SELECTED ESSAYS OF MATTHEW ARNOLD

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SELECTED ESSAYS OF MATTHEW ARNOLD

EDITED, WITH AN INTRODUCTION AND CRITICAL ANNOTATIONS, BY

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PREFACE

MATTHEW ARNOLD, both as a critic and a stylist, deserves to be read much more than he is at present. No finer introduction to the study of English Literature can be found than the Essays in Criticism: as someone has said, they not merely criticise, but teach the reader to criticise for himself. It is hard to make a representative selection without being ruthless: the essays on The Literary Influence of Academies, Joubert, Heine and Spinoza, to say nothing of those on Falkland, The Majority and the Remnant, and Emerson, were only sacrificed after much searchings of heart. But it is hoped that the young student, after mastering the essays in this volume, will be sufficiently interested to get the rest from the nearest library. If so, the editor's purpose has been fulfilled and his efforts justified. It may be necessary to add that the notes were *not* added to save readers from hunting out references for themselves, but in order to stimulate independent research.

H. G. RAWLINSON.

THE DECCAN COLLEGE,
POONA, 12*th May*, 1923.

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INTRODUCTION

MATTHEW ARNOLD

MATTHEW ARNOLD was born in December 1822, at Laleham near Staines. He was the eldest son of Thomas Arnold, afterwards the famous "Arnold of Rugby," the founder of our modern Public School system. He owed much to his father's influence—his high sense of duty, his intellectual honesty and lofty moral ideals—though in many respects there was little in common between the son, with his innate scepticism, his rather pessimistic outlook on life, and his ironical, quizzing turn of mind, and the simple, old-fashioned, pious parent. Thomas Arnold, who became Head Master of Rugby in 1828, died in 1842, while Matthew was still at Oxford, but his influence remained as a dominating and guiding force in the family throughout their lives. Of his father's work at Rugby Matthew Arnold speaks touchingly in *Rugby Chapel*:

> "Still thou upraisest with zeal
> The humble good from the ground,
> Sternly repressest the bad.
> Still, like a trumpet, dost rouse
> Those who, with half-open eyes

Tread the borderland dim
'Twixt virtue and vice: revivs't,
Succourest; this was thy work,
This was thy life upon earth."

Matthew Arnold was educated at Winchester, and then under his father at Rugby. In 1840 he won an open scholarship at Balliol. Both at school and college he was respected and popular. At Oxford he took the Newdigate Prize with a poem on Cromwell, but disappointed his tutors by unaccountably missing a first-class in Litterae Humaniores. He made up for this, however, by carrying off the blue ribbon of Oxford scholarship, an Oriel Fellowship, in 1845. His chief friends at Oxford were the poet Clough, Arthur Stanley, J. D. Coleridge and J. C. Sharp. It is curious that he was totally unaffected by the Neo-Catholic movement, though Newman, himself a fellow of Oriel, joined the Church of Rome in the year that Arnold was elected. Probably his strictly evangelical upbringing, and his own attitude towards religious dogma, stood in the way. Like everyone else, however, who came into contact with him, he felt, as he tells us in his *Discourses in America*, the strange fascination of Newman's personality.[1] For Oxford Arnold had a great and abiding love. It, more than any other influence, moulded his character and fixed his outlook upon life. "Beautiful City," he wrote long after, in one of his rare outbursts of unrestrained emotion, "steeped in sentiment as she lies, spreading

[1] He admired "the desire for beauty nourished by Dr. Newman's movement, and the light which it turned on the hideous and grotesque illusions of middle-class Protestantism."

her gardens in the moonlight, and whispering from her towers the best enchantments of the Middle Ages, who will deny that Oxford, by her ineffable charm, keeps ever calling us nearer to the true goal of all of us, to the ideal, to perfection—to beauty, in a word, which is only truth seen from another side? . . . adorable dreamer, whose heart has been so romantic! who hast given thyself so prodigally, given thyself to sides and heroes not mine, only never to the Philistines! home of lost causes, and forsaken beliefs, and unpopular names, and impossible loyalties!" Every reader of Matthew Arnold's poems is familiar with the exquisite—and accurate—description of the countryside round Oxford in the *Scholar Gipsy*.

After a year as a form-master at Rugby under Dr. Tait, afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury, Matthew Arnold found thoroughly congenial employment as private secretary to Lord Lansdowne, President of the Council in Lord Russell's government. In 1851, having become engaged to the daughter of Mr. Justice Wrightman, he accepted an Inspectorate of Schools, a post which he held for thirty-five years. Into this somewhat prosaic task he threw himself with characteristic earnestness. It would be out of place here to speak in detail of Arnold's work in the service of education in England, but it is no exaggeration to say that he did for the primary schools what his father had done for the public schools. He helped to evolve order out of chaos, and to make people look upon pedagogics as a science, and, above all, as a national concern. His official work was varied by more than one tour on the continent, and his studies of French and

German educational methods were embodied in two valuable reports, which have since become educational classics. Among the permanent results of his efforts may be noted the establishment of the Normal School in England, Extension Lectures, and the organisation of London University as a teaching institution. As an inspector, Arnold was universally popular. His kindly disposition and gentle humour were never so much to the fore as in a school. The children loved him, and the teachers, whose battles he fought unceasingly, looked up to him and adored him. Much of his early work was among Nonconformist schools, and this gave him that insight into English middle-class life and religious beliefs which he uses with such effect in *Culture and Anarchy* and other works. He dwelt, as he himself puts it, with the Philistines in their tents, and broke bread with the barbarians.

In 1849 Matthew Arnold made his *début* as a poet with a slim little volume of verse entitled *The Strayed Reveller and other Poems.* This, though it made a considerable esoteric reputation, was almost still-born as far as the public was concerned, and was quickly withdrawn by the author, who was always the most fastidious critic of his own work. Indeed, Matthew Arnold's audience will always be fit but few. Steeped as he was in Greek thought, he requires a certain amount of culture on the part of his readers in order fully to enter into the spirit of his poetry, with its exquisite finish, its Attic simplicity and restraint, and its subdued and chastened melancholy. Arnold was not a natural poet. He writes as a scholar, and embodies in his work much profound speculation upon

the spiritual perplexities of his age. His acknowledged masters are his beloved Greeks, Homer and the tragedians (above all, Sophocles), Goethe, Wordsworth and Sénancour. The most remarkable of the contents of the first volume were *Mycerinus*, *The Forsaken Merman* and *Resignation*. The second volume, *Empedocles on Etna and other Poems* (1852), suffered the fate of its predecessor, being withdrawn before fifty copies were sold, as the author was dissatisfied with the title-piece. Fortunately this beautiful work was afterwards republished in 1867 at the request of Robert Browning. Other notable poems in this volume were *Tristram and Iseult*, *A Summer Night*, and the Obermann Stanzas. Arnold's action was, however, merely a case of *reculer pour mieux sauter*. In the following year appeared a new collection, containing the best of his old work and much that was new. Of the latter the most striking were the noble epic fragment, *Sohrab and Rustum*, and that glorious ode, *The Scholar Gipsy*, which alone would entitle their writer to a place among the greater English poets. But the volume has another and even more remarkable feature. To it Matthew Arnold appended a preface, primarily as an explanation of his reasons for the omission of *Empedocles*, in the course of which he propounds his theory of poetry. This is, perhaps, the most important contribution to criticism since Wordsworth and Coleridge's famous preface to the *Lyrical Ballads*.

Matthew Arnold's theories are nowhere better exemplified than in his own *Sohrab and Rustum*, which has been aptly described as an oriental story in a

Greek setting. A second series of poems, containing, however, nothing new except *Separation* and the singularly unsuccessful *Balder Dead*, appeared in 1855. Matthew Arnold was now at the height of his reputation; people recognized him not merely as a poet but a poet with a new theory of poetry of no mean importance, and in 1857 he was offered the Professorship of Poetry at Oxford. He held the chair for ten years. The first-fruits of the new appointment, the tragedy *Merope*—an attempt, like Robert Browning's *Agamemnon*, but on different lines, to achieve the impossible task of rendering the spirit of Greek tragedy faithfully in English—must be classed, along with *Balder*, among Arnold's rare failures. Then came the brilliant lectures *On Translating Homer*, with the reply to F. W. Newman's criticism (1861-2); the essay *On the Study of Celtic Literature* (1867), full of novel and suggestive thoughts, marred, however, by the drawback that Arnold did not know a word of any Celtic language; *New Poems* (1869), that splendid collection, representing Arnold's crowning achievement as a poet, and containing those unforgettable things, *Thyrsis* (an elegy, fit to be classed with *Lycidas* and *Adonais*, on his old friend and fellow-poet, Hugh Clough), *Rugby Chapel*, *Heine's Grave*, *A Southern Night*, *Dover Beach*, and *Obermann Once More*; and, above all, the first volume of his *Essays in Criticism*, collected from various reviews, which appeared in 1865. A second posthumous volume, edited by Lord Coleridge, was published in 1888.

After the expiry of his Oxford Professorship, Arnold wrote little more poetry save his swan-song, *West-*

minster Abbey (1882), an elegy composed in honour of his old friend Dean Stanley. The poet was becoming lost in the administrator and critic; visits to the continent, and the drafting of reports upon educational topics occupied an ever-increasing proportion of his time. When we admire the exquisite, jewel-like finish of Matthew Arnold's poetry (and his collected poems alone comprise a considerable volume) we should remember that they represent only a small portion of his activities, and were composed in the rare intervals of leisure of a busy official life.

Another reason was also diverting Arnold's attention from poetry. He was essentially a man with a message to his generation, and he was beginning to feel that, in order to reach a larger audience, this would have to be stated more systematically and in a different medium from that of verse. As an Inspector of Schools, his work, as we have seen, brought him into intimate every-day contact with a class of people of whose very existence, had he remained on the serene heights of Oxford, he would have been blissfully ignorant. The moral and intellectual condition of England impressed him deeply—our aristocracy materialized and null, our middle class purblind and hideous, our lower class crude and brutal. These were the famous " Barbarians and Philistines " of the essay on Heine, *Culture and Anarchy*, *Friendship's Garland*, and numerous passages in other works. It was upon the Philistines, the complacent, money-making *bourgeoisie*, that he directed the full fury of his attack; the Barbarians, secure behind their fortresses, were mostly beyond the reach of his

artillery. England seemed to be plunged into an intellectual sleep of two centuries, from which even the trumpet-voices of Byron and Shelley had failed to arouse her. These considerations led him to the composition of a number of works on theological and social subjects, of which the chief were *Culture and Anarchy : an Essay in Political and Social Criticism* (1869); *Saint Paul and Protestantism, with an Introduction on Puritanism and the Church of England* (1870); *Friendship's Garland*, an exquisite piece of satire (1871); and *Literature and Dogma : an Essay towards a Better Apprehension of the Bible* (1873). It has often been regretted that Arnold devoted the best years of his life to the writing of treatises on religious topics which are now almost unread, but it must be realised that they contain an essential part of his teaching. The unsatisfactoriness of modern civilization is Arnold's theme, as it had been Wordsworth's and Carlyle's. And this was to a large extent due to the inadequacy of Christianity, as presented to us in its present form, to satisfy present-day needs.

"The spirit of man hath found new roads,
And we must leave the old faiths and walk therein.
Leave then the Cross, as ye have left carved gods,
But guard the fire within!"

In the Age of Faith, all was different.

"The sea of faith
Was once, too, at the full, and round earth's shore
Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furled.
But now I only hear
Its melancholy, long withdrawing roar,

Retreating to the breath
Of the night-wind down the vast edges drear
And naked shingles of the world.
. . . The world, which seems
To lie before us like a land of dreams,
So various, so beautiful, so new,
Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain,
And we are here as on a darkling plain,
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,
Where ignorant armies clash by night."

For Protestantism Arnold had little sympathy. Its Hebraism, or ethical earnestness, required the leaven of Hellenism, the Greek love of beauty, in order to make it an instrument of culture, and redeem it from its rather depressing ugliness. Like Carlyle, he felt that religion must be dynamic, not static. Educated men can no longer believe in an anthropomorphic God, still less in the persistence of life after death or in miracles. Religion is " morality tinged with emotion " ; God is " that stream of tendency by which all things strive to fulfil the law of their being." But for the Bible, both as literature and as a storehouse of profound reflections on human life, the *Confessions* of St. Augustine, the *Imitation*, St. Francis of Assisi, and above all for the life and teachings of Jesus Christ, he retained the greatest affection. He was never tired of reading, and quoting, his favourite chapters of Isaiah or St. Paul. To Arnold religion meant conduct—" He that doeth the will of the Father shall know of my doctrine." Conduct is three-quarters of life ; and the way to the knowledge

of truth lies on the road of Right-doing. Matthew Arnold quotes with approval the injunction, Fear God and keep His commandments. And he constantly refers to what St. Paul calls the ἐπιεικεία, the Sweet Reasonableness, of Jesus Christ's teaching, as its crowning glory.

What, then, is the remedy? The remedy lies in Culture. And by Culture Matthew Arnold means love of the Beautiful, the φιλόκαλον of the Greeks. φιλοκάλουμεν ἄνευ μαλακίας, we cultivate a love of the Beautiful without effeminacy, was the proud boast of Pericles concerning ancient Athens. It was this that Arnold aimed at. And it was this which made him attach such paramount importance to Poetry. The poet is the *Vates*, the seer. Poetry is the Religion of the Future. "The future of poetry is immense, because in poetry, where it is worthy of its high destinies, our race, as time goes on, will find an ever surer and surer stay. There is not a creed which is not shaken, not an accredited dogma which is not shown to be questionable, not a received tradition which does not threaten to dissolve. Our religion has materialized itself in the fact, in the supposed fact; it has attached its emotion to the fact, and now the fact is failing it. But for poetry the idea is everything; the rest is a world of illusion, of divine illusion. Poetry attaches its emotion to the idea; the idea *is* the fact. The strongest part of our religion to-day is its unconscious poetry. . . . More and more mankind will discover that we have to turn to poetry to interpret life for us, to console us, to sustain us. Without poetry, our science will appear incomplete; and most

of what now passes with us for religion and philosophy will be replaced by poetry." Poetry, in a word, is to Arnold what it was to Wordsworth, 'the breath and spirit of all knowledge,' 'the impassioned expression of what is in the countenance of all science.' And this leads us to another of Arnold's famous dicta, reiterated, *more suo*, in essay after essay. Literature, and especially poetry, is a 'Criticism of Life.' "The greatness of a poet lies in his powerful and beautiful application of ideas to life—to the question: How to live. A poetry of revolt against moral ideas is a poetry of revolt against *life*: a poetry of indifference towards moral ideas is a poetry of indifference towards *life*. In poetry, however, the criticism of life has to be made conformably to the laws of poetic truth and poetic beauty. Truth and seriousness of substance and matter, felicity and perfection of diction and manner, as these are exhibited in the best poets, are what constitute a criticism of life made in conformity with the laws of poetic truth and poetic beauty; and it is by knowing and feeling the work of those poets that we learn to recognise the fulfilment and non-fulfilment of such conditions." "Poetry," he tells us again, "interprets in two ways: it interprets by expressing with magical felicity the physiognomy and movement of the outer world, and it interprets by expressing with inspired conviction, the ideas and laws of the inward world of man's moral and spiritual nature. In other words, poetry is interpretative by having natural magic in it, and by having moral profundity."[1] And in order to achieve this

[1] Essay on Maurice de Guerin.

the poet must aim at what Aristotle calls σπουδαίοτης, 'high and excellent seriousness,' in all that he writes. This demands two essential qualities. The first is the choice, as he tells us in the 1853 preface, of excellent actions. The poet must choose those "which most powerfully appeal to the great primary human affections: to those elementary feelings which subsist permanently in the race, and which are independent of time." This, he points out, is the chief difference between the poetry of ancient Greece and that of modern Europe. With them, the poetical character of the action in itself, and the conduct of it, was the first consideration: with us, attention is fixed mainly on the value of the separate thoughts and images which occur in the treatment of an action. They regarded the whole: we regard the parts. It was for this reason that Greek tragedy is limited to so small a range of subjects: there are so few actions which unite in themselves, in the highest degree, the conditions of excellence. The second essential is what Arnold calls the Grand Style—perfection of form, choice of words, drawing its force directly from the pregnancy of the matter which it conveys.

This, then, very briefly, is Arnold's conception of the nature and mission of true Poetry. He has sometimes been blamed for exaggerating the ethical at the expense of the aesthetic side of his subject, and in this respect he presents a marked contrast to his younger contemporary, Walter Pater. Pater and his school judge Art by one standard only, and that is the intensity of pleasurable emotion which it is capable of exciting in the beholder. It may, however, be maintained that

these are only two sides of the same picture. Beauty, in Arnold's own words, is only truth in another aspect. In his more detailed criticism, Arnold applies to individual poets the general principles which he has enunciated, and judges them by this test. Thus Chaucer, Burns, Dryden, Pope, and even Shelley, fall short of the best, because they lack " high seriousness." Even Shakespeare thinks too much of expression, too little of composition. Arnold's ideal poets are Homer and Sophocles in the ancient world, Dante and Milton, and among the moderns, Goethe and Wordsworth. Whether this does not lead to occasional inconsistencies and errors of judgment, is, of course, open to question. Many critics have placed Wordsworth, considered as a poet, on a lower level even than Tennyson: certainly no poet can boast of a larger number of prosaic lines. Arnold puts him in the front rank, not for his poetry, but for his " criticism of life." On the other hand, for one who makes the " criticism of life " the basis of his literary judgments, it is scarcely consistent to place Byron in front of Shelley. Arnold's weakness for Byron has sometimes been attributed to Goethe's influence: it is, we suspect, equally due to the shrewd blows which Byron inflicted on Arnold's old enemies the Philistines. And perhaps we may trace his underestimate of Shelley's poetry to his disapproval of the details of the Shelley *ménage* revealed in Professor's Dowden's *Life*. One can perhaps forgive the famous description of Shelley as a " beautiful but ineffectual angel, beating in the void his luminous wings in vain," but it is hard to find an excuse for the extraordinary statement that " his

original poetry is less satisfactory than his translations," still less that "his prose will finally come to stand higher than his poetry." It is kindest to treat such things as the aberrations of genius. Prophecy is always dangerous, and Arnold was in a rash mood when he wrote the concluding sentences of the Essay on Byron. But these are, after all, spots on the sun.

As a critic Matthew Arnold owed much on the one hand to Goethe ("the greatest critic of all time"), and on the other to his favourite French critics, Renan and Sainte Beuve in particular. From them he gets his clarity, his studied moderation, his "disinterestedness." In *The Literary Influence of Academies* he deplores that anarchy of English literature, and contrasts it with the restraint and uniformity of style imposed by the French Academy. He sets out "to cure the great vice of our intellect, manifesting itself in our incredible vagaries in literature, in art, in religion, in morals, namely, that it is *fantastic*, and wants *sanity*." He wants to convince his countrymen of their insularity, and to persuade them to cultivate a European outlook in literature. Criticism he defines as "a disinterested endeavour to learn and propagate the best that is known and thought in the world," and Arnold strove hard to fulfil this aim in his own critical writings. He does not merely criticize: what is far more important, he teaches us to criticize for ourselves. Arnold's critical outlook has its limitations. Of the 'historic estimate,' for instance, he had the most profound distrust, and warns us against it in his essay on *The Study of Poetry*. His great object is to *interpret* his author, to gather up all the facts which throw light

on the author's personality and aims, and to trace the connexion between these conditions and his excellencies and defects. He endeavours to supply the reader with the information necessary to form a proper background. Hence, for a purely literary estimate, an appreciation, in other words, of the author's work from the purely literary point of view, he is in his own way unrivalled. His lectures, says Sir Arthur Quiller Couch, struck a new note in criticism, and have influenced the standard of literary judgment ever since. "No one, remembering what Dryden did, and Johnson, and Coleridge, and Lamb, and Hazlitt, will pretend either that Arnold invented English Criticism or that he did well what they had done ill. What he did, and they had missed doing, was to treat Criticism as a deliberate disinterested Art, with laws and methods of its own, a proper temper, and certain standards or touchstones of right taste by which the quality of any writing, as literature, can be tested: and to lay down these lines at a moment when the practitioners of criticism most needed them—being without rules just then and following astray the brilliant but evil influences of Macaulay and Carlyle, whose success encouraged lesser writers to seek effectiveness rather than truth, and to indulge in sensational writing to the top of their bent. As a corrective of excess and caprice in Criticism the *Essays in Criticism* are invaluable. They have made it reasonably certain that, should England produce another critic of equal power with Dr. Johnson, he will never write a 'Life of Milton' such as Johnson's."

Professor Saintsbury considers him to be the

greatest critic of the nineteenth century, and among the foremost in the whole history of English literature. "Systematic without being hidebound; well read without pedantry; delicate and subtle, without weakness or dilettantism; catholic without eclecticism; enthusiastic without discrimination,—Mr. Arnold is one of the best and most precious teachers on his own side." In one sense, indeed, Arnold failed. In his endeavour to reach the masses he was of course, foredoomed to disappointment. Culture, as an instrument of national regeneration, could only be a scholar's dream. Yet upon the thinking and reflective minds of the Victorian age few have ever exercised so profound and lasting an influence, and his message is in all essential respects as true to-day as when it was delivered.

As a prose-writer Arnold ranks very high. His chief characteristics are ease, lucidity and clearness, combined with a grave rhythmical movement. A favourite device, which he adopts in order to drive home his message, is the constant reiteration of certain striking phrases or catch-words, such as 'sweetness and light,' 'sweet reasonableness,' 'prose of the centre,' 'Hebraism,' 'Hellenism,' 'Barbarians,' 'Philistines,' and so forth. Equally memorable are the epigrams scattered over his pages—Literature is a criticism of life; Religion is morality tinged with emotion; English public life is a Thyestean banquet of claptrap. A delightfully ironical humour breathes through his all writings. Every one remembers his description of Macaulay as the great apostle of the Philistines; the High Church rhinoceros and the Evan-

gelical hyena; the *Times* and its spelling of *diocese*; the whole earth filled and ennobled with the roaring of the young lions of the *Daily Telegraph*; the story of the clergyman who asked Wordsworth if he had written anything besides the *Guide to the Lakes*, and a hundred other examples. *Friendship's Garland* is the most perfect example of Arnold's elaborate irony. Another characteristic of Arnold is restraint. It is only occasionally, as in the famous apostrophe to Oxford which we have quoted already, that he lets himself go. As a man Matthew Arnold was loved and respected by all who knew him. Behind a rather quizzical, Socratic manner he hid the kindest of hearts. Those who expected to find in him a poet of the conventional type were surprised at his powerful frame and rather rugged features, tanned by exposure to sun and wind. One of his chief characteristics was his cheerful serenity, and a typical story was told by a friend, who, after the death of a beloved and gifted son, found him reading the *Meditations* of Marcus Aurelius.

In 1883, Matthew Arnold, following the example of Dickens, Thackeray, and other literary celebrities, went to America to give a series of public lectures. They were not a success. The exquisitely modulated voice, which had charmed the audiences assembled to listen to his lectures on translating Homer at Oxford, failed entirely to reach the vast crowds assembled to hear the British lion roar at Boston or New York. And those who could hear him probably had little relish for the irony of "Numbers; or the Majority and the Remnants." Yet Matthew Arnold used to

reckon his *Discourses in America* among his favourite works—the one, in fact, which he hoped to be remembered by. In 1886 he retired from the department he had served so faithfully for thirty-five years. "Mr. Gladstone will never promote the author of *Literature and Dogma* if he can help it," he once wrote humorously to Lord Morley. He was right. Two years later he died very suddenly of heart disease, while running to catch a tram at Liverpool. "There goes our last Greek," someone remarked upon hearing the news. And he could not have chosen a better epitaph.

THE STUDY OF POETRY[1]

"THE future of poetry is immense, because in poetry, where it is worthy of its high destinies, our race, as time goes on, will find an ever surer and surer stay. There is not a creed which is not shaken, not an accredited dogma which is not shown to be questionable, not a received tradition which does not threaten to dissolve. Our religion has materialised itself in the fact, in the supposed fact; it has attached its emotion to the fact, and now the fact is failing it. But for poetry the idea is everything; the rest is a world of illusion, of divine illusion. Poetry attaches its emotion to the idea; the idea *is* the fact. The strongest part of our religion to-day is its unconscious poetry."

Let me be permitted to quote these words of my own, as uttering the thought which should, in my opinion, go with us and govern us in all our study of poetry. In the present work it is the course of one great contributory stream to the world-river of poetry that we are invited to follow. We are here invited to trace the stream of English poetry. But whether we set ourselves, as here, to follow only one

[1] Published in 1880 as the General Introduction to *The English Poets*, edited by T. H. Ward.

of the several streams that make the mighty river of poetry, or whether we seek to know them all, our governing thought should be the same. We should conceive of poetry worthily, and more highly than it has been the custom to conceive of it. We should conceive of it as capable of higher uses, and called to higher destinies, than those which in general men have assigned to it hitherto. More and more mankind will discover that we have to turn to poetry to interpret life for us, to console us, to sustain us. Without poetry, our science will appear incomplete; and most of what now passes with us for religion and philosophy will be replaced by poetry. Science, I say, will appear incomplete without it. For finely and truly does Wordsworth call poetry "the impassioned expression which is in the countenance of all science"; and what is a countenance without its expression? Again, Wordsworth finely and truly calls poetry "the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge": our religion, parading evidences such as those on which the popular mind relies now; our philosophy, pluming itself on its reasonings about causation and finite and infinite being; what are they but the shadows and dreams and false shows of knowledge? The day will come when we shall wonder at ourselves for having trusted to them, for having taken them seriously; and the more we perceive their hollowness, the more we shall prize "the breath and finer spirit of knowledge" offered to us by poetry.

But if we conceive thus highly of the destinies of poetry, we must also set our standard for poetry high, since poetry, to be capable of fulfilling such high

destinies, must be poetry of a high order of excellence. We must accustom ourselves to a high standard and to a strict judgment. Sainte-Beuve relates that Napoleon one day said, when somebody was spoken of in his presence as a charlatan: "Charlatan as much as you please; but where is there *not* charlatanism?"—"Yes," answers Sainte-Beuve, "in politics, in the art of governing mankind, that is perhaps true. But in the order of thought, in art, the glory, the eternal honour is that charlatanism shall find no entrance; herein lies the inviolableness of that noble portion of man's being." It is admirably said, and let us hold fast to it. In poetry, which is thought and art in one, it is the glory, the eternal honour, that charlatanism shall find no entrance; that this noble sphere be kept inviolate and inviolable. Charlatanism is for confusing or obliterating the distinctions between excellent and inferior, sound and unsound or only half-sound, true and untrue or only half-true. It is charlatanism, conscious or unconscious, whenever we confuse or obliterate these. And in poetry, more than anywhere else, it is unpermissible to confuse or obliterate them. For in poetry the distinction between excellent and inferior, sound and unsound or only half-sound, true and untrue or only half-true, is of paramount importance. It is of paramount importance because of the high destinies of poetry. In poetry, as a criticism of life under the conditions fixed for such a criticism by the laws of poetic truth and poetic beauty, the spirit of our race will find, we have said, as time goes on and as other helps fail, its consolation and stay. But the consolation and

stay will be of power in proportion to the power of the criticism of life. And the criticism of life will be of power in proportion as the poetry conveying it is excellent rather than inferior, sound rather than unsound or half-sound, true rather than untrue or half-true.

The best poetry is what we want; the best poetry will be found to have a power of forming, sustaining, and delighting us, as nothing else can. A clearer, deeper sense of the best in poetry, and of the strength and joy to be drawn from it, is the most precious benefit which we can gather from a poetical collection such as the present. And yet in the very nature and conduct of such a collection there is inevitably something which tends to obscure in us the consciousness of what our benefit should be, and to distract us from the pursuit of it. We should therefore steadily set it before our minds at the outset, and should compel ourselves to revert constantly to the thought of it as we proceed.

Yes; constantly in reading poetry, a sense for the best, the really excellent, and of the strength and joy to be drawn from it, should be present in our minds and should govern our estimate of what we read. But this real estimate, the only true one, is liable to be superseded, if we are not watchful, by two other kinds of estimate, the historic estimate and the personal estimate, both of which are fallacious. A poet or a poem may count to us historically, they may count to us on grounds personal to ourselves, and they may count to us really. They may count to us historically. The course of development of a nation's language, thought, and poetry, is profoundly inter-

esting; and by regarding a poet's work as a stage in this course of development we may easily bring ourselves to make it of more importance as poetry than in itself it really is, we may come to use a language of quite exaggerated praise in criticising it; in short, to over-rate it. So arises in our poetic judgments the fallacy caused by the estimate which we may call historic. Then, again, a poet or a poem may count to us on grounds personal to ourselves. Our personal affinities, likings, and circumstances, have great power to sway our estimate of this or that poet's work, and to make us attach more importance to it as poetry than in itself it really possesses, because to us it is, or has been, of high importance. Here also we overrate the object of our interest, and apply to it a language of praise which is quite exaggerated. And thus we get the source of a second fallacy in our poetic judgments—the fallacy caused by an estimate which we may call personal.

Both fallacies are natural. It is evident how naturally the study of the history and development of a poetry may incline a man to pause over reputations and works once conspicuous but now obscure, and to quarrel with a careless public for skipping, in obedience to mere tradition and habit, from one famous name or work in its national poetry to another, ignorant of what it misses, and of the reason for keeping what it keeps, and of the whole process of growth in its poetry. The French have become diligent students of their own early poetry, which they long neglected; the study makes many of them dissatisfied with their so-called classical poetry, the

court-tragedy of the seventeenth century, a poetry which Pellisson long ago reproached with its want of the true poetic stamp, with its *politesse stérile et rampante*, but which nevertheless has reigned in France as absolutely as if it had been the perfection of classical poetry indeed. The dissatisfaction is natural; yet a lively and accomplished critic, M. Charles d'Héricault, the editor of Clément Marot, goes too far when he says that "the cloud of glory playing round a classic is a mist as dangerous to the future of a literature as it is intolerable for the purposes of history." "It hinders," he goes on, "it hinders us from seeing more than one single point, the culminating and exceptional point; the summary, fictitious and arbitrary, of a thought and of a work. It substitutes a halo for a physiognomy, it puts a statue where there was once a man, and hiding from us all trace of the labour, the attempts, the weaknesses, the failures, it claims not study but veneration; it does not show us how the thing is done, it imposes upon us a model. Above all, for the historian this creation of classic personages is inadmissible; for it withdraws the poet from his time, from his proper life, it breaks historical relationships, it blinds criticism by conventional admiration, and renders the investigation of literary origins unacceptable. It gives us a human personage no longer, but a God seated immovable amidst His perfect work, like Jupiter on Olympus; and hardly will it be possible for the young student, to whom such work is exhibited at such a distance from him, to believe that it did not issue ready made from that divine head."

All this is brilliantly and tellingly said, but we must plead for a distinction. Everything depends on the reality of a poet's classic character. If he is a dubious classic, let us sift him; if he is a false classic, let us explode him. But if he is a real classic, if his work belongs to the class of the very best (for this is the true and the right meaning of the word *classic*, *classical*), then the great thing for us is to feel and enjoy his work as deeply as ever we can, and to appreciate the wide difference between it and all work which has not the same high character. This is what is salutary, this is what is formative; this is the great benefit to be got from the study of poetry. Everything which interferes with it, which hinders it, is injurious. True, we must read our classic with open eyes, and not with eyes blinded with superstition; we must perceive when his work comes short, when it drops out of the class of the very best, and we must rate it, in such cases, at its proper value. But the use of this negative criticism is not in itself, it is entirely in its enabling us to have a clearer sense and a deeper enjoyment of what is truly excellent. To trace the labour, the attempts, the weaknesses, the failures of a genuine classic, to acquaint oneself with his time and his life and his historical relationships, is mere literary dilettantism unless it has that clear sense and deeper enjoyment for its end. It may be said that the more we know about a classic the better we shall enjoy him; and, if we lived as long as Methuselah and had all of us heads of perfect clearness and wills of perfect steadfastness, this might be true in fact as it is plausible in theory. But the case here is much the same

as the case with the Greek and Latin studies of our schoolboys. The elaborate philological groundwork which we require them to lay is in theory an admirable preparation for appreciating the Greek and Latin authors worthily. The more thoroughly we lay the groundwork, the better we shall be able, it may be said, to enjoy the authors. True, if time were not so short, and schoolboys' wits not so soon tired and their power of attention exhausted; only, as it is, the elaborate philological preparation goes on, but the authors are little known and less enjoyed. So with the investigator of "historic origins" in poetry. He ought to enjoy the true classic all the better for his investigations; he often is distracted from the enjoyment of the best, and with the less good he overbusies himself, and is prone to over-rate it in proportion to the trouble which it has cost him.

The idea of tracing historic origins and historical relationships cannot be absent from a compilation like the present. And naturally the poets to be exhibited in it will be assigned to those persons for exhibition who are known to prize them highly, rather than to those who have no special inclination towards them. Moreover the very occupation with an author, and the business of exhibiting him, disposes us to affirm and amplify his importance. In the present work, therefore, we are sure of frequent temptation to adopt the historic estimate, or the personal estimate, and to forget the real estimate; which latter, nevertheless, we must employ if we are to make poetry yield us its full benefit. So high is

that benefit, the benefit of clearly feeling and of deeply enjoying the really excellent, the truly classic in poetry, that we do well, I say, to set it fixedly before our minds as our object in studying poets and poetry, and to make the desire of attaining it the one principle to which, as the *Imitation* says, whatever we may read or come to know, we always return. *Cum multa legeris et cognoveris, ad unum semper oportet redire principium.*

The historic estimate is likely in especial to affect our judgment and our language when we are dealing with ancient poets; the personal estimate when we are dealing with poets our contemporaries, or at any rate modern. The exaggerations due to the historic estimate are not in themselves, perhaps, of very much gravity. Their report hardly enters the general ear; probably they do not always impose even on the literary men who adopt them. But they lead to a dangerous abuse of language. So we hear Cædmon, amongst our own poets, compared to Milton. I have already noticed the enthusiasm of one accomplished French critic for "historic origins." Another eminent French critic, M. Vitet, comments upon that famous document of the early poetry of his nation, the *Chanson de Roland.* It is indeed a most interesting document. The *joculator* or *jongleur* Taillefer, who was with William the Conqueror's army at Hastings, marched before the Norman troops, so said the tradition, singing "of Charlemagne and of Roland and Oliver, and of the vassals who died at Roncevaux"; and it is suggested that in the *Chanson de Roland* by one Turoldus or Théroulde, a poem preserved in a

manuscript of the twelfth century in the Bodleian Library at Oxford, we have certainly the matter, perhaps even some of the words, of the chant which Taillefer sang. The poem has vigour and freshness; it is not without pathos. But M. Vitet is not satisfied with seeing in it a document of some poetic value, and of very high historic and linguistic value; he sees in it a grand and beautiful work, a monument of epic genius. In its general design he finds the grandiose conception, in its details he finds the constant union of simplicity with greatness, which are the marks, he truly says of the genuine epic, and distinguish it from the artificial epic of literary ages. One thinks of Homer; this is the sort of praise which is given to Homer, and justly given. Higher praise there cannot well be, and it is the praise due to epic poetry of the highest order only, and to no other. Let us try, then, the *Chanson de Roland* at its best. Roland, mortally wounded, lays himself down under a pine-tree, with his face turned towards Spain and the enemy—

> " De plusurs choses à remembrer li prist,
> De tantes teres cume li bers cunquist,
> De dulce France, des humes de sun lign,
> De Carlemagne sun seignor ki l'nurrit." [1]

That is primitive work, I repeat, with an undeniable poetic quality of its own. It deserves such praise,

[1] " Then began he to call many things to remembrance,—all the lands which his valour conquered, and pleasant France, and the men of his lineage, and Charlemagne his liege lord who nourished him."—*Chanson de Roland*, iii. 939-942.

and such praise is sufficient for it. But now turn to Homer—

> Ὣς φάτο· τοὺς δ' ἤδη κατέχεν φυσίζοος αἶα
> ἐν Λακεδαίμονι αὖθι, φίλῃ ἐν πατρίδι γαίῃ.[1]

We are here in another world, another order of poetry altogether; here is rightly due such supreme praise as that which M. Vitet gives to the *Chanson de Roland.* If our words are to have any meaning, if our judgments are to have any solidity, we must not heap that supreme praise upon poetry of an order immeasurably inferior.

Indeed there can be no more useful help for discovering what poetry belongs to the class of the truly excellent, and can therefore do us most good, than to have always in one's mind lines and expressions of the great masters, and to apply them as a touchstone to other poetry. Of course we are not to require this other poetry to resemble them; it may be very dissimilar. But if we have any tact we shall find them, when we have lodged them well in our minds, an infallible touchstone for detecting the presence or absence of high poetic quality, and also the degree of this quality, in all other poetry which we may place beside them. Short passages, even single lines, will serve our turn quite sufficiently. Take the two lines which I have just quoted from Homer, the poet's

[1] "So said she; they long since in Earth's soft arms were reposing,
There, in their own dear land, their fatherland, Lacedæmon."
Iliad, iii. 243, 244 (translated by Dr. Hawtrey).

comment on Helen's mention of her brothers;—or take his

> Ἀ δειλώ, τί σφῶϊ δόμεν Πηλῆϊ ἄνακτι
> θνητῷ; ὑμεῖς δ' ἐστὸν ἀγήρω τ' ἀθανάτω τε.
> ἦ ἵνα δυστήνοισι μετ' ἀνδράσιν ἄλγε' ἔχητον;[1]

the address of Zeus to the horses of Peleus;—or take finally his

> Καὶ σέ, γέρον, τὸ πρὶν μὲν ἀκούομεν ὄλβιον εἶναι·[2]

the words of Achilles to Priam, a suppliant before him. Take that incomparable line and a half of Dante, Ugolino's tremendous words—

> " Io no piangeva; sì dentro impietrai.
> Piangevan elli . . ." [3]

take the lovely words of Beatrice to Virgil—

> " Io son fatta da Dio, sua mercè, tale,
> Che la vostra miseria non mi tange,
> Nè fiamma d'esto incendio non m'assale . . ." [4]

take the simple, but perfect, single line—

> " In la sua volontade è nostra pace." [5]

[1] " Ah, unhappy pair, why gave we you to King Peleus, to a mortal? but ye are without old age, and immortal. Was it that with men born to misery ye might have sorrow? "—*Iliad*, xvii. 443-445.

[2] " Nay, and thou too, old man, in former days wast, as we hear, happy."—*Iliad*, xxiv. 543.

[3] " I wailed not, so of stone grew I within;—*they* wailed."—*Inferno*, xxxiii. 39, 40.

[4] " Of such sort hath God, thanked be His mercy, made me, that your misery toucheth me not, neither doth the flame of this fire strike me."—*Inferno*, ii. 91-93.

[5] " In His will is our peace."—*Paradiso*, iii. 85.

Take of Shakespeare a line or two of Henry the Fourth's expostulation with sleep—

> " Wilt thou upon the high and giddy mast
> Seal up the ship-boy's eyes, and rock his brains
> In cradle of the rude imperious surge . . ."

and take, as well, Hamlet's dying request to Horatio—

> " If thou didst ever hold me in thy heart,
> Absent thee from felicity awhile,
> And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain
> To tell my story . . ."

Take of Milton that Miltonic passage—

> " Darken'd so, yet shone
> Above them all the archangel; but his face
> Deep scars of thunder had intrench'd, and care
> Sat on his faded cheek . . ."

add two such lines as—

> " And courage never to submit or yield
> And what is else not to be overcome . . ."

and finish with the exquisite close to the loss of Proserpine, the loss

> " . . . which cost Ceres all that pain
> To seek her through the world."

These few lines, if we have tact and can use them, are enough even of themselves to keep clear and sound our judgments about poetry, to save us from fallacious estimates of it, to conduct us to a real estimate.

The specimens I have quoted differ widely from one another, but they have in common this: the possession of the very highest poetical quality. If

we are thoroughly penetrated by their power, we shall find that we have acquired a sense enabling us, whatever poetry may be laid before us, to feel the degree in which a high poetical quality is present or wanting there. Critics give themselves great labour to draw out what in the abstract constitutes the characters of a high quality of poetry. It is much better simply to have recourse to concrete examples ;— to take specimens of poetry of the high, the very highest quality, and to say : The characters of a high quality of poetry are what is expressed *there.* They are far better recognised by being felt in the verse of the master, than by being perused in the prose of the critic. Nevertheless if we are urgently pressed to give some critical account of them, we may safely, perhaps, venture on laying down, not indeed how and why the characters arise, but where and in what they arise. They are in the matter and substance of the poetry, and they are in its manner and style. Both of these, the substance and matter on the one hand, the style and manner on the other, have a mark, an accent, of high beauty, worth, and power. But if we are asked to define this mark and accent in the abstract, our answer must be : No, for we should thereby be darkening the question, not clearing it. The mark and accent are as given by the substance and matter of that poetry, by the style and manner of that poetry, and of all other poetry which is akin to it in quality.

