the case of intuitional minds):

> Let every student of Nature take this as a fact, that whatever the mind seizes and dwells on with peculiar satisfaction is to be held in suspicion.

Consider also this most practical maxim:

> In attempts to improve your character, know what is in your power and what beyond it.

Or finally, the saying in the *De Amicitia*,

which we quote in the original language on account of its superior terseness:

Magna civitas, magna solitudo.

It might be a saying from Seneca or St Augustine, so pregnant and sparse in wording is it. And if we have somewhat deprecated the excessive praise usually given to Bacon as a writer of prose, let it be acknowledged that, compared with the average modern writer, he is fine and full of matter indeed. It is only by comparison with the great writers of the seventeenth century that he appears less a master of his art. But then, he preceded them; and perhaps even Sir Thomas Browne learned something from him.

MILTON

THE most apocalyptic of English poets was appropriately a 'John'; more inappropriately, one of the richest of all poets was a Puritan. The facts of his life are common history. He is almost the sole great poet we recollect who was a strict Londoner; being born in that city, of a scrivener, on December 9, 1608. He was educated at Christ's College, Cambridge—the beauty of the reserved and haughty student procuring him the name of 'the lady of Christ's.' All things considered, he was one of the most truly precocious of English poets; for in his twenty-first year he wrote the *Hymn on the Nativity*—in spite of some too ingenious and 'conceited' stanzas, as grand a lyric as was ever penned. Perhaps Rossetti, with his *Blessed Damozel* at nineteen, is the nearest parallel; for a fine stanza or two at an early age cannot be paralleled with this sustainedly consummate achievement. In 1637 was published the *Comus*, and in the same year the *Lycidas*, which from its subject should seem to belong to his college years. These, with *L'Allegro*, *Il Penseroso*, and the *Arcades* marked him in his youth for one of the most perfect lyrical geniuses ever born.

How, after a tour in Italy, where he won golden opinions from the Italian *literati*, he thenceforward devoted himself to the defence,

in prose, of the Puritan cause, holding a position as Latin Secretary to the Council of State, is well known; nor was it until the Restoration that he gave himself again wholly to poetry. Twenty-four years of prose drudgery, immortalized only through a genius which turned to gold whatever it touched, is a record of self-command not matched in the history of poets, or matched only partially by Goethe. In 1658, when the Latin Secretaryship was divided with Marvell, he began *Paradise Lost*. It is the custom to think of this as a work carried on steadily at intervals throughout the bulk of Milton's later life; but, as a matter of fact, it was the work of seven years—a brief enough time for the magnitude of the task. Published in 1665, it met with an instant success. Thirteen hundred copies were sold in two years. Practically, his contemporaries—let it be recorded to their credit—pronounced the verdict of posterity. Six years later he closed his record with *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes*. In 1674 he died; having been blind for the last twenty-two years of his life.

Of his three wives, and his relations with them, enough has been written. It was a hard thing to be Milton's wife or Milton's daughter. He was stern, he was austere, he was self-centred; his impeccable strength was purchased by a sublime and monotonous egoism—which is the name they give to selfishness in poets. Very chill must have been the life of his girls

in that Puritan house, reading to the inwrapped Puritan father from languages they did not understand, and taking down from his lips poetry they understood still less. Milton found them undutiful. Poor little 'undutiful' daughters! Fathers had terrible conceptions of duty in those days. Did anyone ever want to know Milton? Did anyone ever not want to know Shakespeare? Doubtless there are readers of the Exeter Hall class who would have yearned for the godly company of the 'great Christian poet.' But, on the whole, how thankful one should be that Shakespeare was not a 'Christian poet'! 'Les vrais artistes sont toujours un peu païens,' said poor Stephen Heller to Sir Charles Hallé; in no invidious sense, for was he not a Catholic writing to a Catholic?

But, in truth, this Sunday-school tradition apart, Milton was more than 'un peu païen.' An extraordinary *mélange* of Hebrew and heathen, this Milton—something of Job, something of Æschylus, not a little of Plato, with an infusion of the Ancient Fathers to 'make the gruel thick and slab.' That 'Dorique delicacy' which ravished Sir Henry Wotton in the lyrics of *Comus* was indeed a gift from the Greeks; yet even in *Il Penseroso* one comes across a fragment from St Athanasius. All learning was fuel to this fire; and what fire it was that could fuse all learning into such poetry! A like burthen of knowledge clogged even Goethe; but, with occasional exceptions, Milton moves

under it freely as in festal garlands. As he borrowed from all learning, so he took from all poets. In particular, to an extent not fully realized, the style of *Comus* is based on Shakespeare. In structure, *Comus* is obviously indebted to Fletcher and the Elizabethan masque-writers. But its diction and the very music of its blank verse follow Shakespeare with a superb and unique felicity, which excludes no jot of Milton's own genius. Shakespeare's magic here, at least, is copied. Such a passage as this has the very ring of Shakespeare's softer style in versification:

> Some say, no evil thing that walks by night,
> In fog or fire, by lake or moorish fen,
> Blue meagre hag, or stubborn unlaid ghost
> That breaks his magic chains at curfew-time;
> No goblin, or swart faery of the mine,
> Hath hurtful power o'er true virginity.

Compare Titania's speech:

> Never, since the middle summer's spring,
> Met we on hill, in dale, forest, or mead,
> By pavèd fountain or by rushy brook,
> Or on the beachèd margent of the sea,
> To dance our ringlets to the whistling wind,
> But with thy brawls thou hast disturbed our sport.

And one expression, 'the porch and inlet of each sense,' is suggested by 'the porches of my sear' in *Hamlet*. But not in Shakespeare's

self is there such a distillation of sheer beauty, combined with perfect form and stately philosophy, as in this wonderful masque. With the monumental *Lycidas* and the other minor poems, it makes an achievement which Milton has not surpassed in kind. The ' bowery loneliness ' of *Paradise Lost* is less lovelily beautiful. The special greatness of that epic is, first and last, sublimity—unmatched outside the Scriptures. It widened the known bounds of the sublime. De Quincey has described how, in his opium-dreams, the sense of space was portentously enlarged. Such a tyrannous extension of the spatial sense presides over *Paradise Lost*. But the source of sublimity is not in mere vastness. Henry Vaughan has at once expounded and exemplified it in two lines:

> There is in God, some say,
> A deep, but dazzling, darkness.

That is not only sublime—it is sublimity. Mystery impelling awe is the fountain of this quality. Accordingly, Milton's imagery is not simply spacious, but undefined. The immediate suggestion of the image we grasp; but the associations stirred by it ascend and descend through interminable reverberations.

Mr Coventry Patmore considered Milton even a greater thaumaturge in words than Shakespeare. It is disputable; but to those who, like Mr Patmore, lean rather towards the classic

and Greek than towards the romantic and Gothic school, it may be conceded that Milton is unapproached for his union of Gothic richness with the sculpturesqueness of classic form. Mr Patmore, who was himself a reconciler of yet more impossible opposites, might well incline a little to Milton. It is impossible to question another opinion of his, that the three chief fountains of wonderful diction are Spenser, Shakespeare, and Milton. 'What a mine he is of words!' he once exclaimed, regarding Spenser; and Milton himself 'mined for words' in both his predecessors, most of all, we think, in Spenser.

Mr Patmore remarks truly that from Spenser Milton derived even some of the metres thought to be peculiarly his own—for example, the metre of *Lycidas*. To a minor extent he used more primitive sources, as in 'the swinked hedger' of *Comus*. As with all great poets, no soil came amiss to him in prospecting for diction; in spite of his ruling tendency towards the exotic, the polysyllabic, the grandiose, he could use 'homespun Saxon' with an enchantment not surpassed by Shakespeare. This needs the more insistence, because his contributions to (as apart from what he drew out of) the treasury of English are notoriously latinized and stately. The successful, the wonderful latinisms of Shakespeare have been grossly overlooked. 'All the abhorrèd births below crisp heaven'; 'The replication of your

sounds made in his concave shores'; 'The intertissued robe of gold and pearl'; 'Not all these, laid in bed majestical'; here is but a random handful of the supreme latinities, some become current, others unimitated in poetry, which are first found in Shakespeare. But it is Milton who has been the great lapidary of Latin splendours in the English tongue; solemnities of diction, indeed, so exotic that for the most part they remain among the unprofaned insignia of poetry when she goes forth in state; words never journalized by the 'base mechanical hand' of prose. In *Comus* alone can we justly compare him with his great dramatic predecessor, and there we find this essential contrast in the matter of diction; the words of Shakespeare seem to flower from the line, while the Miltonic line is inlaid with rich and chosen words. The distinction may seem —but we think is not—fanciful.

Of his blank verse two men alone could have written with full perception; both have left but slight and casual utterances. One was De Quincey, the other Coventry Patmore. Were the critic fool enough to rush in where the most gifted have feared to tread, not in a journalistic summary could he analyse its colossal harmonies. *Paradise Lost* is the treasury and supreme display of metrical counterpoint. It is to metre what the choruses of Handel are to music.

A poet (to conclude, where we have ventured

little more than a prelude) for sheer accomplishment not equalled in our language; in youth capable of luxuriant beauty, in age of 'severe magnificence,' yet in youth or age without humaneness or heart-blood in his greatness; of overawing sublimity, yet not ethereal; of concrete solidity, yet not earthly; a poet to whom all must bow the knee, few or none the heart; 'the second name of men' in English song, who had gone near to being the first, if his grandeurs, his majesties, his splendours, his august solemnities, had been humid with a tear or a smile. The most inspired artificer in poetry, he lacked, perhaps (or was it a perfecting fault?), a little poetic poverty of soul, a little detachment from his artistic riches. He could not forget, nor can we forget, that he was Milton. And, after all, one must confess it was worth remembering. An art so conscious and consummate was never before joined with such plenitude of the spirit.

POPE

THERE was born in eighteenth century England a pale little diseased wretch of a boy. Since it was evident that he would never be fit for any healthy and vigorous trade, and that he must all his life be sickly and burdensome to himself, and since it is the usual way of such unhappy beings to add to their unhappiness by their own perversities of choice, he naturally became a poet. And after living for long in a certain miserable state called glory, reviled and worshipped and laughed at and courted, despised by the women he loved, very ill looked after, amid the fear and malignity of many and the affection of very few, the wizened little suffering monstrosity died, and was buried in Westminster Abbey, by way of encouraging others to follow in his footsteps. And though a large number of others have done so with due and proper misfortune, in all the melancholy line there is, perhaps, no such destined a wretch as Alexander Pope. What fame can do to still the cravings of such a poor prodigal of song, in the beggarly raiment of his tattered body, that it did for him. The husks of renown he had in plenty, and had them all his life, as no other poet has had. But Voltaire testified that the author of that famous piece of philosophy, 'Whatever is, is right,' was the most miserable man he had ever known.

This king of the eighteenth century is still

the king of the eighteenth century by general consent. Dryden was a greater poet, *meo judicio*, but he did not represent the eighteenth century so well as Pope. All that was elegant and airy in the polished artificiality of that age reaches its apotheosis in the *Rape of the Lock*. It is Pope's masterpiece, a Watteau in verse. The poetry of manners could no further go than in this boudoir epic, unmatched in any literature. It is useless, I may here say, to renew the old dispute whether Pope was a poet. Call his verse poetry or what you will, it is work in verse which could not have been done in prose, and, of its kind, never equalled. Then the sylph machinery in the *Rape of the Lock* is undoubted work of fancy: the fairyland of powder and patches, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* seen through chocolate-fumes. The *Essay on Man* is naught to us nowadays, as a whole. It has brilliant artificial passages. It has homely aphorisms such as only Pope and Shakespeare could produce—the quintessence of pointed common sense: many of them have passed into the language, and are put down, by three out of five who quote them, to Shakespeare. But, as a piece of reasoning in verse, the *Essay on Man* is utterly inferior to Dryden's *Hind and Panther*. Even that brilliant achievement could not escape the doom which hangs over the didactic poem pure and simple; and certain, therefore, was the fate of the *Essay on Man*.

The *Dunciad* De Quincey ranked even above the *Rape of the Lock*. At my peril I venture to question a judgement backed by all the ages. The superb satire of parts of the poem I admit; I admit the exceedingly fine close, in which Pope touched a height he never touched before or after; I admit the completeness of the scheme. But from that completeness comes the essential defect of the poem. He adapted the scheme from Dryden's *MacFlecknoe*. But Dryden's satire is at once complete and succinct: Pope has built upon the scheme an edifice greater than it will bear; has extended a witty and ingenious idea to a portentous extent at which it ceases to be amusing. The mock solemnity of Dryden's idea becomes a very real and dull solemnity when it is extended to liberal epic proportions. A serious epic is apt to nod, with the force of a Milton behind it; an epic satire fairly goes to sleep. A pleasantry in several books is past a pleasantry. And it is bolstered out with a great deal which is sheer greasy scurrility. The mock-heroic games of the poets are in large part as dully dirty as the waters into which Pope makes them plunge.

