Shelburne Essays

By

Paul Elmer More

Seventh Series

"Only by valuing is there value."—NIETZSCHE.

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SEVENTH SERIES

SHELLEY

In confessing that he wrote his life of Shelley[1] as a middle-aged man for others of his class, Mr. Clutton-Brock forgot to reckon with the wit of his youthful reviewers; and yet, if by middle-age he means the experience of life, what right, after all, has Shelley or any other darling of the Muses to be exempt from that censure? The biographer's real fault is rather an amazing ingenuousness in trying to ride at once the horses of both youth and maturity. On one page he analyses *Prometheus Unbound* as a drama of a single event, and that causeless, acted by characters who drift about aimlessly and know not who they are or what relation they bear to one another: that is the critical attitude

[1] *Shelley: The Man and the Poet.* By A. Clutton-Brock. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1909.

of mature common-sense. It is the audacious enthusiasm of youth when in a later passage he insists that the author of this drama proves himself an "intellectual poet." The same double-dealing appears when in one place he asserts that Shelley's ideas and emotions underwent little change; and then, a few pages after, with a covert allusion to Matthew Arnold, declares that the poet "was not a vapid angel singing silly hymns; but a man who only learnt to live well and write well by sharp experience." Now, Shelley is "a being prophetic of some higher state to which mankind shall attain, and unfit for this life only because he was fit for a better"; elsewhere, his Paradise is pronounced "a mere impossibility, an incongruous mixture of present pleasure of the flesh with imagined delights of the spirit."

I do not quote these acrobatic feats of criticism because I wish to ridicule Mr. Clutton-Brock's book, which is as a whole a fairly illuminating piece of work; but because they are so characteristic of our modern way of dealing with facts and tendencies. Look, for instance, into Miss Vida Scudder's school edition of the *Prometheus*, with its long Introduction—not a very wise production, perhaps, but significant as a woman's conception of a peculiarly feminine genius and as a specimen of what commonly, no doubt, passes in courses of literature. You will there

find that the drama "has a noble and organic unity," although, while the second act is the most wonderful thing "in the whole cycle of English song," the third "drops into bathos" and is "weak, sentimental, empty." The poem as a whole is "a work of resplendent insight," yet its interpretation of evil—that is, the very heart of its theme—is "hopelessly superficial," and man is depicted in it as "a creature of no personality, scarcely higher, except for his æsthetic instincts, than an amiable brute."

After all, these knights and ladies of the romantic pen seem to discover in Shelley traits pretty much like those which they so magnificently disdain Matthew Arnold for dilating upon. Nor is Arnold's criticism the only field of their inconsistent attack. Mr. Clutton-Brock cites for reprobation a long passage from Hazlitt's *Table Talk;* yet most of what the old bludgeoner says can, with some change of emphasis, be matched in the modern biographer's own pages. In like manner Miss Scudder puts the ancient reviewers in the stocks to show by comparison how wise we since have grown. She quotes from *Blackwood's* of September, 1820, and from the *Quarterly Review* of October, 1821:

> In short, it is quite impossible that there should exist a more pestiferous mixture of blasphemy, sedition, and sensuality, than is visible in the whole structure and strain

of this poem [*Prometheus*], which, nevertheless, and notwithstanding all the detestation its principles excite, must and will be considered by all that read it attentively, as abounding in poetical beauties of the highest order. (*Blackwood's.*)

In Mr. Shelley's poetry, all is brilliance, vacuity, and confusion. We are dazzled by the multitude of words which sound as if they denoted something very grand or splendid: fragments of images pass in crowds before us; but when the procession has gone by, and the tumult of it is over, not a trace of it remains upon the memory. The mind, fatigued and perplexed, is mortified by the consciousness that its labour has not been rewarded by the acquisition of a single distinct conception. (*Quarterly.*)

Really, with the best will in the world, I cannot see that Miss Scudder differs so much from the reviled reviewer of *Blackwood's*, except that she seems to feel no indignation against an author whose sense of evil is "hopelessly superficial." Nor does Mr. Clutton-Brock stand very far from the *Quarterly* when he says that "in a story there should be some relation of cause and effect, otherwise it will not hold together; in *The Revolt of Islam* there is none"; and admits that "in its very absurdity it shows the character of Shelley's mind." The chief difference is that Mr. Clutton-Brock apparently thinks it quite a small matter if a long and professedly philosophical poem leaves the reader perplexed and without any distinct conception of what it is all about.

Now these names represent no isolated para-

dox of taste, but the almost constant current of criticism from Shelley's own day to this. Their dilemma is due, I think, to a fact which his contemporary critics held, if anything, too belligerently in view, and which his modern worshippers commonly allow and then deliberately forget—that his was a genius fine and impressionable, meant by nature for the perception and utterance of rare truths, but marred in its very essence by the obliquity of Time. His work is a confirmation in a way of his master Godwin's theory—though contrary in direction to his master's wish—that education is a power to shape the destinies of man. The value of Mr. Clutton-Brock's biography lies in the clearness and frankness with which he unravels Shelley's motives and ideas; and this value is enhanced, perhaps, by the biographer's sympathy, paradoxical indeed, but so profound as to make him in the end deny utterly the logic of his premises. But we need not go to the commentators on Shelley's life to discover the influences that worked upon him. Sufficient testimony may be found in his own Letters, which have just been brought together and excellently edited by Roger Ingpen.[1] The new material here offered is slight, but the collection has the

[1] *The Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley.* Collected and edited by Roger Ingpen. Two volumes. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1909.

merit of setting the recently discovered letters to Elizabeth Hitchener—and others less important —in their proper place in the full correspondence. I do not see how any open mind can go through these letters without feeling that Shelley was powerfully affected by the prevailing forces of the age (which is commonly conceded), and that his character and poetry suffered a certain perversion from this influence (which is often conceded and denied in the same breath).

Those directing forces were the twin spirits— if they were not one power in dual manifestation —of revolution and romanticism. The revolutionary spirit, whether for weal or for ill, had breathed upon all the finer minds of the age, and indeed not upon the minds of that age alone. But the impulse that came to Shelley was not merely revolt against tyranny, or even the wanton itch for change—*neoterism*, as the ancients called it. That kind of political excitement may or may not have a perverting effect upon a poet. Milton lived in such a time of upheaval; and if the excess and bad taste that here and there mar his later works are attributable to the harsh pride of rebellion, it left his genius sound at heart, perhaps even strengthened the wings of his fierce aspiration. But with Shelley revolution meant the fluttering of an opaque and dizzying flag between the poet's inner eye and the truth of human nature. He was pe-

culiarly the child of his age, betrayed by his own feminine fineness of nature, and lacking that toughness of fibre, or residue of resistant prose, which made Byron and Wordsworth followers but not altogether the victims of the ever-despotic Hour. With a child-like credulity almost inconceivable he accepted the current doctrine that mankind is naturally and inherently virtuous, needing only the deliverance from some outwardly applied oppression to spring back to its essential perfection. With Rousseau the perverting force had been property. With Shelley it was more commonly personified as Jehovah or Jove,

> Foul tyrant both of Gods and Human-kind.

Shelley was a pretty wide reader of Greek, and it may be that in writing his drama on this creed he had in mind not only the *Prometheus Bound* of Æschylus, but for a remote analogy to his personification of evil went back to Homer's blind *atê*, which Zeus cast upon the minds of those who were doomed to sin. And in so far as he did this he would only have voiced a universal and unreasoning sentiment of the human heart; for Achilles was but the type of us all, when in the stress of bewilderment he cried out against the government of the world:

> It is thou, father Zeus, that givest to men the great passions of evil (μεγάλας ἄτας).

But Zeus was to Homer at least a living being, whereas Shelley's Jehovah is merely a symbol of a power in human nature tremendously energetic, yet, if you seek it, nowhere to be found. And Shelley, when he made of man's bewildered outcry a rigid philosophy and principle of action, might have remembered also the words of Zeus (to which Pope has given so amusing an anti-Calvinistic twang):

> Perverse mankind! whose wills, created free,
> Charge all their woes on absolute decree;
> All to the dooming gods their guilt translate,
> And follies are miscall'd the crimes of fate.

To Shelley's old detractor of *Blackwood's* (when religion was a fairly serious concern) his philosophy was "pestiferous blasphemy"; his modern academic admirer merely disregards it as "hopelessly superficial." To me, I confess, it is chiefly unliterary, destructive, that is to say, of that self-knowledge out of which the great creations and the magnificent joys of literature grow. The importance of Shelley's Letters also is largely derived from their confirmation of this critical attitude by their betrayal of the same force at work in his conduct. It is not that he was by nature base or sensual or cruel; on the contrary, his life was ennobled by many acts of instinctive generosity, and his feelings were normally fine. Nevertheless, there was some flaw at his heart, some weakness of overweening

self-trust, which exposed him to the most insidious poison of the age, and in the final test left him almost inhuman. "In all Shelley did," wrote his wife after his death, "he, at the time of doing it, believed himself justified to his own conscience." The words have been used by Matthew Arnold as a text; they would have been still truer to character if to "at the time" Mrs. Shelley had added "and always." Opinions may differ in regard to Shelley's culpability toward his first wife, Harriet Westbrook, although no chivalrous mind, I think, can read his letters at the time of his elopement with her and, later, of his desertion of her for another woman, without feeling a touch of resentment at his self-absorption and his complete assumption of righteousness. And resentment deepens into detestation at his letters written when the abandoned woman, a pitiable thing no matter what her fault, drowned herself in the Serpentine. On the day he heard the news, or possibly the day after, he wrote to Harriet's supplanter:

> Everything tends to prove, however, that beyond the shock of so hideous a catastrophe having fallen on a human being once so nearly connected with me, there would, in any case, have been little to regret. Hookham, Longdill, every one does me full justice; bears testimony to the upright spirit and liberality of my conduct to her. There is but one voice in condemnation of the detestable Westbrooks. If they should dare to bring it before Chancery [they did dare, and nothing derogatory to them transpired],

a scene of such fearful horror would be unfolded as would cover them with scorn and shame.

Little to regret, save the shock to his nerves of so unpleasant an event. Mr. Clutton-Brock observes that Shelley did not do himself "full justice in this letter." He did not, for he was by birth neither maniac nor brute; but he wrote on that day a lurid comment on the effect upon individual character of revolutionary Pharisaism; nor did his sentiments change with time, for in a letter to Southey four years later he wrote of the event in the same vein. The malignant reviewer of *Blackwood's* called those principles "pestiferous"; Miss Scudder rebukes the reviewer and styles them "superficial." Perhaps it is more critical to reflect merely that, as Mrs. Shelley said, the poet's verse was inspired by the passions of his private life, and that the horrors threatened in *Prometheus* against the "foul tyrant both of Gods and Human-kind" sprang from precisely the same source as the imprecations upon the Westbrooks. "I have confidence in my moral sense alone," said Shelley once in a letter to Leigh Hunt; "but that is a kind of originality."

With that moral self-complaisance went another trait, if indeed it was not merely a different aspect of the same influence. By Shelley each emotion as it arose in his breast was accepted as justified in itself, without pausing

to consider its cause or consequence. The full meaning of this emotionalism can be grasped only by a long view into the past. To the great writers of the seventeenth century human nature was a thing to distrust as containing tendencies of ruinous evil. "Men naturally know no Good," said Jeremy Taylor, voicing the constant opinion of his age, "but to please a wild, indetermined, infinite Appetite." But along with this fear of undisciplined nature, went a belief in the efficacy and virtue of certain supernatural emotions, in an infinite appetite that was not wild and indetermined—in enthusiasm.

The following age—and this was the whole force of Deism, one of the most important movements in history—brought about a complete reversal of this position. The very titles of the leading publications show the change: Dr. Clarke writes on *The Unchangeable Obligations of Natural Religion;* Wollaston elaborates his *Religion of Nature Delineated;* Butler preaches *Upon the Natural Supremacy of Conscience*, etc., etc. But this rehabilitation of nature, toward which the eighteenth century, and particularly England of that age, laboured so assiduously, was based, in the earlier years, on a constant distinction: nature was used almost without deviation as a synonym of reason; and strong emotion, or enthusiasm, was condemned as contrary to nature and perilous. Pages might

be filled with the utterances of deists and even of the opponents of Deism on this head, but nothing, perhaps, can be found more characteristic and inclusive than the simple words of the Rev. Nicholas Carter to his daughter Elizabeth, the learned translator of Epictetus: "You seem extremely fond of her [Mrs. Rowe's] writings. I have seen some that have in them a tincture of enthusiasm. 'T is proper to caution you not to read them with too much pleasure. Enthusiasm grows upon us insensibly." I doubt if more of the eighteenth century was ever summed up in a few unpretentious sentences. In that distrust of free emotion lay the strength of the time, the power that made its belief in nature ancillary to its belief in order and subordination (*cf.* Butler's *Sermons* and Dr. Johnson's conversation *passim* on subordination); here, too, lay the cause of its limitation, for this dread of enthusiasm cut off the great inspirations of the preceding age as well as the disturbing passions. The fascination of the century for the student is to watch the rise of this hated spirit of enthusiasm through all obstacles to the surface. The word was long repudiated even by those who were bringing back its force; so Wesley cries out: "The reproach of Christ I am willing to bear; but not the reproach of enthusiasm." Who can measure all that has passed in the inner life of man between the

timidity of Dr. Carter and the bold utterance of Shelley in the preface to *The Revolt of Islam:* "It is the business of the poet to communicate to others the pleasure and the enthusiasm," etc.? There is expressed the elevation and the power of the romantic renaissance; the peril of the movement lies in the fact that with its return to seventeenth-century enthusiasm it retained the eighteenth-century acceptance of nature, but now without restriction, thus leaving to itself no inner check.

All the revolutionary poets of England were affected by the same emotional philosophy, however their practice was modified by other principles. Wordsworth proclaimed it in his worship of the "impulse from the vernal wood," but with an admixture of Puritanic asceticism which made of it a kind of passive discipline. Byron possessed with it a saving self-reproach and cynicism. In Keats it was qualified by an æsthetic humility which rendered him in the end curiously docile to tradition. Few things are more significant in the romantic poetry of England than the change in Keats's versification from the license of his rhymed couplets in *Endymion* to the almost Drydenian regularity of *Lamia*. Whether or not that change will appear altogether a profit, it must be admitted that no such organic development can be discovered in Shelley; nor in his correspondence will you find

anything comparable to the long letter of Keats to Reynolds (3 May, 1818) in which he questions the very principles of his poetic theory. "The thought of such discipline," wrote Keats himself to Shelley, "must fall like cold chains upon you." Shelley, indeed, grew in metrical skill and power of expression, but from first to last his procedure was essentially unaltered: his *Prometheus* is only *Queen Mab* writ large; his *Epipsychidion* re-echoes in firmer strain the vagaries of *Alastor*. Always his philosophy, whether magnified into a shadowy mythology or expressed in human drama, whether it be the love or hate of Prometheus or his own relation to mankind, is the voice of enthusiasm, of unreasoned emotion.

It would not be profitable to follow out all the workings of that emotionalism, but one aspect of it shows so curious a link between the man and the poet as to deserve emphasis. Critics have commented on Shelley's extraordinary faculty of self-deception in regard to his friends, who so often were angels of light when first they appeared to him under the radiance of his own imagination, and demons of malevolence when they came to be known as real men and women having wills at variance with his. This form of delusion was not due merely to the inexperience of youth, for at the end of his life in Italy he was subject to the same revulsion,

if not so violently expressed, toward such friends as the Gisbornes. But the classic example (classic as being so perfect an expression of a trait common to all the Rousselian tribe) is in the letters to Miss Hitchener. These have been for some time known in manuscript, and have forced even the most ardent romanticists to admit a certain weakness in their hero. A few years ago they were printed in a separate edition, but the full weight of their testimony is best understood by reading them as they are now incorporated by Mr. Ingpen in the general correspondence.

Elizabeth Hitchener was a young schoolmistress with whom Shelley became acquainted shortly before his marriage to Harriet Westbrook. Her notions were liberal and her fancy ardent; "an *esprit fort*," Medwin called her; "ceruleanly blue," who "fancied herself a poet." After his marriage Shelley began to send her letters in the most rhapsodical vein of adulation. She is the sister of his soul: "I look up to you," he exclaims, "as a mighty mind. . . . I anticipate the era of reform with the more eagerness as I picture to myself *you* the barrier between violence and renovation"; with his brain and his heart she constitutes the Trinity of his Essence; she must leave all and come to live with him and Harriet—"nothing shall prevent our eternal union in the summer"; and to defer to the

opinions of those who foresee scandal in such a union is to sacrifice "to the *world!* to the swinish multitude, to the indiscriminating million, to such as burnt the House of Priestley, such as murdered Fitzgerald," etc. Well, this female paragon closed her school, and joined the young married couple in July of 1812; in November of the same year she had left them, and Shelley is soon writing to his friend Hogg of "the Brown Demon, as we call our late tormentor and schoolmistress. . . . She is an artful, superficial, ugly, hermaphroditical beast of a woman." To another friend he describes her as "a woman of desperate views and dreadful passions, but of cool and undeviating revenge."

Do not these fragments of correspondence offer a curious comment on the statement of Mr. Clutton-Brock that most of the characters of the *Prometheus* are "so abstract that we do not even know who they are"; and again that *The Cenci*, which deals with human beings, is even "far more unreal" than the *Prometheus*, which is professedly allegorical? As Shelley judged his friends from the immediate emotions they aroused in him, or from some fanciful association with the emotion dominant in his mind, without a care for the various and real springs of action in himself or them, so he created his poetical characters.

I am aware that my criticism of Shelley may

seem harsh and prosaic, yet I am really saying nothing which cannot be confirmed by the words of Mr. Clutton-Brock, and in fact by the views, less openly avowed perhaps, of the more whole-hearted Shelleyans. It is scarcely doing a violence to draw such support even from a critical work like Arthur Symons's *Romantic Movement*, which is written with the avowed purpose of exalting the work of Blake and Coleridge and Shelley as the final criterion of poetry. Mr. Symons does indeed look upon Shelley as an enchanter who "never mistakes the images which he calls up for realities," but, with that extraordinary contradiction which dogs all such critics, he adds immediately that the *Prometheus* is "a cloudy procession of phantoms, seen in a divine *hallucination*." Even more significant is that strangely-fated essay on Shelley by the late Francis Thompson. Dithyrambic praise has never poured itself out in more intoxicated language than in some of these paragraphs:

It [*Prometheus Unbound*] is unquestionably the greatest and most prodigal exhibition of Shelley's powers, this amazing lyric world, where immortal clarities sigh past in the perfumes of the blossoms, populate the breathings of the breeze, throng and twinkle in the leaves that twirl upon the bough; where the very grass is all a-rustle with lovely spirit-things, and a weeping mist of music fills the air. The final scenes especially are such a Bacchic reel and rout and revelry of beauty as leaves one staggered and giddy; poetry is spilt like wine, music runs to drunken

waste. The choruses sweep down the wind, tirelessly, flight after flight, till the breathless soul almost cries for respite from the unrolling splendours.

Yet these closing scenes are "nevertheless the artistic error of the poem"; yet Shelley wrote "with some misdirected view to truth"; yet in religion and morals "his methods were perniciously mistaken"; yet "his theory was repulsive but comprehensible"; and "the spell on which depend such necromantic castles is some spirit of pain charm-poisoned at their base." That charm-poisoned spirit was nothing less than the peculiar romantic illusion of the Revolution which ignored the native impulse of evil, ever lurking in the heart of man, ready to leap forth when its chains are shaken, and which valued the emotions in accordance with their mere spontaneity and intensity.

If, notwithstanding these admissions, the true Shelleyan still cherishes the *Prometheus* and *The Revolt of Islam* as great and beautiful powers in the intellectual world, the issue becomes a matter of emphasis, or, rather, of exclusions in taste. What really appeals to the romantic idealist in the spirit of these poems, in their total effect, is a kind of elusive, yet rapturous, emanation of hope devoid of specific content. The poet may look upon the world of living men with perverted gaze, but his truth is faith in the future; he is "a being prophetic of some higher

state to which mankind shall attain"; and from the intoxication of this sheer hope the destinies of mankind become like the vision of the chariots of the Hours:

> In each there stands
> A wild-eyed charioteer urging their flight.
> Some look behind, as fiends pursued them there,
> And yet I see no shapes but the keen stars:
> Others, with burning eyes, lean forth, and drink
> With eager lips the wind of their own speed,
> As if the thing they loved fled on before,
> And now, even now, they clasped it. Their bright locks
> Stream like a comet's flashing hair: they all
> Sweep onward.

There is at least something in this that seems dynamic, a power to make man

> . . . hope till Hope creates
> From its own wreck the thing it contemplates.

And indeed it is on this power, without account of its direction, that Mr. Clutton-Brock bases his admiration; to him Shelley "in his worst errors . . . was far more admirable and less mischievous than those who persuade us to submit to the mere mechanism of life by their own comfortable submission to it." Shall we, then, end here? The right comparison, I maintain, is not with those sunk in the comfortable mechanism of life, but rather with those strong poets of the true romance, who can hope and still maintain the balance of common-sense. I am

bold to assert that this surrender to hope without thought of the thing it contemplates is possible only to a mind which has, in a sense, been debauched by false ideas and vain reading; that a mind deeply nourished on the true poets may for a time and by a sort of self-violence suffer itself to become inflated with this wind of vanity, but cannot long forget the actual outcome of that spirit in the poet's own life and its sterility or falseness in dealing with the actual motives of mankind. It is no sufficient answer to say that the veritable content of Shelley's hope is love, for the scope of this emotion is left as vague, if not as morbid, as the other. It is a long hope to build on the power which "makes the reptile equal to the God"; nor will that power convey much satisfaction to the heart that has sustained itself on the *amor* of Catullus in this world or on that of Dante in the visionary spheres. Love without a true understanding of evil is meaningless.

Or it may be that your Shelleyan eschews philosophy and ideas altogether, caring only for the poet's musical evocation of beauty. To such a one, as to Francis Thompson, the *Prometheus* is like a magical incantation, under the spell of which forms of fleeting iridescent loveliness float before his dream-open eyes:

> Dim twilight-lawns, and stream-illumined caves,
> And wind-enchanted shapes of wandering mist.

That is an innocent and blissful kind of inebriation, very desirable, no doubt, in a world too much given to seeking its escape from prose in quite other and baser ways; but he who indulges therein should beware of speaking of this phantom realm as if it were peopled with ideas. There is a beauty of dreaming and a beauty of waking; they are sisters both and daughters of the gods, but only one is acknowledged on Olympus. If you desire to know them apart, read in the *Prometheus* of the voices that emanate from those wind-enchanted shapes:

> Canst thou imagine where those spirits live
> Which make such delicate music in the woods?
> . . . . . .
> 'T is hard to tell:
> I have heard those more skilled in spirits say,
> The bubbles, which the enchantment of the sun
> Sucks from the pale faint water-flowers that pave
> The oozy bottom of clear lakes and pools,
> Are the pavilions where such dwell and float
> Under the green and golden atmosphere
> Which noon-tide kindles thro' the woven leaves;
> And when these burst, and the thin fiery air,
> The which they breathed within those lucent domes,
> Ascends to flow like meteors thro' the night,
> They ride on them, and rein their headlong speed,
> And bow their burning crests, and glide in fire
> Under the waters of the earth again.

Read that and then recall Adam's account to Eve of the music that haunted the woods of Paradise:

> How often from the steep
> Of echoing hill or thicket have we heard
> Celestial voices to the midnight air . . .

The change is a transition from dreaming to the sober certainty of waking bliss; from a bubble-blown phantasmagoria to the ecstasy of intellectual beauty.

The fact is that if you press the meaning from all but the very few unreasoning worshippers of Shelley, you will find that they regard his long poems, organically conceived, as sublime failures, and that they really cherish him for the strains of lyric ecstasy caught up in the amorphous mass. That is fair criticism, and a man may pass over much in the waiting expectation for those scattered strains of music,

> Clear, silver, icy, keen, awakening tones
> Which pierce the sense and live within the soul.

Of Shelley, taken merely as the author of a group of lyrics, brief in compass, but exquisite in melody and feeling, quite another account might be given than this I am writing. Here, whether in independent songs or in short strains that can be detached from their context without any mark of incompleteness, here, when he expresses a purely personal joy or sorrow, love or regret, his genius suffers no let or thwarting; it is even strengthened by that romantic acceptance of the emotions. That is the Shelley of

the young man's and the maiden's passionate admiration:

> Music, when soft voices die,
> Vibrates in the memory—
> Odours, when sweet violets sicken,
> Live within the sense they quicken.
>
> Rose leaves, when the rose is dead,
> Are heap'd for the beloved's bed;
> And so thy thoughts, when Thou art gone,
> Love itself shall slumber on.

But it is necessary to add that even this wonderful lyric vein is subject at times to a kind of defeat from excess of the very power that produced it. *Adonais* is commonly reckoned, and no doubt is, the most perfect of his longer lyrics; yet the best stanzas of that poem, those that contain lines which have sung themselves into the memory of the world, are almost always marred by lapses into the vague and inane. There is no greater stanza in the elegy than the forty-fifth:

> The inheritors of unfulfilled renown
> Rose from their thrones, built beyond mortal thought,
> Far in the Unapparent. Chatterton
> Rose pale, his solemn agony had not
> Yet faded from him; Sidney, as he fought
> And as he fell and as he lived and loved
> Sublimely mild, a Spirit without spot,
> Arose; and Lucan, by his death approved:
> Oblivion as they rose shrank like a thing reproved.