Only one thing we may add as to the substance and matter of poetry, guiding ourselves by Aristotle's profound observation that the superiority of poetry

over history consists in its possessing a higher truth and a higher seriousness (*φιλοσοφώτερον καὶ σπουδαιότερον*). Let us add, therefore, to what we have said, this: that the substance and matter of the best poetry acquire their special character from possessing, in an eminent degree, truth and seriousness. We may add yet further, what is in itself evident, that to the style and manner of the best poetry their special character, their accent, is given by their diction, and, even yet more, by their movement. And though we distinguish between the two characters, the two accents, of superiority, yet they are nevertheless vitally connected one with the other. The superior character of truth and seriousness, in the matter and substance of the best poetry, is inseparable from the superiority of diction and movement marking its style and manner. The two superiorities are closely related, and are in steadfast proportion one to the other. So far as high poetic truth and seriousness are wanting to a poet's matter and substance, so far also, we may be sure, will a high poetic stamp of diction and movement be wanting to his style and manner. In proportion as this high stamp of diction and movement, again, is absent from a poet's style and manner, we shall find, also, that high poetic truth and seriousness are absent from his substance and matter.

So stated, these are but dry generalities; their whole force lies in their application. And I could wish every student of poetry to make the application of them for himself. Made by himself, the application would impress itself upon his mind far more deeply than made by me. Neither will my limits

allow me to make any full application of the generalities above propounded; but in the hope of bringing out, at any rate, some significance in them, and of establishing an important principle more firmly by their means, I will, in the space which remains to me, follow rapidly from the commencement the course of our English poetry with them in my view.

Once more I return to the early poetry of France, with which our own poetry, in its origins, is indissolubly connected. In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, that seed-time of all modern language and literature, the poetry of France had a clear predominance in Europe. Of the two divisions of that poetry, its productions in the *langue d'oil* and its productions in the *langue d'oc*, the poetry of the *langue d'oc*, of southern France, of the troubadours, is of importance because of its effect on Italian literature; —the first literature of modern Europe to strike the true and grand note, and to bring forth, as in Dante and Petrarch it brought forth, classics. But the predominance of French poetry in Europe, during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, is due to its poetry of the *langue d'oil*, the poetry of northern France and of the tongue which is now the French language. In the twelfth century the bloom of this romance-poetry was earlier and stronger in England, at the court of our Anglo-Norman kings, than in France itself. But it was a bloom of French poetry; and as our native poetry formed itself, it formed itself out of this. The romance-poems which took possession of the heart and imagination of Europe in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries are French; "they

are," as Southey justly says, "the pride of French literature, nor have we anything which can be placed in competition with them." Themes were supplied from all quarters; but the romance-setting which was common to them all, and which gained the ear of Europe, was French. This constituted for the French poetry, literature, and language, at the height of the Middle Age, an unchallenged predominance. The Italian Brunetto Latini, the master of Dante, wrote his *Treasure* in French because, he says, "la parleure en est plus délitable et plus commune à toutes gens." In the same century, the thirteenth, the French romance-writer, Christian of Troyes, formulates the claims, in chivalry and letters, of France, his native country, as follows:—

"Or vous ert par ce livre apris,
Que Gresse ot de chevalerie
Le premier los et de clergie;
Puis vint chevalerie à Rome,
Et de la clergie la some,
Qui ore est en France venue.
Diex doinst qu'ele i soit retenue,
Et que li lius li abelisse
Tant que de France n'isse
L'onor qui s'i est arestée!"

"Now by this book you will learn that first Greece had the renown for chivalry and letters; then chivalry and the primacy in letters passed to Rome, and now it is come to France. God grant it may be kept there; and that the place may please it so well, that the honour which has come to make stay in France may never depart thence!"

Yet it is now all gone, this French romance-poetry, of which the weight of substance and the power of style are not unfairly represented by this extract from Christian of Troyes. Only by means of the historic estimate can we persuade ourselves now to think that any of it is of poetical importance.

But in the fourteenth century there comes an Englishman nourished on this poetry, taught his trade by this poetry, getting words, rhyme, metre from this poetry; for even of that stanza which the Italians used, and which Chaucer derived immediately from the Italians, the basis and suggestion was probably given in France. Chaucer (I have already named him) fascinated his contemporaries, but so too did Christian of Troyes and Wolfram of Eschenbach. Chaucer's power of fascination, however, is enduring; his poetical importance does not need the assistance of the historic estimate; it is real. He is a genuine source of joy and strength, which is flowing still for us and will flow always. He will be read, as time goes on, far more generally than he is read now. His language is a cause of difficulty for us; but so also, and I think in quite as great a degree, is the language of Burns. In Chaucer's case, as in that of Burns, it is a difficulty to be unhesitatingly accepted and overcome.

If we ask ourselves wherein consists the immense superiority of Chaucer's poetry over the romance-poetry—why it is that in passing from this to Chaucer we suddenly feel ourselves to be in another world, we shall find that his superiority is both in the substance of his poetry and in the style of his poetry.

His superiority in substance is given by his large, free, simple, clear yet kindly view of human life,—so unlike the total want, in the romance-poets, of all intelligent command of it. Chaucer has not their helplessness; he has gained the power to survey the world from a central, a truly human point of view. We have only to call to mind the Prologue to *The Canterbury Tales*. The right comment upon it is Dryden's: "It is sufficient to say, according to the proverb, that *here is God's plenty*." And again: "He is a perpetual fountain of good sense." It is by a large, free, sound representation of things, that poetry, this high criticism of life, has truth of substance; and Chaucer's poetry has truth of substance.

Of his style and manner, if we think first of the romance-poetry and then of Chaucer's divine liquidness of diction, his divine fluidity of movement, it is difficult to speak temperately. They are irresistible, and justify all the rapture with which his successors speak of his "gold dew-drops of speech." Johnson misses the point entirely when he finds fault with Dryden for ascribing to Chaucer the first refinement of our numbers, and says that Gower also can show smooth numbers and easy rhymes. The refinement of our numbers means something far more than this. A nation may have versifiers with smooth numbers and easy rhymes, and yet may have no real poetry at all. Chaucer is the father of our splendid English poetry; he is our "well of English undefiled," because by the lovely charm of his diction, the lovely charm of his movement, he makes an epoch and founds a tradition. In Spenser, Shakespeare, Milton,

Keats, we can follow the tradition of the liquid diction, the fluid movement, of Chaucer; at one time it is his liquid diction of which in these poets we feel the virtue, and at another time it is his fluid movement. And the virtue is irresistible.

Bounded as is my space, I must yet find room for an example of Chaucer's virtue, as I have given examples to show the virtue of the great classics. I feel disposed to say that a single line is enough to show the charm of Chaucer's verse; that merely one line like this—

"O martyr souded [1] in virginitee!"

has a virtue of manner and movement such as we shall not find in all the verse of romance-poetry;—but this is saying nothing. The virtue is such as we shall not find, perhaps, in all English poetry, outside the poets whom I have named as the special inheritors of Chaucer's tradition. A single line, however, is too little if we have not the strain of Chaucer's verse well in our memory; let us take a stanza. It is from *The Prioress's Tale*, the story of the Christian child murdered in a Jewry—

"My throte is cut unto my nekke-bone
Saidè this child, and as by way of kinde
I should have deyd, yea, longè time agone;
But Jesu Christ, as ye in bookès finde,
Will that his glory last and be in minde,
And for the worship of his mother dere
Yet may I sing *O Alma* loud and clere."

[1] The French *soude*; soldered, fixed fast.

Wordsworth has modernised this Tale, and to feel how delicate and evanescent is the charm of verse, we have only to read Wordsworth's first three lines of this stanza after Chaucer's—

> " My throat is cut unto the bone, I trow,
> Said this young child, and by the law of kind
> I should have died, yea, many hours ago."

The charm is departed. It is often said that the power of liquidness and fluidity in Chaucer's verse was dependent upon a free, a licentious dealing with language, such as is now impossible; upon a liberty, such as Burns too enjoyed, of making words like *neck*, *bird*, into a dissyllable by adding to them, and words like *cause*, *rhyme*, into a dissyllable by sounding the *e* mute. It is true that Chaucer's fluidity is conjoined with this liberty, and is admirably served by it; but we ought not to say that it was dependent upon it. It was dependent upon his talent. Other poets with a like liberty do not attain to the fluidity of Chaucer; Burns himself does not attain to it. Poets, again, who have a talent akin to Chaucer's, such as Shakespeare or Keats, have known how to attain to his fluidity without the like liberty.

And yet Chaucer is not one of the great classics. His poetry transcends and effaces, easily and without effort, all the romance-poetry of Catholic Christendom; it transcends and effaces all the English poetry contemporary with it, it transcends and effaces all the English poetry subsequent to it down to the age of Elizabeth. Of such avail is poetic truth of substance, in its natural and necessary union with poetic truth of

style. And yet, I say, Chaucer is not one of the great *classics.* He has not their accent. What is wanting to him is suggested by the mere mention of the name of the first great classic of Christendom, the immortal poet who died eighty years before Chaucer,—Dante. The accent of such verse as

" In la sua volontade è nostra pace . . ."

is altogether beyond Chaucer's reach; we praise him, but we feel that this accent is out of the question for him. It may be said that it was necessarily out of the reach of any poet in the England of that stage of growth. Possibly; but we are to adopt a real, not a historic, estimate of poetry. However we may account for its absence, something is wanting, then, to the poetry of Chaucer, which poetry must have before it can be placed in the glorious class of the best. And there is no doubt what that something is. It is the σπουδαιότης, the high and excellent seriousness, which Aristotle assigns as one of the grand virtues of poetry. The substance of Chaucer's poetry, his view of things and his criticism of life, has largeness, freedom, shrewdness, benignity; but it has not this high seriousness. Homer's criticism of life has it, Dante's has it, Shakespeare's has it. It is this chiefly which gives to our spirits what they can rest upon; and with the increasing demands of our modern ages upon poetry, this virtue of giving us what we can rest upon will be more and more highly esteemed. A voice from the slums of Paris, fifty or sixty years after Chaucer, the voice of poor Villon out of his life of riot and crime, has at its happy moments (as, for instance,

in the last stanza of *La Belle Heaulmière* [1]) more of this important poetic virtue of seriousness than all the productions of Chaucer. But its apparition in Villon, and in men like Villon, is fitful; the greatness of the great poets, the power of their criticism of life, is that their virtue is sustained.

To our praise, therefore, of Chaucer as a poet there must be this limitation; he lacks the high seriousness of the great classics, and therewith an important part of their virtue. Still, the main fact for us to bear in mind about Chaucer is his sterling value according to that real estimate which we firmly adopt for all poets. He has poetic truth of substance, though he has not high poetic seriousness, and corresponding to his truth of substance he has an exquisite virtue of style and manner. With him is born our real poetry.

For my present purpose I need not dwell on our Elizabethan poetry, or on the continuation and close

[1] The name *Heaulmière* is said to be derived from a head-dress (helm) worn as a mark by courtesans. In Villon's ballad, a poor old creature of this class laments her days of youth and beauty. The last stanza of the ballad runs thus—

" Ainsi le bon temps regretons
Entre nous, pauvres vieilles sottes,
Assises bas, à croppetons,
Tout en ung tas comme pelottes;
A petit feu de chenevottes
Tost allumées, tost estainctes.
Et jadis fusmes si mignottes!
Ainsi en prend à maintz et maintes."

" Thus amongst ourselves we regret the good time, poor silly old things, low-seated on our heels, all in a heap like so many balls; by a little fire of hemp-stalks, soon lighted, soon spent. And once we were such darlings! So fares it with many and many a one."

of this poetry in Milton. We all of us profess to be agreed in the estimate of this poetry; we all of us recognise it as great poetry, our greatest, and Shakespeare and Milton as our poetical classics. The real estimate, here, has universal currency. With the next age of our poetry divergency and difficulty begin. An historic estimate of that poetry has established itself; and the question is, whether it will be found to coincide with the real estimate.

The age of Dryden, together with our whole eighteenth century which followed it, sincerely believed itself to have produced poetical classics of its own, and even to have made advance, in poetry, beyond all its predecessors. Dryden regards as not seriously disputable the opinion "that the sweetness of English verse was never understood or practised by our fathers." Cowley could see nothing at all in Chaucer's poetry. Dryden heartily admired it, and, as we have seen, praised its matter admirably; but of its exquisite manner and movement all he can find to say is that "there is the rude sweetness of a Scotch tune in it, which is natural and pleasing, though not perfect." Addison, wishing to praise Chaucer's numbers, compares them with Dryden's own. And all through the eighteenth century, and down even into our own times, the stereotyped phrase of approbation for good verse found in our early poetry has been, that it even approached the verse of Dryden, Addison, Pope, and Johnson.

Are Dryden and Pope poetical classics? Is the historic estimate, which represents them as such, and which has been so long established that it cannot

easily give way, the real estimate? Wordsworth and Coleridge, as is well known, denied it; but the authority of Wordsworth and Coleridge does not weigh much with the young generation, and there are many signs to show that the eighteenth century and its judgments are coming into favour again. Are the favourite poets of the eighteenth century classics?

It is impossible within my present limits to discuss the question fully. And what man of letters would not shrink from seeming to dispose dictatorially of the claims of two men who are, at any rate, such masters in letters as Dryden and Pope; two men of such admirable talent, both of them, and one of them, Dryden, a man, on all sides, of such energetic and genial power? And yet, if we are to gain the full benefit from poetry, we must have the real estimate of it. I cast about for some mode of arriving, in the present case, at such an estimate without offence. And perhaps the best way is to begin, as it is easy to begin, with cordial praise.

When we find Chapman, the Elizabethan translator of Homer, expressing himself in his preface thus: "Though truth in her very nakedness sits in so deep a pit, that from Gades to Aurora and Ganges few eyes can sound her, I hope yet those few here will so discover and confirm that, the date being out of her darkness in this morning of our poet, he shall now gird his temples with the sun,"—we pronounce that such a prose is intolerable. When we find Milton writing: "And long it was not after, when I was confirmed in this opinion, that he, who would not be frustrate of his hope to write well hereafter in laudable things,

ought himself to be a true poem,"—we pronounce that such a prose has its own grandeur, but that it is obsolete and inconvenient. But when we find Dryden telling us: "What Virgil wrote in the vigour of his age, in plenty and at ease, I have undertaken to translate in my declining years; struggling with wants, oppressed with sickness, curbed in my genius, liable to be misconstrued in all I write,"—then we exclaim that here at last we have the true English prose, a prose such as we would all gladly use if we only knew how. Yet Dryden was Milton's contemporary.

But after the Restoration the time had come when our nation felt the imperious need of a fit prose. So, too, the time had likewise come when our nation felt the imperious need of freeing itself from the absorbing preoccupation which religion in the Puritan age had exercised. It was impossible that this freedom should be brought about without some negative excess, without some neglect and impairment of the religious life of the soul; and the spiritual history of the eighteenth century shows us that the freedom was not achieved without them. Still, the freedom was achieved; the preoccupation, an undoubtedly baneful and retarding one if it had continued, was got rid of. And as with religion amongst us at that period, so it was also with letters. A fit prose was a necessity; but it was impossible that a fit prose should establish itself amongst us without some touch of frost to the imaginative life of the soul. The needful qualities for a fit prose are regularity, uniformity, precision, balance. The men of letters, whose destiny it may be

to bring their nation to the attainment of a fit prose, must of necessity, whether they work in prose or in verse, give a predominating, an almost exclusive attention to the qualities of regularity, uniformity, precision, balance. But an almost exclusive attention to these qualities involves some repression and silencing of poetry.

We are to regard Dryden as the puissant and glorious founder, Pope as the splendid high priest, of our age of prose and reason, of our excellent and indispensable eighteenth century. For the purposes of their mission and destiny their poetry, like their prose, is admirable. Do you ask me whether Dryden's verse, take it almost where you will, is not good?

> "A milk-white Hind, immortal and unchanged,
> Fed on the lawns and in the forest ranged."

I answer: Admirable for the purposes of the inaugurator of an age of prose and reason. Do you ask me whether Pope's verse, take it almost where you will, is not good?

> "To Hounslow Heath I point, and Banstead Down;
> Thence comes your mutton, and these chicks my own."

I answer: Admirable for the purposes of the high priest of an age of prose and reason. But do you ask me whether such verse proceeds from men with an adequate poetic criticism of life, from men whose criticism of life has a high seriousness, or even, without that high seriousness, has poetic largeness, freedom, insight, benignity? Do you ask me whether the application of ideas to life in the verse of these men,

often a powerful application, no doubt, is a powerful *poetic* application? Do you ask me whether the poetry of these men has either the matter or the inseparable manner of such an adequate poetic criticism; whether it has the accent of

"Absent thee from felicity awhile . . ."

or of

"And what is else not to be overcome . . ."

or of

"O martyr souded in virginitee!"

I answer: It has not and cannot have them; it is the poetry of the builders of an age of prose and reason. Though they may write in verse, though they may in a certain sense be masters of the art of versification, Dryden and Pope are not classics of our poetry, they are classics of our prose.

Gray is our poetical classic of that literature and age; the position of Gray is singular, and demands a word of notice here. He has not the volume or the power of poets who, coming in times more favourable, have attained to an independent criticism of life. But he lived with the great poets, he lived, above all, with the Greeks, through perpetually studying and enjoying them; and he caught their poetic point of view for regarding life, caught their poetic manner. The point of view and the manner are not self-sprung in him, he caught them of others; and he had not the free and abundant use of them. But whereas Addison and Pope never had the use of them, Gray had the use of them at times. He is the scantiest and frailest of classics in our poetry, but he is a classic.

And now, after Gray, we are met, as we draw towards the end of the eighteenth century, we are met by the great name of Burns. We enter now on times where the personal estimate of poets begins to be rife, and where the real estimate of them is not reached without difficulty. But in spite of the disturbing pressures of personal partiality, of national partiality, let us try to reach a real estimate of the poetry of Burns.

By his English poetry Burns in general belongs to the eighteenth century, and has little importance for us.

> "Mark ruffian Violence, distain'd with crimes,
> Rousing elate in these degenerate times;
> View unsuspecting Innocence a prey,
> As guileful Fraud points out the erring way;
> While subtle Litigation's pliant tongue
> The life-blood equal sucks of Right and Wrong!"

Evidently this is not the real Burns, or his name and fame would have disappeared long ago. Nor is Clarinda's love-poet, Sylvander, the real Burns either. But he tells us himself: "These English songs gravel me to death. I have not the command of the language that I have of my native tongue. In fact, I think that my ideas are more barren in English than in Scotch. I have been at *Duncan Gray* to dress it in English, but all I can do is desperately stupid." We English turn naturally, in Burns, to the poems in our own language, because we can read them easily; but in those poems we have not the real Burns.

The real Burns is of course in his Scotch poems. Let us boldly say that of much of this poetry, a poetry

dealing perpetually with Scotch drink, Scotch religion, and Scotch manners, a Scotchman's estimate is apt to be personal. A Scotchman is used to this world of Scotch drink, Scotch religion, and Scotch manners; he has a tenderness for it; he meets its poet half way. In this tender mood he reads pieces like the *Holy Fair* or *Halloween*. But this world of Scotch drink, Scotch religion, and Scotch manners is against a poet, not for him, when it is not a partial countryman who reads him; for in itself it is not a beautiful world, and no one can deny that it is of advantage to a poet to deal with a beautiful world. Burns's world of Scotch drink, Scotch religion, and Scotch manners, is often a harsh, a sordid, a repulsive world: even the world of his *Cotter's Saturday Night* is not a beautiful world. No doubt a poet's criticism of life may have such truth and power that it triumphs over its world and delights us. Burns may triumph over his world, often he does triumph over his world, but let us observe how and where. Burns is the first case we have had where the bias of the personal estimate tends to mislead; let us look at him closely, he can bear it.

Many of his admirers will tell us that we have Burns, convivial, genuine, delightful, here—

"Leeze me on drink! it gies us mair
Than either school or college;
It kindles wit, it waukens lair,
It pangs us fou o' knowledge.
Be't whisky gill or penny wheep
Or ony stronger potion,
It never fails, on drinking deep,
To kittle up our notion
By night or day."

There is a great deal of that sort of thing in Burns, and it is unsatisfactory, not because it is bacchanalian poetry, but because it has not that accent of sincerity which bacchanalian poetry, to do it justice, very often has. There is something in it of bravado, something which makes us feel that we have not the man speaking to us with his real voice; something, therefore, poetically unsound.

With still more confidence will his admirers tell us that we have the genuine Burns, the great poet, when his strain asserts the independence, equality, dignity, of men, as in the famous song *For a' that and a' that*—

" A prince can mak' a belted knight,
A marquis, duke, and a' that;
But an honest man's aboon his might,
Guid faith he mauna fa' that!
For a' that, and a' that,
Their dignities, and a' that,
The pith o' sense, and pride o' worth,
Are higher rank than a' that."

Here they find his grand, genuine touches; and still more, when this puissant genius, who so often set morality at defiance, falls moralising—

" The sacred lowe o' weel-placed love
Luxuriantly indulge it;
But never tempt th' illicit rove,
Tho' naething should divulge it.
I waive the quantum o' the sin,
The hazard o' concealing,
But och! it hardens a' within,
And petrifies the feeling."

Or in a higher strain—

> " Who made the heart, 'tis He alone
> Decidedly can try us ;
> He knows each chord, its various tone ;
> Each spring, its various bias.
> Then at the balance let's be mute,
> We never can adjust it ;
> What's *done* we partly may compute,
> But know not what's resisted."

Or in a better strain yet, a strain, his admirers will say, unsurpassable—

> " To make a happy fire-side clime
> To weans and wife,
> That's the true pathos and sublime
> Of human life."

There is criticism of life for you, the admirers of Burns will say to us ; there is the application of ideas to life ! There is, undoubtedly. The doctrine of the last-quoted lines coincides almost exactly with what was the aim and end, Xenophon tells us, of all the teaching of Socrates. And the application is a powerful one ; made by a man of vigorous understanding, and (need I say ?) a master of language.

But for supreme poetical success more is required than the powerful application of ideas to life ; it must be an application under the conditions fixed by the laws of poetic truth and poetic beauty. Those laws fix as an essential condition, in the poet's treatment of such matters as are here in question, high seriousness ; —the high seriousness which comes from absolute

sincerity. The accent of high seriousness, born of absolute sincerity, is what gives to such verse as

" In la sua volontade è nostra pace . . ."

to such criticism of life as Dante's, its power. Is this accent felt in the passages which I have been quoting from Burns? Surely not; surely, if our sense is quick, we must perceive that we have not in those passages a voice from the very inmost soul of the genuine Burns; he is not speaking to us from these depths, he is more or less preaching. And the compensation for admiring such passages less, from missing the perfect poetic accent in them, will be that we shall admire more the poetry where that accent is found.

No; Burns, like Chaucer, comes short of the high seriousness of the great classics, and the virtue of matter and manner which goes with that high seriousness is wanting to his work. At moments he touches it in a profound and passionate melancholy, as in those four immortal lines taken by Byron as a motto for *The Bride of Abydos*, but which have in them a depth of poetic quality such as resides in no verse of Byron's own—

" Had we never loved sae kindly,
Had we never loved sae blindly,
Never met, or never parted,
We had ne'er been broken-hearted."

But a whole poem of that quality Burns cannot make; the rest, in the *Farewell to Nancy*, is verbiage.

We arrive best at the real estimate of Burns, I think, by conceiving his work as having truth of matter and truth of manner, but not the accent or the

poetic virtue of the highest masters. His genuine criticism of life, when the sheer poet in him speaks, is ironic; it is not—

> " Thou Power Supreme, whose mighty scheme
> These woes of mine fulfil,
> Here firm I rest, they must be best
> Because they are Thy will! "

It is far rather: *Whistle owre the lave o't!* Yet we may say of him as of Chaucer, that of life and the world, as they come before him, his view is large, free, shrewd, benignant,—truly poetic, therefore; and his manner of rendering what he sees is to match. But we must note, at the same time, his great difference from Chaucer. The freedom of Chaucer is heightened, in Burns, by a fiery, reckless energy; the benignity of Chaucer deepens, in Burns, into an overwhelming sense of the pathos of things;—of the pathos of human nature, the pathos, also, of non-human nature. Instead of the fluidity of Chaucer's manner, the manner of Burns has spring, bounding swiftness. Burns is by far the greater force, though he has perhaps less charm. The world of Chaucer is fairer, richer, more significant than that of Burns; but when the largeness and freedom of Burns get full sweep, as in *Tam o' Shanter*, or still more in that puissant and splendid production, *The Jolly Beggars*, his world may be what it will, his poetic genius triumphs over it. In the world of *The Jolly Beggars* there is more than hideousness and squalor, there is bestiality; yet the piece is a superb poetic success. It has a breadth, truth, and power which make the famous scene in

Auerbach's Cellar, of Goethe's *Faust*, seem artificial and tame beside it, and which are only matched by Shakespeare and Aristophanes.

Here, where his largeness and freedom serve him so admirably, and also in those poems and songs where to shrewdness he adds infinite archness and wit, and to benignity infinite pathos, where his manner is flawless, and a perfect poetic whole is the result,—in things like the address to the mouse whose home he had ruined, in things like *Duncan Gray*, *Tam Glen*, *Whistle and I'll come to you my Lad*, *Auld Lang Syne* (this list might be made much longer),—here we have the genuine Burns, of whom the real estimate must be high indeed. Not a classic, nor with the excellent σπουδαιότης of the great classics, nor with a verse rising to a criticism of life and a virtue like theirs; but a poet with thorough truth of substance and an answering truth of style, giving us a poetry sound to the core. We all of us have a leaning towards the pathetic, and may be inclined perhaps to prize Burns most for his touches of piercing, sometimes almost intolerable, pathos; for verse like—

> " We twa hae paidl't i' the burn
> From mornin' sun till dine;
> But seas between us braid hae roar'd
> Sin auld lang syne . . ."

where he is as lovely as he is sound. But perhaps it is by the perfection of soundness of his lighter and archer masterpieces that he is poetically most wholesome for us. For the votary misled by a personal estimate of Shelley, as so many of us have been, are,

and will be,—of that beautiful spirit building his many-coloured haze of words and images

" Pinnacled dim in the intense inane "—

no contact can be wholesomer than the contact with Burns at his archest and soundest. Side by side with the

" On the brink of the night and the morning
My coursers are wont to respire,
But the Earth has just whispered a warning
That their flight must be swifter than fire . . ."

of *Prometheus Unbound*, how salutary, how very salutary, to place this from *Tam Glen*—

" My minnie does constantly deave me
And bids me beware o' young men ;
They flatter, she says, to deceive me ;
But wha can think sae o' Tam Glen ? "

But we enter on burning ground as we approach the poetry of times so near to us—poetry like that of Byron, Shelley, and Wordsworth—of which the estimates are so often not only personal, but personal with passion. For my purpose, it is enough to have taken the single case of Burns, the first poet we come to of whose work the estimate formed is evidently apt to be personal, and to have suggested how we may proceed, using the poetry of the great classics as a sort of touchstone, to correct this estimate, as we had previously corrected by the same means the historic estimate where we met with it. A collection like the present, with its succession of celebrated names and celebrated poems, offers a good opportunity to us for

resolutely endeavouring to make our estimates of poetry real. I have sought to point out a method which will help us in making them so, and to exhibit it in use so far as to put any one who likes in a way of applying it for himself.

At any rate the end to which the method and the estimate are designed to lead, and from leading to which, if they do lead to it, they get their whole value,—the benefit of being able clearly to feel and deeply to enjoy the best, the truly classic, in poetry,—is an end, let me say it once more at parting, of supreme importance. We are often told that an era is opening in which we are to see multitudes of a common sort of readers, and masses of a common sort of literature; that such readers do not want and could not relish anything better than such literature, and that to provide it is becoming a vast and profitable industry. Even if good literature entirely lost currency with the world, it would still be abundantly worth while to continue to enjoy it by oneself. But it never will lose currency with the world, in spite of momentary appearances; it never will lose supremacy. Currency and supremacy are insured to it, not indeed by the world's deliberate and conscious choice, but by something far deeper,—by the instinct of self-preservation in humanity.

WORDSWORTH[1]

I REMEMBER hearing Lord Macaulay say, after Wordsworth's death, when subscriptions were being collected to found a memorial of him, that ten years earlier more money could have been raised in Cambridge alone, to do honour to Wordsworth, than was now raised all through the country. Lord Macaulay had, as we know, his own heightened and telling way of putting things, and we must always make allowance for it. But probably it is true that Wordsworth has never, either before or since, been so accepted and popular, so established in possession of the minds of all who profess to care for poetry, as he was between the years 1830 and 1840, and at Cambridge. From the very first, no doubt, he had his believers and witnesses. But I have myself heard him declare that, for he knew not how many years, his poetry had never brought him in enough to buy his shoe-strings. The poetry-reading public was very slow to recognise him, and was very easily drawn away from him. Scott effaced him with this public, Byron effaced him.

The death of Byron seemed, however, to make an opening for Wordsworth. Scott, who had for some

[1] The preface to *The Poems of Wordsworth*, chosen and edited by Matthew Arnold, 1879.

time ceased to produce poetry himself, and stood before the public as a great novelist; Scott, too genuine himself not to feel the profound genuineness of Wordsworth, and with an instinctive recognition of his firm hold on nature and of his local truth, always admired him sincerely, and praised him generously. The influence of Coleridge upon young men of ability was then powerful, and was still gathering strength; this influence told entirely in favour of Wordsworth's poetry. Cambridge was a place where Coleridge's influence had great action, and where Wordsworth's poetry, therefore, flourished especially. But even amongst the general public its sale grew large, the eminence of its author was widely recognised, and Rydal Mount became an object of pilgrimage. I remember Wordsworth relating how one of the pilgrims, a clergyman, asked him if he had ever written anything besides the *Guide to the Lakes*. Yes, he answered modestly, he had written verses. Not every pilgrim was a reader, but the vogue was established, and the stream of pilgrims came.

Mr. Tennyson's decisive appearance dates from 1842. One cannot say that he effaced Wordsworth as Scott and Byron had effaced him. The poetry of Wordsworth had been so long before the public, the suffrage of good judges was so steady and so strong in its favour, that by 1842 the verdict of posterity, one may almost say, had been already pronounced, and Wordsworth's English fame was secure. But the vogue, the ear and applause of the great body of poetry-readers, never quite thoroughly

perhaps his, he gradually lost more and more, and Mr. Tennyson gained them. Mr. Tennyson drew to himself, and away from Wordsworth, the poetry-reading public, and the new generations. Even in 1850, when Wordsworth died, this diminution of popularity was visible, and occasioned the remark of Lord Macaulay which I quoted at starting.

The diminution has continued. The influence of Coleridge has waned, and Wordsworth's poetry can no longer draw succour from this ally. The poetry has not, however, wanted eulogists; and it may be said to have brought its eulogists luck, for almost every one who has praised Wordsworth's poetry has praised it well. But the public has remained cold, or, at least, undetermined. Even the abundance of Mr. Palgrave's fine and skilfully chosen specimens of Wordsworth, in the *Golden Treasury*, surprised many readers, and gave offence to not a few. To tenth-rate critics and compilers, for whom any violent shock to the public taste would be a temerity not to be risked, it is still quite permissible to speak of Wordworth's poetry, not only with ignorance, but with impertinence. On the Continent he is almost unknown.

I cannot think, then, that Wordsworth has, up to this time, at all obtained his deserts. "Glory," said M. Renan the other day, "glory after all is the thing which has the best chance of not being altogether vanity." Wordsworth was a homely man, and himself would certainly never have thought of talking of glory as that which, after all, has the best chance of not being altogether vanity. Yet we may well

allow that few things are less vain than *real* glory. Let us conceive of the whole group of civilised nations as being, for intellectual and spiritual purposes, one great confederation, bound to a joint action and working towards a common result; a confederation whose members have a due knowledge both of the past, out of which they all proceed, and of one another. This was the ideal of Goethe, and it is an ideal which will impose itself upon the thoughts of our modern societies more and more. Then to be recognised by the verdict of such a confederation as a master, or even as a seriously and eminently worthy workman, in one's own line of intellectual or spiritual activity, is indeed glory; a glory which it would be difficult to rate too highly. For what could be more beneficent, more salutary? The world is forwarded by having its attention fixed on the best things; and here is a tribunal, free from all suspicion of national and provincial partiality, putting a stamp on the best things, and recommending them for general honour and acceptance. A nation, again, is furthered by recognition of its real gifts and successes; it is encouraged to develop them further. And here is an honest verdict, telling us which of our supposed successes are really, in the judgment of the great impartial world, and not in our own private judgment only, successes, and which are not.

It is so easy to feel pride and satisfaction in one's own things, so hard to make sure that one is right in feeling it! We have a great empire. But so had Nebuchadnezzar. We extol the "unrivalled happiness" of our national civilisation. But then comes a candid

friend, and remarks that our upper class is materialised, our middle class vulgarised, and our lower class brutalised. We are proud of our painting, our music. But we find that in the judgment of other people our painting is questionable, and our music non-existent. We are proud of our men of science. And here it turns out that the world is with us; we find that in the judgment of other people, too, Newton among the dead, and Mr. Darwin among the living, hold as high a place as they hold in our national opinion.

Finally, we are proud of our poets and poetry. Now poetry is nothing less than the most perfect speech of man, that in which he comes nearest to being able to utter the truth. It is no small thing, therefore, to succeed eminently in poetry. And so much is required for duly estimating success here, that about poetry it is perhaps hardest to arrive at a sure general verdict, and takes longest. Meanwhile, our own conviction of the superiority of our national poets is not decisive, is almost certain to be mingled, as we see constantly in English eulogy of Shakespeare, with much of provincial infatuation. And we know what was the opinion current amongst our neighbours the French—people of taste, acuteness, and quick literary tact—not a hundred years ago, about our great poets. The old *Biographie Universelle* notices the pretension of the English to a place for their poets among the chief poets of the world, and says that this is a pretension which to no one but an Englishman can ever seem admissible. And the scornful, disparaging things said by foreigners about Shakespeare and Milton, and about our national

over-estimate of them, have been often quoted, and will be in every one's remembrance.

A great change has taken place, and Shakespeare is now generally recognised, even in France, as one of the greatest of poets. Yes, some anti-Gallican cynic will say, the French rank him with Corneille and with Victor Hugo! But let me have the pleasure of quoting a sentence about Shakespeare, which I met with by accident not long ago in the *Correspondant*, a French review which not a dozen English people, I suppose, look at. The writer is praising Shakespeare's prose. With Shakespeare, he says, "prose comes in whenever the subject, being more familiar, is unsuited to the majestic English iambic." And he goes on: "Shakespeare is the king of poetic rhythm and style, as well as the king of the realm of thought; along with his dazzling prose, Shakespeare has succeeded in giving us the most varied, the most harmonious verse which has ever sounded upon the human ear since the verse of the Greeks." M. Henry Cochin, the writer of this sentence, deserves our gratitude for it; it would not be easy to praise Shakespeare, in a single sentence, more justly. And when a foreigner and a Frenchman writes thus of Shakespeare, and when Goethe says of Milton, in whom there was so much to repel Goethe rather than to attract him, that "nothing has been ever done so entirely in the sense of the Greeks as *Samson Agonistes*," and that "Milton is in very truth a poet whom we must treat with all reverence," then we understand what constitutes a European recognition of poets and poetry as contradistinguished from a merely

national recognition, and that in favour both of Milton and of Shakespeare the judgment of the high court of appeal has finally gone.

I come back to M. Renan's praise of glory, from which I started. Yes, real glory is a most serious thing, glory authenticated by the Amphictyonic Court of final appeal, definitive glory. And even for poets and poetry, long and difficult as may be the process of arriving at the right award, the right award comes at last, the definitive glory rests where it is deserved. Every establishment of such a real glory is good and wholesome for mankind at large, good and wholesome for the nation which produced the poet crowned with it. To the poet himself it can seldom do harm; for he, poor man, is in his grave, probably, long before his glory crowns him.

Wordsworth has been in his grave for some thirty years, and certainly his lovers and admirers cannot flatter themselves that this great and steady light of glory as yet shines over him. He is not fully recognised at home; he is not recognised at all abroad. Yet I firmly believe that the poetical performance of Wordsworth is, after that of Shakespeare and Milton, of which all the world now recognises the worth, undoubtedly the most considerable in our language from the Elizabethan age to the present time. Chaucer is anterior; and on other grounds, too, he cannot well be brought into the comparison. But taking the roll of our chief poetical names, besides Shakespeare and Milton, from the age of Elizabeth downwards, and going through it,—Spenser, Dryden, Pope, Gray, Goldsmith, Cowper, Burns,

Coleridge, Scott, Campbell, Moore, Byron, Shelley, Keats (I mention those only who are dead),—I think it certain that Wordsworth's name deserves to stand, and will finally stand, above them all. Several of the poets named have gifts and excellences which Wordsworth has not. But taking the performance of each as a whole, I say that Wordsworth seems to me to have left a body of poetical work superior in power, in interest, in the qualities which give enduring freshness, to that which any one of the others has left.

But this is not enough to say. I think it certain, further, that if we take the chief poetical names of the Continent since the death of Molière, and, omitting Goethe, confront the remaining names with that of Wordsworth, the result is the same. Let us take Klopstock, Lessing, Schiller, Uhland, Rückert, and Heine for Germany; Filicaia, Alfieri, Manzoni, and Leopardi for Italy; Racine, Boileau, Voltaire, André Chenier, Béranger, Lamartine, Musset, M. Victor Hugo (he has been so long celebrated that although he still lives I may be permitted to name him) for France. Several of these, again, have evidently gifts and excellences to which Wordsworth can make no pretension. But in real poetical achievement it seems to me indubitable that to Wordsworth, here again, belongs the palm. It seems to me that Wordsworth has left behind him a body of poetical work which wears, and will wear, better on the whole than the performance of any one of these personages, so far more brilliant and celebrated, most of them, than the homely poet of Rydal. Wordsworth's perform-

ance in poetry is on the whole, in power, in interest, in the qualities which give enduring freshness, superior to theirs.

This is a high claim to make for Wordsworth. But if it is a just claim, if Wordsworth's place among the poets who have appeared in the last two or three centuries is after Shakespeare, Molière, Milton, Goethe, indeed, but before all the rest, then in time Wordsworth will have his due. We shall recognise him in his place, as we recognise Shakespeare and Milton; and not only we ourselves shall recognise him, but he will be recognised by Europe also. Meanwhile, those who recognise him already may do well, perhaps, to ask themselves whether there are not in the case of Wordsworth certain special obstacles which hinder or delay his due recognition by others, and whether these obstacles are not in some measure removable.

The *Excursion* and the *Prelude*, his poems of greatest bulk, are by no means Wordsworth's best work. His best work is in his shorter pieces, and many indeed are there of these which are of first-rate excellence. But in his seven volumes the pieces of high merit are mingled with a mass of pieces very inferior to them; so inferior to them that it seems wonderful how the same poet should have produced both. Shakespeare frequently has lines and passages in a strain quite false, and which are entirely unworthy of him. But one can imagine his smiling if one could meet him in the Elysian Fields and tell him so; smiling and replying that he knew it perfectly well himself, and what did it matter? But with Wordsworth the case is different. Work altogether inferior, work

quite uninspired, flat and dull, is produced by him with evident unconsciousness of its defects, and he presents it to us with the same faith and seriousness as his best work. Now a drama or an epic fill the mind, and one does not look beyond them; but in a collection of short pieces the impression made by one piece requires to be continued and sustained by the piece following. In reading Wordsworth the impression made by one of his fine pieces is too often dulled and spoiled by a very inferior piece coming after it.

Wordsworth composed verses during a space of some sixty years; and it is no exaggeration to say that within one single decade of those years, between 1798 and 1808, almost all his really first-rate work was produced. A mass of inferior work remains, work done before and after this golden prime, imbedding the first-rate work and clogging it, obstructing our approach to it, chilling, not unfrequently, the high-wrought mood with which we leave it. To be recognised far and wide as a great poet, to be possible and receivable as a classic, Wordsworth needs to be relieved of a great deal of the poetical baggage which now encumbers him. To administer this relief is indispensable, unless he is to continue to be a poet for the few only,—a poet valued far below his real worth by the world.