If the poem had been half as long, it might have been a masterpiece. As it is, unless we are to reckon masterpieces by avoirdupois weight, or to assign undue value to mere symmetry of scheme, I think we must look for Pope's satirical masterpiece elsewhere. Not in the satire on women, where Pope seems hardly to

have his heart in his work; but in the imitations from Horace, those generally known as Pope's *Satires*. Here he is at his very best and tersest. They are as brilliant as anything in the *Dunciad*, and they are brilliant right through; the mordant pen never flags. It matters not that they are imitated from Horace. They gain by it: their limits are circumscribed, their lines laid down, and Pope writes the better for having these limits set him, this tissue on which to work. Not a whit does he lose in essential originality: nowhere is he so much himself. It is very different from Horace, say the critics. Surely that is exactly the thing for which to thank poetry and praise Pope. It has not the pleasant urbane good humour of the Horatian spirit. No, it has the spirit of Pope—and satire is the gainer. Horace is the more charming companion; Pope is the greater satirist. In place of an echo of Horace (and no verse translation was ever anything but feeble which attempted merely to echo the original), we have a new spirit in satire; a fine series of English satirical poems, which in their kind are unapproached by the Roman, and in his kind wisely avoid the attempt to approach him. *Satires after Horace* would have been a better title than *Imitations;* for less imitative poems in essence were never written. These and the *Rape of the Lock* are Pope's finest title to fame. The *Elegy on an Unfortunate Lady* has at least one part which

shows a pathos little to have been surmised from his later work; and so, perhaps (in a much less degree, I think), have fragments of the once famous *Eloisa to Abelard*. But the *Pastorals*, and the *Windsor Forest*, and the *Ode on St Cecilia's Day*, and other things in which Pope tried the serious or natural vein, are only fit to be remembered with Macpherson's Ossian and the classical enormities of the French painter David.

On the whole, it is as a satirist we must think of him, and the second greatest in the language. The gods are in pairs, male and female; and if Dryden was the Mars of English satire, Pope was the Venus—a very eighteenth century Venus, quite as conspicuous for malice as for elegance. If a woman's satire were informed with genius, and cultivated to the utmost perfection of form by lifelong and exclusive literary practice, one imagines it would be much like Pope's. His style seems to me feminine in what it lacks; the absence of any geniality, any softening humour to abate its mortal thrust. It is feminine in what it has, the malice, the cruel dexterity, the delicate needle point which hardly betrays its light and swift entry, yet stings like a bee. Even in his coarseness—as in the *Dunciad*—Pope appears to me female. It is the coarseness of the fine ladies of that material time, the Lady Maries and the rest of them. Dryden is a rough and thick-natured man, cudgelling his adversaries with coarse

speech in the heat and brawl and the bluntness of his sensibilities; a country squire, who is apt at times to use the heavy end of his cutting whip; but when Pope is coarse he is coarse with effort, he goes out of his way to be nasty, in the evident endeavour to imitate a man. It is a girl airing the slang of her schoolboy brother.

The one thing, perhaps, which differentiates him from a woman, and makes it possible to read his verse with a certain pleasure, without that sense of unrelieved cruelty which repels one in much female satire, is his artist's delight in the exercise of his power. You feel that, if there be malice, intent to wound, even spite, yet none of these count for so much with him as the exercise of his superb dexterity in fence. He is like Ortheris fondly patting his rifle after that long shot which knocked over the deserter, in Mr Kipling's story. After all, you reflect, it is fair fight; if his hand was against many men, many men's hands were against him. So you give yourself up to admire the shell-like epigram, the rocketing and dazzling antithesis, the exquisitely deft play of point, by which the little invalid kept in terror his encompassing cloud of enemies—many of them adroit and formidable wits themselves. And you think, also, that the man who was loved by Swift, the professional hater, was not a man without a heart; though he wrote the most finished and brilliant satire in the language.

JAMES THOMSON

WHAT are the chances of the poet as against the practical man—the politician, for instance—in the game of Fame? The politician sees his name daily in the papers, until even he is a little weary of seeing it there. The poet's name appears so rarely that the sight of it has a certain thrill for its owner. But time is all on the side of the poet. The politician's name is barely given a decent burial; it makes haste to its oblivion. Where be the Chancellors of the Exchequer of yester year? The poet, on the contrary, about whom in his life people speak shyly, has his name shouted from the housetop as soon as he is out of earshot. So great, indeed, is the gratitude of reading beings, that a very little poet, such as the author of *The Seasons*, is familiarly known by name to the English-speaking race nearly two centuries after his birth; and now (1897) a new edition of his works has been issued with a memoir that does not spare a detail, and with notes—'critical appendices' they are called—that indicate a laboured study of Thomson's text, on the part of so learned an editor as Mr D. C. Tovey.

Yet Thomson, all the time, is a poet only by courtesy—you could not find in all his formal numbers one spark of the divine fire. Pope may have helped Thomson with *The Seasons*, as Mr Tovey thinks Warton right in

saying; but between Pope and Thomson there is a vast dividing space of technical accomplishment. Between Thomson and Wordsworth or any other of the poetical poets, there is more than space, there is an impassable gulf. Yet Mr Tovey says 'we can trace his influence, we think, in Keats; we can trace it also in Coleridge. Again, between Wordsworth and Thomson we naturally seek affinities.' Coleridge no doubt, wrote many unreal and pretentious things about Nature—*The Hymn before Sunrise* we are bold to class among them—and these we can concede—a concession it is—to anybody to bracket with *The Seasons*. The essential Coleridge is the only Coleridge that the world of letters cares to keep; and there we must say to Thomson's editor, 'Hands off.' Mr Tovey thinks it worth while to suggest also a resemblance of 'essential thought' between Keats' *Ode to a Grecian Urn* and Thomson's

> On the marble tomb
> The well-dissembled mourner stooping stands
> For ever silent and for ever sad.

The 'essence' of the thing does not lie in the thought at all—the old and obvious thought of the permanent expression of emotion in sculpture. It is a matter of treatment; and Mr Tovey himself does not fail to distinguish the essential difference there. As for Wordsworth (who, by the way, preferred *The Castle of Indolence*

to *The Seasons*, a preference we share), the association of Thomson's name with his has become a commonplace, and, like most commonplaces, it stands to be revised. Thomson is the link, we are constantly assured, between Milton and Wordsworth, as an observer and an interpreter of Nature. A little feeling of heart-freshness in the Spring we may, by searching, find in him—not so much in *The Seasons* as in *A Hymn*, where the phrase, 'wide flush the fields,' and the line:

> And every sense and every heart is joy,

just seem to be a degree less distant and conventional than was usual with the eighteenth century Muse. But here, again, the thought is of ancient days; it is the presentment that is the essence; and three of the Spring lines in the *Intimations of Immortality* are worth many times more than all the six thousand or so lines of *The Seasons*, however indefinitely multiplied. The difference is, in truth, of kind and not of degree; and these comparisons between things which have no relativity make us feel like 'young Celadon and his Amelia,' when they 'looked unutterable things'—the only phrase by which Thomson is likely to be spontaneously remembered.

We do not forget that the Thomson-Wordsworth superstition had an illustrious origin—it began in Wordsworth's own saying

that 'from Milton to Thomson no poet had added to English literature a new image drawn from Nature.' That is one of the generous *obiter dicta* great poets have made from time to time for the bewilderment of the unwary. Dr Johnson, it is true, took Thomson seriously, or wrote as though he did; but we remember that when he read *The Seasons* aloud to his friend Shiels, and extorted the listener's praise, he added, 'Well, sir, I have omitted every other line.' He was angry, for all that, when Lyttelton, after the poet's death, abbreviated his poem on Liberty before publishing it—such mutilations, Dr Johnson said, tended 'to destroy the confidence of society and to confound the characters of authors!' Horace Walpole uttered his contempt for Thomson straight out; but Boswell was politic, as became him; and his own personal judgement is, no doubt, shrewdly pitted against Johnson's more favourable opinion in the phrase: 'His *Seasons* are indeed full of elegant and pious sentiments; but a rank soil, nay, a dunghill, will produce beautiful flowers.'

For and against Thomson, in seasons and out, the vain tale of opinions would take too long in the telling. But Cowper it was who said that Thomson's 'lasting fame' proved him a 'true poet.' He would be a yet truer poet to-day, on that reasoning, for his 'fame' is still lasting. His *Rule, Britannia* has a place in anthologies even now; he is the bard in popular possession

of the name he bears (a name that Praed hated), although stories are told of confusion in circulating libraries and book shops between the poet of *The Seasons* and the poet of *The City of Dreadful Night* — that later James Thomson who, conscious of the identity of his name with his predecessor's, added stanzas to the *Castle of Indolence*. The secret of this sustained name—we distinguish name from fame—is easily guessed. The common mention of Milton and Wordsworth in Thomson's company supports his superfluous immortality. Poet or no poet, he is mixed up with poets, and is a part of poetical history.

And the added irony of this careful preservation of a name that stands for little or nothing is this—that whereas Thomson's naturalism was, in his own time, sufficiently marked to set his reputation going, we, with all the great poets of Nature between him and us, read him now, if we read him at all, for the very opposite quality—for artificiality. We tolerate him for his last-centuryness. We have a certain curiosity in observing an observation of Nature which was rewarded no more intimately than by a knowledge of the time-sequence of snowdrop, crocus, primrose, and 'violet darkly blue.' We like to hear him speak of young birds as 'the feathered youth'; of his women readers as 'the British fair'; of Sir Thomas More as having withstood 'the brutal tyrant's useful rage.' Such phrases speak to us from another

world than ours, from a world which had taste that was not touched with emotion; from a world, in short, which lacked the one thing needful for poetical life—inspiration.

THOMAS DE QUINCEY

THE life of Thomas De Quincey is too well known to need much recounting. It is, indeed, the one thing that most people do know of him, even when they have not read his works. Born at Greenhays, in the Manchester neighbourhood; brought up by a widowed mother with little in her of motherhood; shy, small, sensitive, dwelling in corners, with a passion for shunning notice, for books and the reveries stimulated by books; without the boy's love of games and external activities; the only break in his dreamy existence was the sometime companionship of a school-boy elder brother. That episode in his childhood he has told a little long-windedly, as is the De Quincey fashion; and with curious out-of-the-way humour, as is also the De Quincey fashion. He has told of the imaginary kingdoms ruled by his brother and himself; and how the brother, assuming suzerainty over De Quincey's realm, was continually issuing proclamations which burdened the younger child's heart. Once, for example, the elder brother, having become a convert to the Monboddo doctrine in regard to Primitive Man, announced that the inhabitants of De Quincey's kingdom were still in a state of tail; and ordained that they should sit down, by edict, a certain number of hours *per diem*, to work off their ancestral appendages. Also has Thomas told of the mill-youths with

whom his brother waged constant battle, impressing the little boy as an auxiliary; and how De Quincey, being captured by the adversary, was saved by the womankind of the hostile race, who did, furthermore, kiss him all round; and how, thereupon, his brother issued a bulletin, or order of the day, censuring him in terrible language for submitting to the kisses of the enemy.

The *Confessions* contain the story of De Quincey's youth: his precocity as a Greek scholar, which led one master to remark of him: 'There is a boy who could harangue an Athenian mob better than you or I an English one'; his misery at and flight from school, his subsequent drifting to London, his privations in 'stony-hearted' Oxford Street, which he paced at night with the outcast Ann; and there laid the seeds of the digestive disorder which afterwards drove him to opium. His experiences as an opium-eater have become, through his *Confessions*, one of the best-known chapters in English literary history. The habit, shaken off once, returned on him, never again entirely to be mastered. But he did, after severest struggle, ultimately reduce it within a limited compass, which left free his power of work; and, unlike Coleridge, passed the closing years of his life in reasonable comfort and freedom from anxiety. The contrast was deserved. For the shy little creature displayed in his contest with the obsessing demon of his life a patient

tenacity and purpose to which justice has hardly been done. With half as much 'grit,' Coleridge might have left us a less piteously wasted record. In the midst of this life-and-death struggle, De Quincey worked for his journalistic bread with an industry the results of which are represented in sixteen volumes of prose, while further gleanings have, in these late years, intermittently made their appearance. It is not a record which supports the charge of sluggishness or wasted life. Never, at any period, has it been easy for a man to support his family solely by articles for reviews and magazines. Yet De Quincey did it honourably; and if he was often in straits, it is doubtful whether this should not be set to the account of his financial incompetence.

His life brought him into contact with most of the great *littérateurs* of his time. 'Christopher North' was his only bosom friend; but in his youth he was an intimate of all the 'Lake' circle; and, finally, he who had known Wordsworth, Coleridge, Southey, Lamb, Landor, Hazlitt, and at least had glimpse of Shelley, lived to be acquainted with later men like Prof. Masson and others. Not all thought well of him: his talk, like his books, could fret as well as charm; and probably the charge of a certain spitefulness was earned. But, like feminine spite, it could be, and was, co-existent with a kind heart, a gentle and even childlike nature. His children loved him; and

though he was a genius, an opium-eater, and married beneath him, he defied all rules by being happy in his marriage.

As a writer, De Quincey has been viewed with the complete partiality dear to the English mind, and hateful to his own. He was nothing if not distinguishing; the Englishman hates distinctions and qualifications. He loved to

> divide
> A hair 'twixt south and south-west side;

the Englishman yearns for his hair one and indivisible. The Englishman says, 'Black's black—*furieusement* black; and white's white—*furieusement* white.' De Quincey saw many blacks, many whites, multitudinous greys. Consequently to one he is a master of prose; to another — and that other Carlyle — 'wire-drawn.' To one he ranks with the Raleighs, the Brownes, the Jeremy Taylors; to another—and that other Mr Henley—he is 'Thomas de Sawdust.' And, as usual, both have a measure of rightness. Too often is De Quincey wire-drawn, diffuse, ostentatious in many words of distinctions which might more summarily be put; tantalizing, exasperating. Also, if you will suffer him with patience, he is never obvious; a challenger of routine views, a perspicuous, if minute and wordy, logician, subtle in balanced appraisal. He was the first to practise that mode of criticism we call 'appreciation'—be it a

merit or not. Often his rhetorical *bravuras* (as he himself called them) are of too insistent, too clamorously artificial, a virtuosity. Also, in a valuable remainder, they are wonderful in vaporous and cloud-lifted imagination, magnificently orchestrated in structure of sentence, superb in range and quality of diction. In a more classified review, he never criticizes without casting some novel light, and often sums up the characteristics of his subject in memorably fresh and inclusive sentences. His sketch biographies, marred by characteristic discursiveness, at their best (as in the Bentley or the Shakespeare) are difficult to supersede, eating to the vitals of what they touch. His historical papers are unsystematic, skimming the subject like a sea-mew, and dipping every now and again to bring to the surface some fresh view on this or that point.