The literary inspiration of those lines (and in pointing to this I mean no disparagement of Shelley's originality) is clearly born from a kind of mystical blending of Virgil's

> Heu, miserande puer! si qua fata aspera rumpas,
> Tu Marcellus eris—

and of Milton's

> So were I equall'd with them in renown.

There are lines in Shelley's stanza—the first and the eighth, particularly—which are in no wise diminished by this association with two of the most celebrated passages in literature; yet a comparison of the stanza as a whole with the full parts of the *Æneid* and *Paradise Lost* shows quite as clearly the weakness of Shelley. It is inconceivable that Virgil or Milton should have held so loose a rein on his genius as to sink from "The inheritors of unfulfilled renown" to the vapid "Far in the Unapparent," or should have dropped immediately from the magnificent directness of Shelley's eighth verse (which rings like Lucan himself when most Roman) to the vague allegory of oblivion shrinking reproved.

It would not be difficult to extend this kind of criticism to a considerable number of Shelley's most admired lyrics—to show, for instance, that the throbbing and tumultuous music of the great *Ode to the West Wind* straggles here and there to

unmelodious conclusions, chiefly because the poet—like all his English compeers—disdained the inherent laws of the *terza rima* as these are exemplified in the works of Dante and the lesser Italian masters of the measure. There is no other metre in which it is so imperative to mould the thought to the pauses of the rhythm, under penalty of letting the rhymes hang as an impertinence instead of a support; but this lesson none of the English poets learned, and least of all was Shelley capable of such wise docility.

Nevertheless, granted that *Adonais* may occasionally descend into bathos, if it contains also images of pure and radiant beauty, why not give ourselves to these, and pass the errors by? Doubtless that is the part of wisdom, so far as it is feasible; but here again we are blocked by certain insurmountable exclusions of taste. There is a pleasure, the highest critical joy, in the perfection and harmonious unity of such work as Milton's *Lycidas*, and he who has trained his mind to respond to that joy has by the very process rendered himself sensitive to false and obtrusive notes. He simply cannot read the stanza quoted from *Adonais* without suffering from the spirit of perversity at work within it. It is true, no doubt, that there are blemishes—occasional awkwardnesses of execution, failures of the imagination, even lapses of taste of a kind—which may not affect essentially our attitude

toward an extensive work of art; but they are not the faults which throw a suspicion of obliquity or vanity upon the very sources of the artist's inspiration.

These, I say, are the inevitable exclusions of taste. If a man avers that the thorough appreciation of *Lycidas* does not exclude for him an unmarred pleasure in *Adonais*, I can only suspect that he has never felt the full force of the former. This is by no means to say that the enjoyment of Milton deadens a man to all lower forms of literature. The commonplace or the small may in its own sphere be commendable and may afford a true relish to the finest palate; and, indeed, one of the functions of criticism is to set forth and so far as possible rescue from oblivion the inexhaustible entertainment of the lesser writers. But the humble is another thing than the false, the false is noxious just in proportion to the elevation of the genius to which it adheres. There is nothing mutually exclusive in the complete enjoyment of both Milton and Crabbe; it is at least questionable whether the same man can heartily admire both Milton and Shelley.

WORDSWORTH

THERE is not a great deal that is new in Mr. Knight's *Letters of the Wordsworth Family*,[1] and the editing can only be described as chaotic, yet we may be thankful to have the correspondence of the poet and his household brought together in any form. Perhaps the nearest approach to a discovery is the clearer figure of Coleridge seen in the communications to and about him—a dethroned deity of the upper air, not commanding the winds but tossed hither and thither by every breath of the heavens. In his petulant weaknesses and sullen indolence and decay, and still more in the disturbing dæmonic quality of his personality, as he appears and disappears amid the sober circle of his friends, he is like a greater and more tragic Rossetti. As for the letters of Wordsworth himself, their character is already known. They are not precisely entertaining, but read thus together and in this companionship they impress one the more by

[1] *Letters of the Wordsworth Family.* From 1787 to 1855. Collected and edited by William Knight. In three volumes. Boston: Ginn & Co., 1907.

the hard dry light of the intellect they display—a rationalism that was always present with him, ready at times to temper and even to thwart his romantic enthusiasms. When prejudice was aroused or his moral sense outraged he could indeed be amazingly perverse. It would not be easy to find a word more wantonly inappropriate for Byron than "dunce"; nor is "the damnable tendency" of such works as *Don Juan* likely to be diminished by branding "the despicable quality of the powers requisite for their production." Wordsworth might have learned from that poet's satire on himself—

> Who, both by precept and example, shows
> That prose is verse, and verse is merely prose, etc.—

how much more effective it is to exaggerate the virtuous weaknesses of an enemy than to belittle his vicious strength. But these errors of judgment are not common. In general, his critical remarks turn on a dogged determination to bend language to the minute exigencies of thought and emotion, and show how from this passionate integrity of mind, rather than from any peculiar sensitiveness to beauty, he also learned "that poetry is infinitely more of an art than the world is disposed to believe." And when, in the intercourse with a sympathetic friend, he speaks of his intimate ambition, there is something in his unflinching self-assertion and

clear vision that reminds one of Milton's dedication of himself to write such things as the world should not willingly let die. Beside that vow in *The Reason of Church Government* to make a poem suited "to inbreed and cherish in a great people the seeds of virtue and public utility, to allay the perturbations of the mind, and set the affections in a right tune," it is worth while to read Wordsworth's famous letter to Lady Beaumont. One seems here to lay finger on the differences between the sublime self-consciousness of the seventeenth century and its romantic imitation of the nineteenth. The words of the modern poet are familiar to all:

> It is an awful truth, that there neither is, nor can be, any genuine enjoyment of poetry among nineteen out of twenty of those persons who live, or wish to live, in the broad light of the world; among those who either are, or are striving to make themselves, people of consideration in society. This is a truth, and an awful one, because to be incapable of a feeling of poetry, in my sense of the word, is to be without love of human nature and reverence for God.... Never forget what, I believe, was observed to you by Coleridge, that every great and original writer, in proportion as he is great or original, must himself create the taste by which he is to be relished; he must teach the art by which he is to be seen.... I doubt not that you will share with me an invincible confidence that my writings (and among them these little poems) will co-operate with the benign tendencies in human nature and society, wherever found; and that they will, in their degree, be efficacious in making men wiser, better, and happier.

On lower ground these Letters may be considered, and so I would consider them here, as a fresh chapter in that mass of writings—the Fenwick Notes, Dorothy's *Journals*, De Quincey's *Reminiscences*, first of all—that present Wordsworth's poetical life to us in its minutest details. For the real question to-day is not so much the value of his greater works in themselves—these have their assured place—as of his chosen and cherished habit of life which is supposed to lend a prophetic power to his meanest words. I have been struck by a passage in Professor Raleigh's monograph, which expresses aptly a thought common to most present-day admirers. "These three poems," he says, and the reader may supply their names from a dozen in his memory, "judged by any purely literary standard, are almost devoid of merit. They could find no place in a volume of Selections chosen for beauty and glamour of expression; they would even be called silly by many a critic competent to choose such a selection. But they are poetry in the making; they lead us by the way that the poet trod, and bring us at last to the *Ode* or to the *Sonnet* composed on the beach near Calais, with quickened perceptions and an understanding that recognises how much of the stuff of human experience was distilled in these masterpieces." That is but a cautious way of saying what a

magazine-writer has recently stated more epigrammatically: "Those enjoy Wordsworth the most, and appreciate him the best, who see that his verse is never really prosaic." Is it so? Is it true that his meanest poems are noble because they are part of the utterance of a whole poetic life? Shall one dare to hint that, on the contrary, some error may be suspected in his philosophy just because it resulted in these ignoble poems?

"This will never do!" wrote Jeffrey, in the opening of his review of *The Excursion*, and for those four words he has been the most abused and best hated writer of the age; despite Matthew Arnold's half-hearted acceptance of the phrase, he has been held up as an example of the folly and conceit of criticism. Well, I humbly take my place on the pillory with Jeffrey, and say, It never will do. I know there are sublime passages in that "vasty version," as did the irascible Scotsman; but I swear that in judging its total effect the *Edinburgh* was right, that, compared with the earlier poems, it has "less boldness of originality, and less, even, of that extreme simplicity and lowliness of tone which wavered so prettily, in the *Lyrical Ballads*, between silliness and pathos," and that the manner of it exhibits imitations of Milton and Cowper, "engrafted on the natural drawl of the Lakers—and all diluted into harmony by that

profuse and irrepressible wordiness which deluges all the blank verse of this school of poetry, and lubricates and weakens the whole structure of their style." Truly, a Daniel come to judgment!

It is common to admit that Wordsworth had no humour, as, in truth, he had not; but one may agree with the Wordsworthians in disregarding that as a venial fault. Humour is a blessed boon in a world governed by a superciliously solemn Nature, in whose eyes there is no shadow of laughter when she seems most to jest with our own solemnities. But humour as a final criterion of literature is the mere cant of the day; impartially applied, it would atheticise half the great poems of the world. The fault of Wordsworth lies deeper than that; it is the more serious lack of native vitality. One feels this lack throughout the correspondence; it will be recognised instantly by comparing his letter of self-revelation to Lady Beaumont, magnanimous as that letter is, with Milton's similar confession in *The Reason of Church Government;* it leaves his trivial letters merely trivial, just as the superabundance of vitality in Byron imparts a catching vim and interest to his most insignificant note. The failure was primarily physical, I believe. No doubt, it is due to this that none of his portraits betrays the likeness to Milton that De Quincey discovered in his face, or the light within his eyes which seemed "to come

from unfathomed depths." That he was all his life physically active is no disproof; walking for him "stood in the stead of alcohol and all other stimulants." And one remembers that scene on the road when Dorothy was behind Wordsworth and a certain Westmoreland clergyman of "a fine, towering figure," and Dorothy would exclaim at intervals to her companion, "Is it possible—can that be William? How very mean he looks!" Some of De Quincey's petty gossip you will say; but, with a sidelight on larger issues. And much of the prattle in Dorothy's own *Journal* points to the same conclusion. How often the pathetic entry recurs in the prolific Grasmere days: "William worked at *The Ruined Cottage* and made himself very ill"; "William wrote out part of his poem, and endeavoured to alter it, and so made himself ill"; "William got to work, and was worn to death." Not physical elation, but endless fatigue went into the making of those poems; and there went into them also, vicariously, the life of a saintly woman. "I was oppressed and sick at heart for he wearied himself to death," she writes one day, not knowing, or caring, that the weariness meant not death to him, but, as the world is made, shattered nerves and imbecility to her, and for recompense a shadowy place *inter odoratum lauri nemus.*

One suspects that this same low vitality had

something to do with Wordsworth's political attitude. He has been denounced, and variously excused, for his desertion of the French Revolution, but I do not know that any one has attributed the change in large measure to a merely temperamental revulsion from the spectacle of ideas converted into incalculable activities. He himself has told of his early enthusiasm at the time when Europe

> . . . was thrilled with joy,
> France standing on the top of golden hours,
> And human nature seeming to be born.

Nor does it appear, in reality, that his political ideas altered essentially with his later conservatism; always he was full of pity for the "sorrowful reverse of all mankind"; even amidst his agitation over the English Reform bill he declared that he was not an anti-reformer, and at the end of his life he could still say, "I am a democrat." At the same time, with all his humanitarian sympathies and his love of liberty there had been from the beginning an element of stability and moral reverence in his nature, which one likes to uphold as a salutary offset to the fretful impatience of Shelley's revolutionary romanticism. But it was not principle so much as the aversion to limitless action that turned him against France when the Revolution began to work itself out in fact. Then it was, rather than when idling in "academic bowers,"

that a feeling of blind disease entered into his soul:

> I trembled,—thought, at times, of human life
> With an indefinite terror and dismay,
> Such as the storms and angry elements
> Had bred in me; but gloomier far, a dim
> Analogy to uproar and misrule,
> Disquiet, danger, and obscurity.

It is not without bearing on this trait of his character that Napoleon, the man of ruthless activity, was to Wordsworth merely a "remorseless desperado," whose very name caused a shiver, whereas to Hazlitt, another romantic revolutionary but different in his nervous vitality, he was to the end a divine agent.

And Wordsworth's art was affected in the same way by his temperament. In the poetry of events he was dismally weak. He himself, long years after the composition of *The Borderers*, could speak with complacency of his "turn for dramatic writing," but any one who has read to the end of that youthful indiscretion knows that it is one of the falsest and most desperately mawkish plays in the language. In the same way the stories that make up the section of *The Excursion* called too appropriately *The Church-Yard*, need only be compared with Crabbe's *Tales*, whose plots in several instances they almost duplicate, to see how impossible it was for Wordsworth to pass

from reflective sentiment to character as an agent. Love he commonly avoided as a theme because he thought himself by nature too passionate! It was rather the dynamic force of love, the power of love as the supreme mover and perturbator of men, that frightened him from the theme. In the beauty of a woman's face Marlowe saw the energy that launched a thousand ships; *militat omnis amans*, said Ovid, and from that inner and external battle Wordsworth turned by a native instinct. He has, indeed, left a little group of love poems almost perfect in their restrained beauty; but it is the shaping influence of nature he admires in the grace of that undiscovered "Lucy," and in her death he is awestruck by the sense of passionate absorption, if the phrase is allowed, into the passionless life of the world:

> A slumber did my spirit seal;
> I had no human fears:
> She seemed a thing that could not feel
> The touch of earthly years.
>
> No motion has she now, no force;
> She neither hears nor sees;
> Rolled round in earth's diurnal course,
> With rocks, and stones, and trees.

This is not the love that commonly stirs the determination or the despair of a bachelor of twenty-nine; it is neither the Pandemian nor the Uranian Venus of the poets, neither the god

Eros, with his flaming sword, nor the boy with his flower-tipped arrows. It is rather another step toward that communion with nature, that business of contemplative revery, into which the terror of events was driving him. Such a musing withdrawal of the soul cannot, of course, be separated from the general romantic movement of the age, but its special form was determined in Wordsworth by his individual temperament, and its value as a priestly lesson must be measured in some degree by our understanding of his unconscious motives. Now there is a passage in one of his letters (No. cccxviii of Mr. Knight's collection) which suggests a way of throwing these motives into a high light by comparison. He is rebuking his friend Gillies for quoting Lord Byron's "famous passage on solitude" (*Childe Harold*, canto ii., stanzas 26 and 27): this, he thinks, "does not deserve the notice which has been bestowed on it" and as composition "is bad, particularly the line:

Minions of grandeur [splendour] shrinking from distress";—

and he goes on to clinch the criticism:

To illustrate my meaning, and for no other purpose, I refer to my own lines on the Wye, where you will find the same sentiment, not formally put as it is here, but ejaculated, as it were, fortuitously in the musical succession of preconceived feeling.

Wordsworth's *Tintern Abbey* is in the memory

of every lover of poetry to-day, but Byron's stanzas must, I fear, be quoted at length or the point of the comparison will be lost:

> But 'midst the crowd, the hum, the shock of men,
> To hear, to see, to feel, and to possess,
> And roam along, the world's tired denizen,
> With none who bless us, none whom we can bless,—
> Minions of splendour shrinking from distress!—
> None that, with kindred consciousness endued,
> If we were not would seem to smile the less,
> Of all that flatter'd, follow'd, sought, and sued;
> This is to be alone; this, this is solitude!

> More blest the life of godly eremite,
> Such as on lonely Athos may be seen,
> Watching at eve upon the giant height,
> Which looks o'er waves so blue, skies so serene,
> That he who there at such an hour hath been
> Will wistful linger on that hallow'd spot;
> Then slowly tear him from the witching scene,
> Sigh forth one wish that such had been his lot,
> Then turn to hate a world he had almost forgot.

Now, as composition, these lines may, perhaps, be called bad; they do not display the scope of their author's genius, while beside Wordsworth's masterpiece not only are they wanting in rapturous beauty, but in mere expression they seem to be insincere; and for this reason they do not, like Wordsworth's, awaken in the reader the full emotion felt by the poet. So much must be admitted. But when it comes to the underlying ideas, I am not so sure. I cannot, in the

first place, convince myself that the parts of *Tintern Abbey*, if carefully considered, do not contradict one another, that the sentiment of the lines which find the mystic charm of nature in its power to voice "the still, sad music of humanity," is quite congenial with that of the passage which presents this same nature as a consolation for "the sneers of selfish men" and "the dreary intercourse of daily life." There is likely always to be this irreconcilable contradiction between the general sympathy and the particular distaste of the enthusiast who sees the mystery of mankind refracted through the mist of setting suns. The illusion of the nature-worshipper and the deception of the humanitarian spring, indeed, from the same substitution of revery for judgment, and it is worthy of remark that Wordsworth, who mused so pathetically on the lot of the dalesmen about him, had no power of entering into their individual lives and was commonly distrusted by them. I discover no such mingling of the sentimentalist and the cynic in Byron's stanzas, but a cynicism which, however shocking, is certainly consistent. And, going further, I feel a doubt in regard to Wordsworth's essential philosophy of nature. Byron's monk of Athos I can understand and allow for. Finding intolerable his loneliness amidst the conflict of egotisms we call society, he seeks the peace of real solitude where from his

undisturbed lookout the world lies beneath him like a silent panorama. There, unvexed by the need of opposing will to human will, he can cultivate the higher will to refrain and lift his mind above nature into serene communication with itself and with its God. That is a different life from Wordsworth's worship of nature, at least as that state of submission is expressed in *Tintern Abbey:*

> . . . Therefore am I still
> A lover of the meadows and the woods,
> And mountains; and of all that we behold
> From this green earth; of all the mighty world
> Of eye, and ear,—both what they half create,
> And what perceive; well pleased to recognize
> In nature and the language of the sense,
> The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse,
> The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul
> Of all my moral being.

"Nature never did betray the heart that loved her," he adds in the new flush of his pantheistic creed; yet as one reads the letters written in later life, when death had found an entrance to his chosen valleys, when disease had troubled the mind of his dearest companion, and other cares had stolen upon him in his retreat, it becomes clear that Nature did betray and cast him upon other consolations. Nor are his letters alone in presenting the decline of his life as clouded by a certain inner distrust. In June

of 1849 Miss Fenwick writes that "his darker moods are more frequent, though at other times he is as strong and as bright as ever. . . . His is a strong but not a happy old age." And Mr. Yarnall, who from America visited him in the same year, found that "the expression of his countenance was sad, mournful I might say; he seemed one on whom sorrow pressed heavily." Something of this sense of betrayal sounds to my ears in one of his pathetic admissions, made to an unknown correspondent:

> What I lament most is that the spirituality of my nature does not expand and rise the nearer I approach the grave, as yours does, and as it fares with my beloved partner. The pleasure which I derive from God's works in his visible creation is not, I think, impaired with me. . . .

That is not the tone of his earlier confidence in pantheistic admiration to lighten and sustain the soul. From Nature he has turned to a very old-fashioned God of nature; and in the end we may believe that he discovered in religion the true peace he so beautifully boasted of in his youth. "I am standing," he writes to a friend across the estranging ocean of this world, who was solicitous about the poet's fame—"I am standing on the brink of that vast ocean I must sail so soon; I must speedily lose sight of the shore; and I could not once have conceived how little I am now troubled by the thought of

how long or short a time they who remain on that shore may have sight of me."

No, we may as well come to admit that there is something hollow and at bottom false in that blessed mood of revery by which we are laid asleep in body and become a living soul at one with the motion and the spirit of the wide-expanded world; that, on a lower scale, there is something unsatisfactory—dare I say ludicrous? —in thus consecrating a life to nature, as in reverence to Wordsworth, we have so long talked of doing. Solitude as a means of ascetic discipline may have its brave and terrible rewards: life in the country with its various duties may be salubrious, and may add to work its purifying exaltations; but to go out into scenery as "a dedicated Spirit," to cultivate a chronic habit of admiration, to hang upon the seasons' every mood for the sake of harvesting the "gentle agitations of the mind," to prod the imagination deliberately that no day may lack its "matins and vespers of harmonious verse," in a word to make a poetical business of nature—this will never do.

And, more particularly, there are aspects of Wordsworth's priestly function that leave a certain distaste. It is perhaps permitted a prophet to eschew books, even though his own pulpit is the printed page, and in particular Wordsworth had at times the excuse of weak

eyes for not reading them, and of poverty for not buying; yet that little cupboard library in his chamber, with its handful of chance volumes, looks more like intellectual straitness than austerity. "As to buying books," he says in a letter, "I can affirm that on *new* books I have not spent five shillings for the last five years; I include reviews, magazines, pamphlets, etc., etc." Somehow after this it annoys one to find him in another letter, only a few pages on, ordering seven casts of the Chantrey bust of himself, and asking the price of fifteen or twenty. But his library and study were out of doors; there, among the trees on the hillside, he found the knowledge he desired and to their music attuned his own rhythmic song. And then, we remember the old inn-keeper's account of his ways as reported by Canon Rawnsley: "Many 's the time," said he, "I 've seed him a takin' his family out in a string, and niver geein' the deariest bit of notice to 'em; standin' by hissel' and stoppin' behind agapin', wi' his jaws workin' the whoal time; but niver no crackin' wi' 'em, nor no pleasure in 'em,—a desolate-minded man, ye kna. . . . It was potry as did it." That is but a clown's version of what inspired in Wordsworth a lovely sonnet: "Most sweet it is with un-uplifted eyes"; no doubt, and yet we would rather not picture to ourselves the poet thus "*booing* about" the roads in the exercise of his profession.

The habit in Wordsworth's case was more specially, it should appear, the result of that low physical vitality, which made him shrink from action, joined to a troubled moral sense, which sought ease of conscience in communion with a passive unmoral nature. His intellect was always keenly active, but some vice of the blood shut him out from participation in the larger current of life. For the world the result was a great volume of dull verse, which we have been compelled to regard as consecrated in a way to which no other poetry can quite lay claim. It is time we were emancipated from that romantic illusion. Yet withal I trust I am not blind to the great, if spasmodic, accomplishment of Wordsworth. It is perfectly true that we may read through pages of weary metaphysics and self-maunderings of tortured prose, and then suddenly come upon a passage whose inevitable beauty flashes upon the soul like a burning search-light. Who, for example, shall forget his first surprise when, after reading in *The Prelude* of the college kitchens and their "humming sound, less tunable than bees," he passed to the description of Newton's statue:

> The marble index of a mind for ever
> Voyaging through strange seas of Thought, alone?

And there are amid his lesser works that waver "between silliness and pathos," whole

poems—it is unnecessary to name them—of a lyric grace that forever sings itself in memory, or of a naked classic grandeur that awes and subdues the mind. Only, I cannot see why the purple patches in *The Prelude* and *The Excursion* should make us blink the fact that the former would have been better as a whole in prose, and that the latter would have been better not to have been at all. Nor can I see why, to appreciate the melody of *The Solitary Reaper*, whose voice, like the song of a bird retreating into the forest, draws us on to follow the lure of the world's undiscoverable secret beauty—

> A voice so thrilling ne'er was heard
> In spring-time from the Cuckoo-bird,
> Breaking the silence of the seas
> Among the farthest Hebrides.
>
> Will no one tell me what she sings?—

why we should need to pass through the initiation of Poor Susan's doggerel:

> At the corner of Wood Street, when daylight appears,
> Hangs a Thrush that sings loud, it has sung for three years.

The wonder is that the same poet should have written both poems, and that a critic like Matthew Arnold should have given them equal value in his book of selections.

The poet's temperament and manner of com-

position may in part account for these anomalies. One seems to see him starting out with a hard determination to flog his sluggish blood into motion; as he proceeds, he grows into a tense nervous state of expectancy:

> My apprehensions come in crowds;
> I dread the rustling of the grass;
> The very shadows of the clouds
> Have power to shake me as they pass:
> I question things and do not find
> One that will answer to my mind;
> And all the world appears unkind.

One can see the haggard search for inspiration in his eyes: "They were fires half burning, half smouldering," said Leigh Hunt, who himself never needed to jog his jaunty muse, "with a sort of acrid fixture of regard, and seated at the further end of two caverns." Too commonly the fire merely glimmered and smoked to the close; but at times and without warning, most often, one fancies, in moments of extreme lassitude when the will to write had succumbed to the fatigue of the body (or in other happier moments when the will was caught entirely off guard)—then suddenly the wayward breath of heaven blew upon him, the flame leaped up clear and warm, and the miracle of perfect verse was wrought. So, at least, one thinks to explain the "inevitableness" of his greater work amid so much of sad mechanic exercise. It is, in

Arnold's image, almost as if Nature at these times took the pen out of his hands and made him her spokesman, in spite of his self-willed consecration.

And for us may be the profit of those golden moments. For with all the talk of these years the world is indeed too much with us, and little we see in nature that is ours. It is a question whether, despite our poetic convention, we have really as keen and single-hearted an enjoyment of the Outworld, to use Henry More's term, as did the generations that preceded Wordsworth. For the most part we are like Alphius of the Latin poem, always about to abandon ourselves to rustic delights, yet still tangled in the toils of the market. And so we may come honestly to this poet as to one who held in his gift the divine medicine of contemplation—

> But where will Europe's latter hour
> Again find Wordsworth's healing power?