There is another thing. Wordsworth classified his poems not according to any commonly received plan of arrangement, but according to a scheme of mental physiology. He has poems of the fancy, poems of the imagination, poems of sentiment and

reflection, and so on. His categories are ingenious but far-fetched, and the result of his employment of them is unsatisfactory. Poems are separated one from another which possess a kinship of subject or of treatment far more vital and deep than the supposed unity of mental origin, which was Wordsworth's reason for joining them with others.

The tact of the Greeks in matters of this kind was infallible. We may rely upon it that we shall not improve upon the classification adopted by the Greeks for kinds of poetry; that their categories of epic, dramatic, lyric, and so forth, have a natural propriety, and should be adhered to. It may sometimes seem doubtful to which of two categories a poem belongs; whether this or that poem is to be called, for instance, narrative or lyric, lyric or elegiac. But there is to be found in every good poem a strain, a predominant note, which determines the poem as belonging to one of these kinds rather than the other; and here is the best proof of the value of the classification, and of the advantage of adhering to it. Wordsworth's poems will never produce their due effect until they are freed from their present artificial arrangement, and grouped more naturally.

Disengaged from the quantity of inferior work which now obscures them, the best poems of Wordsworth, I hear many people say, would indeed stand out in great beauty, but they would prove to be very few in number, scarcely more than half a dozen. I maintain, on the other hand, that what strikes me with admiration, what establishes in my opinion Wordsworth's superiority, is the great and ample

body of powerful work which remains to him, even after all his inferior work has been cleared away. He gives us so much to rest upon, so much which communicates his spirit and engages ours!

This is of very great importance. If it were a comparison of single pieces, or of three or four pieces, by each poet, I do not say that Wordsworth would stand decisively above Gray, or Burns, or Coleridge, or Keats, or Manzoni, or Heine. It is in his ampler body of powerful work that I find his superiority. His good work itself, his work which counts, is not all of it, of course, of equal value. Some kinds of poetry are in themselves lower kinds than others. The ballad kind is a lower kind; the didactic kind, still more, is a lower kind. Poetry of this latter sort counts, too, sometimes, by its biographical interest partly, not by its poetical interest pure and simple; but then this can only be when the poet producing it has the power and importance of Wordsworth, a power and importance which he assuredly did not establish by such didactic poetry alone. Altogether, it is, I say, by the great body of powerful and significant work which remains to him, after every reduction and deduction has been made, that Wordsworth's superiority is proved.

To exhibit this body of Wordsworth's best work, to clear away obstructions from around it, and to let it speak for itself, is what every lover of Wordsworth should desire. Until this has been done, Wordsworth, whom we, to whom he is dear, all of us know and feel to be so great a poet, has not had a fair chance before the world. When once it has

been done, he will make his way best, not by our advocacy of him, but by his own worth and power. We may safely leave him to make his way thus, we who believe that a superior worth and power in poetry finds in mankind a sense responsive to it and disposed at last to recognise it. Yet at the outset, before he has been duly known and recognised, we may do Wordsworth a service, perhaps, by indicating in what his superior power and worth will be found to consist, and in what it will not.

Long ago, in speaking of Homer, I said that the noble and profound application of ideas to life is the most essential part of poetic greatness. I said that a great poet receives his distinctive character of superiority from his application, under the conditions immutably fixed by the laws of poetic beauty and poetic truth, from his application, I say, to his subject, whatever it may be, of the ideas

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

which he has acquired for himself. The line quoted is Wordsworth's own; and his superiority arises from his powerful use, in his best pieces, his powerful application to his subject, of ideas "on man, on nature, and on human life."

Voltaire, with his signal acuteness, most truly remarked that "no nation has treated in poetry moral ideas with more energy and depth than the English nation." And he adds: "There, it seems to me, is the great merit of the English poets." Voltaire does not mean, by "treating in poetry moral ideas," the composing moral and didactic poems;—

that brings us but a very little way in poetry. He means just the same thing as was meant when I spoke above "of the noble and profound application of ideas to life;" and he means the application of these ideas under the conditions fixed for us by the laws of poetic beauty and poetic truth. If it is said that to call these ideas *moral* ideas is to introduce a strong and injurious limitation, I answer that it is to do nothing of the kind, because moral ideas are really so main a part of human life. The question, *how to live*, is itself a moral idea; and it is the question which most interests every man, and with which, in some way or other, he is perpetually occupied. A large sense is of course to be given to the term *moral*. Whatever bears upon the question, "how to live," comes under it.

> "Nor love thy life, nor hate; but, what thou liv'st,
> Live well; how long or short, permit to heaven."

In those fine lines Milton utters, as every one at once perceives, a moral idea. Yes, but so too, when Keats consoles the forward-bending lover on the Grecian Urn, the lover arrested and presented in immortal relief by the sculptor's hand before he can kiss, with the line,

> "For ever wilt thou love, and she be fair"—

he utters a moral idea. When Shakespeare says, that

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

he utters a moral idea.

Voltaire was right in thinking that the energetic and profound treatment of moral ideas, in this large sense, is what distinguishes the English poetry. He sincerely meant praise, not dispraise or hint of limitation; and they err who suppose that poetic limitation is a necessary consequence of the fact, the fact being granted as Voltaire states it. If what distinguishes the greatest poets is their powerful and profound application of ideas to life, which surely no good critic will deny, then to prefix to the term ideas here the term moral makes hardly any difference, because human life itself is in so preponderating a degree moral.

It is important, therefore, to hold fast to this: that poetry is at bottom a criticism of life; that the greatness of a poet lies in his powerful and beautiful application of ideas to life,—to the question: How to live. Morals are often treated in a narrow and false fashion; they are bound up with systems of thought and belief which have had their day; they are fallen into the hands of pedants and professional dealers; they grow tiresome to some of us. We find attraction, at times, even in a poetry of revolt against them; in a poetry which might take for its motto Omar Kheyam's words: "Let us make up in the tavern for the time which we have wasted in the mosque." Or we find attractions in a poetry indifferent to them; in a poetry where the contents may be what they will, but where the form is studied and exquisite. We delude ourselves in either case; and the best cure for our delusion is to let our minds rest upon that great and inexhaustible word *life*, until we learn to enter into its meaning. A poetry of revolt against

moral ideas is a poetry of revolt against *life;* a poetry of indifference towards moral ideas is a poetry of indifference towards *life.*

Epictetus had a happy figure for things like the play of the senses, or literary form and finish, or argumentative ingenuity, in comparison with "the best and master thing" for us, as he called it, the concern, how to live. Some people were afraid of them, he said, or they disliked and undervalued them. Such people were wrong; they were unthankful or cowardly. But the things might also be over-prized, and treated as final when they are not. They bear to life the relation which inns bear to home. "As if a man, journeying home, and finding a nice inn on the road, and liking it, were to stay for ever at the inn! Man, thou hast forgotten thine object; thy journey was not *to* this, but *through* this. 'But this inn is taking.' And how many other inns, too, are taking, and how many fields and meadows! but as places of passage merely. You have an object, which is this: to get home, to do your duty to your family, friends, and fellow-countrymen, to attain inward freedom, serenity, happiness, contentment. Style takes your fancy, arguing takes your fancy, and you forget your home and want to make your abode with them and to stay with them, on the plea that they are taking. Who denies that they are taking? but as places of passage, as inns. And when I say this, you suppose me to be attacking the care for style, the care for argument. I am not; I attack the resting in them, the not looking to the end which is beyond them."

Now, when we come across a poet like Théophile Gautier, we have a poet who has taken up his abode at an inn, and never got farther. There may be inducements to this or that one of us, at this or that moment, to find delight in him, to cleave to him; but after all, we do not change the truth about him,—we only stay ourselves in his inn along with him. And when we come across a poet like Wordsworth, who sings

> " Of truth, of grandeur, beauty, love and hope,
> And melancholy fear subdued by faith,
> Of blessed consolations in distress,
> Of moral strength and intellectual power,
> Of joy in widest commonalty spread "—

then we have a poet intent on " the best and master thing," and who prosecutes his journey home. We say, for brevity's sake, that he deals with *life*, because he deals with that in which life really consists. This is what Voltaire means to praise in the English poets, —this dealing with what is really life. But always it is the mark of the greatest poets that they deal with it; and to say that the English poets are remarkable for dealing with it, is only another way of saying, what is true, that in poetry the English genius has especially shown its power.

Wordsworth deals with it, and his greatness lies in his dealing with it so powerfully. I have named a number of celebrated poets above all of whom he, in my opinion, deserves to be placed. He is to be placed above poets like Voltaire, Dryden, Pope, Lessing, Schiller, because these famous personages,

with a thousand gifts and merits, never, or scarcely ever, attain the distinctive accent and utterance of the high and genuine poets—

"Quique pii vates et Phœbo digna locuti,"

at all. Burns, Keats, Heine, not to speak of others in our list, have this accent;—who can doubt it? And at the same time they have treasures of humour, felicity, passion, for which in Wordsworth we shall look in vain. Where, then, is Wordsworth's superiority? It is here; he deals with more of *life* than they do; he deals with *life*, as a whole, more powerfully.

No Wordsworthian will doubt this. Nay, the fervent Wordsworthian will add, as Mr. Leslie Stephen does, that Wordsworth's poetry is precious because his philosophy is sound; that his "ethical system is as distinctive and capable of exposition as Bishop Butler's"; that his poetry is informed by ideas which "fall spontaneously into a scientific system of thought." But we must be on our guard against the Wordsworthians, if we want to secure for Wordsworth his due rank as a poet. The Wordsworthians are apt to praise him for the wrong things, and to lay far too much stress upon what they call his philosophy. His poetry is the reality, his philosophy,—so far, at least, as it may put on the form and habit of "a scientific system of thought," and the more that it puts them on,—is the illusion. Perhaps we shall one day learn to make this proposition general, and to say: Poetry is the reality, philosophy the illusion. But in Wordsworth's case, at any rate,

we cannot do him justice until we dismiss his formal philosophy.

The *Excursion* abounds with philosophy, and therefore the *Excursion* is to the Wordsworthian what it never can be to the disinterested lover of poetry,—a satisfactory work. "Duty exists," says Wordsworth, in the *Excursion;* and then he proceeds thus—

> ". . . Immutably survive,
> For our support, the measures and the forms,
> Which an abstract Intelligence supplies,
> Whose kingdom is, where time and space are not."

And the Wordsworthian is delighted, and thinks that here is a sweet union of philosophy and poetry. But the disinterested lover of poetry will feel that the lines carry us really not a step farther than the proposition which they would interpret; that they are a tissue of elevated but abstract verbiage, alien to the very nature of poetry.

Or let us come direct to the centre of Wordsworth's philosophy, as "an ethical system, as distinctive and capable of systematical exposition as Bishop Butler's"—

> ". . . One adequate support
> For the calamities of mortal life
> Exists, one only;—an assured belief
> That the procession of our fate, howe'er
> Sad or disturbed, is ordered by a Being
> Of infinite benevolence and power;
> Whose everlasting purposes embrace
> All accidents, converting them to good."

That is doctrine such as we hear in church too, religious and philosophic doctrine; and the attached Wordsworthian loves passages of such doctrine, and brings them forward in proof of his poet's excellence. But however true the doctrine may be, it has, as here presented, none of the characters of *poetic* truth, the kind of truth which we require from a poet, and in which Wordsworth is really strong.

Even the "intimations" of the famous Ode, those corner-stones of the supposed philosophic system of Wordsworth,—the idea of the high instincts and affections coming out in childhood, testifying of a divine home recently left, and fading away as our life proceeds,—this idea, of undeniable beauty as a play of fancy, has itself not the character of poetic truth of the best kind; it has no real solidity. The instinct of delight in Nature and her beauty had no doubt extraordinary strength in Wordsworth himself as a child. But to say that universally this instinct is mighty in childhood, and tends to die away afterwards, is to say what is extremely doubtful. In many people, perhaps with the majority of educated persons, the love of Nature is nearly imperceptible at ten years old, but strong and operative at thirty. In general we may say of these high instincts of early childhood, the base of the alleged systematic philosophy of Wordsworth, what Thucydides says of the early achievements of the Greek race: "It is impossible to speak with certainty of what is so remote; but from all that we can really investigate, I should say that they were no very great things."

Finally, the "scientific system of thought" in

Wordsworth gives us at last such poetry as this, which the devout Wordsworthian accepts—

> " O for the coming of that glorious time
> When, prizing knowledge as her noblest wealth
> And best protection, this Imperial Realm,
> While she exacts allegiance, shall admit
> An obligation, on her part, to *teach*
> Them who are born to serve her and obey ;
> Binding herself by statute to secure,
> For all the children whom her soil maintains,
> The rudiments of letters, and inform
> The mind with moral and religious truth."

Wordsworth calls Voltaire dull, and surely the production of these un-Voltairian lines must have been imposed on him as a judgment! One can hear them being quoted at a Social Science Congress ; one can call up the whole scene. A great room in one of our dismal provincial towns ; dusty air and jaded afternoon daylight ; benches full of men with bald heads and women in spectacles ; an orator lifting up his face from a manuscript written within and without to declaim these lines of Wordsworth ; and in the soul of any poor child of nature who may have wandered in thither, an unutterable sense of lamentation, and mourning, and woe!

" But turn we," as Wordsworth says, " from these bold, bad men," the haunters of Social Science Congresses. And let us be on our guard, too, against the exhibitors and extollers of a " scientific system of thought " in Wordsworth's poetry. The poetry will never be seen aright while they thus exhibit it. The cause of its greatness is simple, and may be told

quite simply. Wordsworth's poetry is great because of the extraordinary power with which Wordsworth feels the joy offered to us in nature, the joy offered to us in the simple primary affections and duties; and because of the extraordinary power with which, in case after case, he shows us this joy, and renders it so as to make us share it.

The source of joy from which he thus draws is the truest and most unfailing source of joy accessible to man. It is also accessible universally. Wordsworth brings us word, therefore, according to his own strong and characteristic line, he brings us word

"Of joy in widest commonalty spread."

Here is an immense advantage for a poet. Wordsworth tells us what all seek, and tells of it at its truest and best source, and yet a source where all may go and draw for it.

Nevertheless, we are not to suppose that everything is precious which Wordsworth, standing even at this perennial and beautiful source, may give us. Wordsworthians are apt to talk as if it must be. They will speak with the same reverence of *The Sailor's Mother*, for example, as of *Lucy Gray*. They do their master harm by such lack of discrimination. *Lucy Gray* is a beautiful success; *The Sailor's Mother* is a failure. To give aright what he wishes to give, to interpret and render successfully, is not always within Wordsworth's own command. It is within no poet's command; here is the part of the Muse, the inspiration, the God, the "not ourselves." In Wordsworth's case, the accident, for so it may almost be called,

of inspiration, is of peculiar importance. No poet, perhaps, is so evidently filled with a new and sacred energy when the inspiration is upon him; no poet, when it fails him, is so left "weak as is a breaking wave." I remember hearing him say that "Goethe's poetry was not inevitable enough." The remark is striking and true; no line in Goethe, as Goethe said himself, but its maker knew well how it came there. Wordsworth is right, Goethe's poetry is not inevitable; not inevitable enough. But Wordsworth's poetry, when he is at his best, is inevitable, as inevitable as Nature herself. It might seem that Nature not only gave him the matter for his poem, but wrote his poem for him. He has no style. He was too conversant with Milton not to catch at times his master's manner, and he has fine Miltonic lines; but he has no assured poetic style of his own, like Milton. When he seeks to have a style he falls into ponderosity and pomposity. In the *Excursion* we have his style, as an artistic product of his own creation; and although Jeffrey completely failed to recognise Wordsworth's real greatness, he was yet not wrong in saying of the *Excursion*, as a work of poetic style: "This will never do." And yet magical as is that power, which Wordsworth has not, of assured and possessed poetic style, he has something which is an equivalent for it.

Every one who has any sense for these things feels the subtle turn, the heightening, which is given to a poet's verse by his genius for style. We can feel it in the

> "After life's fitful fever, he sleeps well"—

of Shakespeare; in the

> " . . . though fall'n on evil days,
> On evil days though fall'n, and evil tongues "—

of Milton. It is the incomparable charm of Milton's power of poetic style which gives such worth to *Paradise Regained*, and makes a great poem of a work in which Milton's imagination does not soar high. Wordsworth has in constant possession, and at command, no style of this kind; but he had too poetic a nature, and had read the great poets too well, not to catch, as I have already remarked, something of it occasionally. We find it not only in his Miltonic lines; we find it in such a phrase as this, where the manner is his own, not Milton's—

> " . . . the fierce confederate storm
> Of sorrow barricadoed evermore
> Within the walls of cities; "

although even here, perhaps, the power of style, which is undeniable, is more properly that of eloquent prose than the subtle heightening and change wrought by genuine poetic style. It is style, again, and the elevation given by style, which chiefly makes the effectiveness of *Laodameia*. Still the right sort of verse to choose from Wordsworth, if we are to seize his true and most characteristic form of expression, is a line like this from *Michael*—

> " And never lifted up a single stone."

There is nothing subtle in it, no heightening, no study of poetic style, strictly so called, at all; yet it is expression of the highest and most truly expressive kind.

Wordsworth owed much to Burns, and a style of perfect plainness, relying for effect solely on the weight and force of that which with entire fidelity it utters, Burns could show him.

> " The poor inhabitant below
> Was quick to learn and wise to know,
> And keenly felt the friendly glow
> And softer flame ;
> But thoughtless follies laid him low
> And stain'd his name."

Every one will be conscious of a likeness here to Wordsworth ; and if Wordsworth did great things with this nobly plain manner, we must remember, what indeed he himself would always have been forward to acknowledge, that Burns used it before him.

Still Wordsworth's use of it has something unique and unmatchable. Nature herself seems, I say, to take the pen out of nis hand, and to write for him with her own bare, sheer, penetrating power. This arises from two causes ; from the profound sincereness with which Wordsworth feels his subject, and also from the profoundly sincere and natural character of his subject itself. He can and will treat such a subject with nothing but the most plain, first-hand, almost austere naturalness. His expression may often be called bald, as, for instance, in the poem of *Resolution and Independence* ; but it is bald as the bare mountain tops are bald, with a baldness which is full of grandeur.

Wherever we meet with the successful balance, in Wordsworth, of profound truth of subject with

profound truth of execution, he is unique. His best poems are those which most perfectly exhibit this balance. I have a warm admiration for *Laodameia* and for the great *Ode*; but if I am to tell the very truth, I find *Laodameia* not wholly free from something artificial, and the great *Ode* not wholly free from something declamatory. If I had to pick out poems of a kind most perfectly to show Wordsworth's unique power, I should rather choose poems such as *Michael*, *The Fountain*, *The Highland Reaper*. And poems with the peculiar and unique beauty which distinguishes these, Wordsworth produced in considerable number; besides very many other poems of which the worth, although not so rare as the worth of these, is still exceedingly high.

On the whole, then, as I said at the beginning, not only is Wordsworth eminent by reason of the goodness of his best work, but he is eminent also by reason of the great body of good work which he has left to us. With the ancients I will not compare him. In many respects the ancients are far above us, and yet there is something that we demand which they can never give. Leaving the ancients, let us come to the poets and poetry of Christendom. Dante, Shakespeare, Molière, Milton, Goethe, are altogether larger and more splendid luminaries in the poetical heaven than Wordsworth. But I know not where else, among the moderns, we are to find his superiors.

To disengage the poems which show his power, and to present them to the English-speaking public and to the world, is the object of this volume. I by no means say that it contains all which in Words-

worth's poems is interesting. Except in the case of *Margaret*, a story composed separately from the rest of the *Excursion*, and which belongs to a different part of England, I have not ventured on detaching portions of poems, or on giving any piece otherwise than as Wordsworth himself gave it. But under the conditions imposed by this reserve, the volume contains, I think, everything, or nearly everything, which may best serve him with the majority of lovers of poetry, nothing which may disserve him.

I have spoken lightly of Wordsworthians; and if we are to get Wordsworth recognised by the public and by the world, we must recommend him not in the spirit of a clique, but in the spirit of disinterested lovers of poetry. But I am a Wordsworthian myself. I can read with pleasure and edification *Peter Bell*, and the whole series of *Ecclesiastical Sonnets*, and the address to Mr. Wilkinson's spade, and even the *Thanksgiving Ode*;—everything of Wordsworth, I think, except *Vaudracour and Julia*. It is not for nothing that one has been brought up in the veneration of a man so truly worthy of homage; that one has seen him and heard him, lived in his neighbourhood, and been familiar with his country. No Wordsworthian has a tenderer affection for this pure and sage master than I, or is less really offended by his defects. But Wordsworth is something more than the pure and sage master of a small band of devoted followers, and we ought not to rest satisfied until he is seen to be what he is. He is one of the very chief glories of English Poetry; and by nothing is England so glorious as by her poetry. Let us

lay aside every weight which hinders our getting him recognised as this, and let our one study be to bring to pass, as widely as possible and as truly as possible, his own word concerning his poems: "They will co-operate with the benign tendencies in human nature and society, and will, in their degree, be efficacious in making men wiser, better, and happier."

BYRON[1]

WHEN at last I held in my hand the volume of poems which I had chosen from Wordsworth, and began to turn over its pages, there arose in me almost immediately the desire to see beside it, as a companion volume, a like collection of the best poetry of Byron. Alone amongst our poets of the earlier part of this century, Byron and Wordsworth not only furnish material enough for a volume of this kind, but also, as it seems to me, they both of them gain considerably by being thus exhibited. There are poems of Coleridge and of Keats equal, if not superior, to anything of Byron or Wordsworth; but a dozen pages or two will contain them, and the remaining poetry is of a quality much inferior. Scott never, I think, rises as a poet to the level of Byron and Wordsworth at all. On the other hand, he never falls below his own usual level very far; and by a volume of selections from him, therefore, his effectiveness is not increased. As to Shelley there will be more question; and indeed Mr. Stopford Brooke, whose accomplishments, eloquence, and love of poetry we must all recognise and admire, has actually given us Shelley in such a volume. But

[1] Preface to *Poetry of Byron*, chosen and arranged by Matthew Arnold, 1881.

for my own part I cannot think that Shelley's poetry, except by snatches and fragments, has the value of the good work of Wordsworth and Byron; or that it is possible for even Mr. Stopford Brooke to make up a volume of selections from him which, for real substance, power, and worth, can at all take rank with a like volume from Byron or Wordsworth.

Shelley knew quite well the difference between the achievement of such a poet as Byron and his own. He praises Byron too unreservedly, but he sincerely felt, and he was right in feeling, that Byron was a greater poetical power than himself. As a man, Shelley is at a number of points immeasurably Byron's superior; he is a beautiful and enchanting spirit, whose vision, when we call it up, has far more loveliness, more charm for our soul, than the vision of Byron. But all the personal charm of Shelley cannot hinder us from at last discovering in his poetry the incurable want, in general, of a sound subject-matter, and the incurable fault, in consequence, of unsubstantiality. Those who extol him as the poet of clouds, the poet of sunsets, are only saying that he did not, in fact, lay hold upon the poet's right subject-matter; and in honest truth, with all his charm of soul and spirit, and with all his gift of musical diction and movement, he never, or hardly ever, did. Except, as I have said, for a few short things and single stanzas, his original poetry is less satisfactory than his translations, for in these the subject-matter was found for him. Nay, I doubt whether his delightful Essays and Letters, which deserve to be far more read than they are now, will not resist the wear and tear of

time better, and finally come to stand higher, than his poetry.

There remain to be considered Byron and Wordsworth. That Wordsworth affords good material for a volume of selections, and that he gains by having his poetry thus presented, is an old belief of mine which led me lately to make up a volume of poems chosen out of Wordsworth, and to bring it before the public. By its kind reception of the volume, the public seems to show itself a partaker in my belief. Now Byron also supplies plenty of material for a like volume, and he too gains, I think, by being so presented. Mr. Swinburne urges, indeed, that "Byron, who rarely wrote anything either worthless or faultless, can only be judged or appreciated in the mass; the greatest of his works was his whole work taken together." It is quite true that Byron rarely wrote anything either worthless or faultless; it is quite true also that in the appreciation of Byron's power a sense of the amount and variety of his work, defective though much of his work is, enters justly into our estimate. But although there may be little in Byron's poetry which can be pronounced either worthless or faultless, there are portions of it which are far higher in worth and far more free from fault than others. And although, again, the abundance and variety of his production is undoubtedly a proof of his power, yet I question whether by reading everything which he gives us we are so likely to acquire an admiring sense even of his variety and abundance, as by reading what he gives us at his happier moments. Varied and abundant he amply proves himself even by this taken alone.

Receive him absolutely without omission or compression, follow his whole out-pouring stanza by stanza and line by line from the very commencement to the very end, and he is capable of being tiresome.

Byron has told us himself that the *Giaour* " is but a string of passages." He has made full confession of his own negligence. " No one," says he, " has done more through negligence to corrupt the language." This accusation brought by himself against his poems is not just; but when he goes on to say of them, that " their faults, whatever they may be, are those of negligence and not of labour," he says what is perfectly true. " *Lara*," he declares, " I wrote while undressing after coming home from balls and masquerades, in the year of revelry, 1814. The *Bride* was written in four, the *Corsair* in ten days." He calls this " a humiliating confession, as it proves my own want of judgment in publishing, and the public's in reading, things which cannot have stamina for permanence." Again he does his poems injustice; the producer of such poems could not but publish them, the public could not but read them. Nor could Byron have produced his work in any other fashion; his poetic work could not have first grown and matured in his own mind, and then come forth as an organic whole; Byron had not enough of the artist in him for this, nor enough of self-command. He wrote, as he truly tells us, to relieve himself, and he went on writing because he found the relief become indispensable. But it was inevitable that works so produced should be, in general, " a string of passages," poured out, as he describes them, with rapidity and excitement, and

with new passages constantly suggesting themselves, and added while his work was going through the press. It is evident that we have here neither deliberate scientific construction, nor yet the instinctive artistic creation of poetic wholes; and that to take passages from work produced as Byron's was is a very different thing from taking passages out of the *Œdipus* or the *Tempest*, and deprives the poetry far less of its advantage.

Nay, it gives advantage to the poetry, instead of depriving it of any. Byron, I said, has not a great artist's profound and patient skill in combining an action or in developing a character,—a skill which we must watch and follow if we are to do justice to it. But he has a wonderful power of vividly conceiving a single incident, a single situation; of throwing himself upon it, grasping it as if it were real and he saw and felt it, and of making us see and feel it too. The *Giaour* is, as he truly called it, "a string of passages," not a work moving by a deep internal law of development to a necessary end; and our total impression from it cannot but receive from this, its inherent defect, a certain dimness and indistinctness. But the incidents of the journey and death of Hassan, in that poem, are conceived and presented with a vividness not to be surpassed; and our impression from them is correspondingly clear and powerful. In *Lara*, again, there is no adequate development either of the character of the chief personage or of the action of the poem; our total impression from the work is a confused one. Yet such an incident as the disposal of the slain Ezzelin's body passes before our eyes as if we actually

saw it. And in the same way as these bursts of incident, bursts of sentiment also, living and vigorous, often occur in the midst of poems which must be admitted to be but weakly-conceived and loosely-combined wholes. Byron cannot but be a gainer by having attention concentrated upon what is vivid, powerful, effective in his work, and withdrawn from what is not so.

Byron, I say, cannot but be a gainer by this, just as Wordsworth is a gainer by a like proceeding. I esteem Wordsworth's poetry so highly, and the world, in my opinion, has done it such scant justice, that I could not rest satisfied until I had fulfilled, on Wordsworth's behalf, a long-cherished desire;—had disengaged, to the best of my power, his good work from the inferior work joined with it, and had placed before the public the body of his good work by itself. To the poetry of Byron the world has ardently paid homage; full justice from his contemporaries, perhaps even more than justice, his torrent of poetry received. His poetry was admired, adored, "with all its imperfections on its head,"—in spite of negligence, in spite of diffuseness, in spite of repetitions, in spite of whatever faults it possessed. His name is still great and brilliant. Nevertheless the hour of irresistible vogue has passed away for him; even for Byron it could not but pass away. The time has come for him, as it comes for all poets, when he must take his real and permanent place, no longer depending upon the vogue of his own day and upon the enthusiasm of his contemporaries. Whatever we may think of him, we shall not be subjugated by him as they were; for,

as he cannot be for us what he was for them, we cannot admire him so hotly and indiscriminately as they. His faults of negligence, of diffuseness, of repetition, his faults of whatever kind, we shall abundantly feel and unsparingly criticise; the mere interval of time between us and him makes disillusion of this kind inevitable. But how then will Byron stand, if we relieve him too, so far as we can, of the encumbrance of his inferior and weakest work, and if we bring before us his best and strongest work in one body together? That is the question which I, who can even remember the latter years of Byron's vogue, and have myself felt the expiring wave of that mighty influence, but who certainly also regard him, and have long regarded him, without illusion, cannot but ask myself, cannot but seek to answer. The present volume is an attempt to provide adequate data for answering it.

Byron has been over-praised, no doubt. "Byron is one of our French superstitions," says M. Edmond Scherer; but where has Byron not been a superstition? He pays now the penalty of this exaggerated worship. "Alone among the English poets his contemporaries, Byron," said M. Taine, "*atteint à la cîme*,—gets to the top of the poetic mountain." But the idol that M. Taine had thus adored M. Scherer is almost for burning. "In Byron," he declares, "there is a remarkable inability ever to lift himself into the region of real poetic art,—art impersonal and disinterested,—at all. He has fecundity, eloquence, wit, but even these qualities themselves are confined within somewhat narrow limits. He has treated

hardly any subject but one,—himself; now the man, in Byron, is of a nature even less sincere than the poet. This beautiful and blighted being is at bottom a coxcomb. He posed all his life long."

Our poet could not well meet with more severe and unsympathetic criticism. However, the praise often given to Byron has been so exaggerated as to provoke, perhaps, a reaction in which he is unduly disparaged. "As various in composition as Shakespeare himself, Lord Byron has embraced," says Sir Walter Scott, "every topic of human life, and sounded every string on the divine harp, from its slightest to its most powerful and heart-astounding tones." It is not surprising that some one with a cool head should retaliate, on such provocation as this, by saying: "He has treated hardly any subject but one, *himself*." "In the very grand and tremendous drama of *Cain*," says Scott, "Lord Byron has certainly matched Milton on his own ground." And Lord Byron has done all this, Scott adds, "while managing his pen with the careless and negligent ease of a man of quality." Alas, "managing his pen with the careless and negligent ease of a man of quality," Byron wrote in his *Cain*—

> "Souls that dare look the Omnipotent tyrant in
> His everlasting face, and tell him that
> His evil is not good;"

or he wrote—

> ". . . And *thou* would'st go on aspiring
> To the great double Mysteries! the *two Principles*!"[1]

[1] The italics are in the original.

One has only to repeat to oneself a line from *Paradise Lost* in order to feel the difference.

Sainte-Beuve, speaking of that exquisite master of language, the Italian poet Leopardi, remarks how often we see the alliance, singular though it may at first sight appear, of the poetical genius with the genius for scholarship and philology. Dante and Milton are instances which will occur to every one's mind. Byron is so negligent in his poetical style, he is often, to say the truth, so slovenly, slipshod, and infelicitous, he is so little haunted by the true artist's fine passion for the correct use and consummate management of words, that he may be described as having for this artistic gift the insensibility of the barbarian;—which is perhaps only another and a less flattering way of saying, with Scott, that he "manages his pen with the careless and negligent ease of a man of quality." Just of a piece with the rhythm of

> "Dare you await the event of a few minutes'
> Deliberation?"

or of

> "All shall be void—
> Destroy'd!"

is the diction of

> "Which now is painful to these eyes,
> Which have not seen the sun to rise;"

or of

> "... there let him lay!"

or of the famous passage beginning

> "He who hath bent him o'er the dead;"

with those trailing relatives, that crying grammatical solecism, that inextricable anacolouthon! To class the work of the author of such things with the work of the authors of such verse as

" In the dark backward and abysm of time "—

or as

" Presenting Thebes, or Pelops' line,
Or the tale of Troy divine "—

is ridiculous. Shakespeare and Milton, with their secret of consummate felicity in diction and movement, are of another and an altogether higher order from Byron, nay, for that matter, from Wordsworth also; from the author of such verse as

" Sol hath dropt into his harbour "—

or (if Mr. Ruskin pleases) as

" Parching summer hath no warrant "—

as from the author of

" All shall be void—
Destroy'd! "

With a poetical gift and a poetical performance of the very highest order, the slovenliness and tunelessness of much of Byron's production, the pompousness and ponderousness of much of Wordsworth's are incompatible. Let us admit this to the full.

Moreover, while we are hearkening to M. Scherer, and going along with him in his fault-finding, let us admit, too, that the man in Byron is in many respects as unsatisfactory as the poet. And, putting aside all direct moral criticism of him,—with which we need

not concern ourselves here,—we shall find that he is unsatisfactory in the same way. Some of Byron's most crying faults as a man,—his vulgarity, his affectation,—are really akin to the faults of commonness, of want of art, in his workmanship as a poet. The ideal nature for the poet and artist is that of the finely touched and finely gifted man, the εὐφυής of the Greeks; now, Byron's nature was in substance not that of the εὐφυής at all, but rather, as I have said, of the barbarian. The want of fine perception which made it possible for him to formulate either the comparison between himself and Rousseau, or his reason for getting Lord Delawarr excused from a "licking" at Harrow, is exactly what made possible for him also his terrible dealings in, *An ye wool; I have redde thee; Sunburn me; Oons, and it is excellent well.* It is exactly, again, what made possible for him his precious dictum that Pope is a Greek temple, and a string of other criticisms of the like force; it is exactly, in fine, what deteriorated the quality of his poetic production. If we think of a good representative of that finely touched and exquisitely gifted nature which is the ideal nature for the poet and artist,—if we think of Raphael, for instance, who truly is εὐφυής just as Byron is not,—we shall bring into clearer light the connection in Byron between the faults of the man and the faults of the poet. With Raphael's character Byron's sins of vulgarity and false criticism would have been impossible, just as with Raphael's art Byron's sins of common and bad workmanship.

Yes, all this is true, but it is not the whole truth

about Byron nevertheless; very far from it. The severe criticism of M. Scherer by no means gives us the whole truth about Byron, and we have not yet got it in what has been added to that criticism here. The negative part of the true criticism of him we perhaps have; the positive part, by far the more important, we have not. Byron's admirers appeal eagerly to foreign testimonies in his favour. Some of these testimonies do not much move me; but one testimony there is among them which will always carry, with me at any rate, very great weight,—the testimony of Goethe. Goethe's sayings about Byron were uttered, it must however be remembered, at the height of Byron's vogue, when that puissant and splendid personality was exercising its full power of attraction. In Goethe's own household there was an atmosphere of glowing Byron-worship; his daughter-in-law was a passionate admirer of Byron, nay, she enjoyed and prized his poetry, as did Tieck and so many others in Germany at that time, much above the poetry of Goethe himself. Instead of being irritated and rendered jealous by this, a nature like Goethe's was inevitably led by it to heighten, not lower, the note of his praise. The Time-Spirit, or *Zeit-Geist*, he would himself have said, was working just then for Byron. This working of the *Zeit-Geist* in his favour was an advantage added to Byron's other advantages, an advantage of which he had a right to get the benefit. This is what Goethe would have thought and said to himself; and so he would have been led even to heighten somewhat his estimate of Byron, and to accentuate the emphasis of praise. Goethe

speaking of Byron at that moment was not and could not be quite the same cool critic as Goethe speaking of Dante, or Molière, or Milton. This, I say, we ought to remember in reading Goethe's judgments on Byron and his poetry. Still, if we are careful to bear this in mind, and if we quote Goethe's praise correctly, —which is not always done by those who in this country quote it,—and if we add to it that great and due qualification added to it by Goethe himself,— which so far as I have seen has never yet been done by his quoters in this country at all,—then we shall have a judgment on Byron, which comes, I think, very near to the truth, and which may well command our adherence.

In his judicious and interesting Life of Byron, Professor Nichol quotes Goethe as saying that Byron " is undoubtedly to be regarded as the greatest genius of our century." What Goethe did really say was " the greatest *talent*," not " the greatest *genius*." The difference is important, because, while talent gives the notion of power in a man's performance, genius gives rather the notion of felicity and perfection in it; and this divine gift of consummate felicity by no means, as we have seen, belongs to Byron and to his poetry. Goethe said that Byron " must unquestionably be regarded as the greatest talent of the century." [1] He said of him moreover: " The English may think of Byron what they please, but it is certain that they can point to no poet who is his like. He is different from all the rest, and in the main

[1] " Der ohne Frage als das grösste Talent des Jahrhunderts anzusehen ist."

greater." Here, again, Professor Nichol translates: "They can show no (living) poet who is to be compared to him;"—inserting the word *living*, I suppose, to prevent its being thought that Goethe would have ranked Byron, as a poet, above Shakespeare and Milton. But Goethe did not use, or, I think, mean to imply, any limitation such as is added by Professor Nichol. Goethe said simply, and he meant to say, "*no* poet." Only the words which follow [1] ought not, I think, to be rendered, "who is to be compared to him," that is to say, "*who is his equal as a poet.*" They mean rather, "who may properly be compared with him," "*who is his parallel.*" And when Goethe said that Byron was "in the main greater" than all the rest of the English poets, he was not so much thinking of the strict rank, as poetry, of Byron's production; he was thinking of that wonderful personality of Byron which so enters into his poetry, and which Goethe called "a personality such, for its eminence, as has never been yet, and such as is not likely to come again." He was thinking of that "daring, dash, and grandiosity," [2] of Byron, which are indeed so splendid; and which were, so Goethe maintained, of a character to do good, because "everything great is formative," and what is thus formative does us good.

The faults which went with this greatness, and which impaired Byron's poetical work, Goethe saw very well.

[1] "Der ihm zu vergleichen wäre."

[2] "Byron's Kühnheit, Keckheit und Grandiositat, ist das nicht alles bildend?—Alles Grosse bildet, sobald wir es gewahr werden."

He saw the constant state of warfare and combat, the " negative and polemical working," which makes Byron's poetry a poetry in which we can so little find rest; he saw the *Hang zum Unbegrenzten*, the straining after the unlimited, which made it impossible for Byron to produce poetic wholes such as the *Tempest* or *Lear*; he saw the *zu viel Empirie*, the promiscuous adoption of all the matter offered to the poet by life, just as it was offered, without thought or patience for the mysterious transmutation to be operated on this matter by poetic form. But in a sentence which I cannot, as I say, remember to have yet seen quoted in any English criticism of Byron, Goethe lays his finger on the cause of all these defects in Byron, and on his real source of weakness both as a man and as a poet. " The moment he reflects, he is a child," says Goethe;—" *sobald er reflectirt ist er ein Kind.*"

Now if we take the two parts of Goethe's criticism of Byron, the favourable and the unfavourable, and put them together, we shall have, I think, the truth. On the one hand, a splendid and puissant personality —a personality " in eminence such as has never been yet, and is not likely to come again"; of which the like, therefore, is not to be found among the poets of our nation, by which Byron " is different from all the rest, and in the main greater." Byron is, moreover, " the greatest talent of our century." On the other hand, this splendid personality and unmatched talent, this unique Byron, " is quite too much in the dark about himself; " [1] nay, " the moment he begins

[1] " Gar zu dunkel über sich selbst."

to reflect, he is a child." There we have, I think, Byron complete; and in estimating him and ranking him we have to strike a balance between the gain which accrues to his poetry, as compared with the productions of other poets, from his superiority, and the loss which accrues to it from his defects.

A balance of this kind has to be struck in the case of all poets except the few supreme masters in whom a profound criticism of life exhibits itself in indissoluble connection with the laws of poetic truth and beauty. I have seen it said that I allege poetry to have for its characteristic this: that it is a criticism of life; and that I make it to be thereby distinguished from prose, which is something else. So far from it, that when I first used this expression, *a criticism of life*, now many years ago, it was to literature in general that I applied it, and not to poetry in especial. "The end and aim of all literature," I said, "is, if one considers it attentively, nothing but that: *a criticism of life*." And so it surely is; the main end and aim of all our utterance, whether in prose or in verse, is surely a criticism of life. We are not brought much on our way, I admit, towards an adequate definition of poetry as distinguished from prose by that truth; still a truth it is, and poetry can never prosper if it is forgotten. In poetry, however, the criticism of life has to be made conformably to the laws of poetic truth and poetic beauty. Truth and seriousness of substance and matter, felicity and perfection of diction and manner, as these are exhibited in the best poets, are what constitute a criticism of life made in conformity with the laws of poetic truth and poetic

beauty; and it is by knowing and feeling the work of those poets, that we learn to recognise the fulfilment and non-fulfilment of such conditions.