To re-tell the old has no interest for him; it is the point of controversy, the angle at which he catches a new light, that interests him. But his noble views on insulated aspects of history have sometimes been quietly adopted by succeeding writers. Thus his view of the relations between Cæsar and Pompey, and the attitude of Cicero towards both, is substantially that taken in Dean Merivale's *History of the Romans*. On his prose fantasies we have already touched. In a certain shadowy vastness of vision we say deliberately that they have more of the spirit of Milton than anything else

in the language—though, of course, they have no intention of competing with Milton. They are by themselves. The best of the *Confessions;* that vision of the starry universe which he greatly improved from Richter; parts (only parts) of *The Mail-Coach* (which is strained as a whole); portions of the *Suspiria;* above all, *The Three Ladies of Sorrow*—these are marvellous examples of a thing which no other writer, unless it be Ruskin, has succeeded in persuading us to be legitimate. Its admirers will always be few; we have no doubt they will always be enthusiastic.

His humour should have a word to itself. The famous *Murder as One of the Fine Arts* is the only specimen which we need pause upon. Much of that paper is humour out of date; a little childish and obvious. But of the residue let it be said that it was the first example of the topsy-turvydom which we associate with the name of Gilbert. The passage which describes how murder leads at last to procrastination and incivility —' Many a man has dated his ruin from some murder which he thought little of at the time '—might have come out at a Savoy opera. In this, as in other things, De Quincey was an innovator, and, like other innovators, has been eclipsed by his successors. Yet, with all shortcomings, the paper is likely to leave a more durable residuum than much humour which is now of the highest fashion. It is not certain that the slang on which a vast

deal of new humour is pivoted will any more amuse posterity than the slang on which De Quincey too often and unluckily relied.

A little, wrinkly, high-foreheaded, dress-as-you-please man; a meandering, inhumanly intellectual man, shy as a hermit-crab, and as given to shifting his lodgings; much-enduring, inconceivable of way, sweet-hearted, fine-natured, small-spited, uncanny as a sprite begotten of libraries; something of a bore to many, by reason of talking like a book in coat and breeches—undeniably clever and wonderful talk none the less; master of a great, unequal, seductive, and irritating style; author of sixteen delightful and intolerable volumes, part of which can never die, and much of which can never live: that is De Quincey.

MACAULAY

THOMAS BABINGTON MACAULAY was the son of Zachary Macaulay, an ardent abolitionist, the friend of the famous group which gathered round Wilberforce and Clarkson. Early distinguished by omnivorous reading and the old-fashioned literariness of his speech, he first attempted in letters a couple of fragments which aimed at reproducing the life of dashing young Greek and Roman patricians, having for their heroes such typical 'mashers' of the antique world as Alcibiades and Cæsar.

It was a characteristic beginning in one whose mental bent was throughout towards resurrecting the life of past ages. Then came that connexion with the *Edinburgh Review* which produced the most valuable work of his life; and made, while it lasted, the glory of the *Edinburgh*. He entered Parliament as member for Edinburgh, which he represented for many years; being thrown out on one occasion, and restored on the next opportunity by the repentant city at its own cost. A successful Parliamentary career was interrupted for a time by his experience as an Indian official, which provided the materials for his essays on Clive and Warren Hastings. From the outset of his career he was a member of the brilliant Holland House circle. He lived to publish a History of England, which was regarded, in its day, as ranking with the work of Hume and Gibbon; and died in the full

enjoyment of a reputation as the most brilliant prose-writer and talker of his time. It is doubtful whether it should be regarded as an addition to or detraction from his good fortune that he remained to the last a bachelor.

It was a varied career; yet brilliantly unromantic, splendidly commonplace, 'out of obvious ways ne'er wandering far.' In this, his life—like all men's lives—was typical of the man, and the genius of the man, which lay essentially in making strikingly obvious the obviously striking. The recluse De Quincey, with an infinitely more circumscribed career, wove into it infinitely more arresting romance. Coleridge, leading the petty life of a hack-writer, 'bound in shallows and in miseries,' yet imposed on that life the poetry of his own character. Keats shed the halo of the younger gods around an existence of small parlours, suburban gardens, and Hampstead Heath. But Macaulay in the purple would have been a crowned *bourgeois;* a-top of Olympus he would have wielded middle-class majesties, and ordered his thunderbolts from Whitworth's; while he would have lightened on the Olympian thrones and principalities in quarterly proclamations, flashing with antitheses, sounding the blessedness of modern Olympian 'progress,' and pointing out how much things had improved since the days when the gods were unbreeched savages, content with a monotonous diet of ambrosia, and drinking doubtful

nectar in place of Madeira. 'We are better clothed, better fed, better civilized';—so would have run the proclamation of Zeus-Macaulay. 'We no longer quarrel like children, drink like tavern-companions, and cut antiquated witticisms at the delicate jest of a limping cup-bearer black from the forge. The thunderbolts of Whitworth are of more skilled manufacture than the thunderbolts of Hephæstus. Poseidon still rules the waves, but he rules them with a better-made trident. He has his carriage from Bond Street, his horses would not disgrace the Row; he is a well-dressed gentleman, instead of a naked barbarian. Aphrodite has not lost the primacy of beauty, because her fashions are more those of Paris, and less those of Central Africa. The good old times were the bad old times: the very kitchens of Olympus bear witness that there has been such a thing as progress, the very toilet-table of Hera testifies to the march of enlightenment.'

He was content to take the goods the gods had provided him; satisfied with himself, his position, and his day. The day returned the compliment, as it always does, by being satisfied with him. 'Thou art a blessed fellow,' it said with Prince Hal, 'to think as every man thinks; never a man's thought in the nation keeps the roadway better than thine.' He was made for great success rather than great achievement. In all he did he was popular—honourably and deservedly popular; in all he did he was content

to pluck something short of the topmost laurels. He was a successful politician, yet never reached the positions attained by men far more stupid; his speeches, immeasurably superior to the parliamentary eloquence of the present day, filled the House, yet he has left no great name as an orator; he was a great talker in an age of great talkers, yet the tradition of his talk has not impressed itself on literary history as did the traditional talk of Coleridge, Lamb, De Quincey, or Sydney Smith. He wrote history brilliantly, and no serious historian accepts his history as serious history. He wrote essays which profoundly influenced literary style—yea, even to the style of the newspaper-leader; yet it is not altogether certain whether they will maintain their place among the classical classics of English prose. His genius was so like prodigious talent that it is possible to doubt whether it was not prodigious talent very like genius. He was 'cocksure of everything,' in Melbourne's famous epigram, but posterity is by no means cocksure of him.

The most permanent part of his literary baggage is undoubtedly the Essays. It is easy to say what they are not, which Mr George Meredith has declared to be the national mode of criticism; a mode of criticism not without its uses when the universality of a man's fame has made fault-finding an unpopular task, but decidedly the cheapest and lowest part of a

critic's duty. What they are not is largely responsible for the reaction against Macaulay. Our day has seen the rise and strengthening of a very subtle school of style, marked by delicate verbal instinct, and extreme attention to the melody of syllables and sentences. It is the day of Stevenson and Mrs Meynell; a day which is like to underrate Macaulay: for Macaulay is not subtle, is not careful of verbal choiceness. It is a delicate day, in which 'mere rhetoric' is rather frowned upon; and Macaulay is brusque, off-hand, revelling in all devices labelled rhetorical: in balance, antithesis, epigram of the cut-and-thrust order. It is fearful of the obvious; Macaulay loves the obvious with impatient middle-class thoroughness. To take the surface-view, and exaggerate its glaring obviousness until to refuse the accepting of it is almost as difficult as to shut out a lightning flash—that is meat and drink to him. On the other hand, he has qualities as well as defect of qualities; and the critic should cultivate the habit of regarding a man chiefly for what he is. The man who is always croaking of his friends' shortcomings is not more hateful than the critic to whom a literary sun is only spots set off by inter-spaces of light: for to every true critic the masters of literature should be friends. If he love literature, he should love the makers of literature. The creative artist may be forgiven, or, at least, palliated, if to him literature is largely a vehicle for the display of his own

personality; but the critic is unendurable to whom the monuments of literature are what other monuments are to the British tourist—an opportunity for carving his own name on them.

And Macaulay's qualities are such as we should be specially thankful for in our day. If it is a delicate day, it is also a day given to languor; and Macaulay is always vital with energy—or, as the man in the street would say, 'all there.' It is a day in which there is a penn'orth of refined style to an intolerable deal of uttermost slovenliness; and Macaulay has always a conscience of style. It is a day which shirks the labour of producing unified wholes, which dribbles away in snatches, mumbles and slathers the literary bone in its lazy jaws. Macaulay displays symmetry, proportion, unity, a sense of the balance of parts, in all his essays. Perhaps none of the principal masters of the essay are so exemplarily artistic in this point. De Quincey is apt to be fragmentary, at the best seldom maps out and proportions his work: he overflows on some points, draws in tantalizingly on others, and leaves the reader with a mingled impression of extreme thoroughness and scamped work. Landor is wandering and capricious; Hazlitt is a shower of sparks; Addison is by profession a pleasant meanderer; Stevenson's very method is whim. One might prolong the list. But Macaulay's essay is always built up soundly in the stocks. Deep it does not

go, but proportion it always keeps; the thing is undeniably a miniature whole. Then, if the stimulant devices are too restlessly stimulant; if they are sometimes cheap; if balance, antithesis, point, artful abruptness, are carried to an extent which gives a savour of the accomplished literary showman calling attention to his wares: yet they are undeniably effective, touched in with a deft and rapid hand; the reader is lifted along unflaggingly.

And it is literature; if he have nothing new to say, old things are newly said, with surpassing cunning in the presentment. The flow of instances with which an extraordinary memory enables him to support his points may be excessive, may be inexact at times (as the argument by parallel and analogy rarely fails to be, except in the most scrupulous hands), but it lends surprising life and picturesqueness to what with most men would have been dry discussion. For his much-vaunted lucidity we have less praise. He is lucid by taking the obvious road in everything, which is the easy road; and his arrangement is often the reverse of clear from the logical standpoint. But if he is no starter of original views, if he keeps to the surface of things, he must not be denied the merit of presenting that surface with a painter-like animation. Here is his power; it is on this that his fame must rest. As a critic he is naught; as a biographer or historian he is naught so far as exactitude of treatment,

novelty, or philosophy of view is concerned. But he can revivify a period, a person, or a society, with such brilliancy and conciseness as no other Englishman has done.

In one respect alone have we any disposition to quarrel with the routine view of him. We are disposed to put in a good word for his ballads. Mr Henley has truly remarked that *The Last Buccaneer* curiously anticipates some points in the methods of Mr Kipling. And we do, indeed, think that here Macaulay knew exactly what he wanted, and did it. The sayings and doings of the personages in these ballads are obvious and garish, it is said. But the ballad is essentially a product of a time in which people were dreadfully prone to do obvious things, and in no way concerned to be subtle. Fire, directness, energy of handling—these are the main necessities of the martial ballad, rather than any poetic subtlety; and all these were at Macaulay's command. 'Remember thy swashing blow' is the Shakespearean advice which might be given to the writer of the ballad warlike. And Macaulay always remembers his swashing blow. He has none of the deep poetic quality which informs the best work of Mr Kipling. But he does not aim at it. He keeps within a limit and a kind; and in that kind does very excellent pieces of work; quite honest, healthy work, which may well be allowed to stand, even though a stronger than he be come upon him.

In spite of modern æsthetic reaction, Macaulay, we think, will surely stand. If not an authentic god, he is at least a demigod, the most brilliant of Philistines, elevated to the Pantheon of literature by virtue of a quite supra-Philistine power. Macaulay is the Sauric deity of English letters, the artist of the obvious —but an artist none the less.

EMERSON

THERE was a child for whom the capital good and end of life was to see wheels go round. Before a carriage in the street he would stop, plunged in ecstatic contemplation, and—like a Buddhist devotee with his mystic formula—ejaculate at intervals in adoring rapture, 'Wheel-go-wound! wheel-go-wound!' In the works of watches, in tops, in the spinning froth of his tea-cup, in everything whirlable, this unconscious vortical philosopher discerned and worshipped 'wheel-go-rounds.' With that tyrannous mandate, 'Want to see wheel-go-wound,' he insisted on paying his devotions to every such manifestation of orbital motion.

Which things are a parable. That child, it strikes us, should find his ripened ideal in Emerson's writing, which, as one critic has already remarked, revolves round itself, rather than progresses. The remark was made depreciatingly: but we prefer to regard this trait in Emerson as a characteristic, rather than a limitation. This vortical movement of his understanding impresses itself strongly on one's mind after reading a succession of his essays—or lectures, as many of them originally were. Perhaps, indeed, the necessities of a lecturer, and the mental habit induced by much lecturing, may partly be responsible for it. An audience with difficulty follows an ascending sequence of thought, especially on abstruse

subjects; where the snapping of a single link, a momentary lapse of attention, may render all which follows unintelligible; and, at the best, it is uneasy to pick up again the dropped clue. But if the lecture circle round a single idea, such slips of fatigued attention are not fatal: what you have failed to grasp from one aspect, is presently offered and seized from another. The advantages of such a method for such a purpose are obvious. It is, at any rate, Emerson's method to a very large extent. Some one idea is suggested at the outset, and the rest of the essay is mainly a marvellous amplification of it. In some of these essays he is like a great eagle, sailing in noble and ample gyres, with deliberate beat of the strong wing, round the eyrie where his thought is nested.