We shall not be true if we speak of his life in nature as a perfect ideal, for such revery as he taught is but a surrender to the ever-intruding sense of the world's defeat, and human fate is something greater than stocks and stones, the stars that control our destiny are higher than the constellation of mountain flowers, and the meaning of mankind is better guessed in the clamour of society or in the still voice of

the heart withdrawn into its own solitude than in the murmur of the evening wind; but all of us may drink in fresh courage and renewed vigour from seasons of wise passiveness. In this view his reproach is not, like Shelley's, a question of essential falseness, but of exclusion on the one side and of exaggeration on the other. His excess may be our balance, and in his inspiration we may learn to regulate the gusty, self-wearing passions of the mind:

> Ye motions of delight, that haunt the sides
> Of the green hills; ye breezes and soft airs,
> Whose subtle intercourse with breathing flowers,
> Feelingly watched, might teach Man's haughty race
> How without injury to take, to give
> Without offence; ye who, as if to show
> The wondrous influence of power gently used,
> Bend the complying heads of lordly pines,
> And, with a touch, shift the stupendous clouds
> Through the whole compass of the sky; ye brooks,
> Muttering along the stones, a busy noise
> By day, a quiet sound in silent night;
> Ye waves, that out of the great deep steal forth
> In a calm hour to kiss the pebbly shore,
> Not mute, and then retire, fearing no storm;
> And you, ye groves, whose ministry it is
> To interpose the covert of your shades,
> Even as a sleep, between the heart of man
> And outward troubles, between man himself,
> Not seldom, and his own uneasy heart:
> Oh! that I had a music and a voice
> Harmonious as your own, that I might tell
> What ye have done for me.

THOMAS HOOD

It cannot be thought that a new life of Hood was widely desired, nor does the writing[1] of Mr. Walter Jerrold possess that charm of manner which makes us grateful for unnecessary things. Yet, at least, the biography is the result of honest painstaking, and has the solid merit of correcting a few traditional errors and of offering a considerable amount of new material. It is well enough to be assured that the true date of Hood's birth in London was 1799; to have an exact relation of his years in Scotland, 1815–1817, when, according to Mr. Jerrold, his determination was formed to devote himself primarily to literature, rather than to engraving; and to know that his marriage, in 1825, was not in opposition to the wishes of Miss Reynolds's people and brought no bitterness to his amiable heart. It may even be that there is still a sufficient number of admirers of Hood's humour and pathos—among whom, indeed, I count myself—to justify the fuller printing of his mad letters

[1] *Thomas Hood: His Life and Times.* By Walter Jerrold. New York: John Lane Co., 1909.

and the telling of all his madder practical jokes. There may be some who will welcome the complete story of his stay on the Continent from 1835 to 1840, with its rollicking German friendships; who will be glad to read the lengthened record of his struggle against disease during his last five years in England, and to hear his brave death-bed profession of faith, almost his last remembered utterance:

> It 's a beautiful world, and since I have been lying here I have thought of it more and more; it is not so bad, even humanly speaking, as people would make it out. I have had some very happy days while I lived in it, and I *could* have wished to stay a little longer. But it is all for the best, and we shall all meet in a better world!

Through the troubles and anxieties caused by illness and, it must be added, by imprudence in money matters, Hood preserved this buoyant cheerfulness. One comfort comes from this biography—although Mr. Jerrold did not quite intend it—in dispelling the supposed tragedy of Hood's life, which would have him driven by grinding necessity to the production of vendible comicalities. At the very beginning of his career Barry Cornwall is exclaiming to a friend over the pity "that Hood should have given up serious poetry for the sake of cracking the shells of jokes which have not always a kernel"; and so the tradition has been passed down to us of a fine creative artist who deliberately diverted his

talents to the popular market, with all the misery of such a conscious degradation. There was, no doubt, a vein of delicate pathos in his genius, but no one can read this life without feeling that not the hateful *res angusta* but the inevitable bent of his mind made him from boyhood to the fading years of sickness the jester of England. His *National Tales* in prose (published early in 1827) may have been a deliberate effort to prove his rights to another title:

> The serious character of the generality of the stories [he says in his preface] is a deviation from my former attempts, and I have received advice enough, on that account, to make me present them with some misgiving. But because I have jested elsewhere, it does not follow that I am incompetent for gravity, of which any owl is capable; or proof against melancholy, which besets even the ass. Those who can be touched by neither of these moods rank lower indeed than both of these creatures. It is from none of the player's ambition, which has led the buffoon by a rash step into the tragic buskin, that I assume the sadder humour, but because I know from certain passages that such affections are not foreign to my nature. During my short lifetime, I have often been as "sad as night," and not like the young gentlemen of France, merely from wantonness. It is the contrast of such leaden and golden fits that lends a double relish to our days.

All which is perfectly true, but it did not save the *National Tales* from being a flat failure. As for *Tylney Hall*, his attempt at sustained fiction, its character is indicated by Dickens's praise of it as "the most extraordinary jumble

of impossible extravagance and especial cleverness"; or by Lamb's admiration of its puns as "so neat, that the most inveterate foe to that sort of joke, not being expectant of 'em, might read it all thro' and not find you out."

It was as the inimitable equivocator in words that Hood won a reputation among his contemporaries, and will be remembered. In *Blackwood's Magazine* for April, 1830, an unknown rhymester hit off a number of English writers in quatrains, ending with Hood:

> Im*pugn* I dare not thee
> For I 'm of *puny* brood
> And thou would'st *pun*ish me
> With *pun*gent hardiHOOD.

The foolish lines show the place of Hood in the literature of the day, though the puns employed are, as Mr. Jerrold rightly says, not at all of the genus that gave Hood his fame. His letters overrun with quibbling conceits; his pencil could scarcely draw a picture without a play in forms; his practical jests were a kind of amphibology in act—"the equivocation of the fiend!" we are likely to exclaim at the last, in wonder and dismay.

The fact is the pun has got a bad name in society, and Hood—dare we add Lamb also?—as its devotee would probably be shunned to-day as a bore in any club of London or New York. There is some reason for this unpopularity of a once admired species of wit, for it is subject

to a woeful abuse. In his *Shirley Brooks of Punch* Mr. G. S. Layard gives too numerous illustrations of what the profession of punning soon came to be; for horrid example:

> One summer evening Thackeray arrived late at the *Punch* dinner. He had given up a lady's dinner for a dinner with Lord John Russell, and the little statesman had left him in the lurch. "So," he said, "I come as a *peas-aller* to Mr. P. to eat my peas in peace."
>
> "But you must mind your Q's as well," said Shirley, "and you must take your cues from me or I shall not excuse you."

Peculiar taste in entertainment! Let us pray for it an everlasting *requiescat in pace*. It should be added that the Victorian afterwits were not the first or only ones to bring the double-tongued Muse into contempt. Early in the forties of the eighteenth century, Mrs. Elizabeth Carter had planned a *jeu d'esprit* on *The Whole Art and Mystery of Punning*, calculated "to furnish the sweet *nepenthe* of nonsense in such copious streams as to water the face of the whole earth." The prospectus should be perused by all intending sinners. "To so great a height of perfection," she declares, "have the authors of this work carried their design, as to lay down rules to divide, subdivide, compound, recompound, decompound, rack, torture, strain, and quodlibetificate any word into a pun by nineteen several ways of false spelling."

But the pun is not necessarily and was not always this criminal act of verbicide, as Oliver Wendell Holmes has called it; an evening with Theodore Hook, we may remember, could wring from Coleridge the exclamation that he was as great a genius as Dante. There is a pleasant reward in going back now and then to the group of wits who treated punning with the scrupulous delicacy of a fine art; and of this practice Hood, so far at least as the *litera scripta* can decide, was the incomparable master. There is some exaggeration in saying, as a reviewer in the *Spectator* wrote not long ago, that "Hood's pioneer work—Hood's own unique work—was the punning ballad, which may be said not only to have begun, but in its best form to have died, with him." That is to pass a little too lightly over the work of many writers before Hood's day; more particularly it is to forget the ballads of Goldsmith, such, for instance, as the stanzas on *Mrs. Mary Blaize*, which would seem quite in place if found in *Hood's Own*. It is to forget also the excellent absurdities of the *Ingoldsby Legends* and other later works. Yet it is true that Hood remains the master of the pun in all its shades of excellence, and to understand his humour, and indeed his fancy, is to practise a nice discrimination among the different *genres* of that kind of wit. Charles Lamb, as a connoisseur in the art, pointed in the right direction,

when, in his remarks on the *Odes and Addresses*, he censured his friend not for excess of wit but for the occasional use of the wrong sort of wit:

> What we allude to [he writes] is a mixture of *incompatible* kinds; the perpetual recurrence of *puns* in these little effusions of humour; puns uncalled for, and perfectly gratuitous, a sort of make-weight; puns, which, if *missed*, leave the sense and the drollery full and perfect without them. You may read any one of the addresses, and not catch a quibble in it, and it shall be just as good, nay better; for the addition of said quibble only serves to puzzle with an unnecessary double meaning. A pun is good when it can rely on its single self; but, called in as an accessary, it weakens—unless it *makes* the humour, it *enfeebles* it.

What Lamb means, as becomes evident from his comment on the humour of the *Ode to Joseph Grimaldi, Senior*, but what he does not quite say, is that the pun succeeds when it plays primarily on the double sense of a single word and not on the mere similarity in sound of two words. The late Canon Ainger, in his *Life of Hood*, comes closer to the real distinction, while hinting at a larger classification:

> Herbert, Crashaw, Donne [Lamb had made the same comparison with the "metaphysical" poets], in like manner, have their abundant and perishable affectations. Yet all of these in turn show how true wit may subserve the highest aims of the Poet; and that in fact, so far from Wit and Poetry being irreconcilable, they shade and pass into one another by gradations quite imperceptible. Who shall decide, on the moment, whether Waller's couplet—

"The soul's dark cottage, battered and decayed,
Let in new light through chinks which time had made"—

is to be pronounced witty or poetical? The truth is that it is both; and that the two are fused, beyond possibility of separation, by the intensity and sincerity of the Truth enforced.

Now Waller's couplet is at once both poetical and witty just because it contains an uncertain play on words hovering midway between the true metaphor and the avowed quibble. Its position is clearer if we compare it with two stanzas which turn on different exploitations of the same word. In Cardinal Newman's hymn—

Lead, kindly Light, amid the encircling gloom,
Lead thou me on;
The night is dark, and I am far from home;
Lead thou me on—

we have sheer poetry, with no suspicion of wit. The pun, if we may use the term in so generic a sense, lies in those physical qualities of light which the mind has always and instinctively associated with the moral qualities of the spirit. There is an equivocation of ideas, if you insist; but lacking the fillip of mechanical surprise, and springing from a deep similarity of emotional content. This is, properly speaking, metaphor. At the other extreme lies such a stanza as this epitaph on a lamp-lighter:

Faithful at lighting lamps thou wast,
Till soul and body grew so light,
That one is wafted now with dust,
While t' other shines a star of night.

Here is the pun in its vulgarest form—a pure quibble, whose whole force is in the unity of sound of two distinct words, "light" as opposed to dark and to heavy, and whose wit, if it have any, rests on the element of surprise alone. Between these two, the metaphorical and the quibbling use of the word, stands Waller's witty comparison, which is raised by its play on sense rather than on sound above the quibble, yet which so dwells on the physical accessories of light, and so depends for its effect on the unexpected turn, as to be strictly not a poetical metaphor but a conceit.

These are the three terms of figurative speech —the quibble or base pun, the conceit, and the metaphor. For the most part Hood ranges on a ground below the middle term and above the lowest—on a ground which may be designated the legitimate pun. Not always, indeed; for at times he, like other wits, forgets to resist the first temptation of his own cleverness. Thus a catch in an old Scotch ballad, "cauld, cauld, he lies beneath the deep," may set him off on a long chase after words whose only association is their similarity of sound:

But still that jolly mariner
Took in no reef at all,
For, in his pouch, confidingly,
He wore a baby's caul;
A thing, as gossip-nurses know,
That always brings a squall!

. . . . . .

The ensuing wave, with horrid foam,
Rush'd o'er and cover'd all.—
The jolly boatman's drowning scream
Was smother'd by the squall,—
Heaven never heard his cry, nor did
The ocean heed his *caul.*

But more often there is a kind of accompanying twist in the situation itself, playful or grotesque, which raises the humour above the exasperation of sheer verbicide, as in *Faithless Nelly Gray* or the less grewsome *Sally Brown:*

O Sally Brown, O Sally Brown,
How could you serve me so?
I 've met with many a breeze before,
But never such a blow.

And this twist may become the very substance of the humour, so that the play on words is lost in what may be called the equivocation of circumstances, or the pun in things themselves. So it is throughout the *Parental Ode:*

Thou little tricksy Puck!
With antic toys so funnily bestuck,
Light as the singing bird that wings the air—
(The door! the door! he 'll tumble down the stair!) . . .

Hood's manner of punning is an old story no doubt, and needs no interpreter. But it may not have been so often remarked that the trick pursues him even into his solemn moods; is, indeed, in more or less disguised form, one of his efficient instruments of pathos. There was a vein of melancholy in the man, nor was he, as he says, "incompetent for gravity." He wrote in this respect like other humourists who have turned lightly from laughter to tears, but he differed from others in his ability to measure sadness with a conscious pun:

> All things are touch'd with Melancholy,
> Born of the secret soul's mistrust,
> To feel her fair ethereal wings
> Weigh'd down with vile degraded dust;
> Even the bright extremes of joy
> Bring on conclusions of disgust,
> Like the sweet blossoms of the *May*,
> Whose fragrance ends in *must*.
> O give her, then, her tribute just,
> Her sighs and tears, and musings holy!
> There is no music in the life
> That sounds with idiot laughter solely;
> There 's not a string attuned to mirth,
> But has its chord in Melancholy.

Perhaps it is the fatalistic pun on what *might be* and what *is*, luring the mind from beneath the more manifest metaphor of *May* blossoms and *must*, that gives a peculiar piquancy to these lines, as if under a masquerade of sorrow we

should catch glimpses of a face not smiling, as we expected, but itself sorrowing. Such a double-faced quibbling with melancholy leads one to reflect on the intimate mixture of laughter and tears in some forms of art, on the slender partition in human life between joy and sadness, and on what may be called the ambiguity of the emotions. These stand so near together and pass so easily one into the other for the reason that their cause is ambiguous; for regret and disappointment, like the merry accidents of life, though to different ends, spring from a kind of disparity between expectation and event. The only peculiarity of Hood is that he uses the juggling with words more consciously than other poets to express the juggling realities of fate. So it is that we feel nothing incongruous in the epithet of Canon Ainger when he points to the line, "And *twit* me with the spring," in *The Song of the Shirt*, as containing the most "pathetic" pun in the language. So, too, were it not for the levity of the term, the ambiguity of sleep and morn and the soul's secret mistrust in *The Death-Bed* might almost be called punning:

> We watch'd her breathing thro' the night,
> Her breathing soft and low,
> As in her breast the wave of life
> Kept heaving to and fro!
>
> So silently we seem'd to speak—
> So slowly moved about!

As we had lent her half our powers
To eke her living out!

Our very hopes belied our fears,
Our fears our hopes belied—
We thought her dying when she slept,
And sleeping when she died!

For when the morn came dim and sad—
And chill with early showers,
Her quiet eyelids closed—she had
Another morn than ours!

Is our perception here merely quickened by our familiarity with the equivocating ways of the writer, or has this habit really led him on more audaciously than others to that verge of sentiment where the instrument of pathos is almost confused with that of humour? The latter is the case, I think; for I observe that he carries this same tendency not only into his other pathetic poems (making of this same likeness of sleep and death in one passage of his *Hero and Leander*, at least, a pure conceit), but into all the emotions. It would be tedious to hunt out the various illustrations of this lurking wit in his poems of awe and regret and indignation and fancy; it would even tend to disconcert us in our enjoyment of his delicate craftsmanship. Only one example I cannot pass over, for its comment on the ambiguous nature of beauty:

O saw ye not fair Ines?
She 's gone into the West,

To dazzle when the sun is down,
And rob the world of rest:
She took our daylight with her,
The smiles that we love best,
With morning blushes on her cheek,
And pearls upon her breast.

To Poe these lines had "an inexpressible charm"—as indeed to whom have they not?—and I think it is not extravagant to say that some part here of that "petulant, impatient sorrow" (the word is too strong) which Poe connected with the incomplete realisation of beauty in art, is due to the teasing duplicity introduced by the word "West." The emotional impression of the whole poem is too pure to class it as a conceit; it is metaphor of the finest sort. Yet withal the realism of the action of the second line, the insistence on the similarity of physical motion, adds a certain whimsical element, as if a metaphor might at the same time be a conceit and—let us not say a pun, but—a play on words. Beauty, these verses would seem to say, is the most fantastic of creatures, submitting to our clumsy speech only in the forms of similitude, as indeed it owes its fascination to some obscure similitude the other term of which we seek and never quite grasp; it is the equivocation of matter and spirit.

Not the least of the interests attaching to Hood's work is this persistent amphibology

of his genius. Better than in almost any other writer, we can, in him, follow poetic wit through all its gradations of quibbling and conceit and metaphor, where, at least, these are not blended together in a kind of sublimated punning. We seem thus at times to come very close to the equivocation that lies in the human heart, too close, it may be, for the uses of great poetry. We are reminded too coarsely that the adornments of literature are only figures of speech, just as Brutus, after serving virtue for a lifetime, found it in the end, not a thing, but a word.

TENNYSON

WHATEVER changes may occur in the fame of Tennyson—and undoubtedly at the present hour it is passing into a kind of obscuration—he can never be deprived of the honour of representing, more almost than any other single poet of England, unless it be Dryden, a whole period of national life. Tennyson is the Victorian age. His *Poems, Chiefly Lyrical* had been published only seven years when the Queen came to the throne in 1837; he succeeded Wordsworth as poet-laureate in 1850; and from that time to his death in 1892 he was the official voice of the Court and the acknowledged spokesman of those who were leading the people through that long period of transition. There was something typical of the heart of England in his birth and childhood. For what better nursery can be imagined for such a poet than one of those village rectories where the ancient traditions of the land are preserved with religious reverence and the pride of station is unaccompanied by the vanity of wealth? And what scenery could be more appropriate than the

country of Lincolnshire, rolling up from the salt marshes of the sea and from the low dunes, "where the long breakers fall with a heavy clap and spread in a curdling blanket of seething foam over the level sands"? Tennyson never forgot those sights and sounds of his childhood; their shadows and echoes are in all his later verse.

And the surroundings of his early manhood were equally characteristic. In 1828 he went to Cambridge and was matriculated at Trinity College, leaving in 1831 without a degree. Those were years when the spirit stirred in many lands. In France the romantic movement, with Victor Hugo as prophet and Sainte-Beuve as interpreter, was beginning its career of high-handed victory. In England it was a time of reform, felt at the two universities as powerfully as in Parliament. At Oxford, Newman and Keble and Hurrell Froude were preparing the great reintegration of religion and the imagination which runs through the century parallel and hostile to the main current of ideas. In Tennyson's university a group of young men were brooding over strange and lofty liberties, and were dreaming vaguely of a new guide born of the union of idealism and science. A few of these more ardent minds had banded together as the Apostles, a secret debating society which afterwards became

famous from the achievement of its members. Among the strongest of the brotherhood was Arthur Henry Hallam, whose sudden death at Vienna caused grief to many friends, and to Tennyson the long sorrow which, with the vexatious problems of human mortality, winds in and out through the cantos of *In Memoriam*. The meaning of this loss cannot be measured by the scanty remains of Hallam's own writings. He stands with John Sterling and Hurrell Froude among the inheritors of unfulfilled renown—young men, whose confidence in life was, in those aspiring days, accounted as achievement, and whose early death, before the inevitable sordor of worldly concession touched their faces, crowned them with imperishable glory. So the memory of his friend became to Tennyson in a few years a symbol of hopes for him and for the world frustrate. He revisits college and goes to see the rooms where Hallam dwelt; but, hearing only the clapping of hands and the crashing of glass, thinks of the days when he and his circle held debate, and would listen to Hallam's master words:

> . . . Who, but hung to hear
> The rapt oration flowing free
>
> From point to point, with power and grace
> And music in the bounds of law,
> To those conclusions when we saw
> The God within him light his face,

And seem to lift the form, and glow
In azure orbits heavenly wise;
And over those ethereal eyes
The bar of Michael Angelo.

Those who at college have felt the power of such a guiding friendship will tell you it is the fairest and most enduring part of education. I myself know.

To Tennyson that high comradeship of youth and those generous ideals lasted as one of the forces that made him the typical poet of the age. You may read through the memoirs of the period, and almost always you will meet him somewhere moving among other men with the mark of the Muses upon him, as a bard in the old days stood amid lords and warriors with the visible insignia of his calling in his hands and on his brow—*sacra ferens*. Whether in his free-footed and wandering earlier years, or as the prosperous householder in his beautiful homes at Farringford on the Isle of Wight and at Aldworth on Blackdown, Surrey, "overlooking the vast expanses of light and shadow, golden cornfields, blue distances"—wherever you see him, he is the same bearer of conscious inspiration. Now we have a glimpse of him with FitzGerald, visiting James Spedding in his home in the Lake country—Spedding who devoted a lifetime to the whitewashing of Chancellor Bacon, he of the "venerable forehead"; "No

wonder," said his waggish friend, "that no hair can grow at such an altitude; no wonder his view of Bacon's virtue is so rarefied that the common consciences of men cannot endure it." The three young men, we know, discoursed endlessly and enthusiastically about the canons of poetry, while the elder Spedding, a staunch squire of the land who "had seen enough of the trade of poets not to like them"—Shelley and Coleridge and Southey and Wordsworth—listened with ill-concealed impatience. It was at this time, probably, that Tennyson and FitzGerald held a contest as to which could produce the worst Wordsworthian line, with the terrible example claimed by both of them: "A Mr. Wilkinson, a clergyman." Again Tennyson is seen with the same friends in London, "very droll, and very wayward; and much sitting up of nights till two or three in the morning with pipes in our mouths: at which good hour we would get Alfred to give us some of his magic music, which he does between growling and smoking; and so to bed." Or he is at Carlyle's house at Chelsea, with "Jack and a friend named Darwin, both admirers of Alfred's," still talking and interminably smoking—"one of the powerfullest *smokers* I have ever worked along with in that department," writes the experienced host. Or in the Isle of Wight, he is wandering one stormy night with Moncure

Daniel Conway, while "his deep bass voice came through the congenial darkness like mirthful thunder."

With another guest, perhaps, we go up-stairs to the poet's den on the top-story at Farringford, where in safe seclusion he can pour out his stores of deep questioning and Rabelaisian anecdote; or climb still higher, up a ladder to the leads, where he was wont to go to contemplate the heavens, and whence one night, like Plato's luckless philosopher, he fell down the hatch; whereat a brother bard quoted to him: "A certain star shot madly from his sphere." Such stories could be multiplied endlessly. The best of all pictures of him is that written down in the diary of the Rev. R. S. Hawker, the strange vicar of Morwenstow, near Tintagel, the birthplace of the legendary Arthur, whither Tennyson had come in 1848 to make himself familiar with the country of the *Idylls*.

It is observable in all these accounts that the great personality of Tennyson, with his contempt for little conventions, impressed those who lived with him as if he possessed some extraordinary dæmonic power not granted to lesser men. And his conversation was like his figure. It is agreeable, when we consider certain finical over-nice qualities of his verse, to know that his talk was racy with strong, downright Saxon words; that, like our Lincoln,

he could give and take deep draughts of Pantagruelian mirth. I confess that it does not displease me to touch this vein of earthy coarseness in the man. But I like also to hear that his mind rose more habitually from the soil to the finer regions of poetry and religion. In a hundred recorded conversations you will find him at close grips with the great giants of doubt and materialism, which then, as in the caverns and fastnesses of old fable, were breeding in every scientific workshop and stalking thence over the land. How often you will find him, when these questions are discussed, facing them calmly, and then ending all with an expression of unalterable faith in the spirit-forces that blow like one of his mystic winds about the solid earth; speaking words which sound commonplace enough in print but which, with his manner and voice, seem to have affected his hearers as if they had been surprised by a tongue of revelation.

Still oftener his talk was of the poets and their work. Sometimes it was long discourse and rich comparison. Other times it was a flashing comment on the proper emphasis or cadence of a line, as on that day when he visited Lyme Regis with William Allingham, and, sitting on the wall of the Cobb, listened to the passage out of *Persuasion* where Louisa Mulgrave hurts her ankle. And then, continues Allingham, we

. . . take a field-path that brings us to Devonshire Hedge and past that boundary into Devon. Lovely fields, an undercliff with tumbled heaps of verdure, honeysuckle, hawthorns, and higher trees. Rocks peeping through the sward, in which I peculiarly delight, reminding me of the West of Ireland. I quote—

"Bowery hollows crowned with summer sea."

T. (as usual), "You don't say it properly"—and repeats it in his own sonorous manner, lingering with solemn sweetness on every vowel sound,—a peculiar *incomplete* cadence at the end.

It is but one example among a thousand of Tennyson's supreme care for the sound of a word and for the true melody of a verse. "When Tennyson finds anything in poetry that touches him," says Coventry Patmore, "not pathos, but a happy line or epithet—the tears come into his eyes."