The moment, however, that we leave the small band of the very best poets, the true classics, and deal with poets of the next rank, we shall find that perfect truth and seriousness of matter, in close alliance with perfect truth and felicity of manner, is the rule no longer. We have now to take what we can get, to forego something here, to admit compensation for it there; to strike a balance, and to see how our poets stand in respect to one another when that balance has been struck. Let us observe how this is so.

We will take three poets, among the most considerable of our century: Leopardi, Byron, Wordsworth. Giacomo Leopardi was ten years younger than Byron, and he died thirteen years after him; both of them, therefore, died young—Byron at the age of thirty-six, Leopardi at the age of thirty-nine. Both of them were of noble birth, both of them suffered from physical defect, both of them were in revolt against the established facts and beliefs of their age; but here the likeness between them ends. The stricken poet of Recanati had no country, for an Italy in his day did not exist; he had no audience, no celebrity. The volume of his poems, published in the very year of Byron's death, hardly sold, I suppose, its tens, while the volumes of Byron's poetry were selling their tens of thousands. And yet Leopardi has the very qualities which we have found wanting to Byron; he has the sense for form and style, the passion for just expression, the sure and

firm touch of the true artist. Nay, more, he has a grave fulness of knowledge, an insight into the real bearings of the questions which as a sceptical poet he raises, a power of seizing the real point, a lucidity, with which the author of *Cain* has nothing to compare. I can hardly imagine Leopardi reading the

" . . . And *thou* would'st go on aspiring
To the great double Mysteries ! the *two Principles* !"

or following Byron in his theological controversy with Dr. Kennedy, without having his features overspread by a calm and fine smile, and remarking of his brilliant contemporary, as Goethe did, that " the moment he begins to reflect, he is a child." But indeed whoever wishes to feel the full superiority of Leopardi over Byron in philosophic thought, and in the expression of it, has only to read one paragraph of one poem, the paragraph of *La Ginestra*, beginning

" Sovente in queste piagge,"

and ending

" Non so se il riso o la pietà prevale."

In like manner, Leopardi is at many points the poetic superior of Wordsworth too. He has a far wider culture than Wordsworth, more mental lucidity, more freedom from illusions as to the real character of the established fact and of reigning conventions; above all, this Italian, with his pure and sure touch, with his fineness of perception, is far more of the artist. Such a piece of pompous dulness as

" O for the coming of that glorious time,"

and all the rest of it, or such lumbering verse as Mr. Ruskin's enemy,

" Parching summer hath no warrant "—

would have been as impossible to Leopardi as to Dante. Where, then, is Wordsworth's superiority? for the worth of what he has given us in poetry I hold to be greater, on the whole, than the worth of what Leopardi has given us. It is in Wordsworth's sound and profound sense

" Of joy in widest commonalty spread ; "

whereas Leopardi remains with his thoughts ever fixed upon the *essenza insanabile*, upon the *acerbo, indegno mistero delle cose*. It is in the power with which Wordsworth feels the resources of joy offered to us in nature, offered to us in the primary human affections and duties, and in the power with which, in his moments of inspiration, he renders this joy, and makes us, too, feel it ; a force greater than himself seeming to lift him and to prompt his tongue, so that he speaks in a style far above any style of which he has the constant command, and with a truth far beyond any philosophic truth of which he has the conscious and assured possession. Neither Leopardi nor Wordsworth are of the same order with the great poets who made such verse as

Τλητὸν γὰρ Μοῖραι θυμὸν θέσαν ἀνθρώποισιν·

or as

" In la sua volontade e nostra pace ; "

or as

" . . . Men must endure
Their going hence, even as their coming hither ;
Ripeness is all."

But as compared with Leopardi, Wordsworth, though at many points less lucid, though far less a master of style, far less of an artist, gains so much by his criticism of life being, in certain matters of profound importance, healthful and true, whereas Leopardi's pessimism is not, that the value of Wordsworth's poetry, on the whole, stands higher for us than that of Leopardi's, as it stands higher for us, I think, than that of any modern poetry except Goethe's.

Byron's poetic value is also greater, on the whole, than Leopardi's; and his superiority turns in the same way upon the surpassing worth of something which he had and was, after all deduction has been made for his shortcomings. We talk of Byron's *personality*, "a personality in eminence such as has never been yet, and is not likely to come again;" and we say that by this personality Byron is "different from all the rest of English poets, and in the main greater." But can we not be a little more circumstantial, and name that in which the wonderful power of this personality consisted? We can; with the instinct of a poet Mr. Swinburne has seized upon it and named it for us. The power of Byron's personality lies in "the splendid and imperishable excellence which covers all his offences and outweighs all his defects: *the excellence of sincerity and strength.*"

Byron found our nation, after its long and victorious struggle with revolutionary France, fixed in a system of established facts and dominant ideas which revolted him. The mental bondage of the most powerful part of our nation, of its strong middle-class, to a narrow and false system of this kind, is

what we call British Philistinism. That bondage is unbroken to this hour, but in Byron's time it was even far more deep and dark than it is now. Byron was an aristocrat, and it is not difficult for an aristocrat to look on the prejudices and habits of the British Philistine with scepticism and disdain. Plenty of young men of his own class Byron met at Almack's or at Lady Jersey's, who regarded the established facts and reigning beliefs of the England of that day with as little reverence as he did. But these men, disbelievers in British Philistinism in private, entered English public life, the most conventional in the world, and at once they saluted with respect the habits and ideas of British Philistinism as if they were a part of the order of creation, and as if in public no sane man would think of warring against them. With Byron it was different. What he called the *cant* of the great middle part of the English nation, what we call its Philistinism, revolted him; but the cant of his own class, deferring to this Philistinism and profiting by it, while they disbelieved in it, revolted him even more. "Come what may," are his own words, "I will never flatter the million's canting in any shape." His class in general, on the other hand, shrugged their shoulders at this cant, laughed at it, pandered to it, and ruled by it. The falsehood, cynicism, insolence, misgovernment, oppression, with their consequent unfailing crop of human misery, which were produced by this state of things, roused Byron to irreconcilable revolt and battle. They made him indignant, they infuriated him; they were so strong, so defiant, so maleficent,—and

yet he felt that they were doomed. "You have seen every trampler down in turn," he comforts himself with saying, "from Buonaparte to the simplest individuals." The old order, as after 1815 it stood victorious, with its ignorance and misery below, its cant, selfishness, and cynicism above, was at home and abroad equally hateful to him. "I have simplified my politics," he writes, "into an utter detestation of all existing governments." And again: "Give me a republic. The king-times are fast finishing; there will be blood shed like water and tears like mist, but the peoples will conquer in the end. I shall not live to see it, but I foresee it."

Byron himself gave the preference, he tells us, to politicians and doers, far above writers and singers. But the politics of his own day and of his own class,—even of the Liberals of his own class,—were impossible for him. Nature had not formed him for a Liberal peer, proper to move the Address in the House of Lords, to pay compliments to the energy and self-reliance of British middle-class Liberalism, and to adapt his politics to suit it. Unfitted for such politics, he threw himself upon poetry as his organ; and in poetry his topics were not Queen Mab, and the Witch of Atlas, and the Sensitive Plant—they were the upholders of the old order, George the Third and Lord Castlereagh and the Duke of Wellington and Southey, and they were the canters and tramplers of the great world, and they were his enemies and himself.

Such was Byron's personality, by which "he is different from all the rest of English poets, and in the main greater." But he posed all his life, says M.

Scherer. Let us distinguish. There is the Byron who posed, there is the Byron with his affectations and silliness, the Byron whose weakness Lady Blessington, with a woman's acuteness, so admirably seized: "His great defect is flippancy and a total want of self-possession." But when this theatrical and easily criticised personage betook himself to poetry, and when he had fairly warmed to his work, then he became another man; then the theatrical personage passed away; then a higher power took possession of him and filled him; then at last came forth into light that true and puissant personality, with its direct strokes, its ever-welling force, its satire, its energy, and its agony. This is the real Byron; whoever stops at the theatrical preludings does not know him. And this real Byron may well be superior to the stricken Leopardi, he may well be declared "different from all the rest of English poets, and in the main greater," in so far as it is true of him, as M. Taine well says, that "all other souls, in comparison with his, seem inert"; in so far as it is true of him that with superb, exhaustless energy, he maintained, as Professor Nichol well says, "the struggle that keeps alive, if it does not save, the soul;" in so far, finally, as he deserves (and he does deserve) the noble praise of him which I have already quoted from Mr. Swinburne; the praise for "the splendid and imperishable excellence which covers all his offences and outweighs all his defects: *the excellence of sincerity and strength.*"

True, as a man, Byron could not manage himself, could not guide his ways aright, but was all astray.

True, he has no light, cannot lead us from the past to the future; "the moment he reflects, he is a child." The way out of the false state of things which enraged him he did not see,—the slow and laborious way upward; he had not the patience, knowledge, self-discipline, virtue, requisite for seeing it. True, also, as a poet, he has no fine and exact sense for word and structure and rhythm; he has not the artist's nature and gifts. Yet a personality of Byron's force counts for so much in life, and a rhetorician of Byron's force counts for so much in literature! But it would be most unjust to label Byron, as M. Scherer is disposed to label him, as a rhetorician only. Along with his astounding power and passion he had a strong and deep sense for what is beautiful in nature, and for what is beautiful in human action and suffering. When he warms to his work, when he is inspired, Nature herself seems to take the pen from him as she took it from Wordsworth, and to write for him as she wrote for Wordsworth, though in a different fashion, with her own penetrating simplicity. Goethe has well observed of Byron, that when he is at his happiest his representation of things is as easy and real as if he were improvising. It is so; and his verse then exhibits quite another and a higher quality from the rhetorical quality,—admirable as this also in its own kind of merit is,—of such verse as

"Minions of splendour shrinking from distress,"

and of so much more verse of Byron's of that stamp. Nature, I say, takes the pen for him; and then, assured master of a true poetic style though he is not,

any more than Wordsworth, yet as from Wordsworth at his best there will come such verse as

> " Will no one tell me what she sings? "

so from Byron, too, at his best, there will come such verse as

> " He heard it, but he heeded not; his eyes
> Were with his heart, and that was far away."

Of verse of this high quality, Byron has much; of verse of a quality lower than this, of a quality rather rhetorical than truly poetic, yet still of extraordinary power and merit, he has still more. To separate, from the mass of poetry which Byron poured forth, all this higher portion, so superior to the mass, and still so considerable in quantity, and to present it in one body by itself, is to do a service, I believe, to Byron's reputation, and to the poetic glory of our country.

Such a service I have in the present volume attempted to perform. To Byron, after all the tributes which have been paid to him, here is yet one tribute more—

> " Among thy mightier offerings here are mine! "

not a tribute of boundless homage certainly, but sincere; a tribute which consists not in covering the poet with eloquent eulogy of our own, but in letting him, at his best and greatest, speak for himself. Surely the critic who does most for his author is the critic who gains readers for his author himself, not for any lucubrations on his author;—gains more readers for him, and enables those readers to read him with more admiration.

And in spite of his prodigious vogue, Byron has never yet, perhaps, had the serious admiration which he deserves. Society read him and talked about him, as it reads and talks about *Endymion* to-day; and with the same sort of result. It looked in Byron's glass as it looks in Lord Beaconsfield's, and sees, or fancies that it sees, its own face there; and then it goes its way, and straightway forgets what manner of man it saw. Even of his passionate admirers, how many never got beyond the theatrical Byron, from whom they caught the fashion of deranging their hair, or of knotting their neck-handkerchief, or of leaving their shirt-collar unbuttoned; how few profoundly felt his vital influence, the influence of his splendid and imperishable excellence of sincerity and strength!

His own aristocratic class, whose cynical make-believe drove him to fury; the great middle-class, on whose impregnable Philistinism he shattered himself to pieces,—how little have either of these felt Byron's vital influence! As the inevitable break-up of the old order comes, as the English middle-class slowly awakens from its intellectual sleep of two centuries, as our actual present world, to which this sleep has condemned us, shows itself more clearly,—our world of an aristocracy materialised and null, a middle-class purblind and hideous, a lower class crude and brutal,—we shall turn our eyes again, and to more purpose, upon this passionate and dauntless soldier of a forlorn hope, who, ignorant of the future and unconsoled by its promises, nevertheless waged against the conservation of the old impossible world

so fiery battle; waged it till he fell,—waged it with such splendid and imperishable excellence of sincerity and strength.

Wordsworth's value is of another kind. Wordsworth has an insight into permanent sources of joy and consolation for mankind which Byron has not; his poetry gives us more which we may rest upon than Byron's,—more which we can rest upon now, and which men may rest upon always. I place Wordsworth's poetry, therefore, above Byron's on the whole, although in some points he was greatly Byron's inferior, and although Byron's poetry will always, probably, find more readers than Wordsworth's, and will give pleasure more easily. But these two, Wordsworth and Byron, stand, it seems to me, first and pre-eminent in actual performance, a glorious pair, among the English poets of this century. Keats had probably, indeed, a more consummate poetic gift than either of them; but he died having produced too little and being as yet too immature to rival them. I for my part can never even think of equalling with them any other of their contemporaries;—either Coleridge, poet and philosopher wrecked in a mist of opium; or Shelley, beautiful and ineffectual angel, beating in the void his luminous wings in vain. Wordsworth and Byron stand out by themselves. When the year 1900 is turned, and our nation comes to recount her poetic glories in the century which has then just ended, the first names with her will be these.

PAGAN AND MEDIÆVAL RELIGIOUS SENTIMENT

I READ the other day in the *Dublin Review*:—"We Catholics are apt to be cowed and scared by the lordly oppression of public opinion, and not to bear ourselves as men in the face of the anti-Catholic society of England. It is good to have an habitual consciousness that the public opinion of Catholic Europe looks upon Protestant England with a mixture of impatience and compassion, which more than balances the arrogance of the English people towards the Catholic Church in these countries."

The Holy Catholic Church, Apostolic and Roman, can take very good care of herself, and I am not going to defend her against the storms of Exeter Hall. Catholicism is not a great visible force in this country, and the mass of mankind will always treat lightly even things the most venerable, if they do not present themselves as visible forces before its eyes. In Catholic countries, as the *Dublin Review* itself says with triumph, they make very little account of the greatness of Exeter Hall. The majority has eyes only for the things of the majority, and in England the immense majority is Protestant. And yet, in spite of all the shocks which the feeling of a good Catholic,

like the writer in the *Dublin Review*, has in this Protestant country inevitably to undergo, in spite of the contemptuous insensibility to the grandeur of Rome which he finds so general and so hard to bear, how much has he to console him, how many acts of homage to the greatness of his religion may he see if he has his eyes open! I will tell him of one of them. Let him go in London to that delightful spot, that Happy Island in Bloomsbury, the reading-room of the British Museum. Let him visit its sacred quarter, the region where its theological books are placed. I am almost afraid to say what he will find there, for fear Mr. Spurgeon, like a second Caliph Omar, should give the library to the flames. He will find an immense Catholic work, the collection of the Abbé Migne, lording it over that whole region, reducing to insignificance the feeble Protestant forces which hang upon its skirts. Protestantism is duly represented, indeed: the librarian knows his business too well to suffer it to be otherwise; all the varieties of Protestantism are there; there is the Library of Anglo-Catholic Theology, learned, decorous, exemplary, but a little uninteresting; there are the works of Calvin, rigid, militant, menacing; there are the works of Dr. Chalmers, the Scotch thistle valiantly doing duty as the rose of Sharon, but keeping something very Scotch about it all the time; there are the works of Dr. Channing, the last word of religious philosophy in a land where every one has some culture, and where superiorities are discountenanced,—the flower of moral and intelligent mediocrity. But how are all these divided against one another, and how, though

they were all united, are they dwarfed by the Catholic Leviathan, their neighbour! Majestic in its blue and gold unity, this fills shelf after shelf and compartment after compartment, its right mounting up into heaven among the white folios of the *Acta Sanctorum*, its left plunging down into hell among the yellow octavos of the *Law Digest*. Everything is there, in that immense *Patrologiæ Cursus Completus*, in that *Encyclopédie Théologique*, that *Nouvelle Encyclopédie Théologique*, that *Troisième Encyclopédie Théologique*; religion, philosophy, history, biography, arts, sciences, bibliography, gossip. The work embraces the whole range of human interests; like one of the great Middle-Age Cathedrals, it is in itself a study for a life. Like the net in Scripture, it drags everything to land, bad and good, lay and ecclesiastical, sacred and profane, so that it be but matter of human concern. Wide-embracing as the power whose product it is! a power, for history at any rate, eminently *the Church*; not, perhaps, the Church of the future, but indisputably the Church of the past and, in the past, the Church of the multitude.

This is why the man of imagination—nay, and the philosopher too, in spite of her propensity to burn him—will always have a weakness for the Catholic Church; because of the rich treasures of human life which have been stored within her pale. The mention of other religious bodies, or of their leaders, at once calls up in our mind the thought of men of a definite type as their adherents; the mention of Catholicism suggests no such special following. Anglicanism suggests the English episcopate; Calvin's name suggests Dr. Candlish; Chalmers's, the Duke of Argyll;

Channing's, Boston society; but Catholicism suggests,—what shall I say?—all the pell-mell of the men and women of Shakespeare's plays. This abundance the Abbé Migne's collection faithfully reflects. People talk of this or that work which they would choose, if they were to pass their life with only one; for my part I think I would choose the Abbé Migne's collection. *Quicquid agunt homines*,—everything, as I have said, is there. Do not seek in it splendour of form, perfection of editing; its paper is common, its type ugly, its editing indifferent, its printing careless. The greatest and most baffling crowd of misprints I ever met with in my life occurs in a very important page of the introduction to the *Dictionnaire des Apocryphes*. But this is just what you have in the world,—quantity rather than quality. Do not seek in it impartiality, the critical spirit; in reading it you must do the criticism for yourself; it loves criticism as little as the world loves it. Like the world, it chooses to have things all its own way, to abuse its adversary, to back its own notion through thick and thin, to put forward all the *pros* for its own notion, to suppress all the *contras*; it does just all that the world does, and all that the critical shrinks from. Open the *Dictionnaire des Erreurs Sociales*: "The religious persecutions of Henry the Eighth's and Edward the Sixth's time abated a little in the reign of Mary, to break out again with new fury in the reign of Elizabeth." There is a summary of the history of religious persecution under the Tudors! But how unreasonable to reproach the Abbé Migne's work with wanting a criticism, which, by the very nature of things, it

cannot have, and not rather to be grateful to it for its abundance, its variety, its infinite suggestiveness, its happy adoption, in many a delicate circumstance, of the urbane tone and temper of the man of the world, instead of the acrid tone and temper of the fanatic!

Still, in spite of their fascinations, the contents of this collection sometimes rouse the critical spirit within one. It happened that lately, after I had been thinking much of Marcus Aurelius and his times, I took down the *Dictionnaire des Origines du Christianisme*, to see what it had to say about paganism and pagans. I found much what I expected. I read the article, *Révélation Évangélique, sa Nécessité*. There I found what a sink of iniquity was the whole pagan world; how one Roman fed his oysters on his slaves, how another put a slave to death that a curious friend might see what dying was like; how Galen's mother tore and bit her waiting-women when she was in a passion with them. I found this account of the religion of paganism: "Paganism invented a mob of divinities with the most hateful character, and attributed to them the most monstrous and abominable crimes. It personified in them drunkenness, incest, kidnapping, adultery, sensuality, knavery, cruelty, and rage." And I found that from this religion there followed such practice as was to be expected: "What must naturally have been the state of morals under the influence of such a religion, which penetrated with its own spirit the public life, the family life, and the individual life of antiquity?"

The colours in this picture are laid on very thick, and I for my part cannot believe that any human

societies, with a religion and practice such as those just described, could ever have endured as the societies of Greece and Rome endured, still less have done what the societies of Greece and Rome did. We are not brought far by descriptions of the vices of great cities, or even of individuals driven mad by unbounded means of self-indulgence. Feudal and aristocratic life in Christendom has produced horrors of selfishness and cruelty not surpassed by the grandee of pagan Rome; and then, again, in antiquity there is Marcus Aurelius's mother to set against Galen's. Eminent examples of vice and virtue in individuals prove little as to the state of societies. What, under the first emperors, was the condition of the Roman poor upon the Aventine compared with that of our poor in Spitalfields and Bethnal Green? What, in comfort, morals, and happiness, were the rural population of the Sabine country under Augustus's rule, compared with the rural population of Hertfordshire and Buckinghamshire under the rule of Queen Victoria?

But these great questions are not now for me. Without trying to answer them, I ask myself, when I read such declamation as the foregoing, if I can find anything that will give me a near, distinct sense of the real difference in spirit and sentiment between paganism and Christianity, and of the natural effect of this difference upon people in general. I take a representative religious poem of paganism,—of the paganism which all the world has in its mind when it speaks of paganism. To be a representative poem, it must be one for popular use, one that the multitude listens to. Such a religious poem may be found at

the end of one of the best and happiest of Theocritus's idylls, the fifteenth. In order that the reader may the better go along with me in the line of thought I am following, I will translate it; and, that he may see the medium in which religious poetry of this sort is found existing, the society out of which it grows, the people who form it and are formed by it, I will translate the whole, or nearly the whole, of the idyll (it is not long) in which the poem occurs.

The idyll is dramatic. Somewhere about two hundred and eighty years before the Christian era, a couple of Syracusan women, staying at Alexandria, agreed on the occasion of a great religious solemnity, —the feast of Adonis,—to go together to the palace of King Ptolemy Philadelphus, to see the image of Adonis, which the queen Arsinoe, Ptolemy's wife, had had decorated with peculiar magnificence. A hymn, by a celebrated performer, was to be recited over the image. The names of the two women are Gorgo and Praxinoe; their maids, who are mentioned in the poem, are called Eunoe and Eutychis. Gorgo comes by appointment to Praxinoe's house to fetch her, and there the dialogue begins :—

Gorgo.—Is Praxinoe at home?

Praxinoe.—My dear Gorgo, at last! Yes, here I am. Eunoe, find a chair,—get a cushion for it.

Gorgo.—It will do beautifully as it is.

Praxinoe.—Do sit down.

Gorgo.—Oh, this gad-about spirit! I could hardly get to you, Praxinoe, through all the crowd and all the carriages. Nothing but heavy boots, nothing but men in uniform. And what a journey it is! My dear child, you really live *too* far off.

Praxinoe.—It is all that insane husband of mine. He has chosen to come out here to the end of the world, and take a hole of a place,—for a house it is not,—on purpose that you and I might not be neighbours. He is always just the same ;—anything to quarrel with one ! anything for spite !

Gorgo.—My dear, don't talk so of your husband before the little fellow. Just see how astonished he looks at you. Never mind, Zopyrio, my pet, she is not talking about papa.

Praxinoe.—Good heavens ! the child does really understand.

Gorgo.—Pretty papa !

Praxinoe.—That pretty papa of his the other day (though I told him beforehand to mind what he was about), when I sent him to a shop to buy soap and rouge, brought me home salt instead ;—stupid, great, big, interminable animal !

Gorgo.—Mine is just the fellow to him. . . . But never mind now, get on your things and let us be off to the palace to see the Adonis. I hear the Queen's decorations are something splendid.

Praxinoe.—In grand people's houses everything is grand. What things you have seen in Alexandria ! What a deal you will have to tell to anybody who has never been here !

Gorgo.—Come, we ought to be going.

Praxinoe.—Every day is holiday to people who have nothing to do. Eunoe, pick up your work ; and take care, lazy girl, how you leave it lying about again ; the cats find it just the bed they like. Come, stir yourself, fetch me some water, quick ! I wanted the water first, and the girl brings me the soap. Never mind ; give it me. Not all that, extravagant ! Now pour out the water ;—

stupid! why don't you take care of my dress? That will do. I have got my hands washed as it pleased God. Where is the key of the large wardrobe? Bring it here;—quick!

Gorgo.—Praxinoe, you can't think how well that dress, made full, as you have got it, suits you. Tell me, how much did it cost?—the dress by itself, I mean.

Praxinoe.—Don't talk of it, Gorgo: more than eight guineas of good hard money. And about the work on it I have almost worn my life out.

Gorgo.—Well, you couldn't have done better.

Praxinoe.—Thank you. Bring me my shawl, and put my hat properly on my head;—properly. No, child (*to her little boy*), I am not going to take you; there's a bogy on horseback, who bites. Cry as much as you like; I'm not going to have you lamed for life. Now we'll start. Nurse, take the little one and amuse him; call the dog in, and shut the street-door. (*They go out.*) Good heavens! what a crowd of people! How on earth are we ever to get through all this? They are like ants: you can't count them. My dearest Gorgo, what will become of us? here are the royal Horse Guards. My good man, don't ride over me! Look at that bay horse rearing bolt upright; what a vicious one! Eunoe, you mad girl, do take care!—that horse will certainly be the death of the man on his back. How glad I am now, that I left the child safe at home!

Gorgo.—All right, Praxinoe, we are safe behind them; and they have gone on to where they are stationed.

Praxinoe.—Well, yes, I begin to revive again. From the time I was a little girl I have had more horror of horses and snakes than of anything in the world. Let us get on; here's a great crowd coming this way upon us.

Gorgo (*to an old woman*).—Mother, are you from the palace?

Old Woman.—Yes, my dears.

Gorgo.—Has one a tolerable chance of getting there?

Old Woman.—My pretty young lady, the Greeks got to Troy by dint of trying hard; trying will do anything in this world.

Gorgo.—The old creature has delivered herself of an oracle and departed.

Praxinoe.—Women can tell you everything about everything, Jupiter's marriage with Juno not excepted.

Gorgo.—Look, Praxinoe, what a squeeze at the palace gates!

Praxinoe.—Tremendous! Take hold of me, Gorgo, and you, Eunoe, take hold of Eutychis!—tight hold, or you'll be lost. Here we go in all together. Hold tight to us, Eunoe! Oh, dear! oh, dear! Gorgo, there's my scarf torn right in two. For heaven's sake, my good man, as you hope to be saved, take care of my dress!

Stranger.—I'll do what I can, but it doesn't depend upon me.

Praxinoe.—What heaps of people! They push like a drove of pigs.

Stranger.—Don't be frightened, ma'am, we are all right.

Praxinoe.—May you be all right, my dear sir, to the last day you live, for the care you have taken of us! What a kind, considerate man! There is Eunoe jammed in a squeeze. Push, you goose, push! Capital! We are all of us the right side of the door, as the bridegroom said when he had locked himself in with the bride.

Gorgo.—Praxinoe, come this way. Do but look at that work, how delicate it is!—how exquisite! Why, they might wear it in heaven.

Praxinoe.—Heavenly patroness of needlewomen, what

hands were hired to do that work? Who designed those beautiful patterns? They seem to stand up and move about, as if they were real;—as if they were living things, and not needlework. Well, man is a wonderful creature! And look, look, how charming he lies there on his silver couch, with just a soft down on his cheeks, that beloved Adonis,—Adonis, whom one loves even though he is dead!

Another Stranger.—You wretched women, do stop your incessant chatter! Like turtles, you go on for ever. They are enough to kill one with their broad lingo,—nothing but *a*, *a*, *a*.

Gorgo.—Lord, where does the man come from? What is it to you if we *are* chatterboxes? Order about your own servants! Do you give orders to Syracusan women? If you want to know, we came originally from Corinth, as Bellerophon did; we speak Peloponnesian. I suppose Dorian women may be allowed to have a Dorian accent.

Praxinoe.—Oh, honey-sweet Proserpine, let us have no more masters than the one we've got! We don't the least care for *you*; pray don't trouble yourself for nothing.

Gorgo.—Be quiet, Praxinoe! That first-rate singer, the Argive woman's daughter, is going to sing the *Adonis* hymn. She is the same who was chosen to sing the dirge last year. We are sure to have something first-rate from *her*. She is going through her airs and graces ready to begin.—

So far the dialogue; and, as it stands in the original, it can hardly be praised too highly. It is a page torn fresh out of the book of human life. What freedom! What animation! What gaiety! What naturalness! It is said that Theocritus, in composing this poem, borrowed from a work of Sophron, a poet of an earlier and better time; but, even if this is so, the form

is still Theocritus's own, and how excellent is that form, how masterly! And this in a Greek poem of the decadence!—for Theocritus's poetry, after all, is poetry of the decadence. When such is Greek poetry of the decadence, what must be Greek poetry of the prime?

Then the singer begins her hymn:—

"Mistress, who loveth the haunts of Golgi, and Idalium, and high-peaked Eryx, Aphrodite that playest with gold! how have the delicate-footed Hours, after twelve months, brought thy Adonis back to thee from the ever-flowing Acheron! Tardiest of the immortals are the boon Hours, but all mankind wait their approach with longing, for they ever bring something with them. O Cypris, Dione's child! thou didst change—so is the story among men—Berenice from mortal to immortal, by dropping ambrosia into her fair bosom; and in gratitude to thee for this, O thou of many names and many temples! Berenice's daughter, Arsinoe, lovely Helen's living counterpart, makes much of Adonis with all manner of braveries.

"All fruits that the tree bears are laid before him, all treasures of the garden in silver baskets, and alabaster boxes, gold-inlaid, of Syrian ointment; and all confectionery that cunning women make on their kneading-tray, kneading up every sort of flowers with white meal, and all that they make of sweet honey and delicate oil, and all winged and creeping things are here set before him. And there are built for him green bowers with wealth of tender anise, and little boy-loves flutter about over them, like young nightingales trying their new wings on the tree, from bough to bough. Oh, the ebony, the gold, the eagle of white ivory that bears aloft his cup-bearer to Cronos-born Zeus! And up there, see! a second couch

strewn for lovely Adonis, scarlet coverlets softer than sleep itself (so Miletus and the Samian wool-grower will say); Cypris has hers, and the rosy-armed Adonis has his, that eighteen or nineteen-year-old bridegroom. His kisses will not wound, the hair on his lip is yet light.

"Now, Cypris, good-night, we leave thee with thy bridegroom; but to-morrow morning, with the earliest dew, we will one and all bear him forth to where the waves splash upon the sea-strand, and letting loose our locks, and letting fall our robes, with bosoms bare, we will set up this, our melodious strain:

"'Beloved Adonis, alone of the demigods (so men say) thou art permitted to visit both us and Acheron! This lot had neither Agamemnon, nor the mighty moon-struck hero Ajax, nor Hector the first-born of Hecuba's twenty children, nor Patroclus, nor Pyrrhus who came home from Troy, nor those yet earlier Lapithæ and the sons of Deucalion, nor the Pelasgians, the root of Argos and of Pelop's isle. Be gracious to us now, loved Adonis, and be favourable to us for the year to come! Dear to us hast thou been at this coming, dear to us shalt thou be when thou comest again.'"

The poem concludes with a characteristic speech from Gorgo:—

"Praxinoe, certainly women are wonderful things. That lucky woman to know all that! and luckier still to have such a splendid voice! And now we must see about getting home. My husband has not had his dinner. That man is all vinegar, and nothing else; and if you keep him waiting for his dinner, he's dangerous to go near. Adieu, precious Adonis, and may you find us all well when you come next year!"

So, with the hymn still in her ears, says the incorrigible Gorgo.

But what a hymn that is. Of religious emotion, in our acceptation of the words, and of the comfort springing from religious emotion, not a particle. And yet many elements of religious emotion are contained in the beautiful story of Adonis. Symbolically treated, as the thoughtful man might treat it, as the Greek mysteries undoubtedly treated it, this story was capable of a noble and touching application, and could lead the soul to elevating and consoling thoughts. Adonis was the sun in his summer and in his winter course, in his time of triumph and his time of defeat; but in his time of triumph still moving towards his defeat, in his time of defeat still returning towards his triumph. Thus he became an emblem of the power of life and the bloom of beauty, the power of human life and the bloom of human beauty, hastening inevitably to diminution and decay, yet in that very decay finding

"Hope, and a renovation without end."

But nothing of this appears in the story as prepared for popular religious use, as presented to the multitude in a popular religious ceremony. Its treatment is not devoid of a certain grace and beauty, but it has nothing whatever that is elevating, nothing that is consoling, nothing that is in our sense of the word religious. The religious ceremonies of Christendom, even on occasion of the most joyful and mundane matters, present the multitude with strains of profoundly religious character, such as the *Kyrie eleison*

and the *Te Deum*. But this Greek hymn to Adonis adapts itself exactly to the tone and temper of a gay and pleasure-loving multitude,—of light-hearted people, like Gorgo and Praxinoe, whose moral nature is much of the same calibre as that of Phillina in Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister*, people who seem never made to be serious, never made to be sick or sorry. And, if they happen to be sick or sorry, what will they do then? But that we have no right to ask. Phillina, within the enchanted bounds of Goethe's novel, Gorgo and Praxinoe, within the enchanted bounds of Theocritus's poem, never will be sick and sorry, never can be sick and sorry. The ideal, cheerful, sensuous, pagan life is not sick or sorry. No; yet its natural end is in the sort of life which Pompeii and Herculaneum bring so vividly before us,—a life which by no means in itself suggests the thought of horror and misery, which even, in many ways, gratifies the senses and the understanding; but by the very intensity and unremittingness of its appeal to the senses and the understanding, by its stimulating a single side of us too absolutely, ends by fatiguing and revolting us; ends by leaving us with a sense of confinement, of oppression,—with a desire for an utter change, for clouds, storms, effusion, and relief.

In the beginning of the thirteenth century, when the clouds and storms had come, when the gay sensuous pagan life was gone, when men were not living by the senses and understanding, when they were looking for the speedy coming of Antichrist, there appeared in Italy, to the north of Rome, in the beautiful Umbrian country at the foot of the Apennines,

a figure of the most magical power and charm, St. Francis. His century is, I think, the most interesting in the history of Christianity after its primitive age, more interesting than even the century of the Reformation; and one of the chief figures, perhaps the very chief, to which this interest attaches itself, is St. Francis. And why? Because of the profound popular instinct which enabled him, more than any man since the primitive age, to fit religion for popular use. He brought religion to the people. He founded the most popular body of ministers of religion that has ever existed in the Church. He transformed monachism by uprooting the stationary monk, delivering him from the bondage of property, and sending him, as a mendicant friar, to be a stranger and sojourner, not in the wilderness, but in the most crowded haunts of men, to console them and to do them good. This popular instinct of his is at the bottom of his famous marriage with poverty. Poverty and suffering are the condition of the people, the multitude, the immense majority of mankind; and it was towards this *people* that his soul yearned. "He listens," it was said of him, "to those to whom God himself will not listen."

So in return, as no other man he was listened to. When an Umbrian town or village heard of his approach, the whole population went out in joyful procession to meet him, with green boughs, flags, music, and songs of gladness. The master, who began with two disciples, could in his own lifetime (and he died at forty-four) collect to keep Whitsuntide with him, in presence of an immense multitude,

five thousand of his Minorites. And thus he found fulfilment to his prophetic cry: "I hear in my ears the sound of the tongues of all the nations who shall come unto us; Frenchmen, Spaniards, Germans, Englishmen. The Lord will make of us a great people, even unto the ends of the earth."

Prose could not satisfy this ardent soul, and he made poetry. Latin was too learned for this simple, popular nature, and he composed in his mother tongue, in Italian. The beginnings of the mundane poetry of the Italians are in Sicily, at the court of kings; the beginnings of their religious poetry are in Umbria, with St. Francis. His are the humble upper waters of a mighty stream; at the beginning of the thirteenth century it is St. Francis, at the end, Dante. Now it happens that St. Francis, too, like the Alexandrian songstress, has his hymn for the sun, for Adonis. *Canticle of the Sun, Canticle of the Creatures,* —the poem goes by both names. Like the Alexandrian hymn, it is designed for popular use, but not for use by King Ptolemy's people; artless in language, irregular in rhythm, it matches with the childlike genius that produced it, and the simple natures that loved and repeated it:—

"O most high, almighty, good Lord God, to thee belong praise, glory, honour, and all blessing!

"Praised be my Lord God with all his creatures; and specially our brother the sun, who brings us the day, and who brings us the light; fair is he, and shining with a very great splendour: O Lord, he signifies to us thee!

"Praised be my Lord for our sister the moon, and for the stars, the which he has set clear and lovely in heaven.

"Praised be my Lord for our brother the wind, and for air and cloud, calms and all weather, by the which thou upholdest in life all creatures.

"Praised be my Lord for our sister water, who is very serviceable unto us, and humble, and precious, and clean.

"Praised be my Lord for our brother fire, through whom thou givest us light in the darkness; and he is bright, and pleasant, and very mighty, and strong.

"Praised be my Lord for our mother the earth, the which doth sustain us and keep us, and bringeth forth divers fruits, and flowers of many colours, and grass.

"Praised be my Lord for all those who pardon one another for his love's sake, and who endure weakness and tribulation; blessed are they who peaceably shall endure, for thou, O most Highest, shalt give them a crown!

"Praised be my Lord for our sister, the death of the body, from whom no man escapeth. Woe to him who dieth in mortal sin! Blessed are they who are found walking by thy most holy will, for the second death shall have no power to do them harm.

"Praise ye, and bless ye the Lord, and give thanks unto him, and serve him with great humility."

It is natural that man should take pleasure in his senses. But it is natural, also, that he should take refuge in his heart and imagination from his misery. And when one thinks what human life is for the vast majority of mankind, how little of a feast for their senses it can possibly be, one understands the charm for them of a refuge offered in the heart and imagination. Above all, when one thinks what human life was in the Middle Ages, one understands the charm of such a refuge.

Now, the poetry of Theocritus's hymn is poetry treating the world according to the demand of the senses; the poetry of St. Francis's hymn is poetry treating the world according to the demand of the heart and imagination. The first takes the world by its outward, sensible side; the second by its inward, symbolical side. The first admits as much of the world as is pleasure-giving; the second admits the whole world, rough and smooth, painful and pleasure-giving, all alike, but all transfigured by the power of a spiritual emotion, all brought under a law of super-sensual love, having its seat in the soul. It can thus even say: "Praised be my Lord for *our sister, the death of the body.*"

But these very words are, perhaps, an indication that we are touching upon an extreme. When we see Pompeii, we can put our finger upon the pagan sentiment in its extreme. And when we read of Monte Alverno and the *stigmata*; when we read of the repulsive, because self-caused, sufferings of the end of St. Francis's life; when we find him even saying, "I have sinned against my brother the ass," meaning by these words that he had been too hard upon his own body; when we find him assailed, even himself, by the doubt "whether he who had destroyed himself by the severity of his penances could find mercy in eternity," we can put our finger on the mediæval Christian sentiment in its extreme. Human nature is neither all senses and understanding, nor all heart and imagination. Pompeii was a sign that for humanity at large the measure of sensualism had been overpassed; St. Francis's doubt was a sign

that for humanity at large the measure of spiritualism had been overpassed. Humanity, in its violent rebound from one extreme, had swung from Pompeii to Monte Alverno; but it was sure not to stay there.

The Renascence is, in part, a return towards the pagan spirit, in the special sense in which I have been using the word pagan; a return towards the life of the senses and the understanding. The Reformation, on the other hand, is the very opposite to this; in Luther there is nothing Greek or pagan; vehemently as he attacked the adoration of St. Francis, Luther had himself something of St. Francis in him; he was a thousand times more akin to St. Francis than to Theocritus or to Voltaire. The Reformation—I do not mean the inferior piece given under that name, by Henry the Eighth and a second-rate company, in this island, but the real Reformation, the German Reformation, Luther's Reformation—was a reaction of the moral and spiritual sense against the carnal and pagan sense; it was a religious revival like St. Francis's, but this time against the Church of Rome, not within her; for the carnal and pagan sense had now, in the government of the Church of Rome herself, its prime representative. But the grand reaction against the rule of the heart and imagination, the strong return towards the rule of the senses and understanding, is in the eighteenth century. And this reaction has had no more brilliant champion than a man of the nineteenth, of whom I have already spoken; a man who could feel not only the pleasurableness but the poetry of the life of the senses (and the life of the senses has its deep poetry); a man

who, in his very last poem, divided the whole world into " barbarians and Greeks,"—Heinrich Heine. No man has reproached the Monte Alverno extreme in sentiment, the Christian extreme, the heart and imagination subjugating the senses and understanding, more bitterly than Heine; no man has extolled the Pompeii extreme, the pagan extreme, more rapturously.