The essay on Plato is a notable example. He starts with the declaration of Plato's universality:

> These sentences contain the culture of nations; these are the corner-stones of schools; these are the fountain-head of literatures. A discipline it is in logic, arithmetic, taste, symmetry, poetry, language, rhetoric, ontology, morals or practical wisdom. There was never such range of speculation. Out of Plato come all things that are still written or debated among men of thought. . . . Plato is philosophy, and philosophy, Plato.

His genius allies the universal with the particular, so that it becomes all-continent. So Emerson begins, and round this declaration the whole essay revolves. This Allness of Plato, this

combination of universality with particularity, —he takes this idea in his two hands, and turns it about on every side, surveys it from every aspect. Having trampled it out with his feet (one would say), he tosses it on his horns, till the air is alive with the winnowing of it. He conjures with it, till the Protean modifications and transmutations and reappearances of it dazzle the attention and amaze the mind. He touches on Socrates, and Socrates forthwith becomes a reincarnation of the same idea, in his homely practicality and dæmonic wisdom— again the universal and the particular. We will not say but that we sometimes tire of these brilliant metamorphoses, these transmigrations of a single conception through innumerable forms. Sometimes we could cry 'Enough!' and wish the repose of a more vertebrate method. But one thing he has effectually secured—we shall remember with emphasis that Plato was universal, and the synthesis at once of limit and immensity.

The 'wheel-go-round' quality of his mind appears even in the detail of his style; as (in Swedenborg's image) each fragment of a crystal repeats the structure of the whole:

> A man who could see two sides of a thing was born. The wonderful synthesis so familiar in nature; the upper and the under side of the medal of Jove; the union of impossibilities, which reappears in every object; its real and its ideal power,—was now also transferred entire to the consciousness of a man.

That is a simple and casual, but characteristic, example. Statements are not left single, but are iterated and reiterated in form on form. You have thus within the great volutions of the essay at large innumerable little revolutions,—wheels within wheels like the motions of the starry heavens; nay, the individual sentence revolves on its own axis, one might say. The mere opulence of his imagery is a temptation to this.

No prose-writer of his time had such resources of imagery essentially poetic in nature as Emerson—not even Ruskin. His prose is more fecund in imagery, and happier in imagery, than his poetry,—one of the proofs (we think) that he was not primarily a poet, undeniable though some of his poetry is. He had freer and ampler scope and use of all his powers in prose, even of those powers in their nature specifically poetic. It is a thing curious, but far from unexampled. With such figurative range, such easy and inexhaustible plasticity of expression, so nimble a perception, this iterative style was all but inevitable. That opulent mouth could not pause at a single utterance. His understanding played about a thought like lightning about a vane. It suggested numberless analogies, an endless sequence of associated ideas, countless aspects, shifting facets of expression; and it were much if he should not set down a poor three or four of them. We, hard-pushed for our one pauper phrase, may call it excess in him: to Emerson, doubtless, it was austerity.

Moreover, when we examine closely those larger revolutions of thought on which we first dwelt, it becomes visible—even in such an essay as that 'Plato' which we took as the very type and extreme example of his peculiar tendency—that Emerson has his own mode of progression. The gyres are widening gyres, each sweep of the unflagging wing is in an ampler circuit. Each return of the idea reveals it in a deeper and fuller aspect; with each mental cycle we look down upon the first conception in an expanded prospect. It is the progression of a circle in stricken water. So, from the first casting of the idea into the mind, its agitations broaden repercussively outward; repeated, but ever spreading in repetition. And thus the thought of this lofty and solitary mind is cyclic, not like a wheel, but like the thought of mankind at large; where ideas are always returning on themselves, yet their round is steadily 'widened with the process of the suns.'

It was an almost inevitable condition of his unique power that Emerson's mind should have a certain isolation and narrowness, a revolving round its own fixed and personal axis, corresponding with the tendency already analysed. Yet in another view it often surprises by a breadth of interest no one could have predicted in this withdrawn philosopher, this brooder over Plato and the Brahmins. He has a shrewd, clear outlook upon practical life,

all the sounder for his serene detachment from it. For example, the English nation was never passed through so understanding and complete an analysis as by this casual visitor of our shores. It took nothing less than this American Platonist to note at once with such sympathy and such aloof dispassionateness all the strength and weakness of the Saxon-Norman-Celtic-Danish breed. He perceives, let us say, the intense, victorious, admirable, exasperating common sense of the Englishman, with its backing of impenetrable self-belief; neither hating nor overpowered by it. Hear the enjoying *verve* of his brilliant summary:

> The young men have a rude health which runs into peccant humors. They drink brandy like water, cannot expend their quantities of waste strength on riding, hunting, swimming, and fencing, and run into absurd frolics with the gravity of the Eumenides. They stoutly carry into every nook and corner of the earth their turbulent sense: leaving no lie uncontradicted; no pretension unexamined. They chew haschisch; cut themselves with poisoned creases; swing their hammock in the boughs of the Bohan Upas; taste every poison; buy every secret; at Naples they put St Januarius's blood in an alembic; they saw a hole into the head of the 'winking Virgin,' to know why she winks; measure with an English footrule every cell of the Inquisition, every Turkish caaba, every Holy of Holies; translate and send to Bentley the arcanum bribed and bullied from shuddering Brahmins; and measure their strength by the terror they cause.

It could only have been written by a man who united with the profound common sense of eminent genius the profound uncommon sense of eminent genius. The one gave him sympathy; the other enabled him to possess his soul before a spectacle which compels most foreigners either to worship or execration. So also he can write on wealth with a sanity of perception at once homely and philosophic, which is worth the reading either of a man of ledgers or a man of libraries, a poet or a pedlar. Uncle Sam had 'hitched his wagon to a star'; but he kept a vigorous sap of the Uncle Sam who hitches his wagon to a prairie-hoss—and knows how to swop it.

DANTE

THE enormous Roman Empire, blown upon by the winds of barbarism, split like a rending sail into East and West. Reunited for a space by Constantine, it tore again under his successors; and thenceforth 'East was East, and West was West.' The East shrank to the limp and meagre Byzantine Empire; the West smouldered away in Gothic fire, till Rome was tacitly abandoned to the Popes. Charlemagne took up the Western succession, and dreamed himself the father of a new Cæsarean line, Overlords of Italy and the West. But the worms had not finished their imperial banquet in the sepulchre of Aix-la-Chapelle, when his own dominion fell asunder to East and West, parting into Germany and France. Germany itself was dashed to fragments by the Sclavs, till loosely recompacted by a Saxon chief. His son Otho entered Italy, like Charlemagne, to help the Pope; and obtained Charlemagne's reward—the succession to the Roman Emperors of the West.

Thus the title of the German Emperors had to do much less with Germany than with a 'Holy Roman Empire' which was really as dead as Julius Cæsar. But the Papacy had planted a thorn in its own side; for thenceforth the German Emperors were obsessed by the ambition to make their Italian title a sovereign

fact; whence constant strife between Emperor and Pope, in which Italians took opposite sides.

This, which is so little to us, was everything to Dante. For though his father had been a Guelf, he was a fierce Ghibelline, or partisan of the Emperor. To us, in the perspective of history, this Imperial claim seems the shadowiest anachronism. We wonder that sane Emperors could waste blood and treasure on it, with their own Germany turbulent and ununited behind them: as if Alfred had set out to conquer France before he had the petty kings of England under his heel. But four centuries of recognition had made the title real to the Italians, and all tradition was behind it. Moreover, it came to embody the perpetual struggle of State against Church: and it was in this practical light that it appealed to Dante. But in Florence the victorious Guelfs themselves split into 'Blacks' and 'Whites,' or *Neri* and *Bianchi;* and the Ghibellines (including Dante) curiously joined the *Bianchi*, the popular party.

Into this distracted city Durante, or Dante, Alighieri was born. Who dreams that the supreme Italian poet and the supreme English poet bore almost an identical surname? Yet so it is. Alighiero (the name of Dante's grandfather) is a German name, and probably was derived from Aldiger, which means 'Rulespear.' A better city for the growth of poet or

artist there could scarce be than Florence. It was more like a Greek than a modern city, and of all cities most like Athens in her prime. The same 'fierce democracy' clung with the same intense local patriotism to a fatherland nested within the city walls. The same fullness of trade nurtured it to importance. The same circumscribed life turned its energies inward, and created from a municipality the image of a State in miniature. Beyond the walls its territory was less than that of Athens. Its pent-up vitality seethed in the same relentless factions, though the final result was different. And this inward-driven vitality broke forth, like a volcano, in the same surprising and abundant shower of diversified genius. Narrow limits are good for genius. Dante and Michael Angelo are proof enough.

All the narrowed intensity and greatness of Florence seem to be in Dante, and must have been fostered by its training. He grew up in a little grey city, full of pictorial sight and sound, which was creating itself into art. He saw on market days, through its narrow streets overbrowed by the projecting upper stories of the houses, the mules pass laden with oil and wine from the country, carts piled with corn, and drawn by great white oxen, across their foreheads the beam which yoked them to the cart. The oxen shone in the sun which cut the large shadows. In the small squares whence were seen the numberless towers of Florence, sharp

against the intense blue, the red and green and white-gowned citizens paused to chat of politics. He grew up a politician, for politics were a second business to every Florentine. Were you for Pope or for Emperor? Were you a White and for the people, or a Black and for the nobles? You might see Corso Donati, the able and reckless leader of the Blacks, the Castlereagh of Florence, riding through the streets on his black horse, with a troop of friends and kinsmen. The people, despite themselves, cheer the handsome and stately dare-devil whom they hate: the White leaders, our rising Dante among them, pass with bent brows, to which he returns a disdainful glance; and it is well if no broil arise. For Corso presently was Dante's bitter enemy; and our friend Guido Cavalcanti is rasher of temper than we. Dante as a youth had seen the houses of the Galigai go to the ground because one of the family had killed a Florentine—in France!

Poetry, too, early engaged him. He was hand in glove with the Guido Cavalcanti already mentioned; and Cavalcanti had succeeded Guido Guinicelli as the second of mark to write Italian poetry in the 'New Style.' What had been written before, in Sicily for instance, was imitation of Provençal song. Dante himself had studied, perhaps written, Provençal verse, which was a second tongue to literary Italians. It had perished before the wrath of the Church which it assailed: the

new style kept clear of the overt attack which had proved disastrous. Perhaps through his connexion with men like Cavalcanti he became the friend of Giotto the painter and most of the artistic and intellectual 'set' of Florence. This Dante whom Giotto painted is other than the Dante we know. Student, politician, poet, self-centred, doubtless strong of will and passions, but a softer, lighter, more sensitive, perhaps gayer Dante; a brilliant youth, to whom all things were possible. He and his friends picked sixty Florentine ladies whom they judged fairest, and referred to them by numbers in their poems. Not much melancholy here! Yet Dante, like Milton, it is likely, 'joked wi' deeficulty,' as some verses of his hint, no better than Milton's on Hobson the carrier. At the same time he was having his baptism of war at Campaldino, and felt not a little frightened, as he ingenuously says. The flower of this time was that beautiful and mysterious poem, the *Vita Nuova*, on which no two critics agree. There *was* a Beatrice, doubtless; but already she is so overlaid with allegory that not a fact about her can be deemed certain—save that she was *not* Beatrice Portinari. That is the tantalizing truth.

After what he calls the death of Beatrice, our Dante went considerably astray. We may take that from outside witness; though even here his own language is so largely allegorical that we can say little more. Perhaps it

was in reaction from this that he made his fatal entry into leading politics. At any rate, it was no mere political wrong which soured and hardened him. Fiery inner experience and dire spiritual struggle had gone over him and set the trenches on his brow, before Florence cast him without her walls. Now, too, he began the grim study which made him one of the most all-knowing minds of the age. Then he came to power in a 'White' government, to be overset by a 'Black' revolution, was thrown forth from his city, and began that 'wandering of his feet perpetually' which has made him, more truly than Byron, 'the Pilgrim of Eternity.'

Thenceforth he looked to a German invasion for his restoration; and a personal motive deepened the intensity of his stern Ghibelline politics. The 'bitter bread' of clientage sharpened the iron lines about his mouth. All his learning, all his misery, all that Florence and his Florentine blood and the world had taught him, went to the making of his great poem. It is most narrow, most universal; it is the middle ages, it is Dante; it is Florence, it is the world. It is so civic, that the damned and the saints amid their tortures and beatitudes turn excited politicians; and not merely politicians, but Italian politicians; and not merely Italian politicians, but Florentine politicians; and not merely Florentine politicians but Ghibelline politicians; and not merely Ghibelline, but Dantean politicians. An act of

treachery to Florence is enough for damnation. The heavens look forward and exult, to the coming of the German into Italy. We must realize that for Dante the Emperor meant the salvation of Italy, the Church, and himself, to understand these things.

Yet the vastness of his understanding and conception makes his poem overwhelmingly impressive to Teutons who look on mediæval religion as a myth. That poem is so august, so shot with lights of peace and tenderness, that it is accepted as the gospel of mediæval Christendom. Withal it has a severity stern even to truculence, which is of Dante pure and simple —another spirit from that ' Hymn to the Sun ' of the gentle Francis of Assisi. And all this because he is Dante—that strange unity of which we know so much, and so little.