But it was as reciter of his own poems that he maintained in our modern prosaic society the conscious office of bard. He read on all occasions and to all sorts of people, frankly and seriously, rolling out his verses with the rhythm and magnificent emphasis that poets love to bestow on their own works. Nor can I recall a single instance in which the listener was troubled by our tedious sense of humour—not even when, on the celebrated voyage to Copenhagen with Gladstone and a party of royalties, Tennyson patted time to one of his poems on the shoulder of an unknown lady, whom he afterwards

discovered to be the Empress of all the Russias. Best of all these accounts is that of Mrs. J. H. Shorthouse, who, with her husband, the novelist, visited the poet at Farringford:

> Then the moon rose, and through the great cedar on the lawn we saw its light approach and fill the room, and when the gentlemen came in, and Lady Tennyson returned to her sofa, we had the great pleasure of hearing Lord Tennyson read three of his favourite poems—the *Ode to the Duke of Wellington*, *Blow, Bugle, Blow*, and *Maud*. Only the candles by his side lit up the book of poems from which he read; the rest of the room was flooded by moonlight. . . . Many of Lord Tennyson's visitors have described his reading of poetry, varying, of course, with their own tastes and sympathies. To me, as we sat in the moonlight listening to the words we loved, I seemed to realise the scenes of very olden days when the bards improvised their own lays in great baronial halls to enraptured listeners.

Nothing could better characterise the position of Tennyson as the official voice of the land, turning its hard affairs and shrewd debates into the glamour of music before flattered eyes and ears. He was beloved of the Queen and the Prince Consort. Men of science like Huxley were "impressed with the Doric beauty" of his dialect poems; or, like Herschel, Owen, and Tyndall, admired him "for the eagerness with which he welcomed all the latest scientific discoveries, and for his trust in truth." Serious judges cited him on the bench, as did Lord Bowen when, being compelled to preside over

an admiralty case, he ended an apology to counsel for his inexperience with the punning quotation:

> And may there be no moaning at the Bar,
> When I put out to sea.

In all this chorus of acceptance there is a single strangely significant discord. Edward FitzGerald, as we have seen, was one of Tennyson's warmest friends; of all the great men of his acquaintance, and he knew the greatest, Tennyson alone overawed him. "I must, however, say further," he once writes, after visiting with Tennyson, "that I felt what Charles Lamb describes, a sense of depression at times from the overshadowing of a so much more lofty intellect than my own: this (though it may seem vain to say so) I never experienced before, though I have often been with much greater intellects: but I could not be mistaken in the universality of his mind." FitzGerald was one of those who first recognised Tennyson's poetic genius; but after a while there comes a change in the tone of his comment. *In Memoriam*, which he read in manuscript before it was published, he cannot away with; it has to him the "air of being evolved by a Poetical Machine of the highest order"; and from that time his letters contain frequent hints of dissatisfaction. It was not that Tennyson's later

works were inferior to his earlier, but that somehow he seems to have felt, as we to-day are likely to feel, a disparity between the imposing genius of the man himself and these rather nerveless elegies and rather vapid tales like *The Princess*. He cries out once upon "the cursed inactivity" of the nineteenth century for spoiling his poet, coming close to, but not quite touching, the real reason of his discontent. That determined recluse of Little Grange, who, in the silent night hours, loved to walk about the flat Suffolk lanes, among the shadows of the windmills that reminded him of his beloved Don Quixote; who, as the years passed, could scarcely be got to visit his friends at all, but wrote to them letters of quaint and wistful tenderness—he alone among the busy, anxious Victorians, so far as I know them, stood entirely aloof from the currents of the hour, judging men and things from the larger circles of time; he alone was completely emancipated from the illusions of the present, and this is the secret of the grave, pathetic wisdom that so fascinates us in his correspondence. And so the very fact that Tennyson was the mouthpiece of his generation, with the limitations that such a character implies, cooled the praise of our disillusioned philosopher, just as it warmed the enthusiasm of more engaged minds.

One is impressed by this quality of Tennyson's

talent as one goes through his works anew in the Eversley edition[1] that has just been published, with notes by the poet and by the poet's son. It is useless to deny that to a later taste much of this writing seems an insubstantial fabric; that it has many of the qualities that stamp the distinctly Victorian creations as provincial and ephemeral. There is upon it, first of all, the mark of prettiness, that prettiness which has been, and still is, the bane of British art. Look through collections of the work of Landseer and Birket Foster and Sir John Everett Millais, and others of that group, and observe its quality of "guileless beauty," as Holman Hunt calls it, or innocuous sentimentality as it seems to us. These scenes of meek love-making, of tender home-partings and reconciliations, of children floating down a stream in their cradle with perhaps a kitten peering into the water—it is not their morality that offends us, far from that, but their deliberate blinking of what makes life real and, in the higher sense of the word, beautiful. You will find this same prettiness in many of Tennyson's early productions, such as *The May Queen* and *Dora* and *The Miller's Daughter*. Or take a

[1] *The Works of Alfred Lord Tennyson.* In six volumes. The Eversley Edition. Annotated by Alfred Lord Tennyson, edited by Hallam Lord Tennyson. New York: The Macmillan Co., 1908.

more pretentious poem, such as *Enoch Arden*, and compare it with a similar tale from Crabbe; set Tennyson's picture of the three children, "Annie Lee, the prettiest little damsel in the port," etc., beside one of the coast scenes of the earlier poet's Aldworth, and you will be struck by the difference between the beribboned daintiness of the one and the naked strength, as of a Dutch *genre* painting, of the other. Or go still higher, and consider some of the scenes of the *Idylls*. In its own kind *Launcelot and Elaine* is certainly a noble work, yet somehow to all its charm there still clings that taint of prettiness, which is a different thing altogether. I read the words of Gawain to the lily maid of Astolat:

> "Nay, by mine head," said he,
> "I lose it, as we lose the lark in heaven,
> O, damsel, in the light of your blue eyes."

'T is a sweet compliment, but I remember the same metaphor in an old play:

> Once a young lark
> Sat on thy hand, and gazing on thine eyes
> Mounted and sung, thinking them moving skies,—

and by comparison I seem again to note in Tennyson's lines the something false we designate as Victorian. There is in the same poem another scene, one of the most picturesque in all the *Idylls*, where Launcelot and Elaine's brother

ride away from the ancient castle and the lily maid to join the tournament:

> She stay'd a minute,
> Then made a sudden step to the gate, and there—
> Her bright hair blown about the serious face
> Yet rosy-kindled with her brother's kiss—
> Paused by the gateway, standing near the shield
> In silence, while she watch'd their arms far-off
> Sparkle, until they dipt below the downs.

One sees it all—the sentimental maiden at the arch, gazing with shaded eyes after the two departing knights, while some flowering vine of an English summer droops from the stones about her slender form; one sees it, but again it is a painting on the walls of the Burlington House rather than the reality of a more virile art.

There is not a little of this effeminate grace in the long elegy *In Memoriam*, which above any other single poem, I think, seemed to the men of the Victorian age to express the melancholy and the beauty of life. I find a trace of it even in the more exquisite sections, in the nineteenth for instance:

> The Danube to the Severn gave
> The darken'd heart that beat no more;
> They laid him by the pleasant shore,
> And in the hearing of the wave.
>
> There twice a day the Severn fills;
> The salt sea-water passes by,
> And hushes half the babbling Wye,
> And makes a silence in the hills.

The imagery of grief's home could not be more melodiously uttered, and it is close to the facts. "From the Graveyard," writes the editor of the Eversley edition, "you can hear the music of the tide as it washes against the low cliffs not a hundred yards away"; and the poet himself adds in the note: "Taken from my own observation—the rapids of the Wye are stilled by the incoming sea." The application is like the image:

> The Wye is hush'd nor moved along,
> And hush'd my deepest grief of all,
> When fill'd with tears that cannot fall,
> I brim with sorrow drowning song.
>
> The tide flows down, the wave again
> Is vocal in its wooded walls;
> My deeper anguish also falls,
> And I can speak a little then.

Such was the music that Tennyson learned from the Wye at Tintern Abbey, where, as the editor tells us, the verses were actually composed. Exquisitely refined and curious, no doubt; but the editor's note sets us involuntarily to thinking of other *Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey*, where Wordsworth heard "These waters, rolling from their inland springs, with a sweet inland murmur," and from that sound conjectured "the still, sad music of humanity." It is not a question here of philosophy but of art, and no one can fail to note the thinness

of Tennyson's style compared with the larger harmonies of Wordsworth.

But however much the prettiness of *In Memoriam* caught the ears of the sentimental, it was another quality which won the applause of the greater Victorians. There is an interesting letter given among the editor's notes, showing how the men who were leading English thought in those days felt toward the new poem, and in particular toward one of its religious sections:

> If e'er when faith had fall'n asleep,
> I heard a voice "believe no more"
> And heard an ever-breaking shore
> That tumbled in the Godless deep;
>
> A warmth within the breast would melt
> The freezing reason's colder part,
> And like a man in wrath the heart
> Stood up and answer'd "I have felt."
>
> No, like a child in doubt and fear:
> But that blind clamour made me wise;
> Then was I as a child that cries,
> But, crying, knows his father near.

"These lines," writes Prof. Henry Sidgwick in the letter referred to— "these lines I can never read without tears. I feel in them the indestructible and inalienable minimum of faith which humanity cannot give up because it is necessary for life; and which I know that I, at least so far as the man in me is deeper than the

methodical thinker, cannot give up." Now Sidgwick was no ordinary man. He was in fact one of the keenest and hardest-headed thinkers of those days, one of the leaders in the philosophical and economical revolution then taking place; and these tears of his were no cheap contribution of sentiment, but rose from the deepest wells of trouble. Many men still living can remember the dismay and the sense of homelessness that fell upon the trusting mind of England when it became aware of a growing hostility between the new school of science and the established creed. When Arthur Hallam died in 1833, Darwin was making his memorable voyage of investigation on the *Beagle*, and while Tennyson was elaborating his grief in long-linked sweetness, Darwin was writing that "first note-book of Transmutation of Species" which was developed into the *Origin of Species* of 1859. The alarm of the Church over this assimilation of man and monkey, the bitter fight between Huxley and Wilberforce and between Huxley and Gladstone —all this is well known, though the tumult of the fray begins to sound in younger ears as distant as the battles about Troy. Meanwhile within the Church itself the scientific criticism of sources was working a havoc no less dreaded than the attacks from without. This breach within the walls, though long a-making, first

became generally visible by the publication of the famous *Essays and Reviews* in 1860, which, harmless as the book now seems, kept two of its principal contributors, Jowett and Mark Pattison, for years from university promotion.

To these currents of thought Tennyson was quickly responsive. Without hesitation he accepted the new point of view for his *In Memoriam*, and those who were leading the revolution felt this and welcomed enthusiastically a recruit from the writers of the imagination who were commonly against them. "Wordsworth's Attitude towards Nature," says Professor Sidgwick, in the same letter to Tennyson's son, "was one that, so to say, left Science unregarded: the Nature for which Wordsworth stirred our feelings was Nature as known by simple observation and interpreted by religious and sympathetic intuition. But for your father the physical world is always the world as known to us through physical science; the scientific view of it dominates his thoughts about it." And Professor Sidgwick is perfectly right. It is unnecessary to point out the many passages of *In Memoriam* in which the law of evolution, the survival of the fittest, and man's kinship to the ape, were clearly hinted before Darwin had definitely formulated them in his epoch-making book. What more impressed men like Sidgwick was the fact that Tennyson felt with

them the terrifying doubts awakened by this conception of man as part of a vast, unfeeling, blind mechanism, but still clung to "the indestructible and inalienable minimum of faith which humanity cannot give up because it is necessary for life." And Tennyson, and this is the view to be emphasised, found this minimum of faith, not outside of the new science but at its very heart. He does, indeed, cry out at times against the harsher hypothesis, declaring that we are not "magnetic mockeries"—

> Not only cunning casts in clay:
> Let Science prove we are, and then
> What matters Science unto men,
> At least to me? I would not stay.
>
> Let him, the wiser man who springs
> Hereafter, up from childhood shape
> His action like the greater ape,
> But I was *born* to other things.

That note is heard in *In Memoriam*, but the gist of Tennyson's faith, and what made him the spokesman of the age, was in a bold completion of evolution by the theory of indefinite progress and by a vision of some magnificent consummation wherein the sacrifices and the waste and the pain of the present were to be compensated somehow, somewhere, somewhen—who shall say?

> Oh yet we trust that somehow good
> Will be the final goal of ill,

To pangs of nature, sins of will,
Defects of doubt, and taints of blood;

That nothing walks with aimless feet;
That not one life shall be destroy'd,
Or cast as rubbish to the void,
When God hath made the pile complete;

That not a worm is cloven in vain;
That not a moth with vain desire
Is shrivell'd in a fruitless fire,
Or but subserves another's gain.

And the end of the poem is the climax of this comfortable belief:

That God, which ever lives and loves,
One God, one law, one element,
And one far-off divine event,
To which the whole creation moves.

That reconciliation of faith and science, this discovery of a father near at hand within the inexorable law of evolution, this vision of an eternal state to be reached in the progress of time—all this is what we call the Victorian compromise. The prettiness which we found so characteristic of Victorian painting and of Tennyson's non-religious verse was indeed only another phase of the same compromise. The imperious sense of beauty, which has led the great visionaries out of the world and which Tennyson portrayed tremblingly in his *Palace of Art*, was felt by the Victorians to be dangerous to the British sentiment of the home, and mother-

hood, and girlish innocence, and so they rested in the middle ground of prettiness where beauty and innocent sentiment might meet. Here also they held to that "indestructible and inalienable minimum of faith which humanity"—British humanity at least in those years—could not give up. And men like Professor Sidgwick were stirred to the heart by this compromise, and wept.

Undoubtedly the fame of Tennyson in his own day was due largely to his expression of what may be called the official philosophy, but it is a question whether this very trait has not weakened his hold upon a later generation; whether, for instance, the stoic resolve and self-determination of Matthew Arnold, whom Professor Sidgwick in one of the most scathing essays of the century denounced as a trifling "prophet of culture," have not really expressed the higher meaning of that age—though not the highest meaning of all—better than any official and comfortable compromise; whether the profounder significance of that time of doubt was not rather in Matthew Arnold's brave disease:

> And we are here as on a darkling plain
> Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,
> Where ignorant armies clash by night.

I am confirmed in this view by one of the present editor's observations. I read the stanza of

In Memoriam which describes the reception of the poet's dead friend into the heavenly host:

> The great Intelligences fair
> That range above our mortal state,
> In circle round the blessed gate,
> Received and gave him welcome there;—

and then in the editor's note I read the lines of Milton's *Lycidas* which Tennyson imitated:

> There entertain him all the Saints above
> In solemn troops, and sweet societies,
> That sing, and singing, in their glory move,
> And wipe the tears for ever from his eyes.

Why is it that Tennyson here leaves us so cold, whereas at the sound of Milton's words the heart still leaps as at a bugle call. Why are these fair Intelligences so meaningless and so frigid? Is not the cause just the spirit of compromise between religion and science that has entered into Tennyson's image, leaving it neither the simple objective faith of Milton nor the honest questioning of Matthew Arnold?

It may seem that I have dwelt over-much on this weaker side of an admired writer who has so much noble work to his credit, but it was these compromises that gave him his historic position, and, also, it is only by bringing out clearly this aspect of his work that we are enabled to discern the full force of another and contrasted phase, which was not of the age

but was the unfettered voice of the poet himself. As we hear of the impression made by the man Tennyson upon his contemporaries, and then consider the sleeker qualities of his verse, we find it difficult to associate the two together; there was no prettiness or convention in his character, but a certain elusive wildness of beauty and a noble, almost defiant, independence. To distinguish between the two poets in the one writer is the only way rightly to understand and wisely to enjoy him. Now if we examine the spirit of compromise, which made the official poet in Tennyson, we shall see that it rests finally on a denial of religious dualism, on a denial, that is, of the consciousness, which no reasoning of philosophy and no noise of the world can ever quite obliterate, of two opposite principles within us, one bespeaking unity and peace and infinite life, the other calling us to endless change and division and discord. Just this cleft within our nature the Victorians attempted to gloss over. Because they could not discover the rational bond between the world of time and evolution and the idea of eternity and changelessness, they would deny that these two can exist side by side as totally distinct spheres, and by raising the former and lowering the latter would seek the truth in some middle ground of compromise. Thus instead of saying, as Michael Angelo said,

"Happy the soul where time no longer courses," they placed the faith of religion in some far-off event of time, as if eternity were a kind of enchantment lent by distance.

Such was the official message of Tennyson. But by the side of this there comes up here and there through his works an utterly different vein of mysticism, which is scarcely English and certainly not Victorian. It was a sense of estrangement from time and personality which took possession of him at intervals from youth to age. In a well-known passage he tries to analyse this state:

> A kind of waking trance I have frequently had, quite up from boyhood, when I have been all alone. This has generally come upon me thro' repeating my own name two or three times to myself silently, till all at once, as it were out of the intensity of the consciousness of individuality, the individuality itself seemed to dissolve away into boundless being, and this not a confused state, but the clearest of the clearest, the surest of the surest, the weirdest of the weirdest, utterly beyond words, where death was almost a laughable impossibility, the loss of personality (if so it were) seeming no extinction but the only true life.

This was not a reading into youth of a later knowledge gained from Oriental sources. In the notes to the Eversley volumes, the editor gives an unpublished juvenile poem, *The Mystic*, in which the same feeling is expressed, if not so

clearly, at least with a self-knowledge every way remarkable for a boy:

> Ye could not read the marvel in his eye,
> The still serene abstraction; he hath felt
> The vanities of after and before.
> . . . . . .
> He often lying broad awake, and yet
> Remaining from the body, and apart
> In intellect and power and will, hath heard
> Time flowing in the middle of the night,
> And all things creeping to a day of doom.

The point to note is how Tennyson in such passages feels himself an entity set apart from the flowing of time, whereas in the official compromise of *In Memoriam* he—not only he, but God Himself—is one with the sum of things in their vague temporal progress. In that difference, if rightly understood, lies, I think, the distinction between faith and naturalism.

This sense of himself as a being set apart from change strengthened, if anything, as he grew old. Its most philosophic expression is in *The Ancient Sage*, which was first published in 1885 and was regarded by him as one of his best later poems; it is rebellious in *Vastness*, lyrical in *Break, Break, Break*, purely melodic in *Far—Far—Away*, dramatic in *Ulysses*, autobiographical in *The Gleam*. Always it is the man himself speaking his own innermost religious experience, and no mere "minimum of faith" needed for the preservation of society.

For the fullest and most artistic utterance of this faith we must go to the *Idylls of the King*. I will confess to being no unreserved lover of that mangled epic as a whole; it seems to me that in most of its parts the Victorian prettiness is made doubly, and at times offensively, conspicuous by the contrast between Tennyson's limpid sentimentality and the sturdier fibre of Mallory's *Morte Darthur* from which he drew his themes. But it is true that here and there, in a line or a musically haunting passage, he has in the *Idylls* spoken from the depth of his heart, as he has spoken nowhere else, and that one of them, *The Holy Grail*, has an insight into things spiritual and a precision it would be hard to match in any other English poem. The mystic cup, which had been brought to England by Joseph of Arimathea and had vanished away for the sinfulness of the people, was first seen in vision by a holy sister of Sir Percivale, and by her Galahad was incited to go on the sacred quest. Meanwhile, one day, when the knights were gathered at the Round Table in the absence of the King, Galahad sits in Merlin's magic seat, which, as Tennyson explains, is a symbol of the spiritual imagination, the siege perilous, wherein "no man could sit but he should lose himself":

> And all at once, as there we sat, we heard
> A cracking and a riving of the roofs,
> And rending, and a blast, and overhead

Thunder, and in the thunder was a cry.
And in the blast there smote along the hall
A beam of light seven times more clear than day:
And down the long beam stole the Holy Grail
All over cover'd with a luminous cloud,
And none might see who bare it, and it past.
But every knight beheld his fellow's face
As in a glory, and all the knights arose,
And staring each at other like dumb men
Stood, till I found a voice and sware a vow.

The vision, in other words, is nothing else but a sudden and blinding sense of that dualism of the world and of the human soul beneath which the solid-seeming earth reels and dissolves away, overwhelming with terror and uncomprehended impulses all but those purely spiritual to whom the earth is already an unreal thing. Then enters the King and perceives the perturbation among his knights. It is characteristic of England and of the age, although it has, too, its universal significance, that Tennyson's Arthur should deplore the search for the Grail as a wild aberration, which is to bring impossible hopes and desolate disappointments to those whose business was to do battle among very material forces. "Go," he says—

Go, since your vows are sacred, being made:
Yet—for ye know the cries of all my realm
Pass thro' this hall—how often, O my knights,
Your places being vacant at my side,
This chance of noble deeds will come and go

Unchallenged, while ye follow wandering fires
Lost in the quagmire!

Only Sir Galahad, in whom is no taint of sin or selfishness, and who was bold to find himself by losing himself, had beheld clearly the vision of the cup as it smote across the hall. I do not know how it may be with others, but to me the answer of Galahad to the King has a mystical throb and exultation almost beyond any other words of English:

But I, Sir Arthur, saw the Holy Grail,
I saw the Holy Grail and heard a cry—
"O Galahad," and "O Galahad, follow me."

That is the cry and the voice, now poetry and philosophy, which Tennyson had in mind when he wrote of hearing "the word that is the symbol of myself." He who has once heard it and heard the responding echo within his own breast, can never again close his ears to its sound. To Galahad it meant the vanishing of the world altogether, and there is nothing more magnificent in Tennyson, scarcely in English verse, I think, than Sir Percivale's sight of Galahad fleeing over the bridges out into the far horizon, and disappearing into the splendours of the sky, while—

. . . thrice above him all the heavens
Open'd and blazed with thunder such as seem'd
Shoutings of all the sons of God: and first
At once I saw him far on the great Sea,

> In silver-shining armour starry-clear;
> And o'er his head the Holy Vessel hung
> Clothed in white samite or a luminous cloud.

There, in the inspiration from Tennyson's own visionary faith and from no secular compromise, we find the lift and the joy and the assurance that Milton knew and sang in *Lycidas* and that was so sadly missed in the "great Intelligences fair" of *In Memoriam*.

But to Sir Percivale himself the vision brought no such divine transfiguration. He is the one who sees, indeed, and understands, yet cannot lose himself. Because the Holy Grail signifies a dualism which sets the eternal world not at the end of the temporal, but utterly apart from it, he who knows the higher while lacking the courage to renounce the lower, wanders comfortless with neither the ecstatic joy of the one nor the homely satisfactions of the other. So the world and all that it contains turn into dust at his touch, leaving him alone and wearying, in a land of sand and thorns. Another, Sir Bors, the simple, trustful gentleman, who goes out on the word of others, following duty only and trusting in the honour of the act as it comes to him, sees in adversity the Holy Cup shining through a rift in his prison, and abides content that the will of God should reserve these high things as a reward for whomsoever it chooses. Still another, Sir Gawain, finding the vision is

not for him, and having turned his eyes from the simple rule of duty, sinks into sensual pleasures, and declares his twelvemonth and a day a merry jaunt. Most fatal of all is the experience of Launcelot, he, the greatest of all, who brought the sin into the court, who cannot disentangle the warring impulses of good and evil within himself. He, too, rides out of Camelot on the Quest, and then:

> My madness came upon me as of old,
> And whipt me into waste fields far away.
> . . . . . .
> But such a blast, my King, began to blow,
> So loud a blast along the shore and sea,
> Ye could not hear the waters for the blast,
> Tho' heapt in mounds and ridges all the sea
> Drove like a cataract, and all the sand
> Swept like a river, and the clouded heavens
> Were shaken with the motion and the sound.

This is an application to the smaller field of wind and earth and water of that dizzy tempestuous motion which in Tennyson's earlier poem of *Lucretius* surged through the Epicurean's atomic universe. To the eye of the spirit, Tennyson would seem to say, the material world is a flux and endless, purposeless mutation —leaving the self-possessed soul to its own inviolable peace, or, upon one that perceives yet is still enmeshed in evil desires, thronging in visions and terrors of madness. One need not be a confessed mystic to feel the power of these

passages, any more than one need be a Puritan (standing, that is, at the opposite pole of religion from the mystic) to appreciate Milton. To the genuine conviction of these poets our human nature responds as it can never respond to the insincerity of the world's "minimum of faith." With Tennyson, unfortunately, the task is always to separate the poet of insight from the poet of compromise.

WILLIAM MORRIS

Mr. Noyes, himself one of the most serious of the younger English poets, has written a life of William Morris in a tone of almost lyrical commendation[1]; affording further evidence that the maker of *The Earthly Paradise*, as the representative of one of the diverging lines from Tennyson's early Victorian compromise, has in recent years been receiving more critical attention. When Morris went up to Oxford in 1853, bearing with him the humours of a strange romantic boyhood in Epping Forest, he was already steeped in Tennyson, and it was natural that he should have joined himself to a set of men who were under the same spell. "We all had the feeling," says Canon Dixon, one of that university group, "that after Tennyson no farther development was possible: that we were at the end of all things in poetry." As a matter of fact, though Tennyson no doubt exercised a strong influence on these ardent seekers after beauty, their course was to be by no means a

[1] *William Morris.* By Alfred Noyes. (English Men of Letters.) New York: The Macmillan Co., 1908.

continuation of the great Cambridge poet's. They came up to the university with other ideals and they found there other surroundings.