" All through the Middle Age these sufferings, this fever, this over-tension lasted; and we moderns still feel in all our limbs the pain and weakness from them. Even those of us who are cured have still to live with a hospital-atmosphere all around us, and find ourselves as wretched in it as a strong man among the sick. Some day or other, when humanity shall have got quite well again, when the body and soul shall have made their peace together, the fictitious quarrel which Christianity has cooked up between them will appear something hardly comprehensible. The fairer and happier generations, offspring of unfettered unions, that will rise up and bloom in the atmosphere of a religion of pleasure, will smile sadly when they think of their poor ancestors, whose life was passed in melancholy abstinence from the joys of this beautiful earth, and who faded away into spectres, from the mortal compression which they put upon the warm and glowing emotions of sense. Yes, with assurance I say it, our descendants will be fairer and happier than we are; for I am a believer in progress, and I hold God to be a kind being who has intended man to be happy."

That is Heine's sentiment, in the prime of life, in the glow of activity, amid the brilliant whirl of Paris. I will no more blame it than I blamed the sentiment

of the Greek hymn to Adonis. I wish to decide nothing as of my own authority; the great art of criticism is to get oneself out of the way and to let humanity decide. Well, the sentiment of the "religion of pleasure" has much that is natural in it; humanity will gladly accept it if it can live by it; to live by it one must never be sick or sorry, and the old, ideal, limited, pagan world never, I have said, *was* sick or sorry, never at least shows itself to us sick or sorry :—

"What pipes and timbrels! what wild ecstasy!"

For our imagination, Gorgo and Praxinoe cross the human stage chattering in their blithe Doric,—*like turtles*, as the cross stranger said,—and keep gaily chattering on till they disappear. But in the new, real, immense, post-pagan world,—in the barbarian world,—the shock of accident is unceasing, the serenity of existence is perpetually troubled, not even a Greek like Heine can get across the mortal stage without bitter calamity. How does the sentiment of the "religion of pleasure" serve then? does it help, does it console? Can a man live by it? Heine again shall answer; Heine just twenty years older, stricken with incurable disease, waiting for death :—

"The great pot stands smoking before me, but I have no spoon to help myself. What does it profit me that my health is drunk at banquets out of gold cups and in most exquisite wines, if I myself, while these ovations are going on, lonely and cut off from the pleasures of the world, can only just wet my lips with barley-water? What good does it do me that all the roses of Shiraz open their leaves

and burn for me with passionate tenderness? Alas! Shiraz is some two thousand leagues from the Rue d'Amsterdam, where in the solitude of my sick chamber all the perfume I smell is that of hot towels. Alas! the mockery of God is heavy upon me! The great author of the universe, the Aristophanes of Heaven, has determined to make the petty earthly author, the so-called Aristophanes of Germany, feel to his heart's core what pitiful needle-pricks his cleverest sarcasms have been, compared with the thunderbolts which his divine humour can launch against feeble mortals! . . .

" In the year 1340, says the Chronicle of Limburg, all over Germany everybody was strumming and humming certain songs more lovely and delightful than any which had ever yet been known in German countries; and all people, old and young, the women particularly, were perfectly mad about them, so that from morning till night you heard nothing else. Only, the Chronicle adds, the author of these songs happened to be a young clerk, afflicted with leprosy, and living apart from all the world in a desolate place. The excellent reader does not require to be told how horrible a complaint was leprosy in the Middle Ages, and how the poor wretches who had this incurable plague were banished from society, and had to keep at a distance from every human being. Like living corpses, in a gray gown reaching down to the feet, and with the hood brought over their face, they went about, carrying in their hands an enormous rattle, called Saint Lazarus's rattle. With this rattle they gave notice of their approach, that every one might have time to get out of their way. This poor clerk, then, whose poetical gift the Limburg Chronicle extols, was a leper, and he sate moping in the dismal deserts of his misery, whilst all Germany, gay and tuneful, was praising his songs.

"Sometimes, in my sombre visions of the night, I imagine that I see before me the poor leprosy-stricken clerk of the Limburg Chronicle, and then from under his gray hood his distressed eyes look out upon me in a fixed and strange fashion; but the next instant he disappears, and I hear dying away in the distance, like the echo of a dream, the dull creak of Saint Lazarus's rattle."

We have come a long way from Theocritus there; the expression of that has nothing of the clear, positive, happy, pagan character; it has much more the character of one of the indeterminate grotesques of the suffering Middle Age. Profoundness and power it has, though at the same time it is not truly poetical; it is not natural enough for that, there is too much waywardness in it, too much bravado. But as a condition of sentiment to be popular,—to be a comfort for the mass of mankind, under the pressure of calamity, to live by,—what a manifest failure is this last word of the religion of pleasure! One man in many millions, a Heine, may console himself, and keep himself erect in suffering, by a collossal irony of this sort, by covering himself and the universe with the red fire of this sinister mockery; but the many millions cannot,—cannot if they would. That is where the sentiment of a religion of sorrow has such a vast advantage over the sentiment of a religion of pleasure; in its power to be a general, popular, religious sentiment, a stay for the mass of mankind, whose lives are full of hardship. It really succeeds in conveying far more joy, far more of what the mass of mankind are so much without, than its rival. I do not mean joy

in prospect only, but joy in possession, actual enjoyment of the world. Mediaeval Christianity is reproached with its gloom and austerities; it assigns the material world, says Heine, to the devil. But yet what a fulness of delight does St. Francis manage to draw from this material world itself, and from its commonest and most universally enjoyed elements,—sun, air, earth, water, plants! His hymn expresses a far more cordial sense of happiness, even in the material world, than the hymn of Theocritus. It is this which made the fortune of Christianity,—its gladness, not its sorrow; not its assigning the spiritual world to Christ, and the material world to the devil, but its drawing from the spiritual world a source of joy so abundant that it ran over upon the material world and transfigured it.

I have said a great deal of harm of paganism; and, taking paganism to mean a state of things which it is commonly taken to mean, and which did really exist, no more harm than it well deserved. Yet I must not end without reminding the reader, that before this state of things appeared, there was an epoch in Greek life,—in pagan life,—of the highest possible beauty and value. That epoch by itself goes far towards making Greece the Greece we mean when we speak of Greece,—a country hardly less important to mankind than Judaea. The poetry of later paganism lived by the senses and understanding; the poetry of mediaeval Christianity lived by the heart and imagination. But the main element of the modern spirit's life is neither the senses and understanding, nor the heart and imagination; it is the imaginative

reason. And there is a century in Greek life,—the century preceding the Peloponnesian war, from about the year 530 to the year 430 B.C.,—in which poetry made, it seems to me, the noblest, the most successful effort she has ever made as the priestess of the imaginative reason, of the element by which the modern spirit, if it would live right, has chiefly to live. Of this effort, of which the four great names are Simonides, Pindar, Aeschylus, Sophocles, I must not now attempt more than the bare mention; but it is right, it is necessary, after all I have said, to indicate it. No doubt that effort was imperfect. Perhaps everything, take it at what point in its existence you will, carries within itself the fatal law of its own ulterior development. Perhaps, even of the life of Pindar's time, Pompeii was the inevitable bourne. Perhaps the life of their beautiful Greece could not afford to its poets all that fulness of varied experience, all that power of emotion, which

> "... the heavy and the weary weight
> Of all this unintelligible world"

affords the poet of after-times. Perhaps in Sophocles the thinking-power a little overbalances the religious sense, as in Dante the religious sense overbalances the thinking-power. The present has to make its own poetry, and not even Sophocles and his compeers, any more than Dante and Shakespeare, are enough for it. That I will not dispute; nor will I set up the Greek poets, from Pindar to Sophocles, as objects of blind worship. But no other poets so well show to the poetry of the present the way it must take; no other

poets have lived so much by the imaginative reason; no other poets have made their work so well balanced; no other poets, who have so well satisfied the thinking-power, have so well satisfied the religious sense:—

"Oh! that my lot may lead me in the path of holy innocence of word and deed, the path which august laws ordain, laws that in the highest empyrean had their birth, of which Heaven is the father alone, neither did the race of mortal men beget them, nor shall oblivion ever put them to sleep. The power of God is mighty in them, and groweth not old."

Let St. Francis,—nay, or Luther either,—beat that!

MARCUS AURELIUS

MR. MILL says, in his book on Liberty, that "Christian morality is in great part merely a protest against paganism; its ideal is negative rather than positive, passive rather than active." He says, that, in certain most important respects, "it falls far below the best morality of the ancients." Now, the object of systems of morality is to take possession of human life, to save it from being abandoned to passion or allowed to drift at hazard, to give it happiness by establishing it in the practice of virtue; and this object they seek to attain by prescribing to human life fixed principles of action, fixed rules of conduct. In its uninspired as well as in its inspired moments, in its days of languor and gloom as well as in its days of sunshine and energy, human life has thus always a clue to follow, and may always be making way towards its goal. Christian morality has not failed to supply to human life aids of this sort. It has supplied them far more abundantly than many of its critics imagine. The most exquisite document after those of the New Testament, of all the documents the Christian spirit has ever inspired,—the *Imitation*,—by no means contains the whole of Christian morality; nay, the disparagers of this morality

would think themselves sure of triumphing if one agreed to look for it in the *Imitation* only. But even the *Imitation* is full of passages like these: "Vita sine proposito languida et vaga est;"—"Omni die renovare debemus propositum nostrum, dicentes: nunc hodiè perfectè incipiamus, quia nihil est quod hactenus fecimus;"—"Secundum propositum nostrum est cursus profectûs nostri;"—"Raro etiam unum vitium perfectè vincimus, et ad *quotidianum* profectum non accendimur;"—"Semper aliquid certi proponendum est;"—"Tibi ipsi violentiam frequenter fac:" (*A life without a purpose is a languid, drifting thing;—Every day we ought to renew our purpose, saying to ourselves: This day let us make a sound beginning, for what we have hitherto done is nought;—Our improvement is in proportion to our purpose;—We hardly ever manage to get completely rid even of one fault, and do not set our hearts on* daily *improvement;—Always place a definite purpose before thee;—Get the habit of mastering thine inclination.*) These are moral precepts, and moral precepts of the best kind. As rules to hold possession of our conduct, and to keep us in the right course through outward troubles and inward perplexity, they are equal to the best ever furnished by the great masters of morals—Epictetus or Marcus Aurelius.

But moral rules, apprehended as ideas first, and then rigorously followed as laws, are, and must be, for the sage only. The mass of mankind have neither force of intellect enough to apprehend them clearly as ideas, nor force of character enough to follow them strictly as laws. The mass of mankind can be carried

along a course full of hardship for the natural man, can be borne over the thousand impediments of the narrow way, only by the tide of a joyful and bounding emotion. It is impossible to rise from reading Epictetus or Marcus Aurelius without a sense of constraint and melancholy, without feeling that the burden laid upon man is well-nigh greater than he can bear. Honour to the sages who have felt this, and yet have borne it! Yet, even for the sage, this sense of labour and sorrow in his march towards the goal constitutes a relative inferiority; the noblest souls of whatever creed, the pagan Empedocles as well as the Christian Paul, have insisted on the necessity of an inspiration, a joyful emotion, to make moral action perfect; an obscure indication of this necessity is the one drop of truth in the ocean of verbiage with which the controversy on justification by faith has flooded the world. But, for the ordinary man, this sense of labour and sorrow constitutes an absolute disqualification; it paralyses him; under the weight of it, he cannot make way towards the goal at all. The paramount virtue of religion is, that it has *lighted up* morality; that it has supplied the emotion and inspiration needful for carrying the sage along the narrow way perfectly, for carrying the ordinary man along it at all. Even the religions with most dross in them have had something of this virtue; but the Christian religion manifests it with unexampled splendour. "Lead me, Zeus and Destiny!" says the prayer of Epictetus, "whithersoever I am appointed to go; I will follow without wavering; even though I turn coward and shrink, I shall have to follow all

the same." The fortitude of that is for the strong, for the few; even for them the spiritual atmosphere with which it surrounds them is bleak and gray. But, "Let thy loving spirit lead me forth into the land of righteousness;"—"The Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory;"—"Unto you that fear my name shall the sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings," says the Old Testament; "Born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God;"—"Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God;"—"Whatsoever is born of God, overcometh the world," says the New. The ray of sunshine is there, the glow of a divine warmth;—the austerity of the sage melts away under it, the paralysis of the weak is healed; he who is vivified by it renews his strength; "all things are possible to him;" "he is a new creature."

Epictetus says: "Every matter has two handles, one of which will bear taking hold of, the other not. If thy brother sin against thee, lay not hold of the matter by this, that he sins against thee; for by this handle the matter will not bear taking hold of. But rather lay hold of it by this, that he is thy brother, thy born mate; and thou wilt take hold of it by what will bear handling." Jesus, being asked whether a man is bound to forgive his brother as often as seven times, answers: "I say not unto thee, until seven times, but until seventy times seven." Epictetus here suggests to the reason grounds for forgiveness of injuries which Jesus does not; but it is vain to say that Epictetus is on that account a better moralist

than Jesus, if the warmth, the emotion, of Jesus's answer fires his hearer to the practice of forgiveness of injuries, while the thought in Epictetus's leaves him cold. So with Christian morality in general: its distinction is not that it propounds the maxim, "Thou shalt love God and thy neighbour," with more development, closer reasoning, truer sincerity, than other moral systems; it is that it propounds this maxim with an inspiration which wonderfully catches the hearer and makes him act upon it. It is because Mr. Mill has attained to the perception of truths of this nature, that he is,—instead of being, like the school from which he proceeds, doomed to sterility,—a writer of distinguished mark and influence, a writer deserving all attention and respect; it is (I must be pardoned for saying) because he is not sufficiently leavened with them, that he falls just short of being a great writer.

That which gives to the moral writings of the Emperor Marcus Aurelius their peculiar character and charm, is their being suffused and softened by something of this very sentiment whence Christian morality draws its best power. Mr. Long has recently published in a convenient form a translation of these writings, and has thus enabled English readers to judge Marcus Aurelius for themselves; he has rendered his countrymen a real service by so doing. Mr. Long's reputation as a scholar is a sufficient guarantee of the general fidelity and accuracy of his translation; on these matters, besides, I am hardly entitled to speak, and my praise is of no value. But that for which I and the rest of the unlearned may

venture to praise Mr. Long is this; that he treats Marcus Aurelius's writings, as he treats all the other remains of Greek and Roman antiquity which he touches, not as a dead and dry matter of learning, but as documents with a side of modern applicability and living interest, and valuable mainly so far as this side in them can be made clear; that as in his notes on Plutarch's Roman Lives he deals with the modern epoch of Cæsar and Cicero, not as food for schoolboys, but as food for men, and men engaged in the current of contemporary life and action, so in his remarks and essays on Marcus Aurelius he treats this truly modern striver and thinker not as a Classical Dictionary hero, but as a present source from which to draw "example of life, and instruction of manners." Why may not a son of Dr. Arnold say, what might naturally here be said by any other critic, that in this lively and fruitful way of considering the men and affairs of ancient Greece and Rome, Mr. Long resembles Dr. Arnold?

One or two little complaints, however, I have against Mr. Long, and I will get them off my mind at once. In the first place, why could he not have found gentler and juster terms to describe the translation of his predecessor, Jeremy Collier,—the redoubtable enemy of stage plays,—than these: "a most coarse and vulgar copy of the original?" As a matter of taste, a translator should deal leniently with his predecessor; but putting that out of the question, Mr. Long's language is a great deal too hard. Most English people who knew Marcus Aurelius before Mr. Long appeared as his introducer, knew him

through Jeremy Collier. And the acquaintance of a man like Marcus Aurelius is such an imperishable benefit, that one can never lose a peculiar sense of obligation towards the man who confers it. Apart from this claim upon one's tenderness, however, Jeremy Collier's version deserves respect for its genuine spirit and vigour, the spirit and vigour of the age of Dryden. Jeremy Collier too, like Mr. Long, regarded in Marcus Aurelius the living moralist, and not the dead classic; and his warmth of feeling gave to his style an impetuosity and rhythm which from Mr. Long's style (I do not blame it on that account) are absent. Let us place the two side by side. The impressive opening of Marcus Aurelius's fifth book, Mr. Long translates thus:—

"In the morning when thou risest unwillingly, let this thought be present: I am rising to the work of a human being. Why then am I dissatisfied if I am going to do the things for which I exist and for which I was brought into the world. Or have I been made for this, to lie in the bedclothes and keep myself warm?—But this is more pleasant.—Dost thou exist then to take thy pleasure, and not at all for action or exertion?"

Jeremy Collier has:—

"When you find an unwillingness to rise early in the morning, make this short speech to yourself: 'I am getting up now to do the business of a man; and am I out of humour for going about that which I was made for, and for the sake of which I was sent into the world? Was I then designed for nothing but to doze and batten beneath the counterpane? I thought action had been the end of your being.'"

In another striking passage, again, Mr. Long has :—

" No longer wonder at hazard ; for neither wilt thou read thy own memoirs, nor the acts of the ancient Romans and Hellenes, and the selections from books which thou wast reserving for thy old age. Hasten then to the end which thou hast before thee, and, throwing away idle hopes, come to thine own aid, if thou carest at all for thyself, while it is in thy power."

Here his despised predecessor has :—

" Don't go too far in your books and overgrasp yourself. Alas, you have no time left to peruse your diary, to read over the Greek and Roman history : come, don't flatter and deceive yourself ; look to the main chance, to the end and design of reading, and mind life more than notion : I say, if you have a kindness for your person, drive at the practice and help yourself, for that is in your own power."

It seems to me that here for style and force Jeremy Collier can (to say the least, perfectly stand comparison with Mr. Long. Jeremy Collier's real defect as a translator is not his coarseness and vulgarity, but his imperfect acquaintance with Greek ; that is a serious defect, a fatal one ; it rendered a translation like Mr. Long's necessary. Jeremy Collier's work will now be forgotten, and Mr. Long stands master of the field ; but he may be content, at any rate, to leave his predecessor's grave unharmed, even if he will not throw upon it, in passing, a handful of kindly earth.

Another complaint I have against Mr. Long is, that he is not quite idiomatic and simple enough. It is a little formal, at least, if not pedantic, to say *Ethic* and *Dialectic*, instead of *Ethics* and *Dialectics*, and to say

"*Hellenes* and Romans" instead of "*Greeks* and Romans." And why, too,—the name of Antoninus being preoccupied by Antoninus Pius—will Mr. Long call his author Marcus *Antoninus* instead of Marcus *Aurelius*? Small as these matters appear, they are important when one has to deal with the general public, and not with a small circle of scholars; and it is the general public that the translator of a short masterpiece on morals, such as is the book of Marcus Aurelius, should have in view; his aim should be to make Marcus Aurelius's work as popular as the *Imitation*, and Marcus Aurelius's name as familiar as Socrates's. In rendering or naming him, therefore, punctilious accuracy of phrase is not so much to be sought as accessibility and currency; everything which may best enable the Emperor and his precepts *volitare per ora virûm*. It is essential to render him in language perfectly plain and unprofessional, and to call him by the name by which he is best and most distinctly known. The translators of the Bible talk of *pence* and not *denarii*, and the admirers of Voltaire do not celebrate him under the name of Arouet.

But, after these trifling complaints are made, one must end, as one began, in unfeigned gratitude to Mr. Long for his excellent and substantial reproduction in English of an invaluable work. In general the substantiality, soundness, and precision of Mr. Long's rendering are (I will venture, after all, to give my opinion about them) as conspicuous as the living spirit with which he treats antiquity; and these qualities are particularly desirable in the translator of

a work like that of Marcus Aurelius, of which the language is often corrupt, almost always hard and obscure. Any one who wants to appreciate Mr. Long's merits as a translator may read, in the original and in Mr. Long's translation, the seventh chapter of the tenth book; he will see how, through all the dubiousness and involved manner of the Greek, Mr. Long has firmly seized upon the clear thought which is certainly at the bottom of that troubled wording, and, in distinctly rendering this thought, has at the same time thrown round its expression a characteristic shade of painfulness and difficulty which just suits it. And Marcus Aurelius's book is one which, when it is rendered so accurately as Mr. Long renders it, even those who know Greek tolerably well may choose to read rather in the translation than in the original. For not only are the contents here incomparably more valuable than the external form, but this form, the Greek of a Roman, is not exactly one of those styles which have a physiognomy, which are an essential part of their author, which stamp an indelible impression of him on the reader's mind. An old Lyons commentator finds, indeed, in Marcus Aurelius's Greek, something characteristic, something specially firm and imperial; but I think an ordinary mortal will hardly find this: he will find crabbed Greek, without any great charm of distinct physiognomy. The Greek of Thucydides and Plato has this charm, and he who reads them in a translation, however accurate, loses it, and loses much in losing it; but the Greek of Marcus Aurelius, like the Greek of the New Testament, and even more than the Greek of the New Testament, is wanting in

it. If one could be assured that the English Testament were made perfectly accurate, one might be almost content never to open a Greek Testament again; and, Mr. Long's version of Marcus Aurelius being what it is, an Englishman who reads to live, and does not live to read, may henceforth let the Greek original repose upon its shelf.

The man whose thoughts Mr. Long has thus faithfully reproduced, is perhaps the most beautiful figure in history. He is one of those consoling and hope-inspiring marks, which stand for ever to remind our weak and easily discouraged race how high human goodness and perseverance have once been carried, and may be carried again. The interest of mankind, is peculiarly attracted by examples of signal goodness in high places; for that testimony to the worth of goodness is the most striking which is borne by those to whom all the means of pleasure and self-indulgence lay open, by those who had at their command the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them. Marcus Aurelius was the ruler of the grandest of empires; and he was one of the best of men. Besides him, history presents one or two sovereigns eminent for their goodness, such as Saint Louis or Alfred. But Marcus Aurelius has, for us moderns, this great superiority in interest over Saint Louis or Alfred, that he lived and acted in a state of society modern by its essential characteristics, in an epoch akin to our own, in a brilliant centre of civilisation. Trajan talks of "our enlightened age" just as glibly as the *Times* talks of it. Marcus Aurelius thus becomes for us a man like ourselves, a man in all things tempted as we

are. Saint Louis inhabits an atmosphere of mediæval Catholicism, which the man of the nineteenth century may admire, indeed, may even passionately wish to inhabit, but which, strive as he will, he cannot really inhabit. Alfred belongs to a state of society (I say it with all deference to the *Saturday Review* critic who keeps such jealous watch over the honour of our Saxon ancestors) half barbarous. Neither Alfred nor Saint Louis can be morally and intellectually as near to us as Marcus Aurelius.

The record of the outward life of this admirable man has in it little of striking incident. He was born at Rome on the 26th of April, in the year 121 of the Christian era. He was nephew and son-in-law to his predecessor on the throne, Antoninus Pius. When Antoninus died, he was forty years old, but from the time of his earliest manhood he had assisted in administering public affairs. Then, after his uncle's death in 161, for nineteen years he reigned as emperor. The barbarians were pressing on the Roman frontier, and a great part of Marcus Aurelius's nineteen years of reign was passed in campaigning. His absences from Rome were numerous and long. We hear of him in Asia Minor, Syria, Egypt, Greece; but, above all, in the countries on the Danube, where the war with the barbarians was going on,—in Austria, Moravia, Hungary. In these countries much of his Journal seems to have been written; parts of it are dated from them; and there, a few weeks before his fifty-ninth birthday, he fell sick and died.[1] The record of him on which his fame chiefly rests is the

[1] He died on the 17th of March, A.D. 180

record of his inward life,—his *Journal*, or *Commentaries*, or *Meditations*, or *Thoughts*, for by all these names has the work been called. Perhaps the most interesting of the records of his outward life is that which the first book of this work supplies, where he gives an account of his education, recites the names of those to whom he is indebted for it, and enumerates his obligations to each of them. It is a refreshing and consoling picture, a priceless treasure for those who, sick of the "wild and dreamlike trade of blood and guile," which seems to be nearly the whole of what history has to offer to our view, seek eagerly for that substratum of right thinking and well-doing which in all ages must surely have somewhere existed, for without it the continued life of humanity would have been impossible. "From my mother I learnt piety and beneficence, and abstinence not only from evil deeds but even from evil thoughts; and further, simplicity in my way of living, far removed from the habits of the rich." Let us remember that, the next time we are reading the sixth satire of Juvenal. "From my tutor I learnt" (hear it, ye tutors of princes!) "endurance of labour, and to want little, and to work with my own hands, and not to meddle with other people's affairs, and not to be ready to listen to slander." The vices and foibles of the Greek sophist or rhetorician—*the Græculus esuriens*—are in everybody's mind; but he who reads Marcus Aurelius's account of his Greek teachers and masters, will understand how it is that, in spite of the vices and foibles of individual *Græculi*, the education of the human race owes to Greece a debt which can never be overrated.

The vague and colourless praise of history leaves on the mind hardly any impression of Antoninus Pius: it is only from the private memoranda of his nephew that we learn what a disciplined, hard-working, gentle, wise, virtuous man he was; a man who, perhaps, interests mankind less than his immortal nephew only because he has left in writing no record of his inner life,—*caret quia vate sacro.*

Of the outward life and circumstances of Marcus Aurelius, beyond these notices which he has himself supplied, there are few of much interest and importance. There is the fine anecdote of his speech when he heard of the assassination of the revolted Avidius Cassius, against whom he was marching; *he was sorry*, he said, *to be deprived of the pleasure of pardoning him.* And there are one or two more anecdotes of him which show the same spirit. But the great record for the outward life of a man who has left such a record of his lofty inward inspirations as that which Marcus Aurelius has left, is the clear consenting voice of all his contemporaries,—high and low, friend and enemy, pagan and Christian,—in praise of his sincerity, justice and goodness. The world's charity does not err on the side of excess, and here was a man occupying the most conspicuous station in the world, and professing the highest possible standard of conduct;—yet the world was obliged to declare that he walked worthily of his profession. Long after his death, his bust was to be seen in the houses of private men through the wide Roman empire. It may be the vulgar part of human nature which busies itself with the semblance and doings of living sovereigns, it is

its nobler part which busies itself with those of the dead; these busts of Marcus Aurelius, in the homes of Gaul, Britain, and Italy, bear witness, not to the inmates' frivolous curiosity about princes and palaces, but to their reverential memory of the passage of a great man upon the earth.

Two things, however, before one turns from the outward to the inward life of Marcus Aurelius, force themselves upon one's notice, and demand a word of comment; he persecuted the Christians, and he had for his son the vicious and brutal Commodus. The persecution at Lyons, in which Attalus and Pothinus suffered, the persecution at Smyrna, in which Polycarp suffered, took place in his reign. Of his humanity, of his tolerance, of his horror of cruelty and violence, of his wish to refrain from severe measures against the Christians, of his anxiety to temper the severity of these measures when they appeared to him indispensable, there is no doubt: but, on the one hand, it is certain that the letter, attributed to him, directing that no Christian should be punished for being a Christian, is spurious; it is almost certain that his alleged answer to the authorities of Lyons, in which he directs that Christians persisting in their profession shall be dealt with according to law, is genuine. Mr. Long seems inclined to try and throw doubt over the persecution at Lyons, by pointing out that the letter of the Lyons Christians relating it, alleges it to have been attended by miraculous and incredible incidents. "A man," he says, "can only act consistently by accepting all this letter or rejecting it all, and we cannot blame him for either." But it is con-

trary to all experience to say that because a fact is related with incorrect additions, and embellishments, therefore it probably never happened at all; or that it is not, in general, easy for an impartial mind to distinguish between the fact and the embellishments. I cannot doubt that the Lyons persecution took place, and that the punishment of the Christians for being Christians was sanctioned by Marcus Aurelius. But then I must add that nine modern readers out of ten, when they read this, will, I believe, have a perfectly false notion of what the moral action of Marcus Aurelius, in sanctioning the punishment, really was. They imagine Trajan, or Antoninus Pius, or Marcus Aurelius, fresh from the perusal of the Gospel, fully aware of the spirit and holiness of the Christian saints, ordering their extermination because he loved darkness rather than light. Far from this, the Christianity which these emperors aimed at repressing was, in their conception of it, something philosophically contemptible, politically subversive, and morally abominable. As men, they sincerely regarded it much as well-conditioned people, with us, regard Mormonism; as rulers, they regarded it much as Liberal statesmen, with us, regard the Jesuits. A kind of Mormonism, constituted as a vast secret society, with obscure aims of political and social subversion, was what Antoninus Pius and Marcus Aurelius believed themselves to be repressing when they punished Christians. The early Christian apologists again and again declare to us under what odious imputations the Christians lay, how general was the belief that these imputations were well-grounded, how sincere was the horror which

the belief inspired. The multitude, convinced that the Christians were atheists who ate human flesh and thought incest no crime, displayed against them a fury so passionate as to embarrass and alarm their rulers. The severe expressions of Tacitus, *exitiabilis superstitio—odio humani generis convicti*, show how deeply the prejudices of the multitude imbued the educated class also. One asks oneself with astonishment how a doctrine so benign as that of Jesus Christ can have incurred misrepresentation so monstrous. The inner and moving cause of the misrepresentation lay, no doubt, in this,—that Christianity was a new spirit in the Roman world, destined to act in that world as its dissolvent; and it was inevitable that Christianity in the Roman world, like democracy in the modern world, like every new spirit with a similar mission assigned to it, should at its first appearance occasion an instinctive shrinking and repugnance in the world which it was to dissolve. The outer and palpable causes of the misrepresentation were, for the Roman public at large, the confounding of the Christians with the Jews, that isolated, fierce, and stubborn race, whose stubbornness, fierceness, and isolation, real as they were, the fancy of a civilised Roman yet further exaggerated; the atmosphere of mystery and novelty which surrounded the Christian rites; the very simplicity of Christian theism. For the Roman statesman, the cause of mistake lay in that character of secret assemblages which the meetings of the Christian community wore, under a State-system as jealous of unauthorised associations as is the State-system of modern France.

A Roman of Marcus Aurelius's time and position could not well see the Christians except through the mist of these prejudices. Seen through such a mist, the Christians appeared with a thousand faults not their own; but it has not been sufficiently remarked that faults really their own many of them assuredly appeared with besides, faults especially likely to strike such an observer as Marcus Aurelius, and to confirm him in the prejudices of his race, station, and rearing. We look back upon Christianity after it has proved what a future it bore within it, and for us the sole representatives of its early struggles are the pure and devoted spirits through whom it proved this; Marcus Aurelius saw it with its future yet unshown, and with the tares among its professed progeny not less conspicuous than the wheat. Who can doubt that among the professing Christians of the second century, as among the professing Christians of the nineteenth, there was plenty of folly, plenty of rabid nonsense, plenty of gross fanaticism? who will even venture to affirm that, separated in great measure from the intellect and civilisation of the world for one or two centuries, Christianity, wonderful as have been its fruits, had the development perfectly worthy of its inestimable germ? Who will venture to affirm that, by the alliance of Christianity with the virtue and intelligence of men like the Antonines,—of the best product of Greek and Roman civilisation, while Greek and Roman civilisation had yet life and power,—Christianity and the world, as well as the Antonines themselves, would not have been gainers? That alliance was not to be. The Antonines lived and

died with an utter misconception of Christianity; Christianity grew up in the Catacombs, not on the Palatine. And Marcus Aurelius incurs no moral reproach by having authorised the punishment of the Christians; he does not thereby become in the least what we mean by a *persecutor*. One may concede that it was impossible for him to see Christianity as it really was;—as impossible as for even the moderate and sensible Fleury to see the Antonines as they really were;—one may concede that the point of view from which Christianity appeared something anti-civil and anti-social, which the State had the faculty to judge and the duty to suppress, was inevitably his. Still, however, it remains true that this sage, who made perfection his aim and reason his law, did Christianity an immense injustice and rested in an idea of State-attributes which was illusive. And this is, in truth, characteristic of Marcus Aurelius, that he is blameless, yet, in a certain sense, unfortunate; in his character, beautiful as it is, there is something melancholy, circumscribed, and ineffectual.

For of his having such a son as Commodus, too, one must say that he is not to be blamed on that account, but that he is unfortunate. Disposition and temperament are inexplicable things; there are natures on which the best education and example are thrown away; excellent fathers may have, without any fault of theirs, incurably vicious sons. It is to be remembered, also, that Commodus was left, at the perilous age of nineteen, master of the world; while his father, at that age, was but beginning a twenty

years' apprenticeship to wisdom, labour, and self-command, under the sheltering teachership of his uncle Antoninus. Commodus was a prince apt to be led by favourites; and if the story is true which says that he left, all through his reign, the Christians untroubled, and ascribes this lenity to the influence of his mistress Marcia, it shows that he could be led to good as well as to evil. But for such a nature to be left at a critical age with absolute power, and wholly without good counsel and direction, was the more fatal. Still one cannot help wishing that the example of Marcus Aurelius could have availed more with his own only son. One cannot but think that with such virtue as his there should go, too, the ardour which removes mountains, and that the ardour which removes mountains might have even won Commodus. The word *ineffectual* again rises to one's mind; Marcus Aurelius saved his own soul by his righteousness, and he could do no more. Happy they who can do this! but still happier, who can do more!

Yet, when one passes from his outward to his inward life, when one turns over the pages of his *Meditations*,—entries jotted down from day to day, amid the business of the city or the fatigues of the camp, for his own guidance and support, meant for no eye but his own, without the slightest attempt at style, with no care, even, for correct writing, not to be surpassed for naturalness and sincerity,—all disposition to carp and cavil dies away, and one is overpowered by the charm of a character of such purity, delicacy, and virtue. He fails neither in small things nor in great; he keeps watch over himself both that

the great springs of action may be right in him, and that the minute details of action may be right also. How admirable in a hard-tasked ruler, and a ruler, too, with a passion for thinking and reading, is such a memorandum as the following :—

" Not frequently nor without necessity to say to any one, or to write in a letter, that I have no leisure ; nor continually to excuse the neglect of duties required by our relation to those with whom we live, by alleging urgent occupation."

And, when that ruler is a Roman emperor, what an " idea " is this to be written down and meditated by him :—

" The idea of a polity in which there is the same law for all, a polity administered with regard to equal rights and equal freedom of speech, and the idea of a kingly government which respects most of all the freedom of the governed."

And, for all men who " drive at practice," what practical rules may not one accumulate out of these *Meditations* :—

" The greatest part of what we say or do being unnecessary, if a man takes this away, he will have more leisure and less uneasiness. Accordingly, on every occasion a man should ask himself : ' Is this one of the unnecessary things ?' Now a man should take away not only unnecessary acts, but also unnecessary thoughts, for thus superfluous acts will not follow after."

And again :—

" We ought to check in the series of our thoughts everything that is without a purpose and useless, but

most of all the over curious feeling and the malignant; and a man should use himself to think of those things only about which if one should suddenly ask, 'What hast thou now in thy thoughts?' with perfect openness thou mightest immediately answer, 'This or That;' so that from thy words it should be plain that everything in thee is simple and benevolent, and such as befits a social animal, and one that cares not for thoughts about sensual enjoyments, or any rivalry or envy and suspicion, or anything else for which thou wouldst blush if thou shouldst say thou hadst it in thy mind."

So, with a stringent practicalness worthy of Franklin, he discourses on his favourite text, *Let nothing be done without a purpose.* But it is when he enters the region where Franklin cannot follow him, when he utters his thoughts on the ground-motives of human action, that he is most interesting; that he becomes the unique, the incomparable Marcus Aurelius. Christianity uses language very liable to be misunderstood when it seems to tell men to do good, not, certainly, from the vulgar motives of worldly interest, or vanity, or love of human praise, but "that their Father which seeth in secret may reward them openly." The motives of reward and punishment have come, from the misconception of language of this kind, to be strangely overpressed by many Christian moralists, to the deterioration and disfigurement of Christianity. Marcus Aurelius says, truly and nobly:—

"One man, when he has done a service to another, is ready to set it down to his account as a favour conferred. Another is not ready to do this, but still in his own mind

he thinks of the man as his debtor, and he knows what he has done. A third in a manner does not even know what he has done, *but he is like a vine which has produced grapes, and seeks for nothing more after it has once produced its proper fruit.* As a horse when he has run, a dog when he has caught the game, a bee when it has made its honey, so a man when he has done a good act, does not call out for others to come and see, but he goes on to another act, as a vine goes on to produce again the grapes in season. Must a man, then, be one of these, who in a manner acts thus without observing it? Yes."

And again :—

"What more dost thou want when thou hast done a man a service? Art thou not content that thou hast done something conformable to thy nature, and dost thou seek to be paid for it, *just as if the eye demanded a recompense for seeing, or the feet for walking?*"

Christianity, in order to match morality of this strain, has to correct its apparent offers of external reward, and to say : *The kingdom of God is within you.*

I have said that it is by its accent of emotion that the morality of Marcus Aurelius acquires a special character, and reminds one of Christian morality. The sentences of Seneca are stimulating to the intellect ; the sentences of Epictetus are fortifying to the character ; the sentences of Marcus Aurelius find their way to the soul. I have said that religious emotion has the power to *light up* morality : the emotion of Marcus Aurelius does not quite light up his morality, but it suffuses it ; it has not the power to melt the clouds of effort and austerity quite away, but

it shines through them and glorifies them; it is a spirit, not so much of gladness and elation, as of gentleness and sweetness; a delicate and tender sentiment, which is less than joy and more than resignation. He says that in his youth he learned from Maximus, one of his teachers, "cheerfulness in all circumstances as well as in illness; *and a just admixture in the moral character of sweetness and dignity:*" and it is this very admixture of sweetness with his dignity which makes him so beautiful a moralist. It enables him to carry even into his observation of nature, a delicate penetration, a sympathetic tenderness, worthy of Wordsworth; the spirit of such a remark as the following has hardly a parallel, so far as my knowledge goes, in the whole range of Greek and Roman literature:—

"Figs, when they are quite ripe, gape open; and in the ripe olives the very circumstance of their being near to rottenness adds a peculiar beauty to the fruit. And the ears of corn bending down, and the lion's eyebrows, and the foam which flows from the mouth of wild boars, and many other things,—though they are far from being beautiful, in a certain sense,—still, because they come in the course of nature, have a beauty in them, and they please the mind; so that if a man should have a feeling and a deeper insight with respect to the things which are produced in the universe, there is hardly anything which comes in the course of nature which will not seem to him to be in a manner disposed so as to give pleasure."

But it is when his strain passes to directly moral subjects that his delicacy and sweetness lend to it the greatest charm. Let those who can feel the

beauty of spiritual refinement read this, the reflection of an emperor who prized mental superiority highly:—

"Thou sayest, 'Men cannot admire the sharpness of thy wits.' Be it so; but there are many other things of which thou canst not say, 'I am not formed for them by nature.' Show those qualities, then, which are altogether in thy power,—sincerity, gravity, endurance of labour, aversion to pleasure, contentment with thy portion and with few things, benevolence, frankness, no love of superfluity, freedom from trifling, magnanimity. Dost thou not see how many qualities thou art at once able to exhibit, as to which there is no excuse of natural incapacity and unfitness, and yet thou still remainest voluntarily below the mark? Or art thou compelled, through being defectively furnished by nature, to murmur, and to be mean, and to flatter, and to find fault with thy poor body and to try to please men, and to make great display, and to be so restless in thy mind? No, indeed; but thou mightest have been delivered from these things long ago. Only, if in truth thou canst be charged with being rather slow and dull of comprehension, thou must exert thyself about this also, not neglecting nor yet taking pleasure in thy dulness."

The same sweetness enables him to fix his mind, when he sees the isolation and moral death caused by sin, not on the cheerless thought of the misery of this condition, but on the inspiriting thought that man is blest with the power to escape from it:—

"Suppose that thou hast detached thyself from the natural unity,—for thou wast made by nature a part, but now thou hast cut thyself off,—yet here is this beautiful provision, that it is in thy power again to unite thyself.

God has allowed this to no other part,—after it has been separated and cut asunder, to come together again. But consider the goodness with which he has privileged man; for he has put it in his power, when he has been separated, to return and to be united and to resume his place."

It enables him to control even the passion for retreat and solitude, so strong in a soul like his, to which the world could offer no abiding city :—

" Men seek retreat for themselves, houses in the country, seashores, and mountains; and thou, too, art wont to desire such things very much. But this is altogether a mark of the most common sort of men, for it is in thy power whenever thou shalt choose to retire into thyself. For nowhere either with more quiet or more freedom from trouble does a man retire than into his own soul, particularly when he has within him such thoughts that by looking into them he is immediately in perfect tranquillity. Constantly, then, give to thyself this retreat, and renew thyself; and let thy principles be brief and fundamental, which, as soon as thou shalt recur to them, will be sufficient to cleanse the soul completely, and to send thee back free from all discontent with the things to which thou returnest."