THE 'NIBELUNGEN LIED'

SAVE by a heaven-born poet, who should perform on the Teuton epic the miracle which Edward FitzGerald performed on Omar Khayyám, the *Nibelungen Lied* could only be represented for Englishmen in prose—such Biblical prose as that into which Mr Andrew Lang and his coadjutors rendered Homer. This thing has been done. A woman, Miss Margaret Armour, is the successful translator, and I congratulate her on her achievement. She has, say *cognoscenti* in German, taken serious and indefensible liberties of omission and commission with the difficult and sometimes diffuse text of the original. Moreover, she is apt to be too stiffly and crowdedly archaic—overdoing her admirable model, Mr Lang. Yet, get only a little used to this, and her version will grow on you as a thing of spirit and picturesqueness. It is hardly gear for woman to meddle with, this hirsute old German epic; yet this woman has made of it better work than most men could do—an English narrative which holds you and strikes sparks along your blood. I, like thousands more, cannot read the crabbed Mediæval German; but in this translation I have exulted over genius, authentic genius, brought home to me in my mother tongue.

There is no space here to analyse the tale: an epic Homeric in primitive directness of

narrative, but brooded over by the fierce spirit of the murky North. Homeric are the repetitions of set epithet; Homeric is the simple pathos; more than Homeric the joy of battle; Homeric the overlaying of an earlier story with the manners of a later budding civilization. But there is no Homeric imagery; the narrative is utterly direct, and, when the poet strikes an image, he iterates it with *naïf* pride in his discovery. 'A fire-red wind blew from the swords'; 'They struck hot-flowing streams from the helmets'—this image is made to do duty with child-like perseverance in many forms. With simple delight he dwells on details of attire, rich yet primitive, costlily barbaric. The men's robes are of silk, gold-inwrought, and lined with —what think you?—fish-skins! Sable and ermine and silk adorn the damsels, bracelets are over their sleeves: but no pale aristocracy this of Burgundy. 'Certes, they had been grieved if their red cheeks had not outshone their vesture.' Very quiet and plain are the poet's grieving pictures, a lesson to the modern novelist, with his luxury of woe. They make no figure as elegant extracts; but in its place every simple line tells. Kriemhild is borne from her slaughtered lover's coffin in a swoon, 'as her fair body would have perished for sorrow.' No more; and one asks no more. But it is in battle that this truly great Unknown finds himself, and sayeth 'Ha! ha!' among the trumpets.

Unique in all literature is the culmination of this epic of Death. Kriemhild, the loving woman turned to an Erinnys by implacable wrong, has invited all her kindred of Burgundy to the court of her second husband, Etzel the Hun. With them comes dark Hagen, the murderer of her first husband, Siegfried the hero unforgotten. On him she has vowed revenge; and her trap draws round the doomed Burgundians. The squires of Gunthur, the Burgundian King, she has lodged apart: with them abides Dankwart, the brother of Hagen. In the hall of Etzel's castle Gunther and his nobles sit in armour, feasting with the Hunnish King and Queen: the little son of Etzel and Kriemhild, Ortlieb, is summoned in, and wanders round among the stranger guests. Fatal sits Kriemhild, watching her netted prey, expecting the signal which shall turn the feast to death. It comes; in other manner, and to other issue than she dreams. Arms clang on the stairs: the door flies wide, a mailed and bloody figure clanks in terrible. It is Dankwart. The Huns have set upon King Gunther's squires and slain them to a man; he has fought his way through the hostile bands, alone. At those tidings, grim Hagen springs erect, and mocks with fierce irony:

'I marvel much what the Hunnish knights whisper in each other's ears. I ween they could well spare him that standeth at the door, and hath brought this court-news to the Burgun-

dians. I have long heard Kriemhild say that she could not bear her heart's dole. Now drink we to Love, and taste the King's wine. The young prince of the Huns shall be the first.'

To the overture of that dusky mockery the Burgundians rise. 'With that, Hagen slew the child Ortlieb, that the blood gushed down on his hand from his sword, and the head flew up into the Queen's lap.' Up the hall and down the hall pace the terrible strangers, slaying as they go: Etzel and Kriemhild sit motionless, gazing on the horror. At last they fly: the doors are barred, and the Burgundians pass exterminating over all within.

It is but the beginning. All the country round flocks to Etzel's summons. Troop after troop of Huns win into the dreadful hall; but from the dreadful hall no Hun comes back. 'There was silence. Over all, the blood of the dead men trickled through the crannies into the gutters below.' In the midst of a magnificently imagined *crescendo* of horror and heroism, death closes in, adamantine, on the destined Burgundian band. I am almost tempted to say that it is the grandest situation in all epic. And of the dramatic force with which it is related there can be no question.

HEALTH AND HOLINESS

A STUDY OF THE RELATIONS BETWEEN BROTHER ASS, THE BODY, & HIS RIDER, THE SOUL

THIS is an age when everywhere the rights of the weaker against the stronger are being examined and asserted. Is it coincidence merely, that the protest of the body against the tyranny of the spirit is also audible and even hearkened? Within the Church itself, which has ever fostered the claims of the oppressed against the oppressor, a mild and rational appeal has made itself heard. For the body is the spouse of the spirit, and the democratic element in the complex state of man. In the very courts of the spirit the claims—might we say the rights?—of the body are being tolerantly judged.

It was not so once. The body had no rights against her husband, the spirit. One might say, she had no marital rights: she was a squaw, a hewer of wood and drawer of water for her heaven-born mate. Did she rebel, she was to be starved into submission. Was she slack in obedience, she was to be punished by the infliction of further tasks. Did she groan that things were beyond her strength, she was goaded into doing them, while the tyrannous spirit bitterly exclaimed on her slovenly performance. To overdrive a donkey was bar-

barous: to over-drive one's own lawful body a meritorious act. A poet I know has put, after his own fashion, the case between body and spirit:*

Said sprite o' me to body o' me:
'A malison on thee, trustless creature,
That prat'st thyself mine effigy
To them which view thy much misfeature.
My hest thou no ways slav'st aright,
Though slave-service be all thy nature:
An evil thrall I have of thee,
Thou adder coiled about delight!'

Said body o' me to sprite o' me:
'Since bricks were wroughten without straw,
Was never task-master like thee!
Who art more evil of thy law
Than Egypt's sooty Mizraim—
That beetle of an ancient dung:
Naught recks it thee though I in limb
Wax meagre—so thy songs be sung.'

Thus each by other is mis-said,
And answereth with like despite;
The spirit bruises body's head;
The body fangs the heel of sprite;
And either hath the other's wrong.
And ye may see, that of this stour
My heavy life doth fall her flower.

But the hallowed plea for slave-driving the body was not poetry, of which this writer's fleshly spouse so piteously complains; it was

[*The verses are Francis Thompson's own.]

virtue. And the crowning feature of the happy and approved relation between body and spirit was this: that the luckless body could not escape by obedience and eschewing rebellion: she was then visited with stripes and hunger lest she *should* rebel. The body, in fact, was a proclaimed enemy; and as an enemy it was treated. If it began to feel but a little comfortable, high time had come to set about making it uncomfortable, or—like Oliver—it would be asking for more.

Modern science and advanced physiology must needs be felt even in the science of spirituality. Men begin to suspect that much has been blamed to the body which should justly be laid on the mismanagement of its master. It is felt that the body has rights; nay, that the neglect of those rights may cause it to take guiltless vengeance on the soul. We may sin against the body in other ways than are catalogued in Liguori; and impoverished blood—who knows?—may mean impoverished morals. The ancients long ago held that love was a derangement of the hepatic functions. '*Torrit jecur, urit jecur*,' says Horace with damnable iteration; and Horace ought to know. And now, not many years ago, a distinguished Jesuit director of souls, in his letters to his penitents, has hinted over and over again that spiritual disease may harbour in a like vicinage.

Within the limits of his own meaning this spiritual director was wisely right. He was aware

that men of sedentary habits and unshakably introspective temperament may endure spiritual torments for which a fortnight's walking-tour is more sovereign than the Exercises of St Ignatius. And how many such men are there now? Perhaps for this very reason the delicate connexion between mind and body is recognized as it never was before. In truth, Health, as he suggested, may be no mean part of Holiness; and not by mere superficial analogy has imagery drawn from the athlete been perpetually applied to the Saint. That I do not speak without warrant let passages from his published 'Letters'* show:

'As for the evil thoughts, I have so uniformly remarked in your case that they are dependent upon your state of health, that I say without hesitation, begin a course of Vichy and Carlsbad.' . . . . 'Better far to eat meat on Good Friday than to live in war with every one about us. I fear much you do not take enough food and rest. You stand in need of both, and it is not wise to starve yourself into misery. Jealousy and all similar passions become intensified when the body is weak.' . . . . 'Your account of your spiritual condition is not very brilliant; still you must not lose courage. . . . Much of your present suffering comes, I fear, from past recklessness in the matter of health.'

We might quote indefinitely; but it is enough to remind the reader how much and

* Letters of George Porter, S.J., Archbishop of Bombay.

how wisely has the modern director adapted himself to the modern Man. Nay, the very conditions of modern sanctity may be said to have changed, so changed are we. There was a time—strange as it may seem, there was a time upon the earth when man flew in the face of the east wind. He did not like the east wind—his proverbs remain to tell us so; but this was merely because it gave him catarrh, or rheumatism, or inflamed throat, and such gross outward maladies. It did not dip his soul in the gloom of earthquake and eclipse; his hair, and skin, and heart were not made desiccate together. A spiritual code which grew into being for this Man whose moral nature remained unruffled by the east wind, may surely be said to have leaked its validity before it reached *us*. He was a being of another creation. He ate, and feared not; he drank, and in all Shakepeare there is no allusion to *delirium tremens;* his schoolmaster flogged him large-heartedly, and he was almost more tickled by the joke than by the cane; he wore a rapier at his side, and stabbed or was stabbed by his brother-man in pure good fellowship and sociable high spirits. For him the whole apparatus of virtue was constructed, a robust system fitted to a robust time. Strong, forthright minds were suited by strong, forthright direction, redounding vitality by severities of repression; the hot wine of life needed allay. But to our generation uncompromising fasts and severities

of conduct are found to be piteously alien; not because, as rash censors say, we are too luxurious, but because we are too nervous, intricate, devitalized. We find our austerities ready-made. The east wind has replaced the discipline, dyspepsia the hair-shirt. Either may inflict a more sensitive agony than a lusty anchorite suffered from lashing himself to blood. It grows a vain thing for us to mortify the appetite,—would we had the appetite to mortify!—macerate an evanescing flesh, bring down a body all too untimely spent and forewearied, a body which our liberal-lived sires have transmitted to us quite effectually brought down. The pride of life is no more; to live is itself an ascetic exercise; we require spurs to being, not a snaffle to rein back the ardour of being. Man is his own mortification. Hamlet has increased and multiplied, and his seed fill the land. Would any Elsinore director have advised austerities for the Prince, or judged to the letter his self-accusings?—and to this complexion has many a one come. The very laughers ask their night-lamps

> Is all laughed in vain?

Merely to front existence, for some, is a surrender of self, a choice of ineludibly rigorous abnegation.

It was not so with our fortunate (or, at least, earth-happier) ancestors. For them, doubtless, the old idea worked roughly well. They lashed

themselves with chains; they went about in the most frightful forms of hair-shirt, which grew stiffened with their blood; and yet were unrestingly energetic. For us it would mean valetudinarian impotence; which, without heroic macerations, is but too apt to overtake us. They turned anchorites in the English country, the English fens, among the English fogs and raw blasts; they exposed themselves defenceless to all the horror of an English summer; and they were not converted into embodied cramp and arthritis. This implies a constitution we can but dimly conjecture, to which austerity, so to speak, was a wholesome antidote. Their bodies were hot colts, which really needed training and breaking—and very strong breaking, too. They had often, questionless, to be ridden with a cruel curb. When we look at Italy of the Renascence, at England of the sixteenth century, we are amazed. There were giants in those days. Those were the days of *virtu*—when the ideal of men was vital force, to do everything with their whole strength. And they did it. In good and in evil they redounded. *Pecca fortiter*, said Luther; and they sinned strongly. Ezzelin fascinating men with the horror of his tyranny, Aretin blazoning his lusts and infamies, Sforza ravening his way to a throne, Cæsar Borgia conquering Italy with a poisoned sword, would have sneered at the scented sins of the present day. The seething energies of our sixteenth century,—fighting, hating, stabbing,

plotting, throwing out poetry in splendid reckless floods and cataracts,—seem to emanate from beings of another order than ourselves. And these men who are thrown to the forefront of history imply a fierce undercurrent of general vitality. The mediæval men fight amidst the torrid lands of the East jerkined and breeched with iron which it makes us ache to look upon; our men in khaki fall out by hundreds during peace-manœuvres on an English down. They cheapened pain, those forefathers of ours; they endured and apportioned the most monstrous tortures with equal carelessness, reckless of their own suffering or that of others. Read the tortures inflicted on the rebels against Henry IV; and how 'good old Sir Thomas Erpingham' rode round one of them, taunting him in the awful crisis of his agony. Yet Sir Thomas died at Agincourt in the odour of knightly honour, and doubtless was as far from remembering that thoughtless little incivility as any one was from remembering it against him. We cannot conceive the exuberant vitality and nervous insensibility of these men. Some image of the latter quality we may get by turning to the ascetics of the East, who still swing themselves by the heels over a smoky fire, and practise other public forms of self-torture, with (apparently) small nervous exhaustion. Here and there among ourselves, of course, such conditions still exist to witness what was once usual. Such bodies, we may well

believe, needed the awe of hunger and stripes, and, without rigorous rebuke from the spirit, were always lying in wait for its heel.