Morris, too, like Tennyson, made a friendship at the university, which coloured all the rest of his life. When he took his examination at Oxford, there sat beside him in the Hall of Exeter, a boy from Birmingham, Edward Burne-Jones, the future artist, with whom and three or four others was to be formed the Brotherhood (not to be confused with the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood) whose eccentric doings are chronicled so entertainingly in Lady Burne-Jones's memoirs of her husband. Both Morris and Burne-Jones were deeply imbued with the enthusiasm left over from the Oxford Movement, and their first aim was to form a conventual society with some vague notion of preserving and sometime disseminating the religious ideas of the past. Meanwhile, their activity took the usual form of publishing a periodical, the *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine*, of which Burne-Jones reported in a letter to a cousin:

> Watch carefully all that Morris writes. You will find one of the very purest and most beautiful minds on earth breathing through all he touches. . . . Such is our little Brotherhood. We may do a world of good, for we start from new principles, and those of the strongest kind, and are as full of enthusiasm as the first crusaders, and we may perish in a year as others have done before.

Perish in just twelve months the magazine did, and if a neglectful world was bettered thereby it was not immediately, but through the lasting influence of those warm aspirations on the men themselves. And I often think that nothing is more striking, nothing, indeed, more lamentable, than the absence of these little societies from our American universities. How utterly lonely and unhelped is the path of many a college man who cherishes the long hopes of youth. We have so little sense of the power and comfort of these frank conspiracies for fame; we seem to be born with a shame of great ambitions, and tremble lest any one should suppose we nourish a plot to conquer the world. And so we go out into life with no recollection of that first buoyant sympathy to hearten us against life's subduing indifference. We lack the reserve force and the retiring place of such a memory. Well, that is for America, and perhaps for England of to-day; not for the Oxford of the Brotherhood. But this specifically religious zeal soon waned, if it was not rather factitious from the beginning. Morris might be described as a High Churchman and Neo-Catholic when he entered the university, but his religion even then was more a matter of the senses than of morals and creeds. There is a significant note in one of his earliest poems preserved in a letter to a friend:

'T was in Church on Palm Sunday,
Listening what the priest did say
Of the kiss that did betray,

That the thought did come to me
How the olives used to be
Growing in Gethsemane;

That the thoughts upon me came
Of the lantern's steady flame,
Of the softly whispered name;

Of how kiss and words did sound
While the olives stood around,
While the robe lay on the ground.

One can imagine the scorn with which Newman would have regarded this use of the Passion of Christ for æsthetic titillation—he who recoiled with suspicion even from the allurement of natural scenery. And there was little of the earlier zeal then at Oxford to correct or change this tendency. "The place was languid and indifferent," wrote Burne-Jones; "scarcely anything was left to show that it had passed through such an excited time as ended with the secession of Newman." In the hollow ritualism that was beginning to crystallise from the Oxford Movement, our band of enthusiasts could find satisfaction neither for conscience nor for imagination, and they gradually turned from this mixture to a pure art of the senses.

New influences, not of the university, began to take hold upon them. They grew deep in

medieval things; Poe's poems came across the water to open a realm of shadowy dreams; Ruskin's "religion of beauty" created in them the solemn conscience of art, and through Ruskin's *Edinburgh Lectures* they were drawn to the strongest force that operated upon them—Dante Gabriel Rossetti. It is not easy to account for the extraordinary domination of Rossetti over almost every one with whom he came into contact. We may call it the mystery of his personality; and this, if analysed, will probably reduce in large part to the effect of invincible self-knowledge, to his sure instinct of knowing what he admired and what he wanted, while others were waiting for the guidance of some external impulse. And so, as he became better known to these Oxford searchers, he grew to be for a time a kind of high priest of artistic taste. "Rossetti," said one of them, "was the planet round which we revolved; we copied his very way of speaking. All beautiful women were 'stunners' with us. Wombats were the most delightful of God's creatures. Medievalism was our *beau idéal*, and we sank our own individuality in the strong personality of our adored Gabriel." Their first serious incursion into art under the new leadership was that hilarious fiasco, when Morris, who had no training as a painter, and others who, if they could draw, knew nothing of frescoing, covered the walls of

the Oxford Union with pictures which faded disobligingly into the plaster. But there were great days of talk and wild merriment when these friends, now settled in London, came back to Oxford as knights-errant of the brush. And here, from one of the allied artists, we get a vivid glimpse of Morris—or "Topsy," as he was dubbed by Burne-Jones for his rebellious hair—in the rôle of poet:

When dinner was over, Rossetti, humming to himself as was his wont, rose from the table and proceeded to curl himself up on the sofa. "Top," he said, "read us one of your grinds." "No, Gabriel," answered Morris, "you have heard them all." "Never mind," said Rossetti, "here 's Prinsep, who has never heard them, and besides, they are devilish good." "Very well, old chap," growled Morris, and having got his book, he began to read in a sing-song chant some of the poems afterwards published in his first volume. All the time, he was jiggling about nervously with his watch chain. I was then a very young man and my experience of life was therefore limited, but the effect produced on my mind was so strong that to this day, forty years after, I can still recall the scene: Rossetti on the sofa, with large melancholy eyes fixed on Morris, the poet at the table reading and ever fidgeting with his watch chain, and Burne-Jones working at a pen-and-ink drawing.

> Gold on her head, and gold on her feet,
> And gold where the hems of her kirtle meet,
> And a golden girdle round my sweet;
> *Ah! qu' elle est belle La Marguerite—*

still seems to haunt me, and this other stanza:

Swerve to the left, son Roger, he said,
When you catch his eyes through the helmet slit,
Swerve to the left, then out at his head,
And the Lord God give you joy of it!

I confess I returned to the Mitre with my brain in a whirl.

We have wandered pretty far from Tennyson in this ballad rhythm and in this frank lust of gold and blood. Into that empty Palace of Art which the older poet had abandoned for the highway of popular compromises, these young enthusiasts rushed with no fear and no compunction. It is not without significance that they called their common house in London by this very name which Tennyson chose as the death-place of the spirit—The Palace of Art.

The various interests of the world soon invaded that little *cénacle*, drawing its members into different paths of success; but the mark of those Oxford days and of their comradeship in the long hopes was never worn away. The precise work of each depended on his peculiar talents. For Morris, the future was determined by an æsthetic irritability that was not so much the all-eliminating impulse of the great artist as an indiscriminate hankering after beauty, and by a certain fluidity of temperament. You may sink your plummet into his mind, but you will touch no bottom; there is no solid core; all is movement and flux, save this sense of beauty,

which was itself largely a matter of flowing rhythm. The vision of life passed before his eyes in sequence, but without consequence; more than almost any other man of his age he had the romantic indifference to the law of cause and effect which locks events together into a kind of static system, and the bondage of logic he never suffered. The moral compromise of the age, which was like a conventional fiat saying to the movement of life thus far and no farther, and which enfeebled so much of Tennyson's verse, he never felt. If Tennyson sometimes escaped from that constraint into the higher logic of the spirit, Morris moved for the most part as if unconscious of its existence. There is nothing immoral in his work; but of morality in it we do not think at all, save as another term to distinguish the beautiful from the ugly.

This lack of a fixed centre is a part of the man's character, showing itself in his little traits as in his large. There was no repose in his body. He had, says a friend, as Mr. Mackail reports in his life of Morris, the "incessant restlessness of a wild creature." He was "fond of talking, which he did in a husky shout," and for emphasis had the "habit of beating his own head." If anything happened to check his impulse, he would fly into a gusty rage; and there are stories abroad of insane exhibitions of temper, such as striking his head against the wall, rolling in

paroxysms on the floor, biting through window-frames, lifting coal-scuttles with his teeth, and the like Herculean feats—half inventions of Rossetti's humour, it may be, but characteristic of the man. His impatience of hindrance was like the boiling of a mountain torrent over a boulder. Of death he was notoriously afraid, not from any deficiency of physical courage, but in recoil from its final stay and pause.

The same restlessness runs through his artistic life. I am not sure that I can enumerate all the crafts he took up at one time or another, either in rapid succession or together, but weaving, dyeing, furniture making, paper designing, and printing were among them. So feverish was his method, that his great physical strength was worn out at the age of sixty-two (in 1896; it seems already long ago), and he succumbed to the disease, as his family doctor reported, of "being William Morris, and having done more work than most ten men." Excellent results were obtained in all these arts, even if sometimes, as in much of his printing, the delight in antique forms and the sheer lust of the eye overrode the craftsman's right feeling for utility. To these tasks of the hand he brought a magnificent scorn of "vagueness, hypocrisy, and cowardice"; and his hatred of these sins against joyous and beautiful production was the real substitute in him for the moralist's dictates of conscience. One thing

is specially noticeable: his successful work was almost purely decorative, depending on fluent line and skilful repetition. He never learned to manage figures, and when animal or bird was necessary to a design, he generally had it drawn in by another hand. A picture, properly speaking, he could never make, chiefly, I believe, because the concentration of sight and the static power of composition were so weak in him. This peculiarity extended even to his taste for the work of others: "his house," according to Mr. Mackail, "was, with a few exceptions for which there were special reasons, pictureless, and he never bought a picture after the early days when he had ceased trying to paint them."

Poetry was but one craft among many for Morris, and he turned off his lines with miraculous ease. "That talk of inspiration is sheer nonsense," he once exclaimed; "I may tell you that flat: there is no such thing: it is a mere matter of craftsmanship. . . . If a chap can't compose an epic poem while he 's weaving tapestry, he had better shut up, he 'll never do any good at all." And so he composed epics and lyrics and again epics amidst his other occupations, accomplishing once, it is said, as many as seven hundred lines in a single day. Mr. Noyes, who himself knows something of the poetic pains, stops to calculate this at about one line a minute for twelve hours on end, and is aghast and in-

credulous at such an *enfantement.* As a matter of fact, Morris's writing approaches more nearly than that of perhaps any other Englishman to the style of the *improvvisatore;* it bears the same relation to the verse of other equally famous poets as the work of the arabesque decorator bears to that of the figure painter. "The poetic upholsterer," Sir Edmund Beckett called him, and Morris was astonished that this "harmless statement of fact" should have been meant for an insult.

Well, let us admit all this, and then add that Morris's verse is superb decoration. With all their shortcomings and their omission of the qualities that mark the great style, it is possible that a time may come when *The Earthly Paradise* and *Sigurd the Volsung* will be read more than many a poem that fails in a grander manner. Every one knows the simple and happily conceived plot of Morris's longest poem. It is told in the prologue how certain gentlemen and mariners of Norway once, in the Middle Ages, set sail to find the Earthly Paradise, and after long wandering came at last to an island in the western sea, where dwelt a Greek people who still preserved the life and traditions of the ancient world. So throughout a year the elders of the two peoples entertain one another with stories of medieval and classical origin, one of each source every month. There is no attempt

on the part of the poet to differentiate his style for the two periods; his aim is to waft the reader into "a shadowy isle of bliss" which is neither pagan nor Christian, but the world's refuge of romance. From Chaucer he drew the plan of his poem, and with Chaucer in his Envoi he ranges himself as pupil with master:

> Death have we hated, knowing not what it meant;
> Life have we loved, through green leaf and through sere,
> Though still the less we knew of its intent:
> The Earth and Heaven through countless year on year,
> Slow changing, were to us but curtains fair,
> Hung round about a little room, where play
> Weeping and laughter of man's empty day.

The truth is, that, except for their common skill in weaving a story, there are few poets in English from whom Morris differed more than from his avowed model. Chaucer did not hate death as Morris hated it; nor did Morris have any understanding of that broad love of actual life that makes the savour of the *Canterbury Tales*. His aim was rather to escape from the realities of living, while still shrinking from the contemplation of death or of the eternal things. To me the most pathetic lines he ever wrote are the prologue to the tales of *November*, wherein he expresses this revulsion from the two realities:

> Look out upon the real world, where the moon,
> Half-way 'twixt root and crown of these high trees,
> Turns the dead midnight into dreamy noon

Silent and full of wonders, for the breeze
Died at the sunset, and no images,
No hopes of day, are left in sky or earth—
Is it not fair, and of most wondrous worth?

Yea, I have looked and seen November there;
The changeless seal of change it seemed to be,
Fair death of things that, living once, were fair;
Bright sign of loneliness too great for me,
Strange image of the dread eternity,
In whose void patience how can these have part,
These outstretched feverish hands, this restless heart?

In those lines is something of the grand manner, as it is found rarely, if anywhere else, in Morris —not the weight of Milton, but let us say the elfin gravity of Spenser in the later stanzas of *The Faerie Queene.*

Void patience was not in the heart or the hands of our craftsman, and for his refuge from life he turned to the "pageant-maker's imagery." You remember the story of *The Ring Given to Venus* and the young man, who, to recover the ring and therewith gain his human bride, was forced to stand in a place of wizardry by the sea, while a procession of phantoms passed before him:

In after time would Laurence say,
That though the moonshine, cold and grey,
Flooded the lonely earth that night,
These creatures in the moon's despite
Were coloured clear, as though the sun
Shone through the earth to light each one.
. . . . . .

And then his dazzled eyes could see
Once more a noiseless company;
And his heart failed him at the sight,
And he forgot both wrong and right,
And nothing thought of his intent;
For close before him now there went
Fair women clad in ancient guise
That hid but little from his eyes
More loveliness than earth doth hold
Now, when her bones are growing old;
But all too swift they went by him,
And fluttering gown and ivory limb
Went twinkling up the bare hill-side,
And lonely there must he abide.

Such a scene is a parable of Morris's own life save that, unlike Laurence, he never recovered his ring; and it affords the best criticism of the whole poem of *The Earthly Paradise.* Like the distracted youth, the reader seems to be standing by enchanted waters drenched in a magic light, while dream-shadows flit before him, some terrible and some lovely; but the former pass with open mouths that emit no sound and raised hands that never strike, and the latter gleam only for a moment on the hillside and are gone. The best of the tales, to my taste, are those that use this pageant-like material most frankly—such as *Atalanta's Race,* with its dazzling picture of the maiden running before her suitor to the goal:

Then flew her white feet, knowing not a doubt,
Though slackening once, she turned her head about;

or the *Cupid and Psyche* in which the solid gold of Apuleius seems to have been dissolved into a golden haze, "the wavering memory of a lovely dream." One seems to take part in the process of this transmutation by reading together passages of the Latin and of Morris's paraphrase. Or take a few words from the story as it is translated in Pater's *Marius the Epicurean.* Psyche has been carried to the palace of her invisible lover:

> One recognised, even at the entering, the delightful hostelry of a god. Golden pillars sustained the roof, arched most curiously in cedar-wood and ivory. The walls were hidden under wrought silver. . . . Psyche, drawn forward by the delight of it, came near, and, her courage growing, stood within the doorway. One by one, she admired the beautiful things she saw; and, most wonderful of all! no lock, no chain, nor living guardian protected that great treasure house. But as she gazed there came a voice—a voice, as it were unclothed of bodily vesture—"Mistress!" it said, "all these things are thine."

That is a fairly close translation, and does no more than convey the romantic, fairy-land atmosphere of the original Latin. But compare with it the same scene in *The Earthly Paradise:*

> Now went she through the chambers tremblingly,
> And oft in going would she pause and stand,
> And drop the gathered raiment from her hand,
> Stilling the beating of her heart for fear
> As voices whispering low she seemed to hear,

> But then again the wind it seemed to be
> Moving the golden hangings doubtfully,
> Or some bewildered swallow passing close
> Unto the pane, or some wind-beaten rose.

That is all evoked from a single phrase of the Latin: *vox quædam corporis sui nuda.* There is an element of magic in these simple words of the original, no doubt, but nothing that corresponds to the tremulous uncertainty of the paraphrase, as if a wizard's mist had arisen between the palace and the beholder's eyes.

The great fault of *The Earthly Paradise* is its monotony. Very soon we begin to be aware that, with all its seeming diversity, it is really extraordinarily poor in ideas. If we say that beauty and death, death and beauty, form almost the whole substance of the poem, it might seem that enough had been granted to furnish forth a library of verse; but Morris uses these topics with the least variety of effect. Death is only the cessation of beauty, and beauty is only the indistinguished blaze of gold and silver, lilies and roses, slender hands and white limbs. Nowhere is there any relief or emphasis, but an even, swift flow, which never invites the mind to pause, or reflect, or go back. In all the diffuse imagery of *Cupid and Psyche*, for instance, one finds nothing like Apuleius's description of the chariot of Venus: *limæ tenuantis detrimento conspicuum et ipsius auri damno*

pretiosum. Those words, which attracted Pater by the cunning of their paradox, are altogether omitted by Morris. He was not one of those poets "who hoard their moments of felicity," but sowed from the whole sack. And, too soon, this entire lack of concentration or hesitation in the mind of the poet results in something perilously like indifference in the mind of the reader.

If my own taste can be trusted there is less of this cloying monotony in Morris's other great poem, *Sigurd the Volsung*. Already, while composing *The Earthly Paradise*, he had become absorbed in Icelandic studies, and one of the later tales, *The Lovers of Gudrun*, the finest of all his poems, if you will believe Swinburne, as I do not, was taken directly from this source. In 1870 Morris, in collaboration with Magnusson, made a translation of the prose *Volsunga Saga*. Six years later he developed this into the magnificent epic of *Sigurd the Volsung*, surely one of the high metrical triumphs of the nineteenth century. It is, of course, idle chauvinism to call these legends, as Morris does, "the Great Story of the North, which should be to all our race what the Tale of Troy was to the Greeks." Our literature and our ways of thinking do not come to us from the sagas, but from the classics and the Renaissance. And it is mere wantonness, as some hot brains have done, to place

Morris's work above, or even beside, that of Homer. Apart from the question of artistic form and beauty of expression, it lacks the full humanity of the *Iliad*, and its romance, beside that of the *Odyssey*, is as stammering to perfect speech. Some of the radical faults of the original Morris has not seen, or has failed to eliminate. There is, in the poem, as in the saga, a baffling incoherence of events, as, for instance, in the meeting and parting of Sigurd and Brynhild. And to these faults Morris has added his own impetuousness and lack of concentration.

In one respect *Sigurd* is like Morris's earlier work. If you read the poem pencil in hand you will find that you have no impulse to mark the lines for future reference, that you are never tempted to linger and reflect, but are jostled on from page to page. This is partly due to the metrical rhythm, which deserves a word to itself. In the tales of *The Earthly Paradise* Morris used the ordinary iambic pentameters and tetrameters, but he gave them a new character by lightening the accents, so that in place of the grave marching measure of Milton or the regular rattle of Scott, there is an even, almost unstressed flow. To such an extent does he carry this procedure that many of the octo-syllabic lines have only three accents, with a huddling together of two or three unaccented syllables, while the pentameters have a trick of loosening

into series of four or even three accents with still longer groups of unaccented syllables. The rhythm is not without its beauty and its appropriateness to the main theme of the Tales. But Morris employs it without variation or discrimination, and an imprecation, as for example the Queen's curse of Bellerophon, is poured out with the same unstressed diffuseness and swiftness as the scenes of pretty playfulness. Now write together two of these three-stressed verses of the Tales, and you have the verse of *Sigurd:*

Then he rose at once to his feet, and smote the harp with his hand,
And it rang as if with a cry in the dream of a lonely land;

or, to take a more characteristic line, showing the tendency to bunch three light syllables at the cæsura:

But the thought of my heart is unstable, and my hope as the winter drift.

Morris himself no doubt believed that he was using a metre equivalent in effect to the Greek hexameter; as a matter of fact, his rhythm, as Mr. Mackail observes, is probably closer to the original tumbling ballad sing-song out of which the classical dactyls and spondees were developed. Only there is still this difference, which Mr. Mackail does not observe: that the absence of a fixed syllabic quantity, such as we may

assume to have been even more pronounced in Homeric than in later Greek, gives to Morris's measure an unpausing haste and, so to speak, a vague and fitful restlessness.

But this metrical effect, better than in *The Earthly Paradise*, harmonises with the emotional quality of the poem. As you read on and the spell of the song lays hold of the mind, you seem indeed to have been rapt away into the dream of a lonely land. Nothing is quite familiar, nothing quite stable. Before you drives a broken mist, through the rifts of which you catch glimpses of a changing and disconnected panorama—gold-gleaming palaces and grey weather-beaten castles, groups of huntsmen driving the deer in the deep glades, terrible kings frowning forward from their thrones, warriors battling within rings of fire, women wonderfully fair calling men to blind dooms. The effect comes, in part, no doubt, from the story itself as Morris found it in the Icelandic saga, but he has shown extraordinary skill in adaptation. Some of the cruder, more savage details he has omitted, and about the others he has thrown an emotional atmosphere almost entirely his own. Sigurd's fateful arrival at the castle of the Niblungs, for example, is told in the saga with the utmost simplicity: "Thus he rides until he comes to the hall of King Giuki; there he rides into the burg." That is all; whereas in the poem all

the tragic doom of the future seems to meet the hero at the gate:

Upriseth the heart of Sigurd, but ever he rideth forth
Till he comes to the garth and the gateway built up in the face of the north:
Then e'en as a wind from the mountains he heareth the warders' speech,
As aloft in the mighty towers they clamour each to each;
Then horn to horn blew token, and far and shrill they cried,
And he heard, as the fishers hearken the cliff-fowl over the tide:
But he rode in under the gate, that was long and dark as a cave
Bored out in the isles of the northland by the beat of the restless wave;
And the noise of the winds was within it, and the sound of swords unseen,
As the night when the host is stirring and the hearts of Kings are keen.
But no man stayed or hindered, and the dusk place knew his smile,
And into the court of the warriors he came forth after a while,
And looked aloft to the hall-roof, high up and grey as the cloud,
For the sun was wholly perished; and there he crieth aloud. . . .

There is, in fact, little feeling of any kind evident in the saga, but a mere recital of stark deeds. When Gudrun kills her two children, the brief scene is snapped off with a "yet for all that, she cuts the throats of them"—it is quite

in the day's work. Now there is, properly speaking, little more of real humanity in Morris than in the Icelandic story. His sense of moral values is of the most rudimentary sort, and the law of cause and effect, which we associate with the moral law, scarcely exists for him. As a consequence, we have small human sympathy with his characters. Yet an emotional quality he does have, and that in a high degree, latent no doubt in the original but developed into something quite his own. From first to last one feels a kind of dim fatality brooding over the poem, a strange troubled necessity, such as cannot be found in any other of the great epics. It is not the mystical fate of Virgil, the unknown law that governs men and gods for its own far ends; nor the apportioned lot of Homer; nor the blind chance of Lucretius; nor the divine will of Milton. It is the fatality of magic, a web of mist and cloud spun by the Norns; a something inhuman and elfin that sends through the reader a boding thrill as from the night-terrors of his childhood. *The Earthly Paradise* was a lovely and rather cloying fairy tale; *Sigurd* is the enthralling fable of a witch.

Something perhaps I ought also to say about Morris's prose, and about his political activity out of which most of his prose grew, although, to be frank, I have never been able to take either of these quite seriously. Socialism was for him

the veritable Gospel of Discontent, of a piece with his general impatience at the restraints of order. Civilisation, "I *know* now," he once exclaims, "is doomed to destruction, and probably before very long: what a joy it is to think of! and often it consoles me to think of barbarism once more flooding the world, and real feelings and passions, however rudimentary, taking the place of our wretched hypocrisies." In his revolt against the smug commonplace of Victorian art and in his effort to bring back something of the craftsman's joy in his handiwork, Morris stood on firm ground and was a considerable force for good; but when he undertook to formulate a new order of society he talked of things of which he had no understanding. He meant seriously enough; he even "tackled Marx," as he says, suffering thereby "agonies of confusion of the brain over reading the economics of that work." But his attempt, in such a book as *News from Nowhere*, to portray a rejuvenated society would be merely funny, if it were not tiresome. Anything less practical it would be hard to conceive than this fool's paradise in which all the world is off on a perpetual May-day. Morris himself seems to have been aware of the inanity of his puppets, when he let slip an allusion to "some forgotten corner of the earth, where people are unhappy, and consequently interesting to a story-teller." There cannot be

much comfort for a strenuous follower of Marx in these rose-scented idyls; but in one respect at least their author shows a curious kinship to the professional reformers of all ages. Morris once remarked of Rossetti that "he would take abundant trouble to help any one person who was in distress of mind or body; but the evils of any mass of people he could n't bring his mind to bear upon. I suppose," continues Morris, "it needs a person of hopeful mind to take disinterested notice of politics, and Rossetti was certainly not hopeful." And now for the other side. "Did you ever notice that Top never gives a penny to a beggar?" said Rossetti one day; and Mr. Mackail observes of Morris in his socialistic time that "the sufferings of individuals often only moved him to a certain impatience." There is a profound lesson in this difference of temperament between Rossetti, the man of genius, and Morris, the man of talent. In Morris it is connected with the same inability to fix the attention on a stable point, the same fluidity impatient of fact, that form the chief characteristic of his verse.

LOUISA SHORE

SEVERAL years ago, as I was turning over the volumes in the ten-cent box before a book-stall, I found a copy of Louisa Shore's *Poems*,[1] and chanced upon the lines in the *Elegies* in which she expresses her longing to give some form of shadowy life to her lost brother and sister:

> For, could we link their memories to the chain
> Of souls whose lights in long procession move
> From Past to Future, so might yearning love
> Behold their buried beauty live again.