Against this feeling of discontent and weariness, so natural to the great for whom there seems nothing left to desire or to strive after, but so enfeebling to them, so deteriorating, Marcus Aurelius never ceased to struggle. With resolute thankfulness he kept in remembrance the blessings of his lot; the true blessings of it, not the false :—

" I have to thank Heaven that I was subjected to a ruler and a father (Antoninus Pius) who was able to take

away all pride from me, and to bring me to the knowledge that it is possible for a man to live in a palace without either guards, or embroidered dresses, or any show of this kind; but that it is in such a man's power to bring himself very near to the fashion of a private person, without being for this reason either meaner in thought or more remiss in action with respect to the things which must be done for public interest. . . . I have to be thankful that my children have not been stupid nor deformed in body; that I did not make more proficiency in rhetoric, poetry, and the other studies, by which I should perhaps have been completely engrossed, if I had seen that I was making great progress in them; . . . that I knew Apollonius, Rusticus, Maximus; . . . that I received clear and frequent impressions about living according to nature, and what kind of a life that is, so that, so far as depended on Heaven, and its gifts, help, and inspiration, nothing hindered me from forthwith living according to nature, though I still fall short of it through my own fault, and through not observing the admonitions of Heaven, and, I may almost say, its direct instructions; that my body has held out so long in such a kind of life as mine; that though it was my mother's lot to die young, she spent the last years of her life with me; that whenever I wished to help any man in his need, I was never told that I had not the means of doing it; that, when I had an inclination to philosophy, I did not fall into the hands of a sophist."

And, as he dwelt with gratitude on these helps and blessings vouchsafed to him, his mind (so, at least, it seems to me) would sometimes revert with awe to the perils and temptations of the lonely height where he stood, to the lives of Tiberius, Caligula, Nero, Domitian, in their hideous blackness and ruin; and then

he wrote down for himself such a warning entry as this, significant and terrible in its abruptness :—

" A black character, a womanish character, a stubborn character, bestial, childish, animal, stupid, counterfeit, scurrilous, fraudulent, tyrannical ! "

Or this :—

" About what am I now employing my soul ? On every occasion I must ask myself this question, and enquire, What have I now in this part of me which they call the ruling principle, and whose soul have I now ?—that of a child, or of a young man, or of a weak woman, or of a tyrant, or of one of the lower animals in the service of man, or of a wild beast ?"

The character he wished to attain he knew well, and beautifully he has marked it, and marked, too, his sense of shortcoming :—

" When thou hast assumed these names,—good, modest, true, rational, equal-minded, magnanimous,—take care that thou dost not change these names ; and, if thou shouldst lose them, quickly return to them. If thou maintainest thyself in possession of these names without desiring that others should call thee by them, thou wilt be another being, and wilt enter on another life. For to continue to be such as thou hast hitherto been, and to be torn in pieces and defiled in such a life, is the character of a very stupid man, and one overfond of his life, and like those half-devoured fighters with wild beasts, who though covered with wounds and gore still entreat to be kept to the following day, though they will be exposed in the same state to the same claws and bites. Therefore fix thyself in the possession of these few names :

and if thou art able to abide in them, abide as if thou wast removed to the Happy Islands."

For all his sweetness and serenity, however, man's point of life "between two infinities" (of that expression Marcus Aurelius is the real owner) was to him anything but a Happy Island, and the performances on it he saw through no veils of illusion. Nothing is in general more gloomy and monotonous than declamations on the hollowness and transitoriness of human life and grandeur: but here, too, the great charm of Marcus Aurelius, his emotion, comes in to relieve the monotony and to break through the gloom; and even on this eternally used topic he is imaginative, fresh, and striking:—

"Consider, for example, the times of Vespasian. Thou wilt see all these things, people marrying, bringing up children, sick, dying, warring, feasting, trafficking, cultivating the ground, flattering, obstinately arrogant, suspecting, plotting, wishing for somebody to die, grumbling about the present, loving, heaping up treasure, desiring to be consuls or kings. Well then that life of these people no longer exists at all. Again, go to the times of Trajan. All is again the same. Their life too is gone. But chiefly thou shouldst think of those whom thou hast thyself known distracting themselves about idle things, neglecting to do what was in accordance with their proper constitution, and to hold firmly to this and to be content with it."

Again:—

"The things which are much valued in life are empty, and rotten, and trifling; and people are like little dogs,

biting one another, and little children quarrelling, crying, and then straightway laughing. But fidelity, and modesty, and justice, and truth, are fled

'Up to Olympus from the wide-spread earth.'

What then is there which still detains thee here?"

And once more :—

"Look down from above on the countless herds of men, and their countless solemnities, and the infinitely varied voyagings in storms and calms, and the differences among those who are born, who live together, and die. And consider too the life lived by others in olden time, and the life now lived among barbarous nations, and how many know not even thy name, and how many will soon forget it, and how they who perhaps now are praising thee will very soon blame thee, and that neither a posthumous name is of any value, nor reputation, nor anything else."

He recognised, indeed, that (to use his own words) "the prime principle in man's constitution is the social;" and he laboured sincerely to make not only his acts towards his fellow-men, but his thoughts also, suitable to this conviction :—

"When thou wishest to delight thyself, think of the virtues of those who live with thee; for instance, the activity of one, and the modesty of another, and the liberality of a third, and some other good quality of a fourth."

Still, it is hard for a pure and thoughtful man to live in a state of rapture at the spectacle afforded to him by his fellow-creatures; above all it is hard, when such a man is placed as Marcus Aurelius was placed, and has had the meanness and perversity of

his fellow-creatures thrust, in no common measure, upon his notice,—has had, time after time, to experience how "within ten days thou wilt seem a god to those to whom thou art now a beast and an ape." His true strain of thought as to his relations with his fellow-men is rather the following. He has been enumerating the higher consolations which may support a man at the approach of death, and he goes on:—

"But if thou requirest also a vulgar kind of comfort which shall reach thy heart, thou wilt be made best reconciled to death by observing the objects from which thou art going to be removed, and the morals of those with whom thy soul will no longer be mingled. For it is no way right to be offended with men, but it is thy duty to care for them and to bear with them gently; and yet to remember that thy departure will not be from men who have the same principles as thyself. For this is the only thing, if there be any, which could draw us the contrary way and attach us to life, to be permitted to live with those who have the same principles as ourselves. But now thou seest how great is the distress caused by the difference of those who live together, so that thou mayest say: 'Come quick, O death, lest perchance I too should forget myself."

O faithless and perverse generation! how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? Sometimes this strain rises even to a passion:—

"Short is the little which remains to thee of life. Live as on a mountain. Let men see, let them know, a real man, who lives as he was meant to live. If they cannot endure him, let them kill him. For that is better than to live as men do."

It is remarkable how little of a merely local and temporary character, how little of those *scoriæ* which a reader has to clear away before he gets to the precious ore, how little that even admits of doubt or question, the morality of Marcus Aurelius exhibits. Perhaps as to one point we must make an exception. Marcus Aurelius is fond of urging as a motive for man's cheerful acquiescence in whatever befalls him, that "whatever happens to every man *is for the interest of the universal;*" that the whole contains nothing *which is not for its advantage;* that everything which happens to a man is to be accepted, "even if it seems disagreeable, *because it leads to the health of the universe.*" And the whole course of the universe, he adds, has a providential reference to man's welfare: "*all other things have been made for the sake of rational beings.*" Religion has in all ages freely used this language, and it is not religion which will object to Marcus Aurelius's use of it; but science can hardly accept as severely accurate this employment of the terms *interest* and *advantage.* To a sound nature and a clear reason the proposition that things happen "for the interest of the universal," as men conceive of interest, may seem to have no meaning at all, and the proposition that "all things have been made for the sake of rational beings" may seem to be false. Yet even to this language, not irresistibly cogent when it is thus absolutely used, Marcus Aurelius gives a turn which makes it true and useful, when he says: "The ruling part of man can make a material for itself out of that which opposes it, as fire lays hold of what falls into it, and rises higher by means of this

very material;"—when he says: "What else are all things except exercises for the reason? Persevere then until thou shalt have made all things thine own, as the stomach which is strengthened makes all things its own, as the blazing fire makes flame and brightness out of everything that is thrown into it;"—when he says: "Thou wilt not cease to be miserable till thy mind is in such a condition, that, what luxury is to those who enjoy pleasure, such shall be to thee, in every matter which presents itself, the doing of the things which are conformable to man's constitution; for a man ought to consider as an enjoyment everything which it is in his power to do according to his own nature,—and it is in his power everywhere." In this sense it is, indeed, most true that "all things have been made for the sake of rational beings;" that "all things work together for good."

In general, however, the action Marcus Aurelius prescribes is action which every sound nature must recognise as right, and the motives he assigns are motives which every clear reason must recognise as valid. And so he remains the especial friend and comforter of all clear-headed and scrupulous, yet pure-hearted and upward striving men, in those ages most especially that walk by sight, not by faith, but yet have no open vision. He cannot give such souls, perhaps, all they yearn for, but he gives them much; and what he gives them, they can receive.

Yet no, it is not for what he thus gives them that such souls love him most! it is rather because of the emotion which lends to his voice so touching an accent, it is because he too yearns as they do for something

unattained by him. What an affinity for Christianity had this persecutor of the Christians! The effusion of Christianity, its relieving tears, its happy self-sacrifice, were the very element, one feels, for which his soul longed; they were near him, they brushed him, he touched them, he passed them by. One feels, too, that the Marcus Aurelius one reads must still have remained, even had Christianity been fully known to him, in a great measure himself; he would have been no Justin;—but how would Christianity have affected him? in what measure would it have changed him? Granted that he might have found, like the *Alogi* of modern times, in the most beautiful of the Gospels, the Gospel which has leavened Christendom most powerfully, the Gospel of St. John, too much Greek metaphysics, too much *gnosis*; granted that this gospel might have looked too like what he knew already to be a total surprise to him: what, then, would he have said to the Sermon on the Mount, to the twenty-sixth chapter of St. Matthew? What would have become of his notions of the *exitiabilis superstitio*, of the "obstinacy of the Christians"? Vain question! yet the greatest charm of Marcus Aurelius is that he makes us ask it. We see him wise, just, self-governed, tender, thankful, blameless; yet, with all this, agitated, stretching out his arms for something beyond,—*tendentemque manus ripæ ulterioris amore.*

THE FUNCTION OF CRITICISM AT THE PRESENT TIME

MANY objections have been made to a proposition which, in some remarks of mine on translating Homer, I ventured to put forth ; a proposition about criticism, and its importance at the present day. I said : " Of the literature of France and Germany, as of the intellect of Europe in general, the main effort, for now many years, has been a critical effort; the endeavour, in all branches of knowledge, theology, philosophy, history, art, science, to see the object as in itself it really is." I added, that owing to the operation in English literature of certain causes, " almost the last thing for which one would come to English literature is just that very thing which now Europe most desires,—criticism ;" and that the power and value of English literature was thereby impaired. More than one rejoinder declared that the importance I here assigned to criticism was excessive, and asserted the inherent superiority of the creative effort of the human spirit over its critical effort. And the other day, having been led by a Mr. Shairp's excellent notice of Wordsworth [1] to turn again to his

[1] I cannot help thinking that a practice, common in England during the last century, and still followed in France, of print-

biography, I found, in the words of this great man, whom I, for one, must always listen to with the profoundest respect, a sentence passed on the critic's business, which seems to justify every possible disparagement of it. Wordsworth says in one of his letters :—

"The writers in these publications" (the Reviews), "while they prosecute their inglorious employment, can not be supposed to be in a state of mind very favourable for being affected by the finer influences of a thing so pure as genuine poetry."

And a trustworthy reporter of his conversation quotes a more elaborate judgment to the same effect :—

"Wordsworth holds the critical power very low, infinitely lower than the inventive ; and he said to-day that if the quantity of time consumed in writing critiques on the works of others were given to original composition, of whatever kind it might be, it would be much better employed ; it would make a man find out sooner his own level, and it would do infinitely less mischief. A false or malicious criticism may do much injury to the minds of others, a stupid invention, either in prose or verse, is quite harmless."

ing a notice of this kind,—a notice by a competent critic,—to serve as an introduction to an eminent author's works, might be revived among us with advantage. To introduce all succeeding editions of Wordsworth, Mr. Shairp's notice might, it seems to me, excellently serve ; it is written from the point of view of an admirer, nay, of a disciple, and that is right ; but then the disciple must be also, as in this case he is, a critic, a man of letters, not, as too often happens, some relation or friend with no qualification for his task except affection for his author.

It is almost too much to expect of poor human nature, that a man capable of producing some effect in one line of literature, should, for the greater good of society, voluntarily doom himself to impotence and obscurity in another. Still less is this to be expected from men addicted to the composition of the "false or malicious criticism" of which Wordsworth speaks. However, everybody would admit that a false or malicious criticism had better never have been written. Everybody, too, would be willing to admit, as a general proposition, that the critical faculty is lower than the inventive. But is it true that criticism is really, in itself, a baneful and injurious employment; is it true that all time given to writing critiques on the works of others would be much better employed if it were given to original composition, of whatever kind this may be? Is it true that Johnson had better have gone on producing more *Irenes* instead of writing his *Lives of the Poets;* nay, is it certain that Wordsworth himself was better employed in making his Ecclesiastical Sonnets than when he made his celebrated Preface, so full of criticism, and criticism of the works of others? Wordsworth was himself a great critic, and it is to be sincerely regretted that he has not left us more criticism; Goethe was one of the greatest of critics, and we may sincerely congratulate ourselves that he has left us so much criticism. Without wasting time over the exaggeration which Wordsworth's judgment on criticism clearly contains, or over an attempt to trace the causes,—not difficult, I think, to be traced,—which may have led Wordsworth to this exaggeration, a

critic may with advantage seize an occasion for trying his own conscience, and for asking himself of what real service at any given moment the practice of criticism either is or may be made to his own mind and spirit, and to the minds and spirits of others.

The critical power is of lówer rank than the creative. True; but in assenting to this proposition, one or two things are to be kept in mind. It is undeniable that the exercise of a creative power, that a free creative activity, is the highest function of man; it is proved to be so by man's finding in it his true happiness. But it is undeniable, also, that men may have the sense of exercising this free creative activity in other ways than in producing great works of literature or art; if it were not so, all but a very few men would be shut out from the true happiness of all men. They may have it in well-doing, they may have it in learning, they may have it even in criticising. This is one thing to be kept in mind. Another is, that the exercise of the creative power in the production of great works of literature or art, however high this exercise of it may rank, is not at all epochs and under all conditions possible; and that therefore labour may be vainly spent in attempting it, which might with more fruit be used in preparing for it, in rendering it possible. This creative power works with elements, with materials; what if it has not those materials, those elements, ready for its use? In that case it must surely wait till they are ready. Now, in literature,—I will limit myself to literature, for it is about literature that the question arises,—the elements with which the creative power works are

ideas ; the best ideas on every matter which literature touches, current at the time. At any rate we may lay it down as certain that in modern literature no manifestation of the creative power not working with these can be very important or fruitful. And I say *current* at the time, not merely accessible at the time ; for creative literary genius does not principally show itself in discovering new ideas, that is rather the business of the philosopher. The grand work of literary genius is a work of synthesis and exposition, not of analysis and discovery; its gift lies in the faculty of being happily inspired by a certain intellectual and spiritual atmosphere, by a certain order of ideas, when it finds itself in them ; of dealing divinely with these ideas, presenting them in the most effective and attractive combinations,—making beautiful works with them, in short. But it must have the atmosphere, it must find itself amidst the order of ideas, in order to work freely ; and these it is not so easy to command. This is why great creative epochs in literature are so rare, this is why there is so much that is unsatisfactory in the productions of many men of real genius ; because, for the creation of a master-work of literature two powers must concur, the power of the man and the power of the moment, and the man is not enough without the moment ; the creative power has, for its happy exercise, appointed elements, and those elements are not in its own control.

Nay, they are more within the control of the critical power. It is the business of the critical power, as I said in the words already quoted, " in

all branches of knowledge, theology, philosophy, history, art, science, to see the object as in itself it really is." Thus it tends, at last, to make an intellectual situation of which the creative power can profitably avail itself. It tends to establish an order of ideas, if not absolutely true, yet true by comparison with that which it displaces; to make the best ideas prevail. Presently these new ideas reach society, the touch of truth is the touch of life, and there is a stir and growth everywhere; out of this stir and growth come the creative epochs of literature.

Or, to narrow our range, and quit these considerations of the general march of genius and of society,—considerations which are apt to become too abstract and impalpable,—every one can see that a poet, for instance, ought to know life and the world before dealing with them in poetry; and life and the world being in modern times very complex things, the creation of a modern poet, to be worth much, implies a great critical effort behind it; else it must be a comparatively poor, barren, and short-lived affair. This is why Byron's poetry had so little endurance in it, and Goethe's so much; both Byron and Goethe had a great productive power, but Goethe's was nourished by a great critical effort providing the true materials for it, and Byron's was not; Goethe knew life and the world, the poet's necessary subjects, much more comprehensively and thoroughly than Byron. He knew a great deal more of them, and he knew them much more as they really are.

It has long seemed to me that the burst of creative activity in our literature, through the first quarter of

this century, has about it in fact something premature; and that from this cause its productions are doomed, most of them, in spite of the sanguine hopes which accompanied and do still accompany them, to prove hardly more lasting than the productions of far less splendid epochs. And this prematureness comes from its having proceeded without having its proper data, without sufficient materials to work with. In other words, the English poetry of the first quarter of this century, with plenty of energy, plenty of creative force, did not know enough. This makes Byron so empty of matter, Shelley so incoherent, Wordsworth even, profound as he is, yet so wanting in completeness and variety. Wordsworth cared little for books, and disparaged Goethe. I admire Wordsworth, as he is, so much that I cannot wish him different; and it is vain, no doubt, to imagine such a man different from what he is, to suppose that he *could* have been different. But surely the one thing wanting to make Wordsworth an even greater poet than he is,—his thought richer, and his influence of wider application,—was that he should have read more books, among them, no doubt, those of that Goethe whom he disparaged without reading him.

But to speak of books and reading may easily lead to a misunderstanding here. It was not really books and reading that lacked to our poetry at this epoch; Shelley had plenty of reading, Coleridge had immense reading. Pindar and Sophocles—as we all say so glibly, and often with so little discernment of the real import of what we are saying—had not many books; Shakspeare was no deep reader. True; but

in the Greece of Pindar and Sophocles, in the England of Shakspeare, the poet lived in a current of ideas in the highest degree animating and nourishing to the creative power; society was, in the fullest measure, permeated by fresh thought, intelligent and alive. And this state of things is the true basis for the creative power's exercise, in this it finds its data, its materials, truly ready for its hand; all the books and reading in the world are only valuable as they are helps to this. Even when this does not actually exist, books and reading may enable a man to construct a kind of semblance of it in his own mind, a world of knowledge and intelligence in which he may live and work. This is by no means an equivalent to the artist for the nationally diffused life and thought of the epochs of Sophocles or Shakspeare; but, besides that it may be a means of preparation for such epochs, it does really constitute, if many share in it, a quickening and sustaining atmosphere of great value. Such an atmosphere the many-sided learning and the long and widely-combined critical effort of Germany formed for Goethe, when he lived and worked. There was no national glow of life and thought there as in the Athens of Pericles or the England of Elizabeth. That was the poet's weakness. But there was a sort of equivalent for it in the complete culture and unfettered thinking of a large body of Germans. That was his strength. In the England of the first quarter of this century there was neither a national glow of life and thought, such as we had in the age of Elizabeth, nor yet a culture and a force of learning and criticism such as were to

be found in Germany. Therefore the creative power of poetry wanted, for success in the highest sense, materials and a basis; a thorough interpretation of the world was necessarily denied to it.

At first sight it seems strange that out of the immense stir of the French Revolution and its age should not have come a crop of works of genius equal to that which came out of the stir of the great productive time of Greece, or out of that of the Renascence, with its powerful episode the Reformation. But the truth is that the stir of the French Revolution took a character which essentially distinguished it from such movements as these. These were, in the main, disinterestedly intellectual and spiritual movements; movements in which the human spirit looked for its satisfaction in itself and in the increased play of its own activity. The French Revolution took a political, practical character. The movement which went on in France under the old *régime*, from 1700 to 1789, was far more really akin than that of the Revolution itself to the movement of the Renascence; the France of Voltaire and Rousseau told far more powerfully upon the mind of Europe than the France of the Revolution. Goethe reproached this last expressly with having "thrown quiet culture back." Nay, and the true key to how much in our Byron, even in our Wordsworth, is this!—that they had their source in a great movement of feeling, not in a great movement of mind. The French Revolution, however,—that object of so much blind love and so much blind hatred,—found undoubtedly its motive-power in the intelligence of men, and not in

their practical sense; this is what distinguishes it from the English Revolution of Charles the First's time. This is what makes it a more spiritual event than our Revolution, an event of much more powerful and world-wide interest, though practically less successful; it appeals to an order of ideas which are universal, certain, permanent. 1789 asked of a thing, Is it rational? 1642 asked of a thing, Is it legal? or, when it went furthest, Is it according to conscience? This is the English fashion, a fashion to be treated, within its own sphere, with the highest respect; for its success, within its own sphere, has been prodigious. But what is law in one place is not law in another, what is law here to-day is not law even here to-morrow; and as for conscience, what is binding on one man's conscience is not binding on another's. The old woman who threw her stool at the head of the surpliced minister in St. Giles's Church at Edinburgh obeyed an impulse to which millions of the human race may be permitted to remain strangers. But the prescriptions of reason are absolute, unchanging, of universal validity; *to count by tens is the easiest way of counting*—that is a proposition of which every one, from here to the Antipodes, feels the force; at least I should say so if we did not live in a country where it is not impossible that any morning we may find a letter in the *Times* declaring that a decimal coinage is an absurdity. That a whole nation should have been penetrated with an enthusiasm for pure reason, and with an ardent zeal for making its prescriptions triumph, is a very remarkable thing, when we consider how little of mind, or anything so worthy

and quickening as mind, comes into the motives which alone, in general, impel great masses of men. In spite of the extravagant direction given to this enthusiasm, in spite of the crimes and follies in which it lost itself, the French Revolution derives from the force, truth, and universality of the ideas which it took for its law, and from the passion with which it could inspire a multitude for these ideas, a unique and still living power; it is—it will probably long remain—the greatest, the most animating event in history. And as no sincere passion for the things of the mind, even though it turn out in many respects an unfortunate passion, is ever quite thrown away and quite barren of good, France has reaped from hers one fruit—the natural and legitimate fruit, though not precisely the grand fruit she expected: she is the country in Europe where *the people* is most alive.

But the mania for giving an immediate political and practical application to all these fine ideas of the reason was fatal. Here an Englishman is in his element: on this theme we can all go on for hours. And all we are in the habit of saying on it has undoubtedly a great deal of truth. Ideas cannot be too much prized in and for themselves, cannot be too much lived with; but to transport them abruptly into the world of politics and practice, violently to revolutionise this world to their bidding,—that is quite another thing. There is the world of ideas and there is the world of practice; the French are often for suppressing the one and the English the other; but neither is to be suppressed. A member of the House

of Commons said to me the other day: "That a thing is an anomaly, I consider to be no objection to it whatever." I venture to think he was wrong; that a thing is an anomaly *is* an objection to it, but absolutely and in the sphere of ideas: it is not necessarily, under such and such circumstances, or at such and such a moment, an objection to it in the sphere of politics and practice. Joubert has said beautifully: "C'est la force et le droit qui règlent toutes choses dans le monde; la force en attendant le droit." (Force and right are the governors of this world; force till right is ready.) *Force till right is ready;* and till right is ready, force, the existing order of things, is justified, is the legitimate ruler. But right is something moral, and implies inward recognition, free assent of the will; we are not ready for right,—*right*, so far as we are concerned, *is not ready*,—until we have attained this sense of seeing it and willing it. The way in which for us it may change and transform force, the existing order of things, and become, in its turn, the legitimate ruler of the world, should depend on the way in which, when our time comes, we see it and will it. Therefore for other people enamoured of their own newly discerned right, to attempt to impose it upon us as ours, and violently to substitute their right for our force, is an act of tyranny, and to be resisted. It sets at nought the second great half of our maxim, *force till right is ready*. This was the grand error of the French Revolution; and its movement of ideas, by quitting the intellectual sphere and rushing furiously into the political sphere, ran, indeed, a prodigious and memorable course, but produced no

such intellectual fruit as the movement of ideas of the Renascence, and created, in opposition to itself, what I may call an *epoch of concentration.* The great force of that epoch of concentration was England; and the great voice of that epoch of concentration was Burke. It is the fashion to treat Burke's writings on the French Revolution as superannuated and conquered by the event; as the eloquent but unphilosophical tirades of bigotry and prejudice. I will not deny that they are often disfigured by the violence and passion of the moment, and that in some directions Burke's view was bounded, and his observation therefore at fault. But on the whole, and for those who can make the needful corrections, what distinguishes these writings is their profound, permanent, fruitful, philosophical truth. They contain the true philosophy of an epoch of concentration, dissipate the heavy atmosphere which its own nature is apt to engender round it, and make its resistance rational instead of mechanical.

But Burke is so great because, almost alone in England, he brings thought to bear upon politics, he saturates politics with thought. It is his accident that his ideas were at the service of an epoch of concentration, not of an epoch of expansion; it is his characteristic that he so lived by ideas, and had such a source of them welling up within him, that he could float even an epoch of concentration and English Tory politics with them. It does not hurt him that Dr. Price and the Liberals were enraged with him; it does not even hurt him that George the Third and the Tories were enchanted with him. His greatness

is that he lived in a world which neither English Liberalism nor English Toryism is apt to enter ;—the world of ideas, not the world of catchwords and party habits. So far is it from being really true of him that he " to party gave up what was meant for mankind," that at the very end of his fierce struggle with the French Revolution, after all his invectives against its false pretensions, hallowness, and madness, with his sincere conviction of its mischievousness, he can close a memorandum on the best means of combating it, some of the last pages he ever wrote,—the *Thoughts on French Affairs*, in December 1791,—with these striking words :—

" The evil is stated, in my opinion, as it exists. The remedy must be where power, wisdom, and information, I hope, are more united with good intentions than they can be with me. I have done with this subject, I believe, for ever. It has given me many anxious moments for the last two years. *If a great change is to be made in human affairs, the minds of men will be fitted to it ; the general opinions and feelings will draw that way. Every fear, every hope will forward it ; and then they who persist in opposing this mighty current in human affairs, will appear rather to resist the decrees of Providence itself, than the mere designs of men. They will not be resolute and firm, but perverse and obstinate.*"

That return of Burke upon himself has always seemed to me one of the finest things in English literature, or indeed in any literature. That is what I call living by ideas : when one side of a question has long had your earnest support, when all your feelings are engaged, when you hear all round you no

language but one, when your party talks this language like a steam-engine and can imagine no other,—still to be able to think, still to be irresistibly carried, if so it be, by the current of thought to the opposite side of the question, and, like Balaam, to be unable to speak anything *but what the Lord has put in your mouth.* I know nothing more striking, and I must add that I know nothing more un-English.

For the Englishman in general is like my friend the Member of Parliament, and believes, point-blank, that for a thing to be an anomaly is absolutely no objection to it whatever. He is like the Lord Auckland of Burke's day, who, in a memorandum on the French Revolution, talks of "certain miscreants, assuming the name of philosophers, who have presumed themselves capable of establishing a new system of society." The Englishman has been called a political animal, and he values what is political and practical so much that ideas easily become objects of dislike in his eyes, and thinkers "miscreants," because ideas and thinkers have rashly meddled with politics and practice. This would be all very well if the dislike and neglect confined themselves to ideas transported out of their own sphere, and meddling rashly with practice; but they are inevitably extended to ideas as such, and to the whole life of intelligence; practice is everything, a free play of the mind is nothing. The notion of the free play of the mind upon all subjects being a pleasure in itself, being an object of desire, being an essential provider of elements without which a nation's spirit, whatever compensations it may have for them must, in the long run, die of inanition, hardly enters

into an Englishman's thoughts. It is noticeable that the word *curiosity*, which in other languages is used in a good sense, to mean, as a high and fine quality of man's nature, just this disinterested love of a free play of the mind on all subjects, for its own sake,—it is noticeable, I say, that this word has in our language no sense of the kind, no sense but a rather bad and disparaging one. But criticism, real criticism, is essentially the exercise of this very quality. It obeys an instinct prompting it to try to know the best that is known and thought in the world, irrespectively of practice, politics, and everything of the kind; and to value knowledge and thought as they approach this best, without the intrusion of any other considerations whatever. This is an instinct for which there is, I think, little original sympathy in the practical English nature, and what there was of it has undergone a long benumbing period of blight and suppression in the epoch of concentration which followed the French Revolution.

But epochs of concentration cannot well endure for ever; epochs of expansion, in the due course of things, follow them. Such an epoch of expansion seems to be opening in this country. In the first place all danger of a hostile forcible pressure of foreign ideas upon our practice has long disappeared; like the traveller in the fable, therefore, we begin to wear our cloak a little more loosely. Then, with a long peace, the ideas of Europe steal gradually and amicably in, and mingle, though in infinitesimally small quantities at a time, with our own notions. Then, too, in spite of all that is said about the absorbing

and brutalising influence of our passionate material progress, it seems to me indisputable that this progress is likely, though not certain, to lead in the end to an apparition of intellectual life; and that man, after he has made himself perfectly comfortable and has now to determine what to do with himself next, may begin to remember that he has a mind, and that the mind may be made the source of great pleasure. I grant it is mainly the privilege of faith, at present, to discern this end to our railways, our business, and our fortune-making; but we shall see if, here as elsewhere, faith is not in the end the true prophet. Our ease, our travelling, and our unbounded liberty to hold just as hard and securely as we please to the practice to which our notions have given birth, all tend to beget an inclination to deal a little more freely with these notions themselves, to canvass them a little, to penetrate a little into their real nature. Flutterings of curiosity, in the foreign sense of the word, appear amongst us, and it is in these that criticism must look to find its account. Criticism first; a time of true creative activity, perhaps,—which, as I have said, must inevitably be preceded amongst us by a time of criticism,—hereafter, when criticism has done its work.

It is of the last importance that English criticism should clearly discern what rule for its course, in order to avail itself of the field now opening to it, and to produce fruit for the future, it ought to take. The rule may be summed up in one word,—*disinterestedness*. And how is criticism to show disinterestedness? By keeping aloof from what is called "the practical view

of things ; " by resolutely following the law of its own nature, which is to be a free play of the mind on all subjects which it touches. By steadily refusing to lend itself to any of those ulterior, political, practical considerations about ideas, which plenty of people will be sure to attach to them, which perhaps ought often to be attached to them, which in this country at any rate are certain to be attached to them quite sufficiently, but which criticism has really nothing to do with. Its business is, as I have said, simply to know the best that is known and thought in the world, and by in its turn making this known, to create a current of true and fresh ideas. Its business is to do this with inflexible honesty, with due ability ; but its business is to do no more, and to leave alone all questions of practical consequences and applications, questions which will never fail to have due prominence given to them. Else criticism, besides being really false to its own nature, merely continues in the old rut which it has hitherto followed in this country, and will certainly miss the chance now given to it. For what is at present the bane of criticism in this country ? It is that practical considerations cling to it and stifle it. It subserves interests not its own. Our organs of criticism are organs of men and parties having practical ends to serve, and with them those practical ends are the first thing and the play of mind the second ; so much play of mind as is compatible with the prosecution of those practical ends is all that is wanted. An organ like the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, having for its main function to understand and utter the best that is known and thought in the world,

existing, it may be said, as just an organ for a free play of the mind, we have not. But we have the *Edinburgh Review*, existing as an organ of the old Whigs, and for as much play of the mind as may suit its being that; we have the *Quarterly Review*, existing as an organ of the Tories, and for as much play of mind as may suit its being that; we have the *British Quarterly Review*, existing as an organ of the political Dissenters, and for as much play of mind as may suit its being that; we have the *Times*, existing as an organ of the common, satisfied, well-to-do Englishman, and for as much play of mind as may suit its being that. And so on through all the various fractions, political and religious, of our society; every fraction has, as such, its organ of criticism, but the notion of combining all fractions in the common pleasure of a free disinterested play of mind meets with no favour. Directly this play of mind wants to have more scope, and to forget the pressure of practical considerations a little, it is checked, it is made to feel the chain. We saw this the other day in the extinction, so much to be regretted, of the *Home and Foreign Review*. Perhaps in no organ of criticism in this country was there so much knowledge, so much play of mind; but these could not save it. The *Dublin Review* subordinates play of mind to the practical business of English and Irish Catholicism, and lives. It must needs be that men should act in sects and parties, that each of these sects and parties should have its organ, and should make this organ subserve the interests of its action; but it would be well, too, that there should be a criticism, not the minister of

these interests, not their enemy, but absolutely and entirely independent of them. No other criticism will ever attain any real authority or make any real way towards its end,—the creating a current of true and fresh ideas.

It is because criticism has so little kept in the pure intellectual sphere, has so little detached itself from practice, has been so directly polemical and controversial, that it has so ill accomplished, in this country, its best spiritual work; which is to keep man from a self-satisfaction which is retarding and vulgarising, to lead him towards perfection, by making his mind dwell upon what is excellent in itself, and the absolute beauty and fitness of things. A polemical practical criticism makes men blind even to the ideal imperfection of their practice, makes them willingly assert its ideal perfection, in order the better to secure it against attack; and clearly this is narrowing and baneful for them. If they were reassured on the practical side, speculative considerations of ideal perfection they might be brought to entertain, and their spiritual horizon would thus gradually widen. Sir Charles Adderley says to the Warwickshire farmers:—

"Talk of the improvement of breed! Why, the race we ourselves represent, the men and women, the old Anglo-Saxon race, are the best breed in the whole world. . . . The absence of a too enervating climate, too unclouded skies, and a too luxurious nature, has produced so vigorous a race of people, and has rendered us so superior to all the world."

Mr. Roebuck says to the Sheffield cutlers:— a great financier

"I look around me and ask what is the state of England?

Is not property safe? Is not every man able to say what he likes? Can you not walk from one end of England to the other in perfect security? I ask you whether, the world over or in past history, there is anything like it? Nothing. I pray that our unrivalled happiness may last."

Now obviously there is a peril for poor human nature in words and thoughts of such exuberant self-satisfaction, until we find ourselves safe in the streets of the Celestial City.

> " Das wenige verschwindet leicht dem Blicke
> Der vorwärts sieht, wie viel noch übrig bleibt—"

says Goethe; "the little that is done seems nothing when we look forward and see how much we have yet to do." Clearly this is a better line of reflection for weak humanity, so long as it remains on this earthly field of labour and trial.

But neither Sir Charles Adderley nor Mr. Roebuck is by nature inaccessible to considerations of this sort. They only lose sight of them owing to the controversial life we all lead, and the practical form which all speculation takes with us. They have in view opponents whose aim is not ideal, but practical; and in their zeal to uphold their own practice against these innovators, they go so far as even to attribute to this practice an ideal perfection. Somebody has been wanting to introduce a six-pound franchise, or to abolish church-rates, or to collect agricultural statistics by force, or to diminish local self-government. How natural, in reply to such proposals, very likely improper or ill-timed, to go a little beyond the mark and to say stoutly, "such a race of people as we stand,

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so superior to all the world! The old Anglo-Saxon race, the best breed in the whole world! I pray that our unrivalled happiness may last! I ask you whether, the world over or in past history, there is anything like it?" And so long as criticism answers this dithyramb by insisting that the old Anglo-Saxon race would be still more superior to all others if it had no church-rates, or that our unrivalled happiness would last yet longer with a six-pound franchise, so long will the strain, "The best breed in the whole world!" swell louder and louder, everything ideal and refining will be lost out of sight, and both the assailed and their critics will remain in a sphere, to say the truth, perfectly unvital, a sphere in which spiritual progression is impossible. But let criticism leave church-rates and the franchise alone, and in the most candid spirit, without a single lurking thought of practical innovation, confront with our dithyramb this paragraph on which I stumbled in a newspaper immediately after reading Mr. Roebuck:—

"A shocking child murder has just been committed at Nottingham. A girl named Wragg left the workhouse there on Saturday morning with her young illegitimate child. The child was soon afterwards found dead on Mapperly Hills, having been strangled. Wragg is in custody." The Times. March 1865

Nothing but that; but, in juxtaposition with the absolute eulogies of Sir Charles Adderley and Mr. Roebuck, how eloquent, how suggestive are those few lines! "Our old Anglo-Saxon breed, the best in the whole world!"—how much that is harsh and

ill-favoured there is in this best! *Wragg!* If we are to talk of ideal perfection, of "the best in the whole world," has any one reflected what a touch of grossness in our race, what an original shortcoming in the more delicate spiritual perceptions, is shown by the natural growth amongst us of such hideous names, as Higginbottom, Stiggins, Bugg! In Ionia and Attica they were luckier in this respect than "the best race in the world;" by the Ilissus there was no Wragg, poor thing! And "our unrivalled happiness;"—what an element of grimness, bareness, and hideousness mixes with it and blurs it; the workhouse, the dismal Mapperly Hills,—how dismal those who have seen them will remember;—the gloom, the smoke, the cold, the strangled illegitimate child! "I ask you whether, the world over or in past history, there is anything like it?" Perhaps not, one is inclined to answer; but at any rate, in that case, the world is very much to be pitied. And the final touch,—short, bleak, and inhuman: *Wragg is in custody.* The sex lost in the confusion of our unrivalled happiness; or (shall I say?) the superfluous Christian name lopped off by the straightforward vigour of our old Anglo-Saxon breed! There is profit for the spirit in such contrasts as this; criticism serves the cause of perfection by establishing them. By eluding sterile conflict, by refusing to remain in the sphere where alone narrow and relative conceptions have any worth and validity, criticism may diminish its momentary importance, but only in this way has it a chance of gaining admittance for those wider and more perfect conceptions to which all its duty is really owed. Mr.

Roebuck will have a poor opinion of an adversary who replies to his defiant songs of triumph only by murmuring under his breath, *Wragg is in custody;* but in no other way will these songs of triumph be induced gradually to moderate themselves, to get rid of what in them is excessive and offensive, and to fall into a softer and truer key.

It will be said that it is a very subtle and indirect action which I am thus prescribing for criticism, and that, by embracing in this manner the Indian virtue of detachment and abandoning the sphere of practical life, it condemns itself to a slow and obscure work. Slow and obscure it may be, but it is the only proper work of criticism. The mass of mankind will never have any ardent zeal for seeing things as they are; very inadequate ideas will always satisfy them. On these inadequate ideas reposes, and must repose, the general practice of the world. That is as much as saying that whoever sets himself to see things as they are will find himself one of a very small circle; but it is only by this small circle resolutely doing its own work that adequate ideas will ever get current at all. The rush and roar of practical life will always have a dizzying and attracting effect upon the most collected spectator, and tend to draw him into its vortex; most of all will this be the case where that life is so powerful as it is in England. But it is only by remaining collected, and refusing to lend himself to the point of view of the practical man, that the critic can do the practical man any service; and it is only by the greatest sincerity in pursuing his own course, and by at last convincing even the practical man of his

sincerity, that he can escape misunderstandings which perpetually threaten him.

For the practical man is not apt for fine distinctions, and yet in these distinctions truth and the highest culture greatly find their account. But it is not easy to lead a practical man,—unless you reassure him as to your practical intentions, you have no chance of leading him,—to see that a thing which he has always been used to look at from one side only, which he greatly values, and which, looked at from that side, quite deserves, perhaps all the prizing and admiring which he bestows upon it,—that this thing, looked at from another side, may appear much less beneficent and beautiful, and yet retain all its claims to our practical allegiance. Where shall we find language innocent enough, how shall we make the spotless purity of our intentions evident enough, to enable us to say to the political Englishman that the British Constitution itself, which, seen from the practical side, looks such a magnificent organ of progress and virtue, seen from the speculative side,—with its compromises, its love of facts, its horror of theory, its studied avoidance of clear thoughts,—that, seen from this side, our august Constitution sometimes looks,—forgive me, shade of Lord Somers!—a colossal machine for the manufacture of Philistines? How is Cobbett to say this and not be misunderstood, blackened as he is with the smoke of a lifelong conflict in the field of political practice? how is Mr. Carlyle to say it and not be misunderstood, after his furious raid into this field with his *Latter-day Pamphlets?* how is Mr. Ruskin, after his pugnacious political economy? I say, the

critic must be kept out of the region of immediate practice in the political, social, humanitarian sphere, if he wants to make a beginning for that more free speculative treatment of things, which may perhaps one day make its benefits felt even in this sphere, but in a natural and thence irresistible manner.