But not only have conditions changed: there is another influence, unrecognized, yet subtly potent in affecting an altered attitude towards the externals of asceticism. The interaction between body and spirit is understood, or at least apprehended (for comprehended it cannot be), as never it was before. St Paul, indeed, that profoundly original and intuitive mind, long since saw and first proclaimed it, in its broad theological aspect. 'I do not that good which I will; but the evil which I hate, that I do. . . . The good which I will, I do not; but the evil which I will not, that I do. . . . I find then a law, that when I will to do good, evil is present with me. For I am delighted with the law of God, according to the inward man: but I see another law in my members, fighting against the law of my mind, and captivating me in the law of sin that is in my members. Unhappy man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?'

That was the primal cry of the discovery, which has never been more pregnantly and poignantly expressed. Upon it arose a complex theological system; but outside that system, the realization of this mysterious truth went no further. One might almost say that its intimacy was removed and deadened by the circumvallation of theological truisms. But the

progress of physiological research has brought it home to the flesh of man. Science, not for the sole time or the last, has become the witness and handmaid of theology. Scripture swore that the sins of the fathers should be visited on the children to the third and fourth generation; Science has borne testimony to that asseveration with the terrible teaching of heredity. Of the internecine grapple between body and spirit, Science, quick to question the spirit, has in her own despite witnessed much. With the fable of *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* Stevenson has simply incarnated St Paul's thesis in unforgettable romance.

But upon this quickened and vital sense of the immemorial grapple has come also a sense of its unsuspected complexity. We can no longer set body against spirit and let them come to grips after the light-hearted fashion of our ancestors. We realize that their intertwinings are of infinite delicacy, endless multiplicity: no stroke upon the one but is innumerably reverberated by the other. We cannot merely ignore the body: it will not be ignored, and has unguardable avenues of retaliation. This is no rough-and-tumble fight, with no quarter for the vanquished. We behold ourselves swayed by ghostly passions; the past usurps us; the dead replay their tragedy on our fleshly stage. To the body itself we owe a certain inevitable obedience, as the father owes a measure of obeisance to the child, and the ruler is governed by the

ruled. The imperial spirit must order his going by his fleshly shackles; he must hear it said, 'Thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall bind thee, and lead thee whither thou wouldst not.' And wisdom will often submit to the tyrannous impotence of the inferior. For though weak compliance be fatal, arrogant rigidity is like to be only less so. The stumbling of the feeble subject shall bring down the strong ruler; a brain-fever change a straight-walking youth into a flagitious and unprincipled wastrel. But recently we had the medically-reported case of a model lad who after an illness proved a liar and a pilferer. It were unsafe, truly, to reason from extremes; but extremes bring into light forces and tendencies which in their wonted action go unsuspected.

Even in the heroic ages, of men and religion, did these things play no part unrecognized? Was the devil always the devil? Whether the devil might on occasion be the stomach (as the Archbishop hints) may be a perilous question; though some will make small scruple that the stomach may be the devil. That the demon could have been purged from Saul by medicinal draughts were a supposition too much in the manner of the Higher Criticism; though to Macbeth's interrogation: "Canst thou not minister to a mind diseased?" the modern M.D. of Edinburgh would answer: 'Sire, certainly!' He can often purge from

the mind a rooted trouble; nor do we in such cases throw physic to the dogs. But as men lay their sins on the devil who indeed save him the labour of tempting them, so he may be accused for that which comes only from the mishandling of their own bodies. The author of mischief can leave much mischief to be worked for him, and needs but to wait on men's mistakes. Even in the ascetic way, shall one aver such error could not have intruded? It is dangerous treading here; yet with reverence I adventure: since the mistake of personal speculation is after all merely a mistake, and no one will impute to it authority.

Grace does not cast out nature; but the way of grace is founded on nature. Sanctity is genius in religion; the Saint lives for and in religion, as the man of genius lives for and in his peculiar attainment. Nay, it might be said that sanctity is the supreme form of genius, and the Saints the only true men of genius; with the great difference that sanctity is dependent on no special privilege—or curse—of temperament. Both are the outcome of a man's inner and individual love, and are characterized by an eminent fervour, which is the note of love in action. Bearing these things in mind, it should not surprise us to find occasional parallelisms between the psychology of the Saints and the psychology of men of genius,—parallelisms which study might perhaps extend, and which are specially observable

where the genius is of the poetic or artistic kind, in the broad sense of the word 'artistic.' Both Saint and Poet undergo a preparation for their work; and in both a notable feature of this preparation is a period of preliminary retirement. Even the Poets most in and of the world experience it in some form; though in their case it may be an inward process only, leaving no trace on their outward life. It is part of the mysterious law which directs all fruitful increase. The lily, about to seed, withdraws from the general gaze, and lapses into the claustral bosom of the water. Spiritual incubation obeys the same unheard command; whether it be Coleridge in his cottage at Nether Stowey, or Ignatius in his cave at Manresa. In Poet, as in Saint, this retirement is a process of pain and struggle. For it is nothing else than a gradual conformation to artistic law. He absorbs the law into himself; or rather he is himself absorbed into the law, moulded to it, until he become sensitively respondent to its faintest motion, as the spiritualized body to the soul. Thenceforth he needs no guidance from formal rule, having a more delicate rule within him. He is a law to himself, or indeed he is the law. In like manner does the Saint receive into himself and become one with divine law, whereafter he no longer needs to follow where the flocks have trodden, to keep the beaten track of rule; his will has undergone the heavenly magnetization by

which it points always and unalterably towards God.

In both Saint and Poet this process is followed by a rapid and bountiful development of power: in both there are throes, as it were the throes of birth. Light and darkness succeed each other like the successive waves of sun and gloom on a hillside under a brightly windy sky; but the gloom is prolonged, the light swift and intermittent. The despairing chasms of agony into which the Saints are plunged have their analogy in these paroxysms of loss and grief related by Chateaubriand, Berlioz, and others. How far these things are conditioned by the body in the case of the Poet is obscure. If the uniform nature, in them all, of these emotional crises points to a psychic origin, it is none the less difficult to avoid the suspicion, the probable suspicion, that physical reaction is an accessory cause. In the case of the Saint, shall we hold the body always guiltless? Did those passionate austerities of the Manresa cavern (for one typical instance) leave the body hale and sane? Had we to reckon solely with the natural order, the answer would not be doubtful; and, since sanctity has never asserted itself an antidote against the consequences of indiscreet actions, I know not why one should shrink from drawing the likely conclusion and adventuring the likely hypothesis. That celestial unwisdom of fast, vigil, and corporal chastening must, it is like, have exposed Ignatius to the

reactions of the weakened body. Fast is the diet of angels, said St Athanasius; and Milton echoed him:

> Spare Fast, that oft with gods doth diet.

But when mortals surfeit on that food, and superadd stripes and night-watchings, the forespent body is prone to strange revenges. In some measure, is it not possible such may have mingled with the experiences and temptations of Ignatius? The reality of these ghostly conflicts there is not need to doubt; I do not doubt. But with them who shall say what may have been the intermixture of subjective symptoms, fumes of the devitalized flesh? When, the agony past, the battle won, the wedlock with divine law achieved, Ignatius emerged from the cave to carry his hard-won spiritual arms against the world, he saw coiled round a wayside cross a green serpent. Was this indeed an apparition, to be esteemed beside the heavenly monitions of the cavern, or rather such stuff as Macbeth's air-drawn dagger, the issue of an overwrought brain? I recall a poet,* passing through that process of seclusion and interior gestation already considered. In his case the psychological manifestations were undoubtedly associated with disorder of the body. In solitude he underwent profound sadness and suffered brief exultations of power: the wild miseries

[*The poet was Francis Thompson himself.]

of a Berlioz gave place to accesses of half-pained delight. On a day when the skirts of a prolonged darkness were drawing off from him, he walked the garden, inhaling the keenly languorous relief of mental and bodily convalescence; the nerves sensitized by suffering. Pausing in reverie before an arum, he suddenly was aware of a minute white-stoled child sitting on the lily. For a second he viewed her with surprised delight, but no wonder; then, returning to consciousness, he recognized the hallucination almost in the instant of her vanishing. The apparition had no connexion with his reverie; and though not perhaps so strongly visual as to deceive an alert mind, suggests the possibility of such deception. Furthermore, one notes that the green serpent of St Ignatius, unlike the divine monitions in the cave, unlike the visions in general of the saints, was apparently purposeless: it had no function of warning, counsel, temptation, or trial. Yet repetitions of the experience in the Saint's after life make it rash, despite all this, to decide what is not capable of decision, and to say that it may have been a trick of fine-worn nerves.

There is at any rate a possibility that, even in the higher ascetic life, the means used to remove the stumbling-block of the body may get up in it a fresh stumbling-block, to a certain degree; that, even here, Brother Ass may take his stubborn retaliation; and this is a possibility of which our ancestors had no dream. St

Ignatius himself came to think that he had done penance not wisely but too well at Manresa; nevertheless it was only the after-effects at which he glanced, the impairing of his physical utility in later years. With modern lack of constitution the possibility is increased. No spread of knowledge can efface asceticism; but we may, perhaps, wear our asceticism with a difference.

The devil is out of most of our bodies before our youth is long past; in many it scarce exists. The modern body hinders perfection after the way of the weakling; it scandalizes by its feebleness and sloth; it exceeds by luxury and the softer forms of vice, not by hot insurgence; it abounds in vanity, frivolity, and all the petty sins of the weakling which vitiate the spirit; it pushes to pessimism, which is the wail of the weakling turning back from the press; to agnosticism, which is sometimes a form of mental sloth—'It is too much trouble to have a creed.' It no longer lays forcible hands on the spirit, but clogs and hangs back from it. And in some sort there was more hope with the old body than with this new one. When the energies of the old body were once yoked to the chariot-pole of God, they went fast. But what shall be made of a body whose energies lie down in the road? When to these things is added the crowning vice and familiar accompaniment of weakness—selfishness, it is clear indeed that we require an asceticism; but not

so clear that the asceticism we require is the old asceticism. Can this inertia of the modern body be met by breaking still further the beast already over-feeble for its load? It is not possible. In those old valiant days, when the physical frame waxed fat and kicked, the most ardent saints ended in the confession of a certain remorse for their tyrannous usage of the accursed flesh. St Ignatius, we have said, came to think he had needlessly crippled his body—after all, a necessary servant—by the unweighed severity of Manresa. Even the merciless Assisian—merciless towards himself, as tender towards all others—confessed on the deathbed of his slave-driven body: 'I have been too hard on Brother Ass.'

Yes, Brother Ass, poor Brother Ass, had been inhumanly ridden; and but for his stubborn constitution would have gone nigh to hamper the sanctity he could not prevent. In these days he is a weak beast, and may not stand a tithe of the burdens a Francis of Assisi piled upon him with scarce more than a responsive groan. Chastening he needs: he will not sustain overmuch chastisement. Rules have been mitigated, in some of the severer Orders, to meet modern exigencies: but no mitigation can effectually alter their unsuitability to this modern Britain. They are not only obsolete: the whole incidence of them was devised for a sunny clime, a clime of olives, wine, and macaroni. Fasts fall plump and frequent in the

winter season, when in the North they mean unmeditated stress upon the young constitution; while the summer, when fast could be borne, goes almost free of fast. So you have Orders where scarce the rosiest novice passes his profession without an impaired, if not a shattered, constitution. Not so much the amount, but the incidence, of austerity needs revision. Not solely in the kingdoms of this world, but in the kingdom also of God, the administration may become infected by the red-tape microbe.

But this is to invade the domain of monastic asceticism, which is beyond my province. Quite enough is the weltering problem of secular religion. How shall asceticism address itself to this etiolated body of death? For all that I have said regards only the externals of asceticism. Asceticism in its essence is always and inevitably the same. The weak, dastardly, and selfish body of to-day needs an asceticism—never more. The task before religion is to persuade and constrain the body to take up its load. It demands great tenderness and great firmness, as with a child. The child is led by love, and swayed by authority. It must feel the love behind the inflexible will; the will always firm behind the love. And to-day, as never before, one must *love* the body, must be gently patient with it:

> Daintied o'er with dear devices,
> Which He loveth, for He grew.

The whole scheme of history displays the body as 'Creation's and Creator's crowning good.' The aim of all sanctity is the redemption of the body. The consummation of celestial felicity is reunion with the body. All is for the body; and holiness, asceticism itself, rest (next to love of God) on love of the body. As love, in modern Christianity, is increasingly come to be substituted for the motive-power of fear; may it not be that love of the body should increasingly replace hatred of the body as the motive even of asceticism? We need (as it were) to show a dismayed and trembling body, shrinking from the enormity of the world, that all, even rigour and suppression, is done in care for it. The incumbency of daily duty, the constant frets of the world and social intercourse, the intermittent friction of that ruined health which is to most of us the legacy from our hard-living ancestors, the steady mortification of our constitutional sloths and vanities—may not these things make in themselves a handsome asceticism, less heroic, but not less effectual than the showy austerities of our forefathers? A wise director, indeed, said, 'No.' Such external and unsought mortifications came to be borne as an habitual matter—grudged but accepted, like the gout or some pretty persistent ailment. The observation may be shrewdly right; but I confess I doubt it. The accumulated burthen of these things seems to me to exact a weary and daily—nay,

hourly fresh intention. If, however, voluntary inflictions be necessary to subdue this all-too-subdued body, they should not be far to seek without heroic macerations which very surely our stumbling Brother Ass cannot support.