And I vowed then, as I took the soiled volume with me, that some day I would do what I could, at least by large quotation, to extend to a few others who might care for such things the charm that these verses had exercised upon myself. Let me add at once that I am under no delusion in regard to their place in literature or in regard

[1] *Poems.* By Louisa Shore. With a Memoir by her sister, Arabella Shore, and an Appreciation by Frederic Harrison. London and New York: John Lane, 1897.— The original issues of her works are out of print and not easily procured.

to the power of criticism to resuscitate what is forgotten. If Louisa Shore were a great poet she would need no such memorial as this; as she is but one of the minor poets, the world, under its burden of the present, will pass her by with the other "souls that sleep." This I know; yet withal the feminine grace of her art, like a faint perfume that teases recollection, and her protest of love and regret for those who went from her into the world's forgetfulness, have stirred a kind of echoed desire to see, if merely for a day or two, her own "buried beauty live again." If I, who guess only from the printed page, fail in this, I can comfort myself with the lines adapted from the *Elegies* by the sister, who was so close to the living person, for the motto of her Memoir:

> In what strange lines of beauty should I draw thee?
> In what sad purple dreamshine paint thee true?
> How should I make them know who never saw thee?
> How should I make them love who never knew?

Of the life of the poet the main events are given in the Memoir. She was the youngest of three girls, Emily, Arabella, and Louisa, born to the Rev. Thomas Shore,[1] who maintained

[1] Thomas Shore was a son of the Rev. Thomas William Shore, and nephew of the Sir John Shore, afterwards Lord Teignmouth, Governor-General of India, and first president of the Bible Society. Thomas William married Juliana, daughter of William Mackworth Praed of Teign-

himself in quiet independence by preparing a succession of young men, some of them of distinguished families, for college, and, after the maturity of his daughters, by taking in younger pupils. She was born in 1824 and died in 1895. Her early years were passed chiefly at Woodbury Hall, near Everton, and at Bartley Lodge in the New Forest. In 1838, the family broke up their home and went to Madeira, in the hope of saving the life of Emily, who was wasting away with consumption. Here the invalid, the most gifted of the sisters, lingered for six months, leaving behind her the memory of a thing frail and precious and ephemeral. After a while the family returned to England, and lived in a number of places. Successive deaths left the two remaining sisters finally alone, in a union sanctified by memories and bereavements. Though not without friendships and interests in the practical world, Louisa passed much of her

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mouth, and aunt of Winthrop Mackworth Praed, the poet and politician. Letters from Lord Teignmouth to his brother will be found in the Memoir of his Life. Two of his sons went to India, and at page 296 of Volume II. of his Memoir there is a long letter, or religious testament, to his son Frederick, on his sailing, filled with grave counsel drawn from the experience of life. He was an Oriental scholar of some repute, following Sir William Jones as president of the Royal Asiatic Society, and wrote verse of mediocre quality. Poetry and religion came to the younger generation from both the Shores and the Praeds.

time in retirement, and courted long periods of solitude. As a child, she was very fair, and was described by Mr. Nelson Coleridge, who saw her at a party in London, as "a perfect little Hebe." Of her "beautiful face" in later years, her sister remarks that "its most striking beauty was perhaps that of expression, though the features were good, especially as shown in the finely moulded, cameo-like profile. Her rich auburn hair, worn in youth in tresses, fine, soft, and silky, her bright complexion and sweet mouth aided the childlike character which her face long retained." It was, no doubt, as much her appearance as her gentle ways that led a friend to speak of her "violet life." She published five volumes of lyrical and dramatic poems, the best of which, with the exception of *Hannibal, a Drama in Two Parts*, are printed, together with Early Poems and various unfinished pieces, in the posthumous volume edited by Arabella.

Though we know, and need to know, little of so uneventful a life, we are fortunate in possessing a unique account of the atmosphere, so to speak, in which the sisters passed their childhood, and of the influences that shaped their minds. From July 5, 1831, when she was eleven and a half years old, until June 24, 1839, a fortnight before her death, Emily kept a diary from which full extracts have been

published.[1] It is a curious volume, childish at once and precocious, offering little entertainment to the world at large, but having a pathetic interest for those who cherish the beauty of eager souls expanding in "the untrodden ways." Of happenings there is no record, save the changing of homes, and a visit in her seventeenth year to Devonshire. Here one finds the faint adumbration of a love story; and the account of a picnic in which she and her respectful admirer sketch romantic scenes and quote Byron and Shelley, after the approved fashion of the day, introduces a note of youthfulness for which she afterwards felt remorse as for an undue surrender to frivolity. Of the wooing that followed and of the separation on prudential grounds only bare hints are given; "over all things like these," as the editor of the *Journal* remarks, "the intense maiden modesty of her nature kept a seal." It was characteristic of this awe of her own heart that the expansive freedom of love went to her lover's sister rather than to himself, and it was doubtless in the withdrawing memory of these days that she wrote her fragmentary poem:

> Yes, as the perfume to the rose,
> So to our life is Love; it lives
> When every beauteous colour goes,
> And round the withered stem survives.

[1] *Journal of Emily Shore.* London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., Ltd., 1891.

O name too oft abused, misplaced,
By Folly seized, to Folly bound!
Thy stream of silver sound they waste
Who guide it through that weedy ground.

Why should that name, on poet's page,
Flow only through that one wild grove,
Where through our various pilgrimage
'T is ours so short a time to rove?

Nay, rather, Love! be thou a river
That fertilises all our years,
Flows deepening on, and flows for ever
Through and beyond this vale of tears.

But nature and books were her real passion. Botanising and bird lore, taken with portentous seriousness by most cultivated Englishmen of her day, were with her like a function of religion. A new flower discovered in a swamp was a more rapturous event than the speech of a lover, and through years of study she became profoundly cunning in distinguishing the songs not only of different species but of different birds in the same species. One of her complaints in the time of illness was that she could not rise at four or five in the morning and make her observations. Nor were the imaginative aspects of nature forgotten in these pursuits. It is not every miss of fourteen who can see with so clear an eye and can record in her diary the impressions of an early autumn night so poetically as this:

Not a breath of wind stirred the leaves of a tree, and scarce a cloud was visible in the heavens, while the clear, silvery light of the moon contrasted beautifully with the dark shadows of the thick foliage. The bats were flying silently about in the twilight before the moon shone forth, and the wakeful robin had not yet ceased his sweet plaintive song, while at a distance in the wood sounded the deep hoot of the owl. The occasional falling of the rose leaves, *which looked as white as snow in the darkness*, added much to the interest of the scene. I could not persuade myself to go to bed, but sat up a long time looking out of my window.

The dropping petals of the rose, as if they were a symbol or foreboding of her own fragility, seem to have haunted her fancy. Four years later, in the New Forest, on the last night of August, she notes the brilliancy of the moon, and adds:

So now we quite bid adieu to all that looks like summer.—Oh, what a sweet, serene farewell! The evening is so calm that I believe I could almost hear the rose-leaves falling.

And earlier in the spring of that year, she had expressed the same thought in a poem of regret for her old home and her lost health:

Oh, for one laughing morn of May,
When all was beautiful and gay;
When, far from human sound or sight,
I sought my chamber's quiet height!
There would my spirit wander free
O'er study's deep enchanted sea,

Pausing at times to rest awhile
In rapture on some magic isle;
And still, the open casement through,
Gales redolent of roses blew.

. . . . . .

Oh, for one calm September even,
Which I have thought was dropt from heaven,
So still that I could almost hear
The rose-leaves as they softly fell;
So lucid all the atmosphere,
I could each glistening dewdrop tell.

Study was, indeed, to her a deep enchanted sea, and the only wonder is that the slender vessel of her health did not founder in it sooner. It is pathetic to read of the languages and sciences and chronologies she tried to carry in her childish brain, not to mention the library of dramas and novels and histories she was herself composing. Her mind, so long as any health remained, was never relaxed. While dressing, she learned by heart chapters of the Bible; she read Gibbon while curling her hair at night; and at meals she conned her arithmetic, history, and geography. There is something hectic and pitiful in all this expense of youth, to which no fruit of maturity was allowed. In the clearer vision that came to her before her death, she saw and lamented her feverish impatience:

A mind that like some plant has grown
Too fast with vigour not its own,

Sprung from too glowing soil, and fed
With fancy's dews too thickly shed.
O'erwrought, excited, 't was at length
Too full of blossom for lasting strength.

It would be rash to suppose that only the early close or the unwise forcing of these precocious talents prevented the accomplishment of some memorable poetic work. Her sensitive response to every intellectual or imaginative impulse was not the strong and waiting passiveness that some day wakes to creative activity, but indicated rather, one feels, a strain of impotence within her own nature.

Her real achievement was the passion of regret she was able to leave in her sister's heart. It may be that I have carried something of the pathos of Emily's *Journal* itself into the reading of Louisa's *Elegies*, and, indeed, my aim in quoting so largely from the *Journal* has been to convey to others what I could of this adventitious spell; yet I must think that the poetry of loss and long-cherished love has not often been more sincerely and poignantly written than in these lines, or the dream-image of memory more sharply etched:

But half a child through all her childish time,
Still half a child in girlhood's strenuous prime,
By Duty's bride-ring with such passion worn,
By Fancy's sparkling, flowery, fairy wand,
That wrought grave wonders in her firm young hand—
By Nature's own sweet science at grey morn

Revealed, in wandering woodland-studies dear—
By these inspired, and ancient lore austere,
And the full heart that ever rushed to meet
The Fair and Good, and worship at their feet—
She lived on heights and knew not they were high,
On fire, and knew not other souls were cold;
She would have learnt it all, but was to die
Ere yet her eaglet-wings she could unfold
For her true mates to search the world, and ask
Her share in their appointed beauteous task.
Some task was waiting for her, so we deem,
Its hopes, its fears, its failures, all untried;
But now her little lifetime seems a dream,
So long ago, and so unknown she died.
Now the red rose-leaf on the pure young cheek,
More childlike as time moves, and leaves her there,
And eyes which sprang up ere the lips could speak,
Melt into shadow through the drooping hair.
Now all that girlhood, now that flushed, intense,
Young fever, are a whisper of the night,
A faint sweet resurrection, a strange sense
Of absence unexplained till morning light.
And whilst her memory in its crystal urn
Gleams fair as silver through the dust of years,
Cold evermore where sky and ocean burn
With azure fire that isle of sepulchres,
'Twixt purple passion-flower and whitest rose,
Where Death a garden's summer queen appears,
She sleeps—but others live for other tears.

But the *Elegies* have a double burden. Of the two sons of the family, one, led, no doubt, by his kinship to the Teignmouths, went to India in pursuit of fortune; the younger emigrated to Australia, and on the way home, after

a long and painful exile, perished at sea. The suspense of waiting for news of the shipwrecked vessel and the tragedy of the story when it came made an indelible impression on the minds of the two surviving sisters. We have no verse or journal from the "mysterious, solitary boy," no record of the showering rays of wit that held his family spellbound—

> Wild beautiful caprices of a speech
> Now long unwritten, mute, and past from reach—

but he lives with Emily in the *Elegies;* and it seems as if the second death of Emily by the passing away of her shadowy life in his memory, together with the deprivation he suffered by Emily's ignorance of his fate, shot through the writer of the poem with a keener pang for the complete oblivion that should befall when no one was left to cherish their names and images. She wavers between envy of the dead for their peace and a half reproach for their forgetfulness. "But others live for other tears," she says, and then—

> Ah, her young darling is not one of those!
> His tale for her untold, its stormy close
> Rent other hearts, but stirred not her repose:
> Unguessed by her the strange and cheerless bed
> Where rests, for ever rests, his weary head;
> And nothing of *their* haunted life she knows,
> For whom an awful star, 'twixt wind and wave,

Still hovers o'er a merciless despair,
Still hovers o'er their treasure hidden there. . . .
To whom across the world and waste of sea,
A mute sad Shadow turns its solemn gaze,
Hopeless of home—"Forget me not," It says:
"I am not lost, while Love remembers me."

Oh, faithful to the bidding of those eyes!
Oh, faithful to the tender heart of fire!
Love yearns for thee with unextinguished sighs,
But knows that with *her* death thy memory dies;
And dies with it one sacred sole desire,
To gather up the scattered dust of death,
To charm the long-lost phantom back to light,
And that dear semblance to all time bequeath—
Vain bitter prayer for bitter sweet delight.

Reading these lines, one is reminded of the pathetic devotion of Eugénie de Guérin to the memory of her brother Maurice, and of her saying that "Nothing but tears makes us believe in immortality." Or, if one is fresh from a perusal of the pages of Mrs. Augustus Craven, as I am, one thinks of that longer chain of family love which lends to *A Sister's Story* an interest quite unique of its kind.[1] But if the grief in

[1] Those who have read the *Notes from a Diary* of Sir Grant Duff will need no introduction to Mrs. Augustus Craven's *Récit d'une sœur*, to which he is constantly alluding. Fortunately it has been so perfectly translated by Miss Emily Bowles, as *A Sister's Story* (London: Richard Bentley, 1868), and its characters have so many associations with England, that it may be regarded almost as an English classic.

these three cases is equally deep and the determination of memory equally strong, there is a difference in the sources of consolation that sets them strikingly apart. Both Mlle. de Guérin and the members of Mrs. Craven's family were not only intensely religious, but whole-heartedly Catholic. Through the unflagging ministry of the Roman church to mind and imagination, the idea of a present personal God, present almost as a visible sustainer and audible comforter, was a reality even more certain to them than the desolation of their mortal loss. *Ce grand ami perdu*, writes Mlle. de Guérin, *il ne me faut rien moins que Dieu pour le remplacer, ou plutôt Dieu était là, mais il s'avance dans la place vide.* There is, perhaps, in that complete replacing of the human by the divine, a note of austerity that barely accords with the word of comfort. It is the truer Christian *catharsis*, I think, that we find in the grief of Alexandrine for her husband, Mrs. Craven's brother:

> I thank God for my good memory, for one of the greatest miseries of human nature is the gradual blotting out and disappearance of all that one has felt the most intensely. God preserve one from this! It is sweet to be convinced, as I am more and more, that in God our affections are best kept alive, and that He, being all love, knows how to maintain in us the recollection of every affection which He has blest.

Of that sacrament of faith, by which sorrow is

converted into submission and submission into the joy of a great discovery, there is nothing in the *Elegies* of Louisa Shore; memory for her has no bond with eternity, but is a product of time and as ephemeral as the object remembered. For the cause of this frustration we must go back to the influences of childhood. Her father was in orders, but had given up his curacy, chiefly it appears because his views were too broad for such a restraint. Throughout the whole of Emily's *Journal* one is impressed by a sense of something strangely absent. The tone of her meditations is constantly, even intensely, religious, yet nowhere do we feel the presence of any definite tangible faith, speaking to the eye in symbols and to the ear in mystic sounds. Such was the atmosphere of devout but insubstantial Christianity in which Louisa grew up, a religion in which duty and conscience had totally usurped the place of the imagination. With the passing of years her liberality, as so often happens, was refined into skepticism, while her devotion remained as mere will to believe, a hope beating tired wings in the void and sinking to earth. She has neither the impersonal consolation of philosophy—she was too thoroughly feminine for that—nor the personal comfort of Christianity:

> . . . Yet the grief which needs,
> For life's support, a faith and not a dream,

Holds that the spirit in its sigh supreme
With sudden flame shall interpenetrate
Some form unearthly in some unknown state,
A beauteous mystery of meeting bliss
Reserving for the souls that weep and wait,
But vainly towards that state we strain from this;
The earthly heart, the face, the self we miss,
'T is that which *was* we fain would recreate.
We talk in earth's old language to our lost,
With our own sighs revivify its ghost;
The form Love meets advancing through the gloom,
Is but the reflex of her own desire,
Flashed on the glass, as in a darkening room
We meet ourselves.—Love once within the tomb,
Shall not that reflex of herself expire?

It is characteristic of a mind tortured with this religious tenderness for death, without the living support of religion, that it should look for consolation to a future conceived temporally rather than to the actual reality of the past. "He loseth the greatest part of his joie in this worlde," says Wilson in his *Arte of Rhetorique*, ". . . that cannot comfort himselfe with pleasure[s] past, and judge them to be most assured, considering the memorie of them once had, can never decaie." In that power of the past to impose itself on the heart as a thing no longer subject to decay lies the natural bond between tradition, or memory in its transcendent sense, and faith which is the faculty of beholding the eternal beneath the transient. There is no surer sign of lessening faith than the tendency to turn, for

a fulfilling of the present, from the possession of what has been to an uneasy hankering after a future which is no more than a glorification, as it is a desired product, of change itself. Now of things to come we have no knowledge or control —*de non apparentibus et non existentibus eadem est ratio*—and almost inevitably in this reliance upon the future there is a note of impotent unrest if not of insincerity. No higher praise, therefore, can be given to Miss Shore than that she was able to invest the idea of progress with a persuasive passion. I have read much of the literature of the future—as who has not in these days?—but I do not know where to find anything comparable for poetic effect to the closing lines of the *Elegies*, which have been inserted in the hymn-book of the Positivist Church. They are "truly grand lines," as Mr. Frederic Harrison calls them, and by their virtue, if by any, the author may claim to be remembered with the greater poets. Yet even in this noble passage it is not so much the dawning glory of what is to be that stirs the heart, as the pathos of the lesser extinguished lights—the thought that for the buried there is, in Thomas Hood's words, "no resurrection in the minds of men." Out of grief for her own lost and their inevitable failure from memory, the poet rises into a bitter outcry for the generations of unremembered dead, for the frustration of innumerable hopes and the

mockery of love, for all the terrible waste of time; her hymn of triumph to the imperial Future is even more a dirge of divine sorrow for the Past:

Vain broken promise of unfinished lives!
From your untimely ashes what survives?
Who shall fulfil your unlived half of life?
Who win the crown of your unfoughten strife? . . .
Yet, long-lost sister! can a soul like thine
Drop from the march of Nature's foremost line
So early, so unmissed? Can all her pride
In that rich promise be so cast aside?
Oh, long-lost brother! Shall the myriad years
Make plain to Man this mystery of tears?
Shall light come ever to this blind sad Earth
That knows not what is death nor what is birth?
It will, but not to me. Earth yet shall know,
By a new light, the secret of her past,
Shall ask no more, "Why do I suffer so?"
But smile in one great harmony at last.
And we, with faith in what we shall not see,
May call the dead whose tomb is in our heart,
To rise and take their own unconscious part
Of service in the glory that shall be.
For, could we link their memories to the chain
Of souls whose lights in long procession move
From Past to Future, so might yearning love
Behold their buried beauty live again,
To glide with solemn purifying glow
Along the endless way the ages go;
Might joy o'er something added—casting in
Such jewels—to the world's great treasure heap;
And here and there some living souls might win
To reverent fellowship with the souls that sleep.

Oh, perfect Race to be! Oh, perfect Time!
Maturity of Earth's unhappy youth!
Race whose undazzled eyes shall see the truth,
Made wise by all the errors of your prime!
Oh, Bliss and Beauty of the ideal Day!
Forget not, when your march has reached its goal,
The rich and reckless waste of heart and soul
You left so far behind you on your way!
Forget not, Earth, when thou shalt stretch thy hands
In blessing o'er thy happy sons and daughters,
And lift in triumph thy maternal head,
Circling the sun with music from all lands,
In anthems like the noise of many waters—
Forget not, Earth, thy disappointed Dead!
Forget not, Earth, thy disinherited!
Forget not the forgotten! Keep a strain
Of divine sorrow in sweet undertone
For all the dead who lived and died in vain!
Imperial Future, when in countless train
The generations lead thee to thy throne,
Forget not the Forgotten and Unknown!

I have accomplished my design, which was no more than to give a setting to quotations from a poem, exquisite in a way, but not great enough to ensure that the volume in which it occurs will ever be reprinted. Doing this, I have left myself no place to call attention to the passages of rare beauty that are scattered through Miss Shore's other poems. Of her dramas, I am not so sure. They are vivid in a way, not lacking in plot and resource; but the action, by its very intensity of inner passion, affects one as somehow unreal, as if it were the creation of one who

brooded upon the world in solitude. Her true quality as a poet, apart from the *Elegies*, is found rather in the fragmentary relics of *Irene's Dream*, in which memories of Emily united with the author's love of elf-haunted gardens to evoke a fairyland, now filled with sounds like the faint sobbing of creatures imagined in the forest, now penetrated by

> A wild, small music, like to tinkling laughter.

It is by right of such poems as these that she takes her place, not with dishonour, among the group of feminine poets of the last century, of whom Christina Rossetti was the chief, and who added a new charm of refinement to English letters.

THOMAS BAILEY ALDRICH

ANYBODY to-day into whose hands a few documents have fallen can write a biography, forgetful in his haste that "easy writing 's curst hard reading." Indeed, one cannot follow the tide of Lives turned out by the press without feeling that now in earnest the Philistines be upon us, and, with the memory fresh in mind of certain recent biographies, one shudders to think of what might have happened to Mr. Aldrich. Here, above all, delicacy and reticence (not concealment, for there is little or nothing to conceal) were necessary, and, by good fortune, these are eminently the qualities that Mr. Greenslet has brought to his task,[1] together with a skill in words that reproduces something of the charm of one who made refinement the end of all his labour. Mr. Greenslet knows when to stop. He tells just enough of the child's surroundings at Portsmouth; he finds the right note of emphasis for the half-hearted association of

[1] *The Life of Thomas Bailey Aldrich.* By Ferris Greenslet. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1908.

the clerk and youthful editor in New York with that sad Bohemian band before the war, out of which Poe escaped by wine and opium, and from which Whitman was saved only by his phlegmatic egotism; he follows the man sympathetically through his Boston years of prosperous toil and golden ease, to the honoured close. He does not forget to point out the happy influence upon his peculiar temperament of that mingling of the literary traditions of Boston and New York, which gave to his work at once a touch of ethical seriousness and of easy urbanity.

If Mr. Greenslet fails to satisfy us anywhere, it is in the last chapter, in which he sums up his criticism of Aldrich's writings. What he says is good and sound, but somehow it is not quite sufficient; it lacks the last transmuting touch. He quotes, but does not entirely take to heart his author's command:

> To the sea-shell's spiral round
> 'T is your heart that brings the sound:
> The soft sea-murmurs that you hear
> Within, are captured from your ear.
>
> You do poets and their song
> A grievous wrong,
> If your own soul does not bring
> To their high imagining
> As much beauty as they sing.

That is more than should be asked of any reader, no doubt; but at least one may demand of the critic a fuller use of his own high imaginative right by which he lifts the melody of the poet out of its isolation and gives it a place in the music of time.

How much more might be said, which Mr. Greenslet could say so delightfully, about that little volume of *Songs and Sonnets*[1] selected by Mr. Aldrich himself from the body of his work and published in honour of his seventieth birthday. These catches of "short-breathed music, dying on the tongue," we call *vers de société*, perhaps, having no better name for them. There is, in fact, something in that phrase that reminds one rather of the glittering, tableau verses of Mr. Austin Dobson than of Mr. Aldrich's shy insinuation, and I could almost wish we had adopted the phrase "Gentle Verse" suggested by Miss Carolyn Wells in her *Anthology*, using the word gentle as Coleridge and Lionel Johnson applied it to Charles Lamb, or as signifying that which is "innately fine, polished by the experience and sophistication of truly good society."

[1] *A Book of Songs and Sonnets.* Selected from the Poems of Thomas Bailey Aldrich. Boston: The Riverside Press, 1906. Only 430 copies of this book, exquisite in form and contents, were printed. It will be a prize for future collectors.

But by whatever name we call them, we should not suppose that these fragile verses of Mr. Aldrich's were mated carelessly or without thought of the destinies of a beautiful accomplishment:

Enamoured architect of airy rhyme,
Build as thou wilt, heed not what each man says:
Good souls, but innocent of dreamers' ways,
Will come, and marvel why thou wastest time;
Others beholding how thy turrets climb
'Twixt theirs and heaven, will hate thee all thy days;
But most beware of those who come to praise.
O Wondersmith, O worker in sublime
And heaven-sent dreams, let art be all in all;
Build as thou wilt, unspoiled by praise or blame,
Build as thou wilt, and as thy light is given;
Then, if at last the airy structure fall,
Dissolve, and vanish—take thyself no shame.
They fail, and they alone, who have not striven.

This art in miniature, of which Mr. Aldrich's *Songs and Sonnets* are so fine a flower, is not, in fact, an easy thing to be thrown off by any untaught hand; beside the tradition of the larger art it has its own long and sacred history. From the time when some monk, it may be, in the decline of Greek letters, gave to his swallow-like trochaics of love and wine the magic name of Anacreon this new muse of wanton wisdom has had a place with the graver sisters of the nine. Perhaps there is too much of wantonness and too little of wisdom in the *Anacreontica* to

afford the model we are seeking; they lack the background of seriousness that is always felt in the perfect *vers de société*. Yet the picture of this old man, crowned with flowers and crying the pains and pleasures of youth, took a strange hold of the fancy of later poets, and his mischievous boy Eros has had a sly knack of slipping into the minds of passionate singers who should have invoked only the sterner god, known and worshipped by the ancient true Anacreon.

There is seriousness and to spare in the Greek *Anthology*, if we open its heart, and here, if anywhere, has been the inexhaustible source from which our rhymers have drawn their hippocrene. But still the tone is not tempered to just the mood for our present purpose. Somewhat too insistently the might and tragic glory of Greece weigh on the mind as we read these deliberate efforts to hide its grave under flowers; whether by a trick of fancy or not, too poignantly almost we feel that the end of that world is near at hand. These brief epigrams, as they are called, were written to pass from mouth to mouth during the banquet hour, or, at least, took their mode from that norm. Into the heart that began to doubt of wine and love they were designed to bring the Epicurean zest that comes with the intruding thought of universal transience. Some trace of that shadow may always, no doubt, be detected in the eyes of our *Musa*

philommeides, even when she visits the far New England clime:

> Ho, eglantine and cresses
> For her tresses!—
> Let Care, the beggar, wait
> Outside the gate.
>
> Tears if you will—but after
> Mirth and laughter;
> Then, folded hands on breast
> And endless rest.