Do what he will, however, the critic will still remain exposed to frequent misunderstandings, and nowhere so much as in this country. For here people are particularly indisposed even to comprehend that without this free disinterested treatment of things, truth and the highest culture are out of the question. So immersed are they in practical life, so accustomed to take all their notions from this life and its processes, that they are apt to think that truth and culture themselves can be reached by the processes of this life, and that it is an impertinent singularity to think of reaching them in any other. "We are all *terræ filii*," cries their eloquent advocate; "all Philistines together. Away with the notion of proceeding by any other course than the course dear to the Philistines; let us have a social movement, let us organise and combine a party to pursue truth and new thought, let us call it *the liberal party*, and let us all stick to each other, and back each other up. Let us have no nonsense about independent criticism, and intellectual delicacy, and the few and the many. Don't let us trouble ourselves about foreign thought; we shall invent the whole thing for ourselves as we go along. If one of us speaks well, applaud him; if one of us speaks ill, applaud him too; we are all in the same movement, we are all liberals, we are all in

pursuit of truth." In this way the pursuit of truth becomes really a social, practical, pleasurable affair, almost requiring a chairman, a secretary, and advertisements; with the excitement of an occasional scandal, with a little resistance to give the happy sense of difficulty overcome; but, in general, plenty of bustle and very little thought. To act is so easy, as Goethe says; to think is so hard! It is true that the critic has many temptations to go with the stream, to make one of the party movement, one of these *terræ filii*; it seems ungracious to refuse to be a *terræ filius*, when so many excellent people are; but the critic's duty is to refuse, or, if resistance is vain, at least to cry with Obermann: *Périssons en résistant.*

How serious a matter it is to try and resist, I had ample opportunity of experiencing when I ventured some time ago to criticise the celebrated first volume of Bishop Colenso.[1] The echoes of the storm which was then raised I still, from time to time, hear grumbling round me. That storm arose out of a misunderstanding almost inevitable. It is a result of no little culture to attain to a clear perception that science and religion are two wholly different things. The multi-

[1] So sincere is my dislike to all personal attack and controversy, that I abstain from reprinting, at this distance of time from the occasion which called them forth, the essays in which I criticised Dr. Colenso's book; I feel bound, however, after all that has passed, to make here a final declaration of my sincere impenitence for having published them. Nay, I cannot forbear repeating yet once more, for his benefit and that of his readers, this sentence from my original remarks upon him: *There is truth of science and truth of religion; truth of science does not become truth of religion till it is made religious.* And I will add: Let us have all the science there is from the men of science; from the men of religion let us have religion.

tude will for ever confuse them; but happily that is of no great real importance, for while the multitude imagines itself to live by its false science, it does really live by its true religion. Dr. Colenso, however, in his first volume did all he could to strengthen the confusion,[1] and to make it dangerous. *He did this* with the best intentions, I freely admit, and with the most candid ignorance that this was the natural effect of what he was doing; but, says Joubert, "Ignorance, which in matters of morals extenuates the crime, is itself, in intellectual matters, a crime of the first order." I criticised Bishop Colenso's speculative confusion. Immediately there was a cry raised: "What is this? here is a liberal attacking a liberal. Do not you belong to the movement? are not you a friend of truth? Is not Bishop Colenso in pursuit of truth? then speak with proper respect of his book. Dr. Stanley is another friend of truth, and you speak with proper respect of his book; why make these invidious differences? both books are excellent, admirable, liberal; Bishop Colenso's perhaps the most so, because it is the boldest, and will have the best practical consequences for the liberal cause. Do you want to encourage to the attack of a brother liberal his, and your, and our implacable enemies, the *Church and State Review* or the *Record*,—the High Church rhinoceros and the Evangelical hyæna? Be silent, therefore; or rather speak, speak as loud as ever you can! and go into ecstasies over the eighty and odd pigeons."

[1] It has been said I make it "a crime against literary criticism and the higher culture to attempt to inform the ignorant." Need I point out that the ignorant are not informed by being confirmed in a confusion?

But criticism cannot follow this coarse and indiscriminate method. It is unfortunately possible for a man in pursuit of truth to write a book which reposes upon a false conception. Even the practical consequences of a book are to genuine criticism no recommendation of it, if the book is, in the highest sense, blundering. I see that a lady who herself, too, is in pursuit of truth, and who writes with great ability, but a little too much, perhaps, under the influence of the practical spirit of the English liberal movement, classes Bishop Colenso's book and M. Renan's together, in her survey of the religious state of Europe, as facts of the same order, works, both of them, of "great importance;" "great ability, power, and skill;" Bishop Colenso's, perhaps, the most powerful; at least, Miss Cobbe gives special expression to her gratitude that to Bishop Colenso "has been given the strength to grasp, and the courage to teach, truths of such deep import." In the same way, more than one popular writer has compared him to Luther. Now it is just this kind of false estimate which the critical spirit is, it seems to me, bound to resist. It is really the strongest possible proof of the low ebb at which, in England, the critical spirit is, that while the critical hit in the religious literature of Germany is Dr. Strauss's book, in that of France M. Renan's book, the book of Bishop Colenso is the critical hit in the religious literature of England. Bishop Colenso's book reposes on a total misconception of the essential elements of the religious problem, as that problem is now presented for solution. To criticism, therefore, which seeks to have the best that is known

and thought on this problem, it is, however well meant, of no importance whatever. M. Renan's book attempts a new synthesis of the elements furnished to us by the Four Gospels. It attempts, in my opinion, a synthesis, perhaps premature, perhaps impossible, certainly not successful. Up to the present time, at any rate, we must acquiesce in Fleury's sentence on such recastings of the Gospel-story: *Quiconque s'imagine la pouvoir mieux écrire, ne l'entend pas.* M. Renan had himself passed by anticipation a like sentence on his own work, when he said: "If a new presentation of the character of Jesus were offered to me, I would not have it; its very clearness would be, in my opinion, the best proof of its insufficiency." His friends may with perfect justice rejoin that at the sight of the Holy Land, and of the actual scene of the Gospel-story, all the current of M. Renan's thoughts may have naturally changed, and a new casting of that story irresistibly suggested itself to him; and that this is just a case for applying Cicero's maxim: Change of mind is not inconsistency—*nemo doctus unquam mutationem consilii inconstantiam dixit esse.* Nevertheless, for criticism, M. Renan's first thought must still be the truer one, as long as his new casting so fails more fully to commend itself, more fully (to use Coleridge's happy phrase about the Bible) to *find* us. Still M. Renan's attempt is, for criticism, of the most real interest and importance, since, with all its difficulty, a fresh synthesis of the New Testament *data*,—not a making war on them, in Voltaire's fashion, not a leaving them out of mind, in the world's fashion, but the putting a new construction

upon them, the taking them from under the old, traditional, conventional point of view and placing them under a new one,—is the very essence of the religious problem, as now presented; and only by efforts in this direction can it receive a solution.

Again, in the same spirit in which she judges Bishop Colenso, Miss Cobbe, like so many earnest liberals of our practical race, both here and in America, herself sets vigorously about a positive reconstruction of religion, about making a religion of the future out of hand, or at least setting about making it. We must not rest, she and they are always thinking and saying, in negative criticism, we must be creative and constructive; hence we have such works as her recent *Religious Duty*, and works still more considerable, perhaps, by others, which will be in every one's mind. These works often have much ability; they often spring out of sincere convictions, and a sincere wish to do good; and they sometimes, perhaps, do good. Their fault is (if I may be permitted to say so) one which they have in common with the British College of Health, in the New Road. Every one knows the British College of Health; it is that building with the lion and the statue of the Goddess Hygeia before it; at least I am sure about the lion, though I am not absolutely certain about the Goddess Hygeia. This building does credit, perhaps, to the resources of Dr. Morrison and his disciples; but it falls a good deal short of one's idea of what a British College of Health ought to be. In England, where we hate public interference and love individual enterprise, we have a

whole crop of places like the British College of Health; the grand name without the grand thing. Unluckily, creditable to individual enterprise as they are, they tend to impair our taste by making us forget what more grandiose, noble, or beautiful character properly belongs to a public institution. The same may be said of the religions of the future of Miss Cobbe and others. Creditable, like the British College of Health, to the resources of their authors, they yet tend to make us forget what more grandiose, noble, or beautiful character properly belongs to religious constructions. The historic religions, with all their faults, have had this; it certainly belongs to the religious sentiment, when it truly flowers, to have this; and we impoverish our spirit if we allow a religion of the future without it. What then is the duty of criticism here? To take the practical point of view, to applaud the liberal movement and all its works,—its New Road religions of the future into the bargain,—for their general utility's sake? By no means; but to be perpetually dissatisfied with these works, while they perpetually fall short of a high and perfect ideal.

For criticism, these are elementary laws; but they never can be popular, and in this country they have been very little followed, and one meets with immense obstacles in following them. That is a reason for asserting them again and again. Criticism must maintain its independence of the practical spirit and its aims. Even with well-meant efforts of the practical spirit it must express dissatisfaction, if in the sphere of the ideal they seem impoverishing and

limiting. It must not hurry on to the goal because of its practical importance. It must be patient, and know how to wait; and flexible, and know how to attach itself to things and how to withdraw from them. It must be apt to study and praise elements that for the fulness of spiritual perfection are wanted, even though they belong to a power which in the practical sphere may be maleficent. It must be apt to discern the spiritual shortcomings or illusions of powers that in the practical sphere may be beneficent. And this without any notion of favouring or injuring, in the practical sphere, one power or the other; without any notion of playing off, in this sphere, one power against the other. When one looks, for instance, at the English Divorce Court,—an institution which perhaps has its practical conveniences, but which in the ideal sphere is so hideous; an institution which neither makes divorce impossible nor makes it decent, which allows a man to get rid of his wife, or a wife of her husband, but makes them drag one another first, for the public edification, through a mire of unutterable infamy,—when one looks at this charming institution, I say, with its crowded trials, its newspaper reports, and its money compensations, this institution in which the gross unregenerate British Philistine has indeed stamped an image of himself,—one may be permitted to find the marriage theory of Catholicism refreshing and elevating. Or when Protestantism, in virtue of its supposed rational and intellectual origin, gives the law to criticism too magisterially, criticism may and must remind it that its pretensions, in this respect, are illusive and do it

harm; that the Reformation was a moral rather than an intellectual event; that Luther's theory of grace no more exactly reflects the mind of the spirit than Bossuet's philosophy of history reflects it; and that there is no more antecedent probability of the Bishop of Durham's stock of ideas being agreeable to perfect reason than of Pope Pius the Ninth's. But criticism will not on that account forget the achievements of Protestantism in the practical and moral sphere; nor that, even in the intellectual sphere, Protestantism, though in a blind and stumbling manner, carried forward the Renascence, while Catholicism threw itself violently across its path.

I lately heard a man of thought and energy contrasting the want of ardour and movement which he now found amongst young men in this country with what he remembered in his own youth, twenty years ago. "What reformers we were then!" he exclaimed; "what a zeal we had! how we canvassed every institution in Church and State, and were prepared to remodel them all on first principles!" He was inclined to regret, as a spiritual flagging, the lull which he saw. I am disposed rather to regard it as a pause in which the turn to a new mode of spiritual progress is being accomplished. Everything was long seen, by the young and ardent amongst us, in inseparable connection with politics and practical life. We have pretty well exhausted the benefits of seeing things in this connection, we have got all that can be got by so seeing them. Let us try a more disinterested mode of seeing them; let us betake ourselves more to the serener life of the mind and spirit.

This life, too, may have its excesses and dangers; but they are not for us at present. Let us think of quietly enlarging our stock of true and fresh ideas, and not, as soon as we get an idea or half an idea, be running out with it into the street, and trying to make it rule there. Our ideas will, in the end, shape the world all the better for maturing a little. Perhaps in fifty years' time it will in the English House of Commons be an objection to an institution that it is an anomaly, and my friend the Member of Parliament will shudder in his grave. But let us in the meanwhile rather endeavour that in twenty years' time it may, in English literature, be an objection to a proposition that it is absurd. That will be a change so vast, that the imagination almost fails to grasp it. *Ab integro sæclorum nascitur ordo.*

If I have insisted so much on the course which criticism must take where politics and religion are concerned, it is because, where these burning matters are in question, it is most likely to go astray. I have wished, above all, to insist on the attitude which criticism should adopt towards things in general; on its right tone and temper of mind. But then comes another question as to the subject-matter which literary criticism should most seek. Here, in general, its course is determined for it by the idea which is the law of its being; the idea of a disinterested endeavour to learn and propagate the best that is known and thought in the world, and thus to establish a current of fresh and true ideas. By the very nature of things, as England is not all the world, much of the best that is known and thought in the

world cannot be of English growth, must be foreign; by the nature of things, again, it is just this that we are least likely to know, while English thought is streaming in upon us from all sides, and takes excellent care that we shall not be ignorant of its existence. The English critic of literature, therefore, must dwell much on foreign thought, and with particular heed on any part of it, which, while significant and fruitful in itself, is for any reason specially likely to escape him. Again, judging is often spoken of as the critic's one business, and so in some sense it is; but the judgment which almost insensibly forms itself in a fair and clear mind, along with fresh knowledge, is the valuable one; and thus knowledge, and ever fresh knowledge, must be the critic's great concern for himself. And it is by communicating fresh knowledge, and letting his own judgment pass along with it,—but insensibly, and in the second place, not the first, as a sort of companion and clue, not as an abstract lawgiver,—that the critic will generally do most good to his readers. Sometimes, no doubt, for the sake of establishing an author's place in literature, and his relation to a central standard (and if this is not done, how are we to get at our *best in the world?*) criticism may have to deal with a subject-matter so familiar that fresh knowledge is out of the question, and then it must be all judgment; an enunciation and detailed application of principles. Here the great safeguard is never to let oneself become abstract, always to retain an intimate and lively consciousness of the truth of what one is saying, and, the moment this fails us, to be sure that something is wrong.

Still, under all circumstances, this mere judgment and application of principles is, in itself, not the most satisfactory work to the critic; like mathematics, it is tautological, and cannot well give us, like fresh learning, the sense of creative activity.

But stop, some one will say; all this talk is of no practical use to us whatever; this criticism of yours is not what we have in our minds when we speak of criticism; when we speak of critics and criticism, we mean critics and criticism of the current English literature of the day; when you offer to tell criticism its function, it is to this criticism that we expect you to address yourself. I am sorry for it, for I am afraid I must disappoint these expectations. I am bound by my own definition of criticism: *a disinterested endeavour to learn and propagate the best that is known and thought in the world.* How much of current English literature comes into this "best that is known and thought in the world?" Not very much, I fear; certainly less, at this moment, than of the current literature of France or Germany. Well, then, am I to alter my definition of criticism, in order to meet the requirements of a number of practising English critics, who after all, are free in their choice of a business? That would be making criticism lend itself just to one of those alien practical considerations, which, I have said, are so fatal to it. One may say, indeed, to those who have to deal with the mass—so much better disregarded—of current English literature, that they may at all events endeavour, in dealing with this, to try it, so far as they can, by the standard of the best that is known and thought in the world;

one may say, that to get anywhere near this standard, every critic should try and possess one great literature, at least, besides his own; and the more unlike his own, the better. But, after all, the criticism I am really concerned with,—the criticism which alone can much help us for the future, the criticism which, throughout Europe, is at the present day meant, when so much stress is laid on the importance of criticism and the critical spirit,—is a criticism which regards Europe as being, for intellectual and spiritual purposes, one great confederation, bound to a joint action and working to a common result; and whose members have for their proper outfit, a knowledge of Greek, Roman, and Eastern antiquity, and of one another. Special, local and temporary advantages being put out of account, that modern nation will in the intellectual and spiritual sphere make most progress, which most thoroughly carries out this programme. And what is that but saying that we too, all of us, as individuals, the more thoroughly we carry it out, shall make the more progress?

There is so much inviting us!—what are we to take? what will nourish us in growth towards perfection? That is the question which, with the immense field of life and of literature lying before him, the critic has to answer; for himself first, and afterwards for others. In this idea of the critic's business the essays brought together in the present volume have had their origin; in this idea, widely different as are their subjects, they have, perhaps, their unity.

I conclude with what I said at the beginning: to have the sense of creative activity is the great happi-

ness and the great proof of being alive, and it is not denied to criticism to have it; but then criticism must be sincere, simple, flexible, ardent, ever widening its knowledge. Then it may have, in no contemptible measure, a joyful sense of creative activity; a sense which a man of insight and conscience will prefer to what he might derive from a poor, starved, fragmentary, inadequate creation. And at some epochs no other creation is possible.

Still, in full measure, the sense of creative activity belongs only to genuine creation; in literature we must never forget that. But what true man of letters ever can forget it? It is no such common matter for a gifted nature to come into possession of a current of true and living ideas, and to produce amidst the inspiration of them, that we are likely to underrate it. The epochs of Æschylus and Shakspeare make us feel their pre-eminence. In an epoch like those is, no doubt, the true life of literature; there is the promised land, towards which criticism can only beckon. That promised land it will not be ours to enter, and we shall die in the wilderness: but to have desired to enter it, to have saluted it from afar, is already, perhaps, the best distinction among contemporaries, it will certainly be the best title to esteem with posterity.

NOTES

THE STUDY OF POETRY

In this admirable essay, which first appeared as a Preface to Ward's *English Poets*, Matthew Arnold attempts to answer two fundamental questions—What is Poetry, and what is its function in human society ? Commencing with the latter enquiry, he develops the theme which is the basis of all his critical work, namely, the paramount importance and high destiny of Poetry. Everything else is changing, ephemeral ; religions rise and fall, the truths embodied in Poetry are alone eternal. It is the ' breath and finer spirit of all knowledge.' Hence, when other helps fail, the spirit of our race will find here alone its consolation and stay. To the second question no direct reply is possible. Arnold contents himself by illustrating, by means of typical quotations from the great poets of all time, Homer and Dante and Milton and Shakespeare, what true Poetry is. He concludes by warning the student against two common fallacies in criticism, the historical and the personal estimates. Turning to English poetry, he shows that it begins with Chaucer : but Chaucer, admirable though he is, has not the ' high seriousness ' which marks the classic poet. The eighteenth century was *par excellence* the Age of Prose ; the only authentic voices in it were those of Gray and Burns.

p. 2, l. 15. **Wordsworth**. This was from the famous *Preface* to his poems of 1800, where Wordsworth promulgated his peculiar views of poetic diction. The reader should also consult the *Appendix* of 1802, and Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria*, ch. xiv. The importance to literature

of the epoch-making appearance of the *Lyrical Ballads*, 1798, cannot possibly be overestimated. The subject is further developed in Arnold's essay on Wordsworth, *q.v.*

p. 3, l. 3. **Sainte-Beuve** (1804-1869). The great French critic and essayist, so often quoted by Arnold, who spoke of him as an unrivalled guide to French Literature. His principal works are his *Portraits* and *Causeries du Lundi*, contributed to the *Constitutionnel*.

p. 3, l. 5. **charlatan.** Impostor, Carlyle's 'quack.'

p. 6, l. 1. **court tragedy.** The reference is to the classical drama of Corneille and Racine. The student must distinguish carefully between the two uses of the word *Classical*. It should strictly be used only of poetry, which, like that of Milton or of Matthew Arnold himself, breathes the

immortal air
Where Orpheus and where Homer are.

It is, however, conventionally applied to the highly artificial verse of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries,—Boileau, Corneille and Racine in France, and Dryden, Addison, Pope and Johnson in England. In this sense the term is the converse of *Romantic*.

p. 6, l. 2. **Pellisson** (1624-93). French historian and man of letters. See Sainte-Beuve, *Causeries*, xiv.

p. 6, l. 3. **Politesse,** formality, barren and creeping.

p. 6, l. 8. **d'Héricault** (*c.* 1823), a French critic, who contributed studies on the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries to Crépet's *Poètes Français* (Paris, 1861).

p. 6, l. 8. **Marot.** Clément Marot (1496-1544), "the first poet who strikes readers of French as being distinctively modern."

p. 9, l. 6. **Imitation,** a famous devotional work, attributed to Thomas à Kempis, a Dutch monk, *c.* 1400 A.C.

p. 9, l. 7. **Cum multa,** "however much you have read and understood, you must always return to one principle."

p. 9, l. 19. **Cædmon**, a monkish poet of the seventh century, author of a metrical Anglo-Saxon paraphrase of the book of Genesis, sometimes regarded as the germ of Milton's *Paradise Lost*.

p. 9, l. 23. **Louis Vitet** (1802-73), a French critic who wrote a study of the *Chanson de Roland* in his *Essais Historiques et Littéraires* (1862).

p. 9, l. 25. **Chanson de Roland.** This was the most famous of the *Chansons de geste*, epic chronicles or ballads of medieval France. They are interesting both in themselves and because we see here the germ of the later epic. Most of the *Chansons de geste* deal with episodes, more or less legendary, in the life of Charlemagne. The one in question relates to the great battle of Roncesvalles where Roland and the other Paladins were cut off by the Saracens. With his dying breath Roland sounds his magic horn, which calls his master back to the field. 'The loud cry of the dying Roland rings through the poetic literature of mediæval France.' At the battle of Hastings, the *jongleur* or minstrel Taillefer rode in front of the Norman cavalry as they advanced, tossing and catching his sword and chanting the *Chanson de Roland*, until he was slain. Milton knew the *Chanson de Roland* well. Cf.

> Or whom Biserta sent from Afric shore
> When Charlemagne and all his peerage fell
> At Fonterabbia.

The statement, however, that Charlemagne *fell*, is of course a slip.

p. 11, l. 3. Ὣς φάτο . . . From the famous episode in the third Iliad known as the τειχοσκοπιά or View from the Walls. Helen points out to Priam the various heroes in the Greek host encamped round Troy. She wonders at the absence of her twin brothers, Castor and Pollux, little realizing that during her absence they have fallen in battle in distant Sparta. The tragic irony of the situation, the impotence of human love to pierce the darkness in which the web of human fate is woven, is one of Homer's inimitable touches. Theodore Watts Dunton (article *Poetry* in *Encyc. Brit.*) doubts, however, whether this intervention of the poet, this 'criticism of life,' is really in place in an Epic.

p. 12, l. 3. Ἀ δείλω. Achilles, son of Peleus, refused, owing to a slight put upon him by Agamemnon, the Greek

leader, to take part in the siege of Troy. At last, however, owing to the Greek reverses, he agrees to send in his place his beloved friend Patroclus. Patroclus is slain by Hector, and at the sight of their master's wild transports of sorrow, the immortal horses of Achilles, given to him by Peleus, weep in sympathy. This motif is turned to admirable use by Arnold himself in *Sohrab and Rustum*, where Ruksh, Rustum's war-horse, weeps over the dying Sohrab.

p. 12, l. 8. *καί σε, γέρον . . .* This is from the incomparable closing scene of the Iliad, where Priam goes to Achilles to beg the body of his dead son Hector. Compare Arnold's essay on Joubert: "The true tears are those which are called forth by the *beauty* of sorrow, there must be as much admiration in them as sorrow. They are the tears which come to our eyes when Priam says to Achilles *ἔτλην δ' οἷ' οὔπω . . .*—'and I have endured,—the like whereof no soul upon earth hath yet endured—to carry to my lips the hand of him who slew my child.'"

p. 12, l. 11. **Ugolino.** Ugolino, a cruel tyrant, was accused by the Pisans (1289) of selling their city to Florence. He, and his two sons and little grandsons, were locked up in the Torre della Fame and left to starve. Ugolino watched them die, one by one, in agonies of hunger and thirst. The story is told by Dante with terrible brevity and simplicity (*Inferno*, xxxiii.). It deeply affected Carlyle, who often refers to it, *e.g. Past and Present*, i., *Heroes*, v., etc.

p. 12, l. 14. **Beatrice . . . Virgil.** The poet Virgil is Dante's guide through the lower world, until they meet the spirit of Beatrice on the confines of Paradise. Dante's purpose in going thither had been to seek Beatrice Portinari, the woman whom he had "loved long since, and lost awhile." The story of Dante's love for Beatrice is told in the *Vita Nuova*.

p. 13, l. 3. **Wilt thou.** 2 *Hen. IV.* III. i. 15 ff.

p. 13, l. 7. **If thou.** *Hamlet*, v. 2. 330 ff.

p. 13, l. 12. **Darkened so.** *Paradise Lost*, i. 599 ff.

p. 13, l. 17. **And courage.** *Ibid.* i. 108 ff.

p. 13, l. 21. **Ceres.** *Ibid.* iv. 269 ff. :—

> Proserpina, gather'ng flowers,
> Herself a fairer flower, by gloomy Dis
> Was gathered, which cost Ceres all that pain
> To seek her through the world.

Proserpina was carried off by Dis (Pluto) the god of the underworld, while gathering flowers at Enna in Sicily. Her mother, Ceres or Demeter, the earth-goddess, sought her far and near, till at last the gods in pity allowed Proserpina to return to earth for six months in every year.

p. 16, l. 16. **troubadours.** The poets of Southern France who wrote in the *langue d'oc* from the twelfth to the fourteenth centuries. They improvised (*trouver*) songs on love and war, and were patronized by the courts of the luxurious nobility of Provençe. The *chansons* were actually sung, not by the troubadour, but by his servant the minstrel (*joglar, jongleur*). The vernacular poetry of France and Italy originated with the troubadours. The old French word for "yes" was *oil* in the north and *oc* in the south. The countries where they were respectively employed were known as Languedoil and Languedoc.

p. 17, l. 9. **Brunetto Latini** (1220-94), Dante's tutor, and a famous scholar. He translated Cicero and studied the works of the Troubadours. He embodied his learning in a work called *Trésor*. He also published a kind of Pilgrim's Progress in verse, entitled *Tesoretto*. **la parleure . . .** "The language is pleasanter and more universally intelligible."

p. 17, l. 13. **Christian of Troyes.** A famous medieval French poet, who lived at the end of the twelfth century, and wrote many popular poems, chiefly dealing with episodes of the Arthurian cycle. Some critics actually ascribe the origin of the Arthurian legend to him.

p. 18, l. 11. **Chaucer** (1338-1400). The *Canterbury Tales*, *c.* 1385, are a turning-point in English literature, like the *Shepherd's Calendar* of 1579, and the *Lyrical Ballads* of 1798. It is almost impossible to exaggerate the greatness of Chaucer's achievement. With him English Literature really begins. We have, of course, to beware of the historical

fallacy in criticism, but it is impossible to help feeling that Arnold is unduly severe to Chaucer, as he is unduly lenient to Burns. After all, Burns had little of the 'high seriousness,' the lack of which in Chaucer Arnold deplores. Arnold had not a keen sense of humour, otherwise Chaucer's inimitable wit, freshness and pathos, would have surely appealed to him more strongly. Chaucer's universality is only less than Shakespeare's. And if it comes to quoting a single line as a test, what could be more perfect of its kind than

He was a very parfit, gentil knight ?

Spenser spoke of Chaucer as 'Dan Chaucer, well of English undefiled.' This is, of course, inaccurate: Chaucer has even been accused of corrupting the English tongue by borrowing too freely, especially from French. The stanza form imported from Italy by Chaucer is the *ottava rima* of Ariosto's *Orlando*. Spenser added a ninth line and so arrived at the stanza used in the *Faerie Queene*. Dryden 'translated' a number of the *Canterbury Tales* in his *Fables*: the quotations in Arnold are from the introduction to this work.

p. 18, l. 15. **Wolfram of Eschenbach,** a medieval German poet of the end of the twelfth century, and the most brilliant of the Minnesingers. He is best known for his *Parzival* and for those beautiful lyric poems, the *Wächter Lieder*.

p. 19, l. 23. **Gower.** 'Moral Gower,' a contemporary of Chaucer's, and author of that long and dreary poem, the *Confessio amantis*.

p. 20, l. 12. **O martyr.** St. Hugh of Lincoln in *The Prioress' Tale*. The best editions read *to*. **sowded,** dedicated, devoted.

p. 20, l. 27. **Will,** wills, desires.

p. 20, l. 29. **Alma.**

Alma Redemptoris Mater, quae pervia coeli
Porta manes et Stella maris, succurre cadenti, etc.

Mother of Christ! hear thou thy people's cry,
Star of the deep, and portal of the sky.

(Antiphons of the Blessed Virgin, from the service of Compline.)

p. 22, l. 30. **Villon.** François Villon (*c.* 1450), a French poet who led a wild and dissolute life in Paris, and is the hero of many romantic stories and episodes. His ballades and rondeaux contain features which are all too rare in medieval poetry, realism; the personal note, and the joy of life. Among these the most famous is the *Ballade des dames du temps jadis*, with its haunting refrain "Mais où sont les neiges d'antan?" There are translations by Andrew Lang, Rossetti and Swinburne.

p. 28, l. 17. **Gray.** See Arnold's Essay on Gray. Gray "never spoke out." He was stifled by the atmosphere of the eighteenth century. Yet we see in him, as in Goldsmith, Thomson, Cowper and others among his contemporaries, the first dawn of the Romantic reaction. This is apparent in the *Elegy* in spite of its classicisms, in his Odes, which annoyed Dr. Johnson so much, and his Norse and Celtic studies.

p. 29, l. 3. **Burns.** Robert Burns, son of a small farmer, was born near Ayr in 1759. After his father's death in 1784 he took a farm at Mossgiel, which proved unsuccessful. About the same time he fell in love with Jean Armour, daughter of a mason in the adjoining parish of Mauchline. In the meanwhile he had been busy (1784-5) with a number of short poems, *The Twa Herds*, *Holy Willie's Prayer*, *The Cotter's Saturday Night*, and many others. Owing to the anger of Jean's father at discovering his daughter's condition, Burns determined to emigrate to Jamaica. He published these poems to help him to pay for his passage. This was the great Kilmarnock edition of 1786. Like Byron, he woke up to find himself famous, and went to Edinburgh, where he was lionized, and, according to his biographers, ruined by adulation. Among the many women of this period with whom he formed temporary attachments was a Mrs. Maclehose, the heroine of the 'Sylvander and Clarinda' correspondence. In 1788 he married Jean Armour, but this tardy reparation did not by any means terminate his *liaisons* with others. In 1790 he wrote his masterpiece, *Tam O'Shanter*. About the same time he quitted farming, and became a gauger, or exciseman. Much sentimental rubbish, by Carlyle and others, has been written about this: Burns had only himself to thank that he did

not rise to a collectorship of excise, a sinecure which meant a 'life of literary leisure with a decent competence.' He died in 1796. Burns led a wild, irregular life, and this is reflected in much which he wrote. Wine and women are his favourite theme. His coarseness, and (to English readers) the uncouthness of his dialect, are obstacles in the way of appreciating him. On the other hand, his genuineness in an artificial age, his reckless invective, his humour, especially his extraordinarily faithful pictures of Scotch life, and his wonderful lyric gift, make him a great poet. It would be hard to match a song like

> My luve is like a red, red rose
> That's newly sprung in June;
> My luve is like the melodie
> That's sweetly played in tune.

(Strangely enough, Arnold does not quote this.) Almost the same may be said of *John Anderson, my Jo, John; Of a' the Airts; Auld Lang Syne*, and about half a dozen others. The reader who wishes to appreciate the force of Arnold's remarks should look up Burns in Ward's *English Poets*, where he is seen at his best. Arnold's criticism of Burns is, on the whole, just and candid. In a letter to his sister, however, he calls him "a beast with splendid gleams." This probably represents his private opinion more accurately.

p. 30, l. 25. **Leeze me.** For those who have no Scotch, the following vocabulary may make this and the other extracts partly intelligible:

Leeze me, a blessing; **lair,** learning; **pangs,** crams; **wheep,** small beer; **kittle,** tickle; **mauna fa' that,** cannot manage that; **lowe,** flame; **weans,** bairns, children. **Whistle owre the lave o't,** an old Scotch air, the tune of one of the songs in Burns' opera, *The Jolly Beggars*. **Paidl't,** paddled; **dine,** dinner-time; **burn,** brook; **auld lang syne,** bygone days; **minnie,** mother; **deave,** tease.

p. 35, l. 1. **Auerbach's Cellar.** The carousal scene in Auerbach's cellar in Leipzig occurs in *Faust*, Part I. v.

p. 35, l. 15. σπουδαιότης, Aristotle's "high seriousness."

p. 35, l. 31. **Shelley.** Cf. his remarks at the end of the essay on Byron. Arnold's chief failing, perhaps, as a critic, was his inability to recognize the greatness of Shelley's poetry.

WORDSWORTH

This beautiful essay is perhaps the best of its kind that Arnold ever wrote. It is a mosaic of striking and characteristic thoughts upon the subject of Poetry: in particular, it enunciates and expounds Arnold's famous thesis, that Poetry should be a Criticism of Life, and that this is the one infallible touchstone by which it, and indeed all true literature, can be judged. Arnold sees that Wordsworth's supreme merit is the unique way in which he feels, and makes us share, the joy offered to us in Nature, and the simple primary affections and duties of life. In this Arnold had much in common with Wordsworth: see for instance those wonderful, and quite Wordsworthian, verses at the end of *Parting* in the Switzerland suite:

> Fold closely, O Nature,
> Thine arms round thy child.
> To thee only God granted
> A heart ever new—
> To all always open,
> To all always true.

Of Wordsworth's 'healing power,' Arnold speaks beautifully in *Memorial Verses*:

> He found us when the age had bound
> Our souls in its benumbing round;
> He spoke, and loosed our heart in tears.
> He laid us as we lay at birth
> On the cool flowery lap of earth,
> Smiles broke from us and we had ease;
> The hills were round us, and the breeze
> Went o'er the sunlit fields again;
> Our foreheads felt the wind and rain.
> Our youth returned; for there was shed
> On spirits that had long been dead,
> Spirits dried up and closely furl'd,
> The freshness of the early world.

Perhaps it was this similarity of temperament which led Arnold to commit what is generally considered to be an

exaggeration in putting Wordsworth next to Goethe among the poets of modern Europe.

Wordsworth, the subject of the present essay, was born in 1770. After leaving Cambridge in 1791 he was attracted, like most of the rising generation, by the French Revolution, and travelled in France, where he was disillusioned by the Reign of Terror. In 1798 appeared his *Lyrical Ballads*, in conjunction with Coleridge. This work marks the beginning of a new era in English poetry, the revolt against the now moribund classicism of the eighteenth century. From 1813 to his death in 1850, Wordsworth dwelt at Rydal Mount in the Lake District. In 1805 appeared the *Prelude*, and in 1814 the *Excursion*, blank verse poems dealing with the growth of the poet's mind. The rest of his life is only marked by the publication of successive volumes of poems. Wordsworth is, essentially, a poet with a purpose, and it is this sense of a mission which makes him our greatest philosophical poet, the interpreter of Nature to man. The great and striking feature of the *Lyrical Ballads* was its revolt against the insipid and conventional "poetic diction" of the eighteenth century. Wordsworth contended that poetry should be written in "the ordinary language of everyday life." In choice of subject, too, he found his inspiration as much in the simplest flower, or the humdrum existence of the Westmorland peasant, as in the most exalted themes. There is no doubt that, both in manner and matter, he pushed his theories to excess, and it was left to Coleridge in his *Biographia Literaria* to re-state them more temperately and philosophically.

p. 38, l. 21. **death of Byron.** See Arnold's *Memorial Verses* (quoted on p. 208).

p. 40, l. 27. **Renan.** See p. 182, l. 11, *note*.

p. 41, l. 8. **Goethe.** See p. 77, l. 12, *note*. This is Arnold's favourite idea of setting up a literary academy in England as in France.

p. 41, l. 30. **Nebuchadnezzar.** "The king spake and said, Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power and for the honour of my majesty? While the word was in the king's mouth

there fell a voice from heaven saying, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken : the kingdom is departed from thee. . . . The same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar : and he was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen." Daniel iv. 30-32.

p. 41, l. 32. **candid friend.** This is the favourite doctrine of the Philistines and Barbarians, which is always cropping up in Arnold in one form or another. See the Essay on Byron, p. 86, l. 1, *note*.

p. 43, l. 7. **Victor Hugo.** One of the greatest of the French writers of the middle part of the nineteenth century ; equally famous as poet (*Les Châtiments*, 1853, *Les Contemplations*, 1856, *La Légende des Siècles*, 1859), dramatist (*Hernani*, 1830) and novelist (*Notre-Dame*, *Les Misérables*, *Les Travailleurs de la Mer*). He moved Swinburne's passionate admiration, but left Arnold cold. Tennyson calls him

> Victor in Drama, Victor in Romance,
> Cloud-weaver of phantasmal hopes and fears,
> French of the French and Lord of human tears.

p. 44, l. 6. **Amphictyonic.** A court of arbitration in Ancient Greece, whose purpose was to settle religious disputes between the various states. Here the word is used in the sense of final or international, like the modern ideas of a Hague Tribunal or Court of the League of Nations.

p. 44, l. 22. **I firmly believe.** This is usually regarded as an exaggeration. Saintsbury writes : " Mr. Arnold puts Wordsworth, as a poet and an English poet, far higher than I can put him. He is not so great a poet to my thinking as Spenser or Shelley ; if it were possible in these competitions to allow weight for age, he is not as great a poet as Keats ; I am sure he is not a greater poet than Tennyson. I cannot give him rank above Heine or Hugo, though the first may be sometimes naughty and the second frequently silly or rhetorical ; and when Mr. Arnold begins to reckon Molière in, I confess I am lost. When and where did Molière write poetry ? "

p. 45, l. 14-21. **Corneille** (1606-84), **Molière** (1622-73), **Racine** (1639-99), were the greatest names in French seventeenth-century " classical " drama. **Boileau** (1636-1711)

was a literary critic (*Le Lutrin*), poet and satirist, who was to a great extent the model followed by Pope and the English poets of the "Augustan" period. **Voltaire** (François Marie Arouet, 1694-1791), dramatist, historian, critic and encyclopedist, led the movement against the tyranny of Church and State in France, and lived for many years in exile at Ferney in Switzerland. **André Chenier,** lyric poet, "half Greek by blood and wholly by sentiment," was guillotined in 1794. **Béranger** (1780-1857), "grand chansonnier de France," was often in prison for his patriotic and anti-Royalist lyrics. **Lamartine** (1790-1869), wrote *Méditations poétiques*, described as "La poésie toute pure." **De Musset** (1810-1857), essentially the poet of Paris and modern France, the antithesis of Hugo.

Of the German poets, **Klopstock** (1724-1803) is chiefly celebrated for his *Messiah*, and **Lessing** (1729-81) for *Minna von Barnhelm, Nathan the Wise*, and *Laocoön*, the latter being a classical essay on Aesthetics. Klopstock, Lessing, and Wieland founded the classical school of German literature. **Schiller** (1759-1805), friend and rival of Goethe, is noted chiefly for his historical dramas, *Wallenstein, Wilhelm Tell*, etc. **Uhland** (1787-1862) was the founder of the "Swabian" school. **Rückert** (1789-1866) celebrated the war of the Liberation. **Heine** (*Buch der Lieder*) is best studied in Arnold's beautiful essay.