The co-operation of the body must be enlisted in the struggle against the body. It is the lusts of the healthy body which are formidable; but to war with them the body (paradoxically) must be kept in health; the soldier must be fed, though not pampered. Without health, no energy; without energies, no struggle. Seldom does the *fainéant* become the Saint; the vigorous sinner often. *Pecca fortiter* (despite Luther) is no maxim of spirituality; but he that sins strongly has the stuff of sanctity, rather than the languid sinner. The energies need turning Godward; but the energies are most necessary. Prayer is the very sword of the Saints; but prayer grows tarnished save the brain be healthful, nor can the brain be long healthful in an unhealthy body. So you have that sage Archbishop already quoted advising against long morning devotions for weaker vessels: 'The brain requires some time after the night's rest, and some food, to regain its normal power,' says he. And again: 'You are suffering the consequences of the wilfulness as regards health in years long past; these consequences cannot be prevented now. The most you can do, the most you can hope for, is to lessen them as much as possible.' Or yet again: 'The most

you can do is to be patient, to avoid swearing and grumbling, to say some prayers mechanically, or to look at your crucifix.' These things are not said to Saints: but alas! sanctity has small beginnings; there are no short cuts, no 'royal roads' (as à Kempis says) to God. One must start even like these unheroic souls; and on those most weary small beginnings all the after-issues rest. Not so much to restrain, but to foster the energies of our *dilettanti* and foreweary bodies, and throw them on the ghostly Enemy; that is the task before us. For that, is this Fabian strategy all which remains to us?

To foster the energies of the body, yes; and to foster also the energies of the will: that is the crying need of our uncourageous day. There is no more deadly prevalent heresy than the mechanical theory which says: 'You are what you are, and you cannot be otherwise.' Linked with it is the false and sloven charity which pleads 'We are all precious scoundrels in some fashion; so let us love one another!'—the fraternity of criminals, the brotherly love of convicts. That only can come out of a man which was in a man; but the excessive can be pruned, the latent be educed; and this is the function of the will. The will is the lynch-pin of the faculties. Nor, more than the others, is it a stationary power, as modern materialism assumes it to be. The weak will can be strengthened, the strong will made stronger. The will grows by its own exercise, as the thews and

sinews grow: *vires acquirit eundo:* it increases like a snowball, by its own motion. I believe that the weakest man has will enough for his appointed exigencies, if he but develop it as he would develop a feeble body. To that special end, moreover, are addressed the sacramental means of the Church. But it is also terribly true that the will, like the bodily thews, can be atrophied by indolent disuse; and at the present time numbers of men and women are suffering from just this malady. 'I cannot' waits upon 'I tried not.' The active and stimulative, not the merely surgical asceticism, which should strike at this central evil of modernity, is indeed a thing to seek. Demanding so much sparing, so much spurring; so much gentleness, so much unswervingness; never so much to be considered, and never exacting more anxious consideration; this poor fool of a present body is indeed a hard matter for the spiritual physician to handle, yet not beyond his power. The Church is ever changing to front a changing world; *et plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose.* She brings forth out of her treasuries new things and old—even as does that world to which she ministers, which moves in circles, though in widening circles. She is so divinely adjusted to it, that nothing can it truly need but she shall automatically respond: the mere craving of the world's infant lips suffices to draw from her maternal and ever-yielded bosom the milk.

So she is now proving, with that insensible

gradualness in change, as of Nature's self, which is her secret. When very persecution has recognized the profound change in men, and vindictiveness forgoes the infliction of tortures which justice once held paternal amenities of correction, it would be strange if so tender a mother as the Church had maintained the rigidities of a discipline evolved for a race at once ruder and hardier than ourselves. The continual commutations of fasting and other physical penances, in the present day, sufficiently attest her policy. Of that more intimately discriminating relentingness which must rest with the private director, those letters of Archbishop Porter, more than once quoted, furnish a singularly commendable and sagacious example. The degree to which the current of a life is ruffled by the wind of circumstance, coloured by its own contained infirmities and affected by the nature of its source, has only in these latter days begun to be realized in all its profound extent. An age which sees the apotheosis of the personal mode in literature, an age in which self-revelations excite not impatience, but a tenacious interest far from wholly ignoble or merely curious, an age which has shifted its preoccupation from the type to the individual, naturally apprehends more subtly these complexities of the individual life. And the result is perhaps (even in that Church always the very heart, and that priesthood always the very members, of charity) a charity a thought nearer to the charity of the

Eternal. For it is a charity based on a more sensitive delicacy of justice; and He is archetypal Charity because He is archetypal Justice.

And if the maternal cares of the Church be thus increased by the frailty of the modern body, she is not without maternal recompense. We have thus far regarded that profound change, so widely evident, as though it were an unmixed evil. But in all change, well looked into, the germinal good out-vails the apparent ill. A regard thus one-sided misses the most potent ally of the Church and ultimate stickler for ascetic religion—Nature. Nature, which some say abhors asceticism, in her larger and subtler processes steadily befriends—nay, enforces it. A favourite employment of men is the venting of these shallow libels on Nature. They have called her foe to chastity—her, who ruthlessly penalizes its violation. No less, looking largely back over human history, I discern in her a pertinacious purpose to exalt the spirit by the dematerialization (if I may use the phrase) of the body. Slow and insensible, that purpose at length bursts into light, so to speak, for our present eyes. For all those signs and symptoms, upon which I have insisted even to weariness—however ill from the mere material standpoint, what do they mean but the gradual decline of the human animal, the gradually ascending supremacy of the spirit on the stubborn ruins of the bodily fortress; that we have, by an advance evident from its very pain,

Moved upward, working out the beast?

In one large word (is it over-bold?) Nature is doing for the Church what each individual saint, passionately anticipative, had formerly to do for himself. She is macerating the body.

Look but back on the past. Realize the riotous animality of primitive man. Witness the amazing progenitive catalogue of Jewish king after Jewish king, the lengthening bede-roll of his wives: then reflect that these men still thirsted, with more than the thirst of a second Charles or a Louis Bien-Aimé, after illicit waters. Or recall, if you will, the two thousand wives of Zinghiz Khan. Remember, from a hundred evidences, that all the passions of these men were on a like turbulent scale; and estimate the distance to the British paterfamilias, a law-abiding creature in every way, who (according to the Shah's epigram) prefers fifty years with one wife to a hundred years with fifty wives. A poor and sordid comparison enough, you may think, but it measures a distance, the better because no one imputes it to him for a merit; and a distance you have not thought to measure.

There is another measure far nobler, deeper, less obvious. Its two *termini* are Dante and St Paul. The teaching of St Paul with regard to marriage represents the eternal mind of Christianity: out of it have unfolded all the lilied blossom of Christian wedlock and (by consequence) Christian love. Yet the spirit, the tone, of St Paul concerning marriage (with reverence

be it said) in our modern perspective seems but a little way from that of the heathenesse around him. Doubtless there was a world between them, to the sense of his day; but in the perspective of nineteen hundred years the gulf becomes a crevice. To what silver spirals would climb that spirit which he rooted fast in dogma St Paul could not foresee; and even yet has it put forth its apex-bud? For the Christian love-poets it was left to incarnate the spirit of waxing Christianity in regard to that love which was the effluence of the Pauline counsels. Thus it is that the passage from the first great Christian teacher to Dante is the passage to 'an ampler ether, a diviner air' in the relations of man and woman. And that transition is the measure of a vast insensible spiritualism bathing the very roots of human society.

Along uncounted lines you may follow up, with attentive meditation, this steady working of history towards the higher man, this secret treaty between Nature and her asserted antagonist, asceticism. Constantly obscured, or seemingly contradicted, in historic detail, in particular periods, it becomes arrestingly patent in a large and spatial view. The existing valetudinarianism of our overspent bodies is, I would suggest, a mere stage in the wider beneficent process. But are the iniquitous potencies of the body to be checked by the destruction of all potency?—a question to be asked. It would be a poor world if the ultimate issue were a

mere stagnant virtue, in which morality should luxuriate like duckweed; if (after the saying of a departed Bishop) we were to put off the old man merely in order that we might put on the old woman. But against that prospect, against a remedy which might justifiably be accounted worse than the disease, comes in another force—the force of sanctity itself. For *holiness energizes*. The commonest of common taunts is that of 'idle monks,' 'lazy saints,' and the like. But most contrary to that superficial taunt, a holy man was never yet an idle man. The process of sanctity, like the Egyptian embalmers, destroys only to preserve the lustiness of the body, and a saintly could never be an effete world.

Let us, again, look back to the basis of Nature. In our times Science has partially brought into daylight the obscure physiology of the will: we know that the will of one man may heal or quicken the body of another. We call it therapeutic hypnotism; and the long name confers scientific orthodoxy on what was a pestilent heresy. Nor only this: we know, also, the possibility of self-hypnotization; we know that a man's own will can heal or quicken a man's own self. Are not these the days of 'Christian Science,' and many another over-seeding of this truth? Solely as a natural matter, by its profound effect on the personality, by its quickening of the will, sanctity (then) would produce a quickening of the body. But that is only the basis, the physical basis of the process. The body (I might say) is

immersed in the soul, as a wick is dipped in oil; and its flame of active energy is increased or diminished by the strength or weakness of the fecundizing soul. But this oil, this soul, is enriched a hundredfold by the infusion of the Holy Spirit; the human will is intensified by union with the Divine Will; and for the flame of human love or active energy is substituted the intenser flame of Divine Love or Divine Energy. Rather, it is not a substitution; but the higher is added to the lower, the lesser augmented by and contained within the greater. The effective energies of the fleshly wick, the body, are correspondingly and immensely augmented. If self-hypnotization have quickening power, how life-giving must be that force when the human is reinforced by the Divine Will, the human soul gathered into the Soul of all being! In such fashion is it that sanctity the destroyer becomes sanctity the preserver; and through the passes of an ascetic death leads even the body, on which its hand has lain so heavy, into a resurrection of power.

This truth is written large over the records of saintliness. The energy of the saints has left everywhere its dents upon the world. When these men, reviled for impotence, have turned their half-disdainful hand to tasks approved by the multitude, they have borne away the palm from the world in its own prized exercises. Take, if you will, poetry. In the facile forefront of lyric sublimity stand the Hebrew prophets: not

only unapproached, but the exemplars to which the greatest endeavour after approach. The highest praise of Milton, Dante, supreme names of Christian secular song, is to have captured spacious echoes of these giants' solitary song. In so far, then, and from one of their aspects, these great poets are derivative; and could not so have written without their sacred models. Yet the Hebrew prophets wrote without design of adding to the world's poetry, without purpose of poetic fame, intent only on their message (unblessed word, yet 'an excellent good word till it was ill-sorted'): they thought only of the kingdom of God, and 'all these things were added unto them'! Or consider, in another field of human endeavour, St Augustine. Throughout his brilliant youth he was simply a rhetorician of his day; a dazzling rhetorician, a noted rhetorician, but he produced nothing of permanence, and might have passed from the ken of posterity as completely as the many noted rhetoricians who were his contemporaries. He rose to literary majesty and an authentic immortality only when he rose to sanctity. Yet those works which still defy time were the by-product of an active episcopal life, a life of affairs which would have soaked in the energies of most men. With like incidentalness Francis of Assisi sang his Hymn to the Sun, that other Francis—of Sales—wrote his delightful French prose, John of the Cross poured out those mystical poems which are among the

treasurable things of Spanish literature, and unforgotten prose works besides; all in the leisure hours of lives which had no leisure hours, lives which to most men would have been death.

For holiness not merely energizes, not merely quickens; one might almost say it prolongs life. By its Divine reinforcement of the will and the energies, it wrings from the body the uttermost drop of service; so that, if it can postpone dissolution, it averts age, it secures vital vigour to the last. It prolongs that life of the faculties, without which age is the foreshadow of the coming eclipse. These men, in whom is the indwelling of the Author of life, scarce know the meaning of decrepitude: they are constantly familiar with the suffering, but not the palsy, of mortality. Regard Manning, an unfaltering power, a pauseless energy, till the grave gripped him; yet a 'bag of bones.' That phrase, the reproach of emaciation, is the gibe flung at the saints; but these 'bags of bones' have a vitality which sleek worldlings might envy. St Francis of Assisi is a flame of active love to the end, despite his confessed ill-usage of 'Brother Ass,' despite emaciation, despite ceaseless labour, despite the daily hæmorrhage from his Stigmata. In all these men you witness the same striking spectacle; in all these men, nay, and in all these women. Sex and fragility matter not: these flames burn till the candle is consumed utterly. 'We are always young,' said the Egyptian priests to the Greek emissaries;

and the Saints might repeat the boast, did they not disdain boasting. It was on the instinctive knowledge of this, on the generous confidence they might trust the Creator with His creation, that the Saints based the stern handling of the body which some of them afterwards allowed to have been excessive. For though the oil can immensely energize and prolong the life of the wick, it is on that corporeal wick, after all, that the flame of active energy depends. The fire is conditioned by the fleshly fuel. No energy can replace the substance of energy; and while some impoverishment is a necessity of ascetic preparation, waste is a costly waste. For, even as a beast of burthen, this sore-spent body is a Golden Ass.

But with all tender and wise allowance (and in these pages I have not been slack of allowance) it remains as it was said: ' He that loseth his life for Me shall find it.' The remedy for modern lassitude of body, for modern weakness of will, is Holiness. There alone is the energizing principle from which the modern world persists in divorcing itself. If ' this body of death ' be, in ways of hitherto undreamed subtlety, a clog upon the spirit, it is no less true that the spirit can lift up the body. In the knowledge of the body's endless interplay with the spirit, of the subtle inter-relations between this father and daughter, this husband and wife, this pair whose bond is at once filial and marital, we have grown paralysingly learned in late days. But our

knowledge is paralysing because it is one-sided. Of the body's reactions and command upon the spirit we know far indeed from all, yet fearfully much. Of the potency, magisterial, benevolent, even tyrannous, which goes forth from the spirit upon the body we have but young knowledge. Nevertheless it is in rapid act of blossoming. Hypnotism, faith-healing, radium—all these, of such seeming multiple divergence, are really concentrating their rays upon a common centre. When that centre is at length divined, we shall have scientific witness, demonstrated certification, to the commerce between body and spirit, the regality of will over matter. To the blind tyranny of flesh upon spirit will then visibly be opposed the serene and sapient awe of spirit upon flesh. Then will lie open the truth which now we can merely point to by plausibilities and fortify by instance: that Sanctity is medicinal, Holiness a healer, from Virtue goes out virtue, in the love of God is more than solely ethical sanity. For the feebleness of a world seeking some maternal hand to which it may cling a wise asceticism is remedial.