That is also in the *Anthology*, that and something more. It is not only the Egyptian death-masque among the feasters to crown their pleasure, but, sitting with them, one seems to hear, amid the pauses of their singing, from afar off, muffled by the windings of many streets, the engines of the enemy beating at the city gates. The banquet hall is in a beleaguered town, the barbarians are beneath the walls, and the guests cling to one another in friendship, and to "the fair things of Hellas," their inheritance now about to be scattered and trodden under foot. It is the consummation of Greece one sings in the epigram best known to us in its Latin version, *Spes et Fortuna valete:*

> To Hope, farewell, and Fortune; having found the port
> I leave you; others now shall be your sport.

The Romans also had their votaries of this Muse, greater names in this kind than Greece

could count. Catullus, the lover of Lesbia, has, indeed, accomplished all that is possible in bestowing upon passion a high-bred ease. No one has surpassed his song of the kisses, the *basia mille, deinde centum, dein mille altera,* with its solemn reminder:

> So may we live and love, till life be out,
> And let the greybeards wag and flout.
> Yon failing sun shall rise another morn,
> And the thin moon round out her horn;
> But we, when once we lose our waning light,—
> Ah, Love, the long unbroken night!

Or, if this seem too directly pathetic for our class, there is the inimitable song to Lesbia's sparrow, which so many poets have so bravely tried to imitate.

And yet withal Catullus was too swift and too energetic to belong wholly, or even primarily, within the circle we are trying to draw. He who walked in the terrible company of Cæsar and Mamurra, of Clodius and his sister the *quadrantaria,* may have dallied with the day; but under his fine linen might be felt the surface of steel, and in his hand he carried a dagger, and not a lily.

Despite his inferiority as a poet, perhaps in part because of his lesser force, Martial is really nearer at times to our model than Catullus. Here is the consciousness of a lesser art con-

trasted with the great tradition, and with it the refuge from failure in ambiguous nonchalance. Here, too, is the note of tenderness for little, broken things, for young children whom neither their loveliness nor their prattling eloquence could save from death:

> Soft lie the sod above her; lightly rest,
> O earth, on one who lightly touched thy breast.

But, again, we are deterred from accepting this later singer as our type, if only for the filth and sordidness that choke his pages. His rarer notes of beauty are like iridescent bubbles floating on a foul stream; we fear to touch them lest they burst and soil our hands.

Nevertheless, in these poets are the sources of the kind we are trying to distinguish. Their influence extends to England with the Renaissance, and is never forgotten. The Caroline poets, Suckling and Carew and the others, knew it; Herrick felt it, and wrote his *Hesperides* under the spell. But somehow these Cavaliers failed to put the shadows in their pictures as well as the lights, or, rather, they left out the moral element too completely; they belong too much to the school of the *Anacreontica* and too little to that of the *Anthology*. The real *vers de société*—they can scarcely here be called Gentle Verse—came in with the wits of Queen Anne; and for the better part of a century Prior's lines to

Chloe and Clorinda and the other nymphs of London, and Pope's *Rape of the Lock*, were admired as the very mirror of a society in which good taste was finally codified. Well, it may be unjust, but I, for one, cannot read the lightest and prettiest of those verses without remembering the satyrlike advice of Rochester to his Cælias and Corinnas, or the brutal coarseness of Swift's Strephon and Chloe. The background of that graceful diversion is not the kindly illusion we are seeking, but an undeceived cynicism; the drop of bitter is hatred and not regret.

If any one in that age caught the tone of Gentle Verse, it was the learned, awkward, absent-minded, pious usher of Westminster school, Vincent Bourne, whose Latin poems Cowper placed above those of Tibullus, Propertius, and Ausonius, and not below those of Ovid. Perhaps it is his very use of Latin that makes him so perfect a master in the kind. There is in that union of ancient words with modern ideas, in that wedding of the speech of the schools with the politeness of the man of the world (for, pen in hand, Bourne was one of the wits, not a pedagogue), a something that tantalises the reader like a half-seen, half-vanishing face. One feels this here and there in the lines which Bourne has turned into Latin from Prior and the other singers of Chloe; one feels it still more strongly in the

translations of his own poems into English. Cowper, if any one, was fitted to catch the charm of his fables, but *The Jackdaw* and *The Cricket* miss just the piquant meeting of gravity and levity that mark the *Cornicula* and *Ad Grillum*. Lamb, too, has tried his hand and almost succeeded. In the *Epitaph on a Dog* especially he was able to match Vincent with his own experience of the humours and pathos of the London streets; but his verses still lack the Virgilian echo that sighs through the *Epitaphium*. Read the close of the two poems together:

> These were my manners, this my way of life,
> Till age and slow disease me overtook,
> And sever'd from my sightless master's side.
> But lest the grace of so good deeds should die,
> Through tract of years in mute oblivion lost,
> This slender tomb of turf hath Irus rear'd. . . .

> Hi mores, hæc vita fuit, dum fata sinebant,
> Dum neque languebam morbis, nec inerte senecta,
> Quæ tandem obrepsit, veterique satellite cæcum
> Orbavit dominum: prisci sed gratia facti
> Ne tota intereat, longos deleta per annos,
> Exiguum hunc Irus tumulum de cespite fecit. . . .

The very essence of Gentle Verse is in that Virgilian *dum fata sinebant* applied to a blind beggar and his dog; and Lamb has omitted it.

But to write out the full history of this verse would be like laying a burden on the back of a moth. And, indeed, there is not room here

even for the names of the poets of the later nineteenth century, Austin Dobson, Andrew Lang, Frederick Locker-Lampson, and a host of others, Englishmen and Americans, who have written in this vein. As a rule, their work has just missed the mark, because their intention was too evident. One seems to hear them say: Come, now, we will sit down and compose *vers de société*. And almost always they use the modes of the past as a kind of masquerade, so that their scenes may fall into neat artificial tableaux. From these, however, and from the earlier poets one begins to see the limitations and possibilities of the kind. Its essence lies in irony—not the grim sort we know from the tragedians and satirists, but a self-deprecating irony that is half a confession of weakness and half a deliberate veiling of strength in gentleness. Reticence, suggestion, and accepted littleness are its indispensable qualities. The regret of an idealised past will linger in it, but its themes are of the immediate present. It must have its root in deep emotion, but its manner is rather of one who sees passion in another than of one who himself feels. It is touched by the tragic brevity and insufficiency of life, but has no grief more clamorous than a sigh. It sees the incongruity of human pretensions, but indulges in no mirth more boisterous than a smile. It knows the deception of the world, but harbours pity and not cynicism.

It employs the most elaborate polish of art, but affects a careless spontaneity. It is at once urbane and bashful, the voice of a lady of the world on the lips of Ariel.

And these are the marks that distinguish the little book of *Songs and Sonnets* as, in its own field, one of the precious things in English. Aldrich wrote a good deal in the course of his life—novels, which have the thin-blooded amateurishness of the older New England fiction; other prose, like the *Ponkapog Papers*, too finely woven to endure harsh handling; long poems and plays, conscientiously devised but lacking in substantial human nature. His chief title to genius is the inerrant taste with which he has after many trials beaten out these few lyrics into perfect form, and set them apart from the rest of his work. Their veil of humility is their beauty. To read them is as if one sat alone in a city park, when the mist of twilight was falling, and beheld a company of fair women pass homeward—magically fair in the glimmering dusk. So, in his verse, the atmosphere is that which divides the day and the night, and the two worlds, meeting together, create an illusion of impalpable loveliness:

> Forever am I conscious, moving here,
> That should I step a little space aside
> I pass the boundary of some glorified
> Invisible domain—it lies so near.

He deals with the old themes in the old way, but with his own delicacy of touch—grave antiquity colouring a whimsical sentiment of the present, as in the *Intaglio Head of Minerva;* death hovering between terror and whimsical fancy, as in *Identity;* the mockery of human fates turned into pity and wonder, as in *Destiny;* and nature—

> These winter nights, against my window-pane
> Nature with busy pencil draws designs
> Of ferns and blossoms and fine spray of pines,
> Oak-leaf and acorn and fantastic vines,
> Which she will shape, when summer comes again—
> Quaint arabesques in argent, flat and cold,
> Like curious Chinese etchings. . . . By and by
> (I in my leafy garden as of old)
> These frosty fantasies shall charm my eye
> In azure, damask, emerald, and gold.

Perhaps, if one had to name a single poem as typical of Gentle Verse as Aldrich practised the art, it would be the lines called *Latakia*, in which the gorgeous extravagances of the Orient are held in fee to a smoker's lazy dream:

I

> When all the panes are hung with frost,
> Wild wizard-work of silver lace,
> I draw my sofa on the rug
> Before the ancient chimney-place.
> Upon the painted tiles are mosques

And minarets, and here and there
A blind muezzin lifts his hands
And calls the faithful unto prayer.
Folded in idle, twilight dreams,
I hear the hemlock chirp and sing
As if within its ruddy core
It held the happy heart of Spring.
Ferdousi never sang like that,
Nor Saadi grave, nor Hafiz gay:
I lounge, and blow white rings of smoke,
And watch them rise and float away.

II

The curling wreaths like turbans seem
Of silent slaves that come and go—
Or Viziers, packed with craft and crime,
Whom I behead from time to time,
With pipe-stem, at a single blow.
And now and then a lingering cloud
Takes gracious form at my desire,
And at my side my lady stands,
Unwinds her veil with snowy hands—
A shadowy shape, a breath of fire!

O Love, if you were only here
Beside me in this mellow light,
Though all the bitter winds should blow,
Though all the ways be choked with snow,
'T would be a true Arabian night!

It is a part of the convention thus to touch the reality of a life-long devotion (for so it was in Aldrich) with the lightness of a passing fancy. And like love, even beauty itself, which poets are fond of magnifying as a great and awful

power pervading the world, she will reduce by the delicate wand of irony to the least and most ephemeral form:

> My mind lets go a thousand things,
> Like dates of wars and deaths of kings,
> And yet recalls the very hour—
> 'T was noon by yonder village tower,
> And on the last blue noon in May—
> The wind came briskly up this way,
> Crisping the brook beside the road;
> Then, pausing here, set down its load
> Of pine-scents, and shook listlessly
> Two petals from that wild-rose tree.

In that exquisite and pathetic diminution, I take it, lies the secret of what is called *vers de société* or Gentle Verse. Mr. Greenslet quotes from a letter in which Whittier speaks of the pleasure given by these lines, "a pleasure that is very near pain in its intensity"; and he tells how the Quaker poet, then old and approaching death, would ask every evening to have certain of Aldrich's poems read to him, closing invariably with the request: "Now thee knows without my saying so that I want *Memory*," and always, with his wonderful far-off gaze, repeating after the reader:

> Two petals from that wild-rose tree.

And many a lesser lover of that Muse will hold in memory the falling petals of the *Songs and Sonnets* long after he has forgotten more ambitious things.

FRANCIS THOMPSON

It was about the year 1897, when his *New Poems* appeared with an American imprint, that the name of Francis Thompson began to be rumoured among us as a word of high esoteric meaning. At least that was the year in which he swam into my ken, in the form of a request to write some account of the new apparition. I was puzzled, I know, even a little baffled, by this "star-weary, overwarred" genius, and excused my inability in his own words:

> But here my lips are still.
> Until
> You and the hour shall be revealed,
> This song is sung and sung not, and its words are sealed.

Now, at last, the seal may seem to have been removed. Since his death last year (1907) at the age of forty-eight his two kindest protectors and warmest admirers, Mr. and Mrs. Wilfrid Meynell, have brought out a selection from his three books of poems, with a biographical note, and, at the end of the volume, a number of apprecia-

tions.[1] Well, shall I admit that I am still a little perplexed? I feel much in him that is great; I see him in the appreciations placed by eminent critics as an equal beside Donne and Herbert and Shelley and Wordsworth and Spenser and Milton; but I hesitate. Even in this residue from which all the dross of his work has supposedly been drawn off, there is still so much to harass the ear and tease the mind—uncouth words that simulate oracular frenzy, jagged edges of rhyme, harsh inversions, and gaping ellipses; so often his tortured language sounds like the beating on the ground of wings that cannot rise. He is of the wrestling but not of the triumphant spirits; of those upon whom the vision comes as an enemy, and who never, even when the victory is theirs, like the champions of Pindar, "go about the loud circle of applause, beautiful in youth and fair from fairest deeds."

It may be that I am misled by the fallacy of carrying his life into his work. Of that broken life the main events are told by Mr. Meynell, with hints of its darker aspect. Francis Thompson was the son of a Lancashire physician and was himself trained for that profession at Owens College, Manchester. But literature seduced him, and, like De Quincey, he went to London

[1] *Selected Poems of Francis Thompson.* New York: John Lane Co., 1908.

carrying for all his wealth "Æschylus in one pocket, Blake in the other." Like the Opium-eater, he carried also the taste that made his life in London's streets a visionary terror; and like him he met a strange and innocent rescuer:

Once, bright Sylviola! in days not far,
Once—in that nightmare-time which still doth haunt
My dreams, a grim, unbidden visitant—
Forlorn, and faint, and stark,
I had endured through watches of the dark
The abashless inquisition of each star,
Yea, was the outcast mark
Of all those heavenly passers' scrutiny;
Stood bound and helplessly
For Time to shoot his barbèd minutes at me;
Suffered the trampling hoof of every hour
In night's slow-wheelèd car;
Until the tardy dawn dragged me at length
From under those dread wheels; and, bled of strength,
I waited the inevitable last.
Then came there past
A child; like thee, a spring-flower; but a flower
Fallen from the budded coronal of Spring,
And through the city-streets blown withering.
She passed,—O brave, sad, lovingest, tender thing!—
And of her own scant pittance did she give,
That I might eat and live:
Then fled, a swift and trackless fugitive.

The story thus hinted at has never, I believe, been told in print. It "surpasses in romance," says Mr. Meynell, "that of De Quincey's Anne, and might, indeed, for a moment, reverse Rossetti's just indictment of the life of *Jenny*—

'It makes a goblin of the sun.' For this 'flower fallen from the budded coronal of Spring' took root and flourished, even in London mire, and again the fragrant petals unfolded and the greenery grew."

But the true help for Thompson came from Mr. and Mrs. Meynell themselves and was more far-reaching than the modesty of the biographer permits him to record. In their home, the poet found a refuge; to their child daughter were written the poems, wistful with jealousy of the future, when only by the remembrance of these verses he should share the possession of her heart with the destined lover:

> But on a day whereof I think
> One shall dip his hand to drink
> In that still water of thy soul,
> And its imaged tremors race
> Over thy joy-troubled face,
> As the intervolved reflections roll
> From a shaken fountain's brink;

to his adored benefactress were dedicated the lines *Before Her Portrait in Youth*, in which all the ravages and abstinences of a dispossessed life unite in a passionate claim upon the past:

> So I, in very lowlihead of love,—
> Too shyly reverencing
> To let one thought's light footfall smooth
> Tread near the living, consecrated thing,—
> Treasure me thy cast youth.

This outworn vesture, tenantless of thee,
Hath yet my knee,
For that, with show and semblance fair
Of the past Her
Who once the beautiful, discarded raiment bare,
It cheateth me.
As gale to gale drifts breath
Of blossoms' death,
So dropping down the years from hour to hour
This dead youth's scent is wafted me to-day:
I sit, and from the fragrance dream the flower.

From these songs of surrendered love, whose concentrated emotion can only be perceived from repeated reading in their complete form, it is but a step to the poems of Catholic mysticism, upon which his greater fame depends. They are all in praise of asceticism, yet with troubled reserves. As in his love there is no entire forbearance of the fruits of time, but an attempt to subtilise the flesh by waiving the alien present for some shadowy and morbid possession of the past and future, so one can never be quite sure how far his ecstasies of faith are a victory of the will and how far mere *défaillances* of a degenerate body. There are notes here and there that rise like spiritual triumphs, lines like those quoted by Mr. Quiller-Couch in his appreciation:

Firm is the man, and set beyond the cast
Of Fortune's game, and the iniquitous hour,
Whose falcon soul sits fast,
And not intends her high sagacious tour

> Or ere the quarry sighted; who looks past
> To slow much sweet from little instant sour,
> And in the first does always see the last.

But these do not seem to me to express so intimately the poet's own experience or to ring so true to the reader as the passages of a more ambiguous turn. And I am confirmed in this opinion by the curious twisting of logic in a little prose treatise on *Health and Holiness*, which was the result of his temporary retreat in a monastery. In one place he quotes Luther's *pecca fortiter*, and thinks that "he that sins strongly has the stuff of sanctity, rather than the languid sinner"; yet as a whole his argument would appear to be that in the lowering of physical vitality, which he transfers from himself to his generation, there is a corresponding growth in spirituality:

> No less, looking largely back over human history, I discern in her [Nature] a pertinacious purpose to exalt the spirit by the dematerialisation (if I may use the phrase) of the body. Slow and insensible, that purpose at length bursts into light, so to speak, for our present eyes. For all those signs and symptoms, upon which I have insisted even to weariness—however ill from the mere material standpoint, what do they mean but the gradual decline of the human animal, the gradually ascending supremacy of the spirit on the stubborn ruins of the bodily fortress?

It is natural that the editors of the Selection should have shown little of this wavering be-

tween heaven and earth, yet no one can rightly understand Thompson who has not followed him in the agony of such excluded poems as *The Dread of Height*:

> But ah withal,
> Some hold, some stay,
> O difficult Joy, I pray,
> Some arms of thine,
> Not only, only arms of mine!
> Lest like a weary girl I fall
> From clasping love so high,
> And lacking thus thine arms, then may
> Most hapless I
> Turn utterly to love of basest rate;
> For low they fall whose fall is from the sky.
> Yea, who me shall secure
> But I of height grown desperate
> Surcease my wing, and my lost fate
> Be dashed from pure
> To broken writhings in the shameful slime:
> Lower than man, for I dreamed higher,
> Thrust down, by how much I aspire,
> And damned with drink of immortality?

That note may be found in the accepted saints, no doubt, yet with a difference. There is in the *Imitation* the story of one who, under similar stress of fluctuating hope and fear, prostrated himself at the altar, with the cry: "Oh, if I knew that I should still persevere!" But immediately he heard within himself the divine response: "If you knew this, what would you do? Do now what then you would wish to do, and you

shall be secure." One finds in Thompson no such assurance that spiritual comfort is based on a healthy common-sense. His distress is aggravated at once by the impatience and uncertainty of his faith, impatient in its clamour for the heavenly rapture, uncertain whether this rapture is to be obtained by a repudiation of the flesh or by "that embrace of body and spirit, Seen and Unseen," as he calls it, "to which mortality, sagging but pertinacious, unalterably tends." The most extraordinary of his poems, artistically, that *To the Dead Cardinal of Westminster*, takes this ambiguity frankly for its theme. In quick, exclamatory stanzas, whose rhythm hesitates with a kind of palpitating suspense, he addresses his prayer to the spirit now emparadised:

Anchorite, who didst dwell
With all the world for cell,
My soul
Round me doth roll

A sequestration bare.
Too far alike we were,
Too far
Dissimilar.

For the poet who worships beauty, like the priestly servant of God, sees everywhere in life a coquetry of Death, a tiring-room for the trying on of Death's various garments; he has in recompense his own proud avocation from the world:

He lives detachèd days;
He serveth not for praise;
For gold
He is not sold.

But to the priest comes no such rending doubt as pierces the heart of one who has lost his life for the "impitiable Dæmon, Beauty." Rarely in modern verse, rarely in any verse, shall you hear words of more real terror of spirit than this cry of the poet to his friend in heaven:

Call, holy soul, O call
The hosts angelical,
And say,—
"See, far away

"Lies one I saw on earth;
One stricken from his birth
With curse
Of destinate verse.

"What place doth He ye serve
For such sad spirit reserve?
. . . . .

"Can it be his alone,
To find, when all is known,
That what
He solely sought

"Is lost, and thereto lost
All that its seeking cost?
That he
Must finally,

"Through sacrificial tears,
And anchoretic years,
Tryst
With the sensualist?

Something of this same terror, the fear of one to whom the vision appears as a flaming, awful sword threatening to sunder spirit from flesh, but enlarged now to embrace the experience of mankind, enters into the inspiration of Thompson's great poem. That ode, partly, no doubt, through the alliterative suggestion of its title, *The Hound of Heaven*, has attained already a kind of popularity, yet it would be unsafe to assume that even its opening lines are known to the reader:

I fled Him, down the nights and down the days;
I fled Him, down the arches of the years;
I fled Him, down the labyrinthine ways
Of my own mind; and in the midst of tears
I hid from Him, and under running laughter.
Up vistaed hopes I sped;
And shot, precipitated
Adown Titanic glooms of chasmèd fears,
From those strong Feet that followed, followed after.
But with unhurrying chase
And unperturbèd pace,
Deliberate speed, majestic instancy,
They beat—and a Voice beat
More instant than the Feet—
"All things betray thee, who betrayest Me."

The idea of these lines is evidently conceived

from a union of Æschylus' Erinnys, that like a hound (ὡς κύων) follows its prey until he come under the earth, where even dead he is not all free, with the language of the Psalmist: "Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: If I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there." Yet the effect is in nothing borrowed or secondary. Here, at least, thought and image, emotion and rhythm, are in liberated and mighty accord, and the result is a stanza which pulses in the memory like the sound of a bell swaying amidst a waste of obscure waters. Those few lines alone are a complete poem, magnificent enough to make a singer's fame. Indeed, I am not sure that the following stanzas are entirely in harmony with this opening, that they do not a little dissipate the initial impression. They are, in part, a legitimate expansion of the general idea: the poet tells of seeking refuge in human love, in the innocence of childhood, in the secrecies of nature, only to be baffled and routed everywhere by the insistence of the divine pursuer. That is well; but it is not well that the metaphors should sink at times into frigid conceits, and it approaches a kind of treachery to the confiding imagination when the sense of impetuous motion is lost in the abundance, however splendid, of stationary description. With a few excisions,

and with a little more loyalty to the guidance of the titular theme, I feel that the poet might have created, what an admirer calls it, "one of the very few 'great' odes, of which the language can boast"—I should say that, even as it stands, he had so succeeded, were it not for the concluding lines:

> Halts by me that footfall:
> Is my gloom after all,
> Shade of His hand, outstretched caressingly?
> "Ah, fondest, blindest, weakest,
> I am He Whom thou seekest!
> Thou dravest love from thee, who dravest Me."

Others may be affected differently, but I cannot accustom my mind to this inversion of the metaphor from one who seeks refuge against a pursuer to one who unwittingly drives away what he seeks; nor can I convince myself that the change is quite justifiable from the Oriental, rather the truly catholic, inspiration of the opening to the more narrowly Catholic note of the close. Here is a metamorphosis of the Furies into Eumenides, with a vengeance. Would not the impression have been at once more consistent and more powerful, had the poet maintained to the end his image of the pursuing hound, shadowing thus the alarms of some infinite ineluctable enemy that break into all the enjoyments and concerns of the world? The tone of the climax should have been only a

deepening of that which was first struck; or, if any reconciliation were necessary, it should have been through some half-allowed glimpse of the mystic truth: "When me they fly, I am the wings." It may be presumptuous thus to reconstruct in idea a poem at all accounts so magnificently imagined, but really this is nothing more than a distinguishing between the two voices that speak in the same ode: one the voice of the poet's heart, tremulous with fear of its own ecstasy; the other that of the prescribed and beneficent peace of the saints.

Those who place Thompson in the immediate company of the Caroline poets, will not, perhaps, accept such a distinction; but I cannot quite see that relationship. Something of Donne he may have, a little less of Herbert; of the free, more elastic singers of that religious age, Vaughan and Traherne and Marvell and Milton, in whom is all the exultant music of the dawn—scarcely a note. Only with the ascetic Crashaw, who stands apart from the main line, the kinship is marked. He is free from the execrable gust for blood, which makes a good deal of Crashaw almost revolting to a healthy mind, but the other faults of taste he shares with Crashaw, and even exaggerates. In both there is the same breath of the prison house, something close and febrile and spiritually exacerbating.

But his real affiliation is rather with the line of

poets and visionaries of the nineteenth century, who have combined a worship of heaven with subjection to the angel of the darker drink—Coleridge and De Quincey, Poe and Clarence Mangan, and, nearer to his own age, the ill-starred James Thomson. More particularly one cannot read *The Hound of Heaven*, without remembering how De Quincey saw the images of his dream swell and swoop upon him, and is forced unpleasantly to consider the cause. Still closer to him in point of time, are those finely wrought poets, Lionel Johnson and Ernest Dowson, who, like him, looked to Rome for their faith. Whether it be from morphine or absinthe or alcohol, there is in each of these three the suspicion that their cloistral abstinence is doubled with a physical taint. Johnson and Thompson differ profoundly in their sense of form and style, the former being as classical and restrained in his taste as the latter is romantic and lawless; but both write with the same straining hope that, out of a renunciation half-voluntary and half-compelled by the enfeebled body, there shall come in the end the peace of an infinite salvation. The agony is more poignant, if expressed with more reserve of language, in Johnson, and the victory is also more philosophic, if less lyrical:

> Dark angel, with thine aching lust!
> Of two defeats, of two despairs:

Less dread, a change to drifting dust,
Than thine eternity of cares.