Of the Italian poets, **Filicaia** was a lyrist of the seventeenth century who celebrated the siege of Vienna by the Turks. **Alfieri,** patriotic, classical and revolutionary, led the revolt against the insipid Arcadian school of poetry, with Foscolo and Monti. **Manzoni,** religious and mystic, was the author of the great historical romance *I Promessi Sposi*. His contemporary **Leopardi** has been described as "the poet of Nature and Despair, more poignant than Byron or Shelley."

p. 50, l. 12. **application of ideas to life.** Arnold's central idea of poetry as a Criticism of Life is here expounded in detail. Arnold's meaning is that the object of all great literature is to elevate and ennoble the mind by setting before it lofty ideals of life and conduct. The theme is expanded in the Essays on *Byron* and *The Study of Poetry*. Compare with it Aristotle's definition of Tragedy as a

Purification of the Mind through Pity and Fear (*πάθεων κάθαρσις δι' ἐλέου καὶ φόβου*). Arnold exaggerates the ethical side of literature at the expense of the aesthetic. The school represented by Walter Pater holds that literature, like all art, is to be judged by its beauty, *i.e.* by the sense of pleasure, not necessarily sensuous, aroused in the beholder's mind. Arnold attempts a synthesis of the two opposite points of view. The most beautiful literature is the noblest. Beauty, in other words, is an aspect of Truth.

p. 50, l. 19. **On man, on nature.** From the *Recluse* (*Golden Treasury Selections*, p. 260).

p. 51, l. 17. **Nor love thy life.** *Paradise Lost*, xi. 553.

p. 51, l. 28. **We are such stuff.** Prospero's famous lines in *The Tempest*.

p. 52, l. 23. **Omar Kheyam.** The eleventh-century philosopher-poet of Persia, popularized in England by Fitzgerald's rendering of his *Rubaiyat*.

p. 53, l. 4. **Epictetus.** This great Stoic teacher was originally a poor crippled slave. He ranks next to Marcus Aurelius as a teacher of Stoicism. When the brutal tyrant Domitian expelled the philosophers from Rome, he settled down at Nicopolis in Epirus. See Matthew Arnold's sonnet *To a Friend*.

p. 54, l. 2. **Gautier** (1811-72), the great French romantic writer, author of *Emaux et Camées* and *Mlle. de Maupin*. Saintsbury protests against Arnold's unfair treatment of Gautier.

p. 54, l. 10. **Of truth.** From the *Recluse* (*Golden Treasury Selections*, p. 260).

p. 55, l. 4. **Quique.** "Holy bards, who have sung in a manner worthy of Apollo." Virgil's *Aeneid*, vi. 662.

p. 55, l. 14. **Leslie Stephen** (1832-1904), a well-known journalist, biographer, and critic, author of *Hours in a Library*, and joint-editor of the *Dictionary of National Biography*.

p. 55, l. 18. **Butler** (1692-1752), English divine and moralist, author of the famous *Analogy of Religion*.

p. 56, l. 9. **Immutably survive.** This and the following passage come from Book IV. of the *Excursion*.

p. 57, l. 9. **"Intimations" of the famous Ode.** The reference is to the title of Wordsworth's *Ode on Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood*.

p. 58, l. 3. **O for the coming.** *Excursion*, Book IX.

p. 60, l. 23. **This will never do.** The opening words of Jeffrey's famous criticism of the *Excursion* (*Jeffrey's Literary Criticism*, ed. D. Nichol Smith, p. 107). Jeffrey, the famous editor of the *Edinburgh Review*, was no admirer of the 'Lake School.'

p. 60, l. 32. **After life's fitful fever.** The death of Duncan in *Macbeth*.

p. 61, l. 2. **though fall'n.** *Paradise Lost*, vii. 24.

p. 61, l. 15. **the fierce confederate storm.** Again from the *Recluse*.

p. 62, l. 5. **The poor inhabitant.** From *A Bard's Epitaph*.

BYRON

Byron was born on January 22nd, 1788, and educated at Harrow and Trinity College, Cambridge. His first publication, *Hours of Idleness* (1807), received from the *Edinburgh Review* the usual brutal reception accorded by reviews of those days to a new poet. Byron retorted effectively in *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* (1809). After this he went on a two years' tour over the Continent, visiting Germany, France, Italy, Spain, Greece and Turkey. The fruit of his wanderings was the first two cantos of *Childe Harold* (1812). Its success was instantaneous, and eclipsed even Scott's. Byron, to his amazement, "woke up one morning to find himself famous." The same fate lay in store for *The Giaour, The Bride of Abydos, The Corsair, Lara, Hebrew Melodies, The Siege of Corinth, Parisina*, all written between 1813 and 1816. Then the crash came. In 1815 he had married Miss Augusta Milbanke. A year later, just after the birth of their little daughter Ada, she left him for ever.

The cause of the separation has never been divulged, but society, which had made Byron its idol, now turned upon him. Byron, in defiance, shook the dust of England from off his feet for good and all. He never saw his native shores again. For a time he lived at Geneva, where he wrote the wonderful last cantos of *Childe Harold*, *The Prisoner of Chillon*, and *Manfred*. From 1818 to 1823 he was in Italy, first at Venice, then at Ravenna and Pisa, with the Countess Guiccioli, and here he met the Shelley family. Byron was now in the plenitude of his powers. He was partly occupied with his great dramas, *Marino Faliero*, *Sardanapalus*, *Cain*, *Werner* and the rest; but the most characteristic and original of his poems were the satirical and comical narratives of the style of *Beppo* (1818), *The Vision of Judgement* (1822), and above all that inimitable masterpiece, *Don Juan* (1819-24), with its wonderful humour, wit and passion, and its matchless audacity. Byron died of fever at Missolonghi in 1824, whither he had gone to help the Greeks in their rebellion against the Turks. He was only thirty-six.

Arnold has been accused of overestimating Byron and underestimating Shelley. On his own showing, Byron is guilty of atrocious lapses of taste and style. His poetry can scarcely be called a 'criticism of life,' Arnold's touchstone of greatness. He has little of the 'high seriousness' of the true classic. He is a consummate egoist and *poseur*, who is constantly trying to picture himself as the hero of his own poems,—the rebel against God and society. The 'gong and cymbal's din' becomes by reiteration as wearisome in him as in Marlowe. But his inimitable power of telling a story in verse, his audacity, his defiance of conventions and his picturesque career, made him the idol of thousands to whom Keats and Shelley are mere names. Arnold, however, was wrong in supposing that at the end of the nineteenth century he would come into his own with Wordsworth. On the Continent Byron is still regarded as our greatest poet. Lamartine's verses, *L'Homme*,

> Et toi, qui dans tes mains
> Tiens le cœur palpitant des sensibles humains,

are well known. Goethe held an equally high opinion of him. Arnold may have been partly misled by his respect

for the opinion of Goethe (" the greatest critic of all times "), and partly by what Swinburne calls " the excellence of his sincerity and strength," or, in other words, his defiance of the Philistines. In his essay on *The Function of Criticism at the Present Time* he contrasts Byron with Goethe because, while both had great productive power, Goethe had endurance while Byron had not; Goethe's poetry, unlike Byron's, was nourished by sound critical principles; and Goethe knew life and the world far better than Byron. In *Memorial Verses* Arnold classes Byron with Wordsworth and Goethe:

> When Byron's eyes were shut in death,
> We bowed our head, and held our breath;
> He taught us little, but our Soul
> Had *felt* him, like the thunder's roll—
> With shivering heart the strife we saw
> Of Passion with Eternal Law.
> And yet with reverential awe,
> We watched the fount of fiery life,
> Which served for that Titanic strife.

p. 68, l. 12. **Swinburne.** Algernon Charles Swinburne (1837-1909), the last of the great Victorian poets, was also a critic of distinction. The essay on Byron occurs in his *Studies of Prose and Poetry*.

p. 69, l. 5. **The Giaour.** (Giaour means Infidel.) This was the first of a series of verse-romances based upon Greco-Turkish themes. The Giaour steals the mistress of Hassan. Hassan puts her to death, but the Giaour escapes and kills Hassan and then retires to a monastery. In *The Corsair* and its sequel *Lara* we have the adventures of the Corsair Conrad, who re-appears as Lara. His opponent is the Turkish admiral Syed Pasha, whose female slave Gulnare follows Lara in the guise of his page under the name of Kaled. The indebtedness of Byron to Mrs. Radcliffe and the ' Terror ' School in these tales is obvious.

p. 70, l. 7. **Oedipus,** the hero of the greatest tragedies of Arnold's favourite Sophocles,

> Who saw life steadily and saw it whole,
> The mellow glory of the Attic stage,
> Singer of sweet Colonus and its child.

p. 70, l. 24. **Hassan.** See the *Golden Treasury Selections from Byron*, p. 129.

p. 70, l. 32. **Ezzelin.** *Lara*, ii. 24. *Golden Treasury Selections*, p. 157.

p. 72, l. 21. **M. Scherer,** a French critic (1815-89) whose *Études Critiques sur la Littérature* have been translated by Professor Saintsbury. Arnold devotes two essays to him in *Mixed Essays*.

p. 72, l. 24. **M. Taine.** H. A. Taine (1824-93) historian and critic, author of the brilliant, witty but perverse *Histoire de la Littérature Anglaise*. Taine's worst fault is that he persists in taking what he considers to be the English type and making the English authors fit into it.

p. 73, l. 25. **Souls.** *Cain*, i. 1.

p. 73, l. 29. **And thou . . .** Lucifer in *Cain*, ii. 2.

p. 74, l. 19. **Dare you . . .** *Marino Faliero*, iii. 2.

p. 74, l. 22. **All shall be void.** From the spirits' song in *Heaven and Earth*, i. 3.

p. 74, l. 25. **Which now is painful.** *Prisoner of Chillon*, II.

p. 74, l. 28. **there let him lay.** This horrible solecism is to be found in the last line of *Childe Harold*, IV. clxxx.

p. 74, l. 30. **He who hath bent him.** A famous passage in the earlier portion of the *Giaour*.

p. 75, l. 5. **In the dark backward.** *Tempest*, i. ii. 50.

p. 75, l. 7. **Presenting Thebes.**

> Sometimes let gorgeous Tragedy
> In sceptered pall come sweeping by,
> Presenting Thebes or Pelops' line,
> Or the tale of Troy divine.
>
> *Il Penseroso*, ll. 97 ff.

" Seven-gated Thebes " is the scene of the tragedy of the house of Oedipus, which runs through all the Greek tragedians. Pelops was the ancestor of Agamemnon, and the fortunes of this house form another story of Nemesis which plays a great part in Greek tragedy.

p. 75, l. 16. **Parching Summer.** The reference is to the severe criticisms in Ruskin's essay on Fiction Fair and Foul,

in *On the Old Road*, vol. ii., chap. iii., §§ 53, 62 (p. 75 of the 1885 edn.). The verse is from Wordsworth's *Inscription near the Spring of the Hermitage*, and runs

> Parching summer hath no warrant
> To consume this crystal well;
> Rains, that make each rill a torrent,
> Neither sully it nor swell.

(*Collected Works*, p. 571).

p. 76, l. 7. εὐφυής, of a noble disposition.

p. 76, l. 12. **Rousseau.** In the famous passage, *Childe Harold*, III. lxxvii. ff., Byron evidently sees a resemblance, *more suo*, between himself and

> Wild Rousseau,
> The apostle of affliction, he who threw
> Enchantment over passion.

p. 76, l. 13. **Lord Delawarr.** At Harrow Byron is reported to have said to one of the prefects, "Pray don't lick Lord Delawarr . . . he is a brother peer." Nichol, p. 29.

p. 76, l. 18. **Pope is a Greek temple.** One of Byron's affectations is to praise the Augustan poets at the expense of Coleridge and Wordsworth. See, *e.g. English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*.

p. 77, l. 12. **Goethe.** It is impossible to overrate the influence of Goethe over Arnold, as over Carlyle. In *Memorial Verses*, Arnold writes:

> When Goethe's death was told, we said:
> Sunk, then, is Europe's sagest head.
> Physician of the iron age,
> Goethe has done his pilgrimage.
> He took the suffering human race,
> He read each wound, each weakness clear;
> And struck his finger on the place,
> And said: *Thou ailest here, and here!*
> He looked on Europe's dying hour
> Of fitful dream and feverish power:
> His eye plunged down the weltering strife,
> The turmoil of expiring life,—

He said : *The end is everywhere,*
Art still has truth, take refuge there !
And he was happy, if to know
Causes of things, and far below
His feet to see the lurid flow
Of terror, and insane distress
And headlong fate, be happiness.

p. 77, l. 19. **Tieck.** Ludwig von Tieck (1773-1853), German critic and man of letters, who assisted Schlegel in his translation of Shakespeare. Carlyle often quotes him.

p. 77, l. 24. **Zeit-Geist.** The Time Spirit, or Spirit of the Age, which lies at the back of the movement and tendencies of the time. Cf. Carlyle's translation of a famous passage in *Faust* :

" In Being's floods, in Action's storm,
I walk and work, above, beneath,
Work and weave, in endless motion,
Birth and Death,
An infinite Ocean,
A seizing and giving
The fire of Living,
'Tis thus at the roaring Loom of Time I ply,
And weave for God the Garment thou seest Him by."

p. 78, l. 16. **Professor Nichol.** The reference is to his " Byron " in the *English Men of Letters* series, chapter xi., p. 209 ff.

p. 81, l. 15. **criticism of life.** See the Essay on Wordsworth, p. 50, l. 12, and note.

p. 82, l. 15. **Leopardi.** Giacomo Leopardi (1798-1837) has been called the Shelley of Italy, both on account of his political views and his lyric gift. His masterpiece is *La Ginestra*, which resembles Shelley's *Mont Blanc*, but is more perfect in form.

p. 82, l. 21. **physical defect.** Byron was lame, Leopardi a confirmed invalid.

p. 82, l. 24. **Recanati.** The birthplace of Leopardi.

p. 82, l. 25. **Italy . . . did not exist.** The French were at that time the masters of Italy.

p. 83, l. 10. **Dr. Kennedy.** The Scotch physician with whom Byron had some amusing debates upon Calvinism at Cephalonia shortly before his death. See Nichol, p. 189.

p. 83, l. 18. **Sovente.** Often on these shores. **Non so se,** I don't know whether laughter or pity predominates.

p. 83, l. 29. **O for the coming.** *Excursion*, Book IX.

p. 84, l. 10. **Of joy.** From *The Recluse*. See the *Golden Treasury Selections*, p. 260.

p. 84, l. 12. **essenza,** incurable essence. **Acerbo,** hard, unworthy mystery of things.

p. 84, l. 26. τλητὸν. *Iliad*, xxiv, 49. "The Fates have bestowed upon Man an enduring soul."

p. 84, l. 30. **Men must endure.** *Lear*, v. ii. 11.

p. 86, l. 1. **Philistinism.** This is one of Arnold's stock terms. His mission in life was to attack Philistinism, the conventionality, vulgarity and imperviousness to ideas of the middle classes, which he regarded as the root of the evils of the present day. See, for instance, *Culture and Anarchy*, and *Friendship's Garland, passim*. The expression may be compared to Carlyle's *gigmanity*, and the French *épicier*. Arnold borrowed it from Germany.

p. 86, l. 7. **Almack's,** the famous Club and Assembly Rooms in Pall Mall, the haunt of the most exclusive society of the early nineteenth century. It was succeeded by Brooks's in St. James' Street, which still exists.

p. 86, l. 8. **Lady Jersey's.** The 5th Earl of Jersey, prince of the Macaroons or Dandies, and well known in hunting and racing circles, married Sophia Child of Child's Bank, who became a leader of London society in the early part of the century.

p. 88, l. 4. **Lady Blessington.** A celebrated wit and beauty, whose *salon* at Gore House was crowded with the literary celebrities of her day. She had met Byron in Genoa in 1823-4, and published an interesting if not always accurate account of their friendship, entitled *Conversations with Byron*.

p. 89, l. 28. **Minions of splendour,** *Childe Harold,* Canto II., xxvi.

p. 90, l. 3. **Will no one,** from *The Solitary Reaper.*

p. 90, l. 6. From the "Dying Gladiator" passage, *Childe Harold,* Canto IV., cxli.

p. 90, l. 22. **Among thy mightier offerings,** *Childe Harold,* Canto IV., cxxxi.

p. 91, l. 4. **Endymion** (1880), the last of Disraeli's brilliant satires on contemporary English society.

p. 92, l. 25. **luminous wings.** This famous phrase was no doubt suggested by Joubert, as "Sweetness and light" was by Swift. See the Essay on Joubert (1st series, p. 294), where Joubert says of Plato, "Plato loses himself in the void, but one sees the play of his wings, one hears their rustle." In *The Study of Poetry* Arnold calls Shelley 'that beautiful spirit building his many-coloured haze of words and images.'

p. 92, l. 27. **When the year 1900 is turned.** The prophecy has not been fulfilled. The position of Byron is now considerably lower than Shelley, who has 'come to his own,' as the greatest, along with Swinburne, of English lyric poets.

PAGAN AND MEDIÆVAL RELIGIOUS SENTIMENT

In this essay Matthew Arnold sets out to define and analyze the essential difference between the Pagan religion of old Greece and Christianity. He illustrates this by contrasting a typical scene from Theocritus with The Canticle of St. Francis of Assisi. The one is poetry treating the world according to the demand of the senses: the other is poetry treating the world according to the demand of the heart and imagination. But the old Pagan spirit is not dead. The revolt against the Christian attitude is nowhere better seen than in Heine, stricken with a mortal disease, and yet defying the 'Aristophanes of Heaven.' But even Paganism has its graver side: much profound reflection is found in

the great Greek poets, as, for instance, in the famous chorus of *Oedipus Rex*.

p. 93, l. 1. **Dublin Review.** This review and *The Tablet* are the leading Catholic journals.

p. 93, l. 13. **Exeter Hall.** The great *rendezvous* of the Protestant party, popularized by Lord Shaftesbury. It no longer exists.

p. 94, l. 13. **Mr. Spurgeon,** the great nonconformist preacher at the City Tabernacle.

p. 94, l. 13. **Omar.** The reference is to the sack of Alexandria and the burning of the famous library by Amr, the general of the Caliph Omar, in 640 A.C.

p. 94, l. 15. **Abbé Migne** (1800-75), an industrious Catholic theologian who made several voluminous collections of the Fathers, the largest being the huge *Patrologiae Cursus Completus* in 221 volumes.

p. 94, l. 23. **Calvin** (1509-64), the celebrated Protestant reformer of Geneva, who represents Protestantism *in excelsis*. Presbyterianism is an offshoot of Calvinism.

p. 94, l. 25. **Dr. Chalmers** (1780-1847). A great Scotch preacher and theologian.

p. 94, l. 26. **Rose of Sharon.** Song of Solomon, ii. i.

p. 94, l. 28. **Dr. Channing** (1780-1842). A famous American preacher and writer, who ranked with Emerson among the intellectual leaders of New England in the early nineteenth century.

p. 95, l. 2. **Leviathan.**

> That sea-beast
> Leviathan, which God, of all his works,
> Created hugest that swim the ocean-stream.

p. 95, l. 15. **net in Scripture.** "The Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a net that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind." Matthew xiii. 47.

p. 95, l. 32. **Dr. Candlish** (1806-1873). A famous Scotch leader of the Free Church.

p. 95, l. 32. **Duke of Argyll** (1823-1900). A Scotch Liberal statesman and thinker, and a vigorous opponent of Darwin and Huxley. His chief work was *The Unseen Foundations of Society* (1893).

p. 96, l. 1. **Boston society.** Boston is the capital of Massachusetts and the great intellectual centre of New England.

p. 96, l. 8. **Quicquid agunt.**

Quicquid agunt homines, votum, timor, ira voluptas
Gaudia, discursus, nostri farrago libelli.

Juv. i. 86.

What ever since the golden age was done,
What human kind deserves and what they shun,
Rage, passions, pleasures, impotence of will,
Shall this satirical collection fill.

(Dryden).

p. 97, l. 17. **Galen's mother.** Galen was the famous physician of Pergamus, the founder of modern medicine, and a friend of Marcus Aurelius. His mother was said to have been a second Xanthippe.

p. 98, l. 11. **Marcus Aurelius's mother.** Domitia Calvilla, a noble Roman matron.

p. 98, l. 15. **Aventine . . . Bethnal Green, Spitalfields,** the 'slums' of ancient Rome and modern London respectively.

p. 98, l. 17. **Sabine country.** The poet Horace is forever celebrating the delights of rustic life in his Sabine farm.

p. 99, l. 1. **Theocritus,** the creator of Pastoral poetry, lived at Syracuse in Sicily in the latter half of the third century B.C., probably in the reign of the tyrant Hiero II. He was doubtless also familiar with the court of Ptolemy Philadelphus at Alexandria, and it was on the occasion of his marriage to the Princess Arsinoë in 277 B.C., that the scene described with such inimitable humour took place. In honour of the wedding a *tableau* of Venus and Adonis has been arranged at the palace, and the local *prima donna* hired to sing. Adonis was the beautiful youth beloved of Venus, killed by a wild boar while hunting. At the prayer of the goddess he was restored to life for six months in

every year. See Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* and Milton, *P. L.* i. 445 ff.

> Thammuz came next
> Whose annual wound in Lebanon allured
> The Syrian damsels to lament his fate,
> In amorous ditties all a summer's day,
> While smooth Adonis from his native rock
> Ran purple to the sea, supposed with blood
> Of Thammuz yearly wounded.

p. 106, l. 21. **Hope.** From Wordsworth's *Address to my infant daughter, Dora.*

p. 106, l. 32. **Kyrie eleison.** 'Lord have mercy upon us, Christ have mercy upon us,' ancient Greek versicles which form part of the service of the Mass.

p. 107, l. 1. **Te Deum.** 'We praise Thee, O God,' the Church's ancient song of thanksgiving.

p. 107, l. 6. **Wilhelm Meister.** Goethe's famous novel, known to English readers through Carlyle's version.

p. 107, l. 15. **Pompeii and Herculaneum.** Two fashionable Roman watering-places on the Bay of Naples, suddenly overwhelmed, in the midst of all their gaiety, by an eruption of Vesuvius, in 79 A.C. Pompeii has been subsequently excavated. It gives us a wonderful picture of the luxurious pleasure-loving life of Roman society in the first century B.C.

p. 107, l. 30. **Antichrist.** Satan, who will come back to earth in visible form, to 'deceive the very elect.' Extreme Protestants identified Antichrist with the Pope.

p. 108, l. 2. **St. Francis of Assisi** (1182-1226) the greatest of the medieval saints, and perhaps the only one who actually carried out in his life the literal precepts of Jesus Christ. He was suddenly converted from a life of gaiety in 1202, and soon after, with the sanction of Innocent III., founded his order of preaching friars, who were vowed to chastity and poverty, and wandered about the country, tending the poor, sick and needy. Love of poverty was a cardinal element in the Franciscan creed. Love of his fellow-creatures, not merely the human race, but the birds and animals, Brother Sun, Sister Moon, Brother Wind and Sister Water, even Brother Ass the Body, was another. Joyfulness was another characteristic: there was nothing

gloomy about St. Francis. He preached all over Italy and France, in Egypt, and even in the Holy Land in the midst of the Crusade. Two years before his death he retired to Mount Alverno to fast and pray, and there he received upon his body the *stigmata*, or marks of the Passion of Jesus Christ. However this extraordinary phenomenon be explained, it is an acknowledged fact. St. Francis was neither a philanthropist or revivalist, but an ascetic and mystic, overflowing with the Love of God. He was canonized immediately after his death.

p. 113, l. 2. **Heinrich Heine.** The student should read Arnold's beautiful essay on Heine. Heine (1797-1857) was a Jew by birth. He was unable to live in Germany owing to his political opinions, and lived and died in Paris. He was pre-eminently the sweet singer of German literature. The *Buch der Lieder* contains some of the most poignant lyrics and ballads in the world. Heine's life in Paris was one long tragedy of poverty and excruciating pain, which he bore with whimsical fortitude. God is to him the Supreme Jester, the " Aristophanes of Heaven."

p. 114, l. 11. **What pipes.** Keats, *Ode to a Grecian Urn.*

p. 118, l. 9. **Simonides** of Cos, *c.* 538 B.C., a celebrated elegiac poet. **Pindar,** the greatest of the Greek lyric writers, author of the magnificant *Odes*, lived at Thebes *c.* 450 B.C. **Aeschylus** and **Sophocles,** together with Euripides, were the greatest of the Greek tragedians.

p. 118, l. 20. **the heavy and the weary weight.** From Wordsworth's *Tintern Abbey.*

p. 119, l. 5. **O that my lot.** This celebrated passage comes from a chorus in the *Oedipus Rex* of Arnold's favourite Sophocles, l. 863 ff. :

εἴ μοι συνείη φέροντι
μοῖρα τὰν εὐσεπτον ἁγνείαν λόγων
ἔργων τε πάντων, ὧν νόμοι πρόκεινται
ὑψίποδες, οὐρανίαν
δι' αἰθέρα τεκνωθέντες, ὧν Ὄλυμπος
πατὴρ μόνος, οὐδέ νιν
θνατὰ φύσις ἀνέρων
ἔτικτεν, οὐδὲ μάν ποτε λάθα κατακοιμάσει.
μέγας ἐν τοῦτοις θεός, οὐδὲ γηράσκει.

Jebb translates:

May destiny still find me winning the praise of reverent purity in all words and deeds sanctioned by those laws of range sublime called into life throughout the high clear heaven, whose father is Olympus alone; their parent was no race of mortal men, no, nor shall oblivion ever lay them to sleep; the God is mighty in them, and he grows not old.

MARCUS AURELIUS

Marcus Aurelius Antoninus shares with Julian the honour of being among the saintliest products of paganism, and one of the noblest rulers who ever wore the purple. He was an almost literal fulfilment of the Platonic ideal of the 'philosopher-king.' He was born of a noble family in A.C. 121, and educated by tutors, of whom M. Cornelius Fronto became a devoted friend and guide. From Diognetus he imbibed the Stoic doctrines which moulded his life. His uncle, Titus Antoninus Pius (138-161), had adopted both Marcus and Commodus, but designated the former only as his successor. Marcus Aurelius, however, insisted on sharing the dignity with his foster-brother. On his succession he began at once to put his doctrines into practice. He slaved night and day in purifying public and private life and in reforms of every kind. But he was not left long in peace. Rome was threatened on all sides. The Parthians in Armenia, and the German tribes on the Danube, were assuming a threatening attitude. Marcus had to take the field, and spent the rest of his life in ceaseless campaigns against the barbarian hordes until his death in 180. With his demise came to a close the age of the Antonines, which Gibbon considers "the period during which the condition of the human race was most happy and prosperous." But it was an autumn summer only. Commodus, buffoon, tyrant and libertine, soon undid his father's work. The most lasting heritage which Marcus Aurelius bequeathed to the world was his *Meditations*, reflections jotted down at odd moments of leisure, and forming one of the noblest collection of precepts in all literature. It has been not unjustly compared with the Sermon on the Mount, or the

teaching of Gautama, the founder of Buddhism. It is one of the most melancholy paradoxes of history that one whose beliefs were so akin to Christianity should have sanctioned the butchery of the Christians in 177. But Marcus Aurelius had no opportunity of forming any kind of acquaintance with Christianity as a religion. To the Romans of his time, the Christian religion was, in the words of Tacitus, an 'execrable superstition,' an obscure Jewish sect, composed of immoral fanatics who encouraged disloyalty by forbidding their followers to conform to the State religion.

Stoicism was the name given to a school of philosophy founded by Zeno about 304 B.C. It was successively built up by Cleanthes and Chrysippus. Stoicism is essentially a practical creed—a religion or rule of life, rather than a mere philosophical theory. It aims at knowledge, but knowledge which can be realized in virtuous action. God is to the world what soul is to man, an informing spirit. Right action is "life according to Nature," doing our duty, fulfilling the end for which we are created. The only Good is Knowledge or Virtue; the only Evil is Ignorance or Vice: the other accidents of this mortal life, disease, poverty, even death, are "indifferent." It will easily be seen that Stoicism made an appeal to the Roman mind, which was essentially practical and severe, and laid especial stress on conduct. Besides, Stoicism, unlike the earlier Greek systems, was cosmopolitan and suited to the Roman Empire, with its various nationalities, and in this respect it anticipated the appeal of Christianity. All might be members of the "dear city of Zeus." Stoicism came to Rome with Panaetius (185 B.C.), and it found a congenial soil in the hearts of the stern republicans who struggled against the tyranny and corruption of the early Emperors. Cato the Younger's suicide at Utica set the example for Paetus and Helvidius Priscus, and even the gentle Seneca and the timid Lucan, to follow unflinchingly. In Epictetus, a lame slave banished by Domitian, Stoicism found one of its most admirable exponents; in Marcus Aurelius it reached the summit of practical morality. After him it died out, perhaps because the universal degeneration of the Roman character made it no longer acceptable.

p. 120, l. 1. **Mill.** John Stuart Mill (1806-73), politician and philosopher, a leading member of the Utilitarian School of Adam Smith and Bentham, the motto of which was " The greatest happiness of the greatest number."

p. 120, l. 23. **The Imitation.** See p. 9, l. 6, *note*.

p. 121, l. 26. **Epictetus.** See p. 53, l. 4, *note*.

p. 122, l. 12. **Empedocles.** The fifth-century Sicilian philosopher,

> who, to be deemed
> A god, leaped fondly into Etna flames.

See Arnold's *Empedocles on Etna*.

p. 122, l. 17. **justification by faith.** This was the belief that man obtained salvation by belief in the merits of the Saviour, as opposed to the opposite doctrine that salvation could only be obtained by good works. It was upheld by the Protestants at the Reformation, but was condemned at the Council of Trent. It formed the substance of the furious controversy between the Jansenists of Port Royal and the Jesuits in the eighteenth century.

p. 122, l. 22. **religion has lighted up morality.** Elsewhere Matthew Arnold defines religion as ' morality tinged with emotion.'

p. 122, l. 29. **Lead me.** This is usually attributed to Cleanthes and not to Epictetus. The original runs:

> Ἡγοῦ δέ μ' ὦ Ζεῦ, καὶ σύγ', ἡ πεπρωμένη,
> ὅποι ποθ' ὑμῖν εἰμὶ διατεταγμένος,
> ὡς ἕψομαι γ' ἄοκνος· ἢν δὲ μὴ θέλω,
> κακὸς γενόμενος, οὐδὲν ἧττον ἕψομαι.
>
> Lead, lead Cleanthes, Zeus and holy Fate,
> Where'er ye place my post, to serve or wait;
> Willing I follow; were it not my will,
> A baffled rebel must I follow still.

p. 123, l. 4. **Let thy loving spirit,** etc. Psalm cxliii. 10 Isaiah lx. 19; Malachi iv. 2; St. John i. 13 and iii. 3 1 Ep. of John v. 4; St. Mark ix. 23; 2 Corinthians v. 17 and St. Matthew, xviii. 22.

p. 124, l. 23. **Mr. Long.** Mr. George Long (1800-79), Professor at University College, London.

p. 126, l. 1. **Collier** (1650-1726), a High Church clergyman who wrote a once famous tract on the immorality of the English stage.

p. 128, l. 17. **volitare.** Virgil, *Georg.* iii. 8. "To live for ever on the lips of men."

p. 128, l. 23. **Arouet.** Voltaire was only a *nom de plume.* His real name was François Marie Arouet.

p. 130, l. 24. **St. Louis.** Louis IX. (1226-70), warrior, saint and statesman, and the greatest of the early French monarchs.

p. 131, l. 6. **Saturday Review.** The reference is to the articles by Professor Freeman, author of the *History of the Norman Conquest* and opponent of Froude.

p. 132, l. 10. **trade of blood and guile.** Cf. Gibbon's famous dictum that history is "little more than the register of the crimes, follies and misfortunes of mankind." On the other hand, Gibbon considers the Age of the Antonines to have been the happiest period in the history of the human race.

p. 132, l. 21. **sixth satire of Juvenal.** Juvenal, the prince of Roman satirists, gives us an intensely gloomy picture of the morality of Roman society in the first century A.C. It is probably extremely one-sided and biassed.

p. 132, l. 27. **Graeculus esuriens.** "The greedy Greek." Juvenal, *Satires,* iii. 78.

p. 133, l. 8. **caret.** "Because he lacks a bard to sing his praises," Horace, *Odes,* iv. 9. 28.

p. 133, l. 13. **Avidius Cassius,** commander-in-chief of the Roman forces operating against the Parthians in Asia Minor, was proclaimed Emperor by the soldiery in 175, some say at the instigation of Faustina. Three months after, he was assassinated and his head brought to Marcus. Marcus characteristically refused to punish any one else for the revolt, and burnt the incriminating correspondence of Cassius unread.

p. 135, l. 22. **Mormonism,** the grotesque sect founded by Joseph Smith (1805-44), calling themselves the Latter-day Saints. Their headquarters is Salt Lake City, Utah. Amongst other things, they practise polygamy.

p. 136, l. 5. **exitiabilis superstitio,** " an execrable superstition—convicted on account of their hatred of the human race." Tacitus, *Ann.* xv.44. Christianity was looked upon as an obscure Jewish sect, and shared the general obloquy under which the Jews suffered in Rome. In spite of the preaching of St. Paul, the doctrines of Jesus Christ were utterly unknown to Roman society in the first century A.C. The Christians were accused of incest, cannibalism, murder, and of setting fire to Rome in the reign of Nero. Their chief crime in the eyes of the state was their refusal to worship the emperor. Persecutions of the Christians broke out under Nero, Domitian, and other emperors, and this drove them to meet for worship in the Catacombs, those wonderful underground tombs which still contain countless remains of their occupation. In the reign of Marcus Aurelius two great persecutions took place, at Lyons, where Pothinus and Blandina suffered, and at Smyrna, where the most prominent victim was the aged bishop Polycarp.

p. 138, l. 3. **the Palatine.** The hill on which stood the Imperial Palace.

p. 138, l. 9. **Fleury.** A French ecclesiastical historian (1640-1723).

p. 141, l. 13. **Franklin.** Benjamin Franklin (1706-90), American statesman, scientist and moralist, best known for his *Autobiography* and *Poor Richard's Almanack.*

p. 141, l. 23. **Father which seeth in secret.** St. Matthew vi. 4.

p. 142, l. 20. **The kingdom of God.** Luke xvii. 21.

p. 142, l. 25. **Seneca.** A celebrated Stoic philosopher, tutor of Nero, who forced him to commit suicide in 65 A.C.

p. 146, l. 13. **Apollonius,** etc. Marcus Aurelius' tutors.

p. 146, l. 32. **Tiberius,** etc. The four worst of the Roman Emperors.

p. 148, l. 2. **the Happy Islands.** The Islands of the Blessed, to which the souls of the dead go. So Tennyson's Ulysses says

> It may be we shall reach the Happy Isles,
> And see the great Achilles whom we knew

and King Arthur is borne away to

> The island valley of Avilion,
> Where falls not rain, or hail, or any snow,
> Nor ever wind blows loudly.

p. 150, l. 25. **O faithless.** St. Matthew xvii. 17.

p. 153, l. 10. **Justin.** Justin Martyr, author of an Apology for Christianity addressed to Antoninus Pius.

p. 153, l. 13. **Alogi,** a heretical sect which denied the Divinity of Jesus Christ.

p. 153, l. 16. **gnosis,** esoteric knowledge, mysticism.

p. 153, l. 27. **tendentem.** *Aen.* vi. 314. "With hands outstretched in yearning for the other side."

The Roman Emperors

As many references to the Roman Emperors occur in the text, the following list may be useful:

Augustus, 29 B.C.-14 A.C.
Tiberius, 14-37 A.C.
Caligula, 37-41 A.C.
Claudius, 41-54 A.C.
Nero, 54-68 A.C.
Galba, Otho, Vitellius, 68-9 A.C.
Vespasian, 69-79 A.C.
Titus, 79-81 A.C.
Domitian, 81-96 A.C.

The Antonines
- Nerva, 96-98 A.C.
- Trajan, 98-117 A.C.
- Hadrian, 117-138 A.C.
- Antoninus Pius, 138-161 A.C.
- Marcus Aurelius, 161-180 A.C.

THE FUNCTION OF CRITICISM AT THE PRESENT TIME

This essay should be read in conjunction with that on *The Literary Influence of Academies*. In both, Matthew Arnold insists upon a truth too often forgotten in England—the importance of the office of the critic. Criticism is

despised as inferior to creative literature. But it is the absence of a regular school of criticism which has led to the most glaring faults of English literature in the nineteenth century, its provinciality, its anarchy, its eccentricity, its violence. "The creation of a modern poet, to be worth much, implies a great critical effort behind it." Compare Goethe, for instance, with Byron. In France, the Academy sets a literary standard for the nation: there is nothing comparable to this in England, no sovereign organ of opinion, no recognized authority in matters of tone and taste. In England we have indeed our great Reviews, the *Edinburgh*, the *Quarterly*, *Blackwood's*, but they lack the first essential quality of true criticism, *disinterestedness*. Their judgments, in consequence, are biassed, *saugrenu*, to use an expressive French term. Contrast with them, for instance, the *Revue des Deux Mondes*. Criticism is, or should be, "a disinterested endeavour to learn and propagate the best that is known and thought in the world."

p. 154, l. 20. **Shairp.** J. C. Shairp (1819-85), Principal of St. Andrews and Professor of Poetry at Oxford.

p. 159, l. 22. **Byron . . . Goethe.** In *Memorial Verses* Arnold speaks of "Goethe's sage mind and Byron's force."

p. 163, l. 18. **St. Giles.** On 23rd July, 1637, Jenny Geddes hurled her folding-stool at the minister who tried to introduce into St. Giles' Cathedral the English ritual, so detested by the Presbyterians.

p. 165, l. 8. **Joubert** (1745-1824), a French moralist, philosopher and critic, not unlike Coleridge, known chiefly from Sainte-Beuve's study in *Causeries du Lundi* and Matthew Arnold's famous essay.

p. 166, l. 30. **Dr. Price** (1723-91) A nonconformist divine, whom Burke attacks for his republican principles in his *Reflections on the French Revolution*.

p. 168, l. 5. **Balaam.** The Prophet who came to curse but remained to bless. Numbers xxii.

p. 168, l. 12. **Lord Auckland** (1743-1814), a Tory peer and diplomat, a warm supporter of the younger Pitt.

p. 171, l. 30. **Revue des Deux Mondes.** The great French critical review, started in 1829. The foremost

names in French literature, Sainte-Beuve and many others, have been among its contributors, and it has been styled the " vestibule of the Academy." The **Edinburgh** (the " buff and blue ") was the Whig quarterly edited by Jeffrey; Macaulay was, perhaps, its most notable contributor. The **Quarterly**, edited by Gifford, was an equally powerful Tory organ; both were violently partizan, biassed and brutal in their criticisms. (For the other periodicals, see *Encyc. Brit. s.v.* Periodical.)

p. 173, l. 23. **Adderley.** Sir Charles Adderley (1814-1905), better known as Lord Norton, was M.P. for Staffordshire, and held several offices connected with Education and the Colonies in Lord Derby's ministry.

p. 173, l. 31. **Roebuck,** John Arthur, for a long time Member of Parliament for Sheffield.

p. 178, l. 25. **Lord Somers** (1649-1746), the great Whig lawyer who framed the Declaration of Right and maintained that James II. had " abdicated " the throne.

p. 178, l. 26. **Cobbett** (1763-1835), ex-soldier, colonist, farmer, politician and author, known equally for his stormy career as the friend of the labouring classes and as the author of that beautiful and spirited description of rural England, *Rural Rides*.

p. 179, l. 19. **terræ filii,** sons of the soil.

p. 180, l. 14. **Obermann** (1804), the masterpiece of Etienne de Senancour (1779-1846), consists of a series of letters supposed to be written by a solitary and melancholy person, whose headquarters are placed in a lonely valley of the Jura. It was a favourite with Arnold, who celebrated it in two poems.

p. 180, l. 18. **Colenso** (1814-83), bishop of Natal, who raised a controversy which made a great noise in his day by his views on the Pentateuch (especially upon the account of the Creation in Genesis), and on Eternal Punishment, for which he was excommunicated.

p. 181, l. 17. **Dr. Stanley.** Dean Stanley (1815-81), Arnold's college-friend and companion, well known in his day as Dean of Westminster Abbey and as the author of

many works, including a *Life of Dr. Arnold.* He was the George Arthur of *Tom Brown's Schooldays.* He was a protagonist of the Broad Church movement, and defended Colenso.

p. 182, l. 11. **Renan** (1832-92), a French orientalist, originally educated for the priesthood; ultimately, however, he came to disbelieve in the Divinity of Christ, and abandoned Christianity. His most famous work is his beautiful *Life of Jesus* (1863). He deeply influenced Matthew Arnold.

p. 182, l. 26. **Strauss** (1808-1874), the celebrated German theologian, author of the *Life of Jesus* (1835).

p. 183, l. 7. **Fleury** (1640-1723). A French ecclesiastical historian, author of a great *Histoire Ecclésiastique* (1691).

p. 183, l. 8. **Quiconque,** "Whoever imagines that he could write it better, does not understand it."

p. 183, l. 21. **nemo,** etc. "No educated man ever called a change of mind inconstancy."

p. 187, l. 4. **Bossuet** (1627-1704), a celebrated French preacher.

p. 187, l. 7. **Pius the Ninth** (1846-78), the greatest of modern Popes. Though the Papacy forfeited its Temporal Power by the entrance of Victor Emmanuel into Rome in 1870, it gained under Pio Nono a moral prestige far in excess of anything it had lost. Among Pius the Ninth's most famous acts were the promulgation of the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception (1854), and the Infallibility Decree (1870). He waged relentless war with Modernism. His Jubilee of 1871 was celebrated with unparalleled enthusiasm.

p. 188, l. 16. **Ab integro.** "The world's great age begins anew," from the opening lines of Virgil's fourth Eclogue.

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