Health, I have well-nigh said, is Holiness. What if Holiness be Health? Two sides of one truth. In their co-ordination and embrace resides the rounded answer. It is that embrace of body and spirit, Seen and Unseen, to which mortality, sagging but pertinacious, unalterably tends.

SHELLEY

AFTER he had read this *Shelley* Essay in *The Dublin Review* (July 1908), Mr George Wyndham wrote to the editor of that periodical, Mr Wilfrid Ward, the following letter, afterwards printed as the Introduction to the separate re-publication:

I HAVE read Francis Thompson's *Shelley* more than once to myself, and once aloud. For the moment I will say that it is the most important contribution to pure Letters written in English during the last twenty years. In saying that, I compare this Essay in criticism with Poetry, as well as with other critical Essays.

Speaking from memory, Swinburne's last effective volume, *Astrophel* with *The Nympholept* in it, came out in '87 or '88; Browning's *Asolando* in '87. Tennyson's *Œnone* is also, I think, at the verge of my twenty years. But, even so, these were pale autumn blossoms of more radiant springs. It may be, when posterity judges, that Thompson's own poems alone will overthrow this opinion.

In any case there is a strain in a comparison between criticism and poetry; prose and verse. It is more natural to seek comparison with other essays devoted to the appreciation of poetry. I have a very great regard for Matthew Arnold's *Essays in Criticism*, partly reasoned, partly sentimental. But they were earlier. They did not reach such heights. They do not handle subjects, as a rule, so pertinent to Poetry. When they do, in the *Wordsworth* and *Byron* (Second Series), they are outclassed by this Essay. The *Heine* Essay deals with Religion rather than Poetry. The only recent English Essay on Poetry—and, therefore, life temporal and eternal—which challenges comparison, as I read Thompson's *Shelley*, is Myers's *Virgil*, and specially the First Part.

I think those two are the best English Essays on Poetry, of our day. Myers gains by virtue of Virgil's wider appeal

to mortal men in all ages. Thompson gains by virtue of the fact that he is himself a poet, writing on the poet who, in English, appeals specially to poets. His subject is narrower, but his style is incomparable in the very qualities at which Myers aimed; of rhythm and profuse illustration. Both, perhaps, exceeded in these qualities. But Thompson, the poet, is the better man at varying and castigating his prose style. He is rich and melodic, where Myers is, at moments, sweet and ornate. Both are sentimental; and each speaks out of his own sorrow. Myers sorrowed after confirmation of Immortality. Thompson sorrowed out of sheer misery. When Myers writes of Virgil's 'intimations' of Immortality, he is thinking of his own sorrow. When Thompson writes of Mangan's sheer misery, he is thinking of his own Slough of Despond. Both mean to be personally reticent. But Thompson succeeds. Unless I knew Thompson's story, I could not read between the lines of his wailing over Mangan. But anyone who reads Myers sees the blots of *his* tears. Again, Myers is conscious of Virgil as a precursor on the track of unrevealed immortality. Thompson seems—is, I believe—unconscious of any comparison between himself and Shelley, as angels ascending the iridescent ladders of sunlit imagination. He follows the 'Sun-treader' with his eye, unaware that his feet are automatically scaling the Empyrean.

That his article is addressed to Catholics in no way deflects its aim. It begins with an *apologia* for writing on Shelley. It ends with an *apologia* for Shelley. These are but the grey goose-feathers that speed it to the universal heart of man. There it is pinned and quivers.

The older I get, the more do I affect the two extremes of literature. Let me have either pure Poetry, or else the statements of actors and sufferers. Thompson's article, though an Essay in prose criticism, is pure Poetry, and also, unconsciously, a human document of intense suffering. But I won't pity him. He scaled the heavens because he had to sing, and so dropped in a niche above the portals of the temple of Fame. And little enough would he care for that!

Why should he? Myers doubted. But Thompson knew that souls, not only of poets but of saints, 'beacon from the abode where the eternal are.' He is a meteor exhaled from the miasma of mire; and all meteors, earth-born and Heaven-fallen, help the Heavens to declare the Glory of GOD. *Cœli enarrant.* But the grammar of their speech is the large utterance of such men made 'splendid with swords.'

GEORGE WYNDHAM.

Saighton Grange, Chester,
September 16, 1908.

A leading article, entitled 'Poet to Poet,' appearing in *The Observer* (August 1908), said:

NO literary event for years has been so amazing an instance of buried jewels brought to light as the posthumous article by the late Francis Thompson.* *The Dublin Review* has leaped into a second edition with a memorable masterpiece of English prose. Brilliant, joyous, poignant are these pages of interpretation, as sensitive and magical as the mind of one poet ever lent to the genius of another. Yet when we turn from the subject to think of the author, the thing is as mournful as splendid. As for Francis Thompson, whose existence was as fantastic in the true sense as De Quincey's, and far more sorrowful, it is as though fate, even after death, pursued him with paradoxes. In this part of his fame he has no share, and his finest piece of prose—and much of his prose, though unknown to the world, was notable—sets London ringing in a way that reminds us of music never played until found among the papers of a dead composer. There are doubtless many who still ask 'Who was Francis Thompson?' There are probably many more who, mistaking knowledge of a poet for familiarity with his name, would do well to ask 'Who was Shelley?' The Essay answers

* This essay, offered to *The Dublin Review* when first written in 1889, and then refused, had appeared in its pages nineteen years later, after the death of its author.

both questions equally. As in all the highest work of that kind, its author divines the secrets of another nature by the certainty that his own was akin to it; and sympathy, inspiring true vision, reveals the seer as well as the seen. That the Essay should appear at last, instinct with the first freshness of life—that the expression of the inward glory of a man's youth should become his own rich epitaph—this is perhaps worth all the years of oblivion out of which a masterpiece has been redeemed.

Shortly after he wrote this *Shelley* paper, Francis Thompson set down some 'Stray Thoughts on Shelley,' owning at least a 'correlated greatness' in association with the longer composition. Speaking again of the close relation between the poet and the poetry—that 'sincere effluence of life' which Thompson's own verse ever was—he protests against a writer who had said that Shelley, though himself a wretch, could write as an angel:

Let me put it nakedly: that if Heliogabalus had possessed Shelley's brain, he might have lived the life of Heliogabalus, and yet have written the poetry of Shelley. To those who believe this, there is nothing to say. I will only remark, in passing, that I take it to be the most Tartarian lie which ever spurted on paper from the pen of a good man. For the writer *was* a good man, and had no idea that he was offering a poniard at the heart of truth.

Again, Francis Thompson says:

The difference between the true poet in his poetry and in his letters or personal intercourse, is just the difference between two states of the one man; between the metal live from the forge and the metal chill. But, chill or glowing, the metal is equally itself. If difference there be, it is the metal in glow that is the truer to itself. For, cold, it may be overlaid with dirt, obscured with dust; but afire, all these are scorched away.

The last of these 'Stray Thoughts' carries Shelley with it into the far possibilities of an environment other than that which was his own:

> The coupling of the names of two English poets [Keats and Shelley] who have possessed in largest measure that frail might of sensibility suggests another problem which I should like to put forward, though I cannot answer. What may be the effect of scenic and climatic surroundings on the character and development of genius such as theirs? Had he drunk from the cup of Italy before, not after, the cup of death, how would it have wrought on the passionate sensitiveness of Keats? Would his poetry have changed in kind or power? Cooped in an English city, what would have betided the dewy sensitiveness of Shelley? Could he have created *The Revolt of Islam* had he not risen warm from the lap of the poets' land? Could he have waxed inebriate with the heady choruses of *Prometheus Unbound*,
>
> Like tipsy Joy, that reels with tossing head,
>
> if for the Baths of Caracalla with their 'flowering ruins,' the Italian spring and 'the new life with which it drenches the spirits even to intoxication,' had been substituted the blear streets of London, the Avernian birds, the anæmic herbage of our parks, the snivel of our catarrhal May, and the worthless I O U which a sharping English spring annually presents to its confiding creditors? Climate and surroundings must needs influence vital energy; and upon the storage of this fuel, which the imaginative worker burns at a fiercer heat than other workers, depends a poet's sustained power. With waning health, the beauty of Keats's poetry distinctly waned. Nor can it be, but that beings of such susceptibility as these two should transmute their colour, like the Ceylonese lizard, with the shifting colour of their shifted station. I have fancied, at times, a degree of analogy between the wandering sheep Shelley and the Beloved Disciple. Both are usually represented with a certain feminine beauty. Both made the constant burden of their teaching, 'My

little children, love one another.' Both have similarities in their cast of genius. The Son of Man walks amidst the golden candlesticks almost as the profane poet would have seen Him walk:

'His head and His hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and His eyes were as a flame of fire; and His feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and His voice as the sound of many waters.'

Receive from Shelley, out of many kindred phantasies, this:

White
Its countenance, like the whiteness of bright snow. . . .
Its hair is white, the brightness of white light
Scatter'd in string.

And, finally, with somewhat the same large elemental vision they take each their stand; leaning athwart the rampires of creation to watch the bursting of over-seeded worlds, and the mown stars falling behind Time, the scytheman, in broad swaths along the Milky Way. Now, it is shown that the inspired revelations of the inspired Evangelist are tinged with imagery by the scenery of Patmos. If, instead of looking from Patmos into the eyes of Nature, he had been girt within the walls of a Roman dungeon, might not his eagle have mewed a feather? We should have had great Apocalyptic prophecy; should we have had the great Apocalyptic poem? For the poetical greatness of a Biblical book has no necessary commensuration with its religious importance; Job is greater than Isaiah. Might not even St John have sung less highly, though not less truly, from out the glooms of the Tullianum? Perhaps so it is; and, perhaps, one* who hymned the angel Israfel spoke wider truth than he knew:

The ecstasies above
With thy burning measures suit—
Thy grief, thy joy, thy hate, thy love,
With the fervour of thy lute—
Well may the stars be mute!

*E. A. Poe.

Yes, Heaven is thine; but this
Is a world of sweets and sours;
Our flowers are merely—flowers,
And the shadow of thy perfect bliss
Is the sunshine of ours.

If I could dwell
Where Israfel
Hath dwelt, and he where I,
He might not sing so wildly well
A mortal melody,
While a bolder note than this might swell
From my lyre within the sky.

HEALTH AND HOLINESS

When first published, this Essay had the following Preface by George Tyrrell.

'IT is dangerous treading here,' says the author (p. 260), 'yet with reverence I adventure.' For whether as a defence, or as a criticism, of the ascetical tradition of Christianity, what he says will perhaps raise objections on this side or on that. Else it were not worth saying. Let it first be clearly noted that he is not dealing with the austerities of sanctity so far as they are inspired by the purely religious and mystical motives of atonement and expiation. His theme is Asceticism, which is to the 'psychic' man, to the passions and desires, what athletics are to the 'physical' man, to the limbs and muscles. It is an instrument or method for the perfecting of our whole nature by the due subjection of the lower to the service of the higher; for the harmonious subordination of the 'psychic' to the 'pneumatic' or spiritual. It is therefore 'for building-up and not for destruction.' In the Saints, the ascetical tendency is frequently complicated with the sacrificial and self-destructive tendency. This latter is a problem apart, a problem for mystics rather than for moralists. But if at times the mystic may transcend, yet he may never transgress the clear dictates of moral reason; and so he too may meditate with profit on these pages. The crippling of Brother Ass is eventually as fatal to the mystical as to the moral life, both of which require the free use of unimpaired faculties.

Midway between an exaggerated pessimistic spiritualism on the one side, and the naïve animalism (against which it is the equally naïve reaction) on the other, stands the Great Physician of soul and body alike, 'with healing on his wings,' the Giver of the meat which perisheth no less than of the meat which endureth. Christian asceticism has ever been in principle and in aim a synthesis, a tempering of contraries.

But if, as an imperishable principle of conduct, asceticism comes more directly under the jurisdiction of divine tradition, yet its application changes with ever changing conditions of life and society, and still more with our growing understanding of the functions of soul and body, and of the precise degree and nature of their interdependence. To adhere rigidly and blindly not merely to the ascetical principles of the Past, but to their old-world applications, were to ignore the bewildering changes that have since swept over the face of society, and to deny all value to the light which has been given us from the Giver of all light through the progress of Physiology and Psychology. An asceticism whose zeal is untempered by such knowledge may easily defeat itself by inducing those very same nervous and mental disorders which proverbially dog the heels of indulgence, and whose root in both cases is to be found in the violation of the due balance of sense and spirit. On the other hand, the laws of perfect hygiene, the culture of the *corpus sanum*, not for its own sake, but as the pliant, durable instrument of the soul, are found more and more to demand such a degree of persevering self-restraint and self-resistance as constitutes an ascesis, a mortification, no less severe than that enjoined by the most rigorous masters of the spiritual life.

In these pages the thoughts of many hearts are revealed in speech that is within the faculty of few, but within the understanding of all. They are an expression of fallible opinion, not of infallible dogma. Mistakes there may be, but, as the author says, 'The mistake of personal speculation is after all merely a mistake, and no one will impute it to authority.'

G. TYRRELL.

Richmond, Yorks.

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W.M.

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