Do what thou wilt, thou shalt not so,
Dark Angel! triumph over me:
Lonely, unto the Lone I go;
Divine, to the Divinity.

The kinship with Ernest Dowson, the decadent singer of the London slums and the Parisian asphalt, might seem too slight to bear analysis; yet Dowson was not without his abstinence, which took the form of an æsthetic fragility and purity of touch. Through all the dissipation of his life the memory of the one true love—"I have been faithful to thee, Cynara! in my fashion"—remains like a mystic purgation of the soul. It is at least a curious coincidence that he, too, has his child-love, although with renunciation rather than jealousy of the future:

Little lady of my heart!
Just a little longer,
Be a child: then, we will part,
Ere this love grow stronger.

Nor is the *Amor Umbratilis* wanting, with its pathetic adoration of what the world has reserved for stronger hands:

Yea, for I cast you, sweet!
This one gift, you shall take:
Like ointment, on your unobservant feet,
My silence for your sake.

These are but hints to divine the secret of a soul I do not pretend to measure. Who shall untangle the threads of such a life, and say that this peace is born of faith's vision and this ecstasy is wrung from the body's defeat? Who shall declare how much of this personal anguish in the struggle is due to the tyranny of Catholic images and how much to troubled nerves? It is safer to hold fast to the simple assurance that, in spite of all questioning and far beneath all morbid accretions, if such there be, lay in this poet a fund of religious conviction, a real and incalculable power, springing from sources not bare to the world. Among his papers when he died was found this unfinished descant on the text of the Bible, "The Kingdom of God is within you":

O world invisible, we view thee,
O world intangible, we touch thee,
O world unknowable, we know thee,
Inapprehensible, we clutch thee!

Does the fish soar to find the ocean,
The eagle plunge to find the air—
That we ask of the stars in motion
If they have rumour of thee there?

Not where the wheeling systems darken,
And our benumbed conceiving soars!—
The drift of pinions, would we hearken,
Beats at our own clay-shuttered doors.

The angels keep their ancient places;—
Turn but a stone, and start a wing!
'T is ye, 't is your estrangèd faces,
That miss the many-splendoured thing.

But (when so sad thou canst not sadder)
Cry;—and upon thy so sore loss
Shall shine the traffic of Jacob's ladder
Pitched betwixt Heaven and Charing Cross.

Yea, in the night, my Soul, my daughter,
Cry,—clinging Heaven by the hems;
And lo, Christ walking on the water
Not of Genesareth, but Thames.

Belief in a present deity is not so common in these latter days that it can be ignored or belittled; it makes the substitute of human charity heard in many a Protestant pulpit seem in comparison like a poor hypocrisy. For so much we must thank the Catholic poet and his editors.

THE SOCIALISM OF G. LOWES DICKINSON

It chanced that two sociological books published in the spring of 1908 fell into my hands at the same time, Morris Hillquit's *Socialism in Theory and Practice* and G. Lowes Dickinson's *Justice and Liberty*;[1] and reading them together, I was led to ask myself how men of so diverse tempers could hold, or profess to hold, the same doctrine.

Mr. Hillquit, I saw, was at least consistent

[1] The order of Mr. Dickinson's publications will be found significant: *From King to King: The Tragedy of the Puritan Revolution* (1891); *Revolution and Reaction in Modern France* (1892); *The Development of Parliament during the Nineteenth Century* (1895); *The Greek View of Life* (1896); *The Meaning of Good: A Dialogue* (1901); *Letters from a Chinese Official: Being an Eastern View of Western Civilisation* (1901); *Religion: A Criticism and a Forecast* (1905); *A Modern Symposium* (1905); *Justice and Liberty* (1908). Since then, he has delivered at Harvard his Ingersoll lecture *Is Immortality Desirable?* afterwards printed in the *Atlantic Monthly* and in book form. The important development of his ideas begins with *The Greek View of Life*.

with himself; his reconstructed society of the future is a natural outgrowth from his attitude toward that of the present. Whether he really understands the present, and whether his reconstruction of the future is humanly possible, are, of course, other questions. Orthodox economy, in the person of the doughty M. Leroy-Beaulieu, contends that no communistic exploitation of labour would be sufficiently productive to maintain civilisation: the economists may decide. So, too, the psychologist alone can determine whether any equalised system of distribution would create among the individuals a condition of content capable of stability. The historian must say whether evolution from a slave-holding régime, through the dominance of the feudal baron and of the "captain of industry," points logically to a self-guiding society, or merely to another change of masters. And, finally, it remains for the moralist to ask whether a revolution based avowedly on class-hatred would not result in a grosser form of egotism, rather than in Mr. Hillquit's beatific vision of a "world-wide solidarity," and of a State in which "the question of right and wrong is entirely obviated, since no normal conduct of the individual can hurt society, and all acts of society must benefit the individual." These are brave matters, indeed, and whilst the debate goes on with words, and sometimes with blows, the mere man of letters

might do well to hug the wall and chant his "*Ailinon! ailinon!*—sing woe, sing woe, but may the Good prevail."

With Mr. Hillquit and the honourable economists of his type, I have no argument; they are out of my range. But Mr. Dickinson, who is himself really just a man of letters, however high he may stand in the craft, I am able to follow; and I seem to detect an inconsistency in his procedure, something more than a logical fault, which, if I am wrong, he may some day in his suave manner quite explain away. Meanwhile, I should have supposed that he belonged to the class rather of M. Anatole France than of Mr. Hillquit, with less of irony and more of moral earnestness, no doubt, than the disillusioned Parisian, but still moved at bottom by the same irritated refinement of taste. If that be so, his descent into the political maelstrom ought to have ended in some such *débâcle* of horror as closes M. France's *L'Ile des Pingouins;* wherein the reader is left with the spectacle of a civilisation crowded into a monstrous city, evidently suggested by New York, alternating with a state of barbarism into which it is periodically thrown by a socialistic insurrection, and from which it slowly emerges to the same hideous nightmare of commercialism. To be sure, M. France has himself sat on the *pierre blanche*, dreaming the dream of a regenerated world, and it may be that Mr.

Dickinson will yet take the same step from fancy to despair. But for the present his profession of faith, as it may be read in *Justice and Liberty*, closes with an avowed adherence to that party of progressive materialism from whose temperament his own would seem to be of all temperaments the furthest removed.

In one respect, no doubt, Mr. Dickinson stands with the more practical socialists, in so far as he, like them, is exercised by a profound discontent with the present social order. That deep-seated feeling underlies all his discussions, rising at the last in *Justice and Liberty* to a clamorous outcry against a society which is "a silly, sordid muddle, grown up out of centuries of violence and perpetuated in centuries of stupidity and greed," but expressed more bitingly, if more judiciously, in the earlier *Letters*, wherein an imaginary follower of Confucius sets forth the lack of an ethical basis in Western civilisation, its absolute divorce between religion and practice, its inherent and suicidal unrest, its vain endeavour to accomplish through governmental meddling what in China springs naturally from the institution of the family. "Your triumphs in the mechanical arts," observes this bland Oriental, "are the obverse of your failure in all that calls for spiritual insight. . . . Ratiocination has taken the place of perception; and your whole life is an infinite syllogism from premises you have not

examined to conclusions you have not anticipated or willed. Everywhere means, nowhere an end! Society a huge engine, and that engine itself out of gear!"

No practical socialist could express a more complete animosity toward existing conditions than does this scholar of Cambridge; but the grounds of their discontent are utterly different, and it is precisely in this difference that I see the difficulty of associating Mr. Dickinson in any peaceful bond with such writers as Mr. Hillquit —to take the latest comer. These writers, it is clear, have no part in the regret for the past, such as troubles the imagination of the poet and scholar; rather they are of those who reach out passionate, protesting hands to make, as Mr. Dickinson says, "a cupidinous ravishment of the future." Their quarrel with present ills is not because time affords so small a recompense for all it takes away, but because it withholds so grudgingly its promise of good. The tendency of things is to them altogether right; only by persuasion or violence they would hasten its course. Starting with a thorough acceptance of the *grande industrie* as it now rules society, they aim only to carry this law to what they regard as its scientific conclusion. They are no recalcitrants against "the proud magnificence of trade." On the contrary, they are merely a part of the larger tendency, which for a century

and more has been gaining visibly in acceleration, to glorify industry, commerce, labour, as things desirable in themselves and inevitable to progress. Their old testament is Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, from which individualist and collectivist alike take origin; and their Messiah is Karl Marx, with whom they agree in this, if in nothing else, that the dominating forces of the world are material, that the changing social order with its creeds and professions is entirely the result of economic forces, that productive labour is the sole economic measure of values, and that the irresistible movement of civilisation is toward the collective control of production.[1] They can point to philosophers and grave historians as authority for their faith in the cash nexus—to Guglielmo Ferrero, to cite the scholar we are all reading these days, who accounts for the Roman conquest of the world by "the growth of a nationalist and industrial democracy on the ruins of a federation of agricultural aristocracies."

Now, the faith of these men in industrial evolution I can understand; it accords with certain fundamental traits of character which

[1] I am perfectly aware that socialists are all things against all men, and will at a pinch slip from socialism to anarchism, or from materialism to idealism, in a quite bewildering manner. But I believe that my thesis represents their most continuous argument.

they otherwise display. But with the type of writers of which Mr. Dickinson is so eminent an example it is another matter. It may be a fault of interpretation, but as I read his books, even his profession of socialism, I involuntarily class him with the long line of philosophers who have averted their eyes from industry as from a degrading influence. To them the power that raises individuals and communities has been rather that *honestum* which Cicero defined as something laudable in itself, apart from all utility and without thought of reward or fruit. They are of the line of the witty Lord Halifax, who thought that "when by habit a man cometh to have a bargaining soul, its wings are cut, so that it can never soar"; of that clerk of the India House, honest Elia, who called upon earthquakes to swallow up the " 'gripple merchants,' as Drayton hath it, 'born to be the curse of this brave isle' "; of that anarchical vagabond, if the comparison may be offered without offence, who tramped about Concord and who in his *Journal* wrote down business as more opposed than crime to poetry, and as "a negation of life"; of the gravely ironical Cardinal Newman, who rebuked the political economists for their theory "that the pursuit of wealth, that is, the endeavour to accumulate the means of future subsistence and enjoyment, is, to the mass of mankind, the great source of *moral* im-

provement." In a word, for examples might be heaped up without end, they are by temperament inclined to believe that any true advance from an industrial stage of society must be through some force working contrary to the principle of industrialism and not within it. Whether, I repeat, their disposition is in harmony with the nature of things, is another question; I am concerned with their self-consistency.

This is no fanciful opposition of classes, nor does it spring from any mere theoretical disagreement. I will not presume to say that I have tracked the dividing cause to its last secret lair; he who could do that would possess such a clue to the divergent ramifications of human character as no man has ever yet held in his hand. But it is plain to see that with this opposition goes the contrast of temperaments which we call loosely democratic and aristocratic, and which are perhaps more precisely defined by the dislike or like of *distinction*. Not labour itself, the *labor improbus* of the poet, makes the difference, for the true aristocrat, whether in politics or the arts, has often been addicted to the severest toil. It is expressed rather in the phrase labour-value. Adam Smith marked the point of divergence in his famous text: "Labour alone, therefore, never varying in its own value, is alone the ultimate and real standard by which the value of all commodities can at all times and

places be estimated and compared." He himself, to be sure, has adverted in passing to the public admiration which makes part of the reward of the arts and sciences, and, indeed, some orthodox socialists have not, in theory, denied this principle. As in all human divisions, the question is one of emphasis; it is the stress laid on labour-value that separates the socialist from the school to which Mr. Dickinson should seem to belong. For distinction is precisely that quality in man or object which is incommensurable by labour; it is, to wrest a word from the vocabulary of the enemy, the true plus-value.

On that estimation and reverence which has no basis in labour-value, which goes with the concealment of labour or at least with the suppression of labour-value, hangs the whole aristocratic ideal. This theory is set forth unmistakably in Castiglione's portrait of the gentleman whose distinguishing trait is a grace arising from a certain *sprezzatura* or disdain of apparent toil. It is elaborated with endless repetition in the letters of Lord Chesterfield to his son, with their insistence on the *Suaviter in modo, fortiter in re*, and on the necessity of hiding a strenuous application under the arts and graces of life. Mr. Dickinson himself, in his *Modern Symposium*, has somewhat grudgingly set forth, and in *Justice and Liberty* has carica-

tured, a society whose tone and march are given by those who are pre-eminent from no personal achievement, but from the deference bestowed on rank and possessions achieved in the past. The justification of such a society, if justification there be, is in the value of a distinction created or maintained by the imagination. The aristocratic theory presupposes that the ideal of a family set apart by a certain illusion, if you please, of the people for the higher ends of life will, imperfectly no doubt, work itself out in a practice of honour and beauty and wise control on the part of the family itself, and in a maintenance in society at large of values which have no relation to production. It believes that the concealment of labour in an inherited name may have this power of the imagination, and that in the long run and in general the artificial distinction of rank has fostered the true distinction of character. It hopes that, as the aristocracy of artificial distinctions passes away, there may arise an aristocracy of true distinctions. The democratic theory, which depends on a labour-value common to all men, abhors the artificial distinction as unjust, and would eliminate the true distinction as a power that escapes its control.

The difference is even more evident in another field of the imagination. The common distrust of socialism among those who really cherish

literature and the arts is soundly based; and socialists, in replying to that distrust, have fallen into the vaguest generalisations, or have frankly avowed that no scheme of socialising this form of production without destroying its inspiration has yet been devised. "The domain of the arts is to-day practically the last resting-place of the 'superman,' " says our helpful friend, Mr. Hillquit: rightly as regards the implied attitude of his class; quite wrongly in so far as he affiliates the true distinction with a Nietzschean individualism rather than with a community of the imagination, giving and taking honour, which is the very opposite of a material or economic collectivism. There was something more than grim humour in the remark of a socialist made in my hearing: "We must first kill the poets!" He meant to say that labour in itself affords no measure for valuing the production of the artist, as the tragedy and honour of artists' lives too openly show. Sir Joshua Reynolds, in his wise *Discourses*, has seen the force of this law. "The value and rank," he says, "of every art is in proportion to the mental labour employed in it, or the mental pleasure produced by it. As this principle is observed or neglected, our profession becomes either a liberal art or a mechanical trade." That might seem to play into the hands of the economist, but as a matter of fact Sir Joshua by

"mental labour" understood the very opposite of a quantitative and measurable effort. "The great end of the art," he adds, "is to strike the imagination. The painter, therefore, is to make no ostentation of the means by which this is done; the spectator is only to feel the result in his bosom. An inferior artist is unwilling that any part of his industry should be lost upon the spectator." Not the picture or the poem that has cost the greatest toil is most highly prized and rewarded; and indeed the manifestation of toil, however much may have been expended, is directly harmful to the artistic impression. The value depends on the innate sense of distinction, or on the bastard sister of distinction which we call rarity. Industrialism is entirely consistent with itself in harbouring a secret or avowed contempt for those works of the imagination which escape its means of estimation; just as a democracy is inherently jealous of distinction of manners.

If I do Mr. Dickinson a wrong in placing him, a professed socialist, in the class of those naturally opposed to socialism, it will be because I misjudge his writings. I find in these, to begin with, a distinction of mere language, a style marked by a rare delicacy of phrase and cadence, even verging at times on a too refined self-consciousness. To pass, for instance, from Mr. Hillquit's pages to this Cambridge don's is

like changing from homespun, very good homespun in this case, to an attire of silk. His language is shot through with imaginative, above its utilitarian values.

And the ideas from which he starts are in accordance with his style. If you will open his early volume on *The Greek View of Life*, you will discover where his heart really lies. "With the Greek civilisation, beauty perished from the world," he says; and although he admits sadly that the dissolution of that harmonious life was inevitable, yet he cannot avoid gazing back upon it regretfully, as upon the "fairest and happiest halting-place in the secular march of men." One observes, too, almost a secret satisfaction in his allusions to the Platonic and Aristotelian theory of mechanical toil as derogatory to the status of a citizen. "To regard the 'working-class,' " he says,—and his statement cannot be dissevered from his praise of the Greek State as the fairest memory and the highest hope of mankind,—"to regard the 'working-class' as the most important section of the community, to substitute for the moral or political the economic standpoint, and to conceive society merely as a machine for the production and distribution of wealth, would have been impossible to an ancient Greek."

Temperamentally, it is evident, Mr. Dickinson is with the Greeks. The tragedy of his evolution

—if tragedy be not too harsh a word—springs from his wistful admiration of that fair Hellenic harmony joined with a sense that it rested on ephemeral foundations. Excellence in Greece, he thinks with some exaggeration of the fact, was confined to a select circle and demanded the subordination of the many to the few:

> But this limitation was felt, in the development of consciousness, to be self-contradictory; and the next great system of ethics that succeeded to that of Aristotle, postulated an end of action that should be . . . open alike to all classes of mankind. The ethics of a privileged class were thus expanded into the ethics of humanity; but this expansion was fatal to its essence, which had depended on the very limitations by which it was destroyed.

The aim of philosophy, then, is to discover some practice, or theory leading to practice, which may bring back to the world that vanished grace, while not circumscribing its benefits; in a word, to reconcile individual excellence with absolute justice. But, first of all, we must clear our minds as to what is the real goal and desire of humanity, about which the idea of justice plays; and to that end moves the discussion of *The Meaning of Good*, a subtle and somewhat perplexed dialogue after the manner of Cicero's *De Finibus*. Fortunately for the reader, to this long pursuit of the *summum bonum*, which like a will o' the wisp flickers now here, now there, over a vast illusory field, the author has pre-

fixed a careful analysis of his argument. The negative and unphilosophical aspects of the question are first considered, and reasons are given for rejecting, on the one side, the opinion that our ideas about the Good have no relation to fact, and, on the other side, the opinion that we have such easy and simple criteria of the Good as infallible instinct or the course of Nature or current conventions or pleasure. Some deeper experience of the heart must be discovered than these, some foundation in that conscious activity which is of the individual and yet pertains to the whole. It cannot be merely the good of future generations, for to be real it must be present. It cannot be merely the scientific notion of the benefit of the species, for this introduces an incompatibility between the one and the many, leaving the Good to hang, as it were, in the air, being the good of nobody at all. And so we are led by subtlest interrogatories to detect the inadequacy of theory after theory:— that all activities are good, and that what seems bad in each, viewed in isolation, is seen to be good in a general survey of them all; that the Good consists in ethical activity, in art, in knowledge. Finally, we are left to the hypothesis that the Good must abide in our relation to other persons, and is nothing other than *love*. Here we have set before us, as the end of our conscious activity, not ideas, but objects,—

objects which are good in themselves and harmonious to our own nature, and are alone really intelligible. Such love, indeed, to satisfy our innate craving must be more perfect than that which is possible to our present flawed existence, and must have an eternal endurance. Unless the soul as we know it is immortal, and love itself a perpetual possession beyond the bars of time, then are we baffled and abandoned of our aspirations; there is no Good, but only illusion and hope.

Such is the Christian ideal which superseded the decay of the ancient world; it is religious, in the narrower sense of looking to a future recompense for present imperfections and of demanding a relation of separate personalities, in contrast to the philosophy of Greece, which was immediate and impersonal. But what if we have no assurance of this recompense? To this doubt Mr. Dickinson applies himself in the next stage of his investigation, *Religion: a Criticism and a Forecast.* Our belief in revelation he admits to have been remorselessly exploded; supernatural knowledge of no sort can we have. There remains to us faith:

> When I speak here of faith, I speak of an attitude which is not primarily intellectual at all, and which is quite compatible with—nay, which depends upon—intellectual agnosticism; for it presupposes that, in the region to which it applies, we do not know. The attitude I would de-

scribe is one of the emotions and the will—the laying hold, in the midst of ignorance, of a possibility that may be true, and directing our feeling and our conduct in accordance with it. In its broadest sense, I would say it is an emotional and volitional assumption that, somehow or other, in spite of appearances, things are all right. . . . Faith should stand always with the dagger of science pointed at its breast. It need not fear. It has its resurrections. . . . The frailest thing we know, it is also the least perishable, for it is a tongue of the central fire that burns at the heart of the world.

We have, thus, on the one hand, our present unlovely civilisation, as it seems to Mr. Dickinson, in which humanity has grown to a perception of this faith whose substance is the perfectibility of love; and, contrasted with it, the lost harmony of life actually attained by some men under the pagan dispensation. The next step was to see that the salvation of society depends on the union of this newly learned *summum bonum* with the reality of beauty; on the amalgamation, that is, of the Christian and the Hellenic ideals. Such a reconciliation Mr. Dickinson points to, in what is, to my judgment, the most perfectly composed of all his books, *A Modern Symposium*. Here, with a dramatic skill that deserts him in none of his dialogues, and with an added sense of fair play that he sometimes forgets, he allows the upholders of various theories of government to set forth their views in a series of marvellously sympathetic

speeches. At the end, after Tory and Liberal, Socialist and Anarchist, and all the others, have exposed the evils of society and offered their remedies, the word is taken up by Geoffry Vivian, a man of letters, in whom it is not hard to recognise the author himself:

> Of which the chief [evil] is Property, most cruel and blind of all, who devours us, ere we know it, in the guise of Security and Peace, killing the bodies of some, the souls of most, and growing ever fresh from the root, in forms that but seem to be new, until the root itself be cut away by the sword of the spirit. What that sword shall be called, socialism, anarchy, what you will, is small matter, so but the hand that wields it be strong, the brain clear, the soul illumined, passionate, and profound. . . .
>
> Therefore, the gods [of Greece] are eternal; not they die, but we, when we think them dead. And no man who does not know them, and knowing, worship and love, is able to be a member of the body of Man. Thus it is that the sign of a step forward is a look backward; and Greece stands eternally at the threshold of the new life. Forget her, and you sink back, if not to the brute, to the insect. Consider the ant, and beware of her! She is there as a warning. In universal Anthood there are no ants. From that fate may men save Man!
>
> But the pagan gods were pitiless; they preyed upon the weak. Their wisdom was rooted in folly, their beauty in squalor, their love in oppression. So fostered, those flowers decayed. And out of the rotting soil rose the strange new blossoms we call Faith, and Hope, and Charity. . . . That was the Christian Trinity, the echo of man's frustration, as the other was the echo of his accomplishment. Yet he needs both.

I have quoted at length, because in this confession of the man of letters I seem to come closer than anywhere else to Mr. Dickinson's real habit of thinking. In that angry revolt from a form of civilisation dominated by the cruel and ugly laws of property, in the passionate desire of noble self-development symbolised to him by Hellas, in the longing backward glance toward a grace of the vanished past, in the feeling that somehow, in some far-away Advent, this self-development may be wedded with universal charity,—in all this I see the inspiration that is drawing many troubled minds to these preciously wrought dialogues. Nor is it the least significant part of his manifesto at this stage that the promise of redemption is left so vague and emotional. Socialism or anarchy —either will do, so that it wields the dividing and healing sword of the spirit. Only it is clear that the idea of socialism fills him with a certain apprehension, in so far as such a régime threatens to absorb the individual in the mass and to reduce mankind to the level monotony of the ants and bees. And, in fact, of the speeches that precede this closing confession of the man of letters, the most persuasive, the one that seems to flow most warmly from the author's own breast, is that of the anarchist.

To the reader of Mr. Dickinson's successive volumes it must therefore have appeared as a

kind of tergiversation when, in his next book, he ranged himself frankly with the socialists. No doubt it would be possible to discover in his earlier works signs that pointed in this direction as in other directions, but, unless I have misread his meaning, there is a real inconsistency in the step from the *Symposium* to *Justice and Liberty*. I am confirmed in this view by the actual picture of the State he draws in prophecy. To be sure, the theorems of the party are not blinked. "Property is theft," he says with Proudhon; with the socialists he makes no sharp distinction between the slow evolutionary alteration of human character, if such there be, and the quick change, under the influence of new institutions, in the outward manifestation of unchanged nature; he believes that, in a government planned for the equal good of all, all will be content, and the desire to exceed will cease; he predicts prettily a time when various occupations will not create various interests, and the dock-labourer, the carpenter, the professor, and the financier will lie down in peace together; yet withal, like other socialists, he feels the difficulty of according an artificial scheme of distribution with any conceivable stage of human nature, and for a solution gropes in the ways of a dark psychology. In all this, he is at one with his professed creed.

But there are signs of uneasiness. He himself

is aware, or so appears to be, of the different route by which he has travelled to this golden land. Class-hatred, which has been the slogan of the party, and which forms not only its political driving force but its principle of solidarity,—as nothing so unites men as a common object of fear or envy,—he openly repudiates. Moreover he would base his hopes of evolution on the illusory power of the imagination rather than on a mechanically and irresistibly working economic law. "Where it [socialism] errs," he thinks, "is in the attempt—in a reaction against utopianism—to eliminate altogether the appeal of the Ideal, and to imagine the industrial forces of themselves, independently of human choice, delivering from the womb of the class-war a babe of fraternity and peace." There is only one thing to say to such a statement as this, that it is a flat contradiction of what, to the orthodox socialist, makes of his hope a scientific fact. It is a confusion of the communism which depends on the reciprocal service of the imagination with the communism which knows only labour-values.

And when, ignoring the lip homage of Mr. Dickinson, we examine his proposed State, it turns out to be equally removed from the outgrowth of socialistic evolution. This amiable society, which is to "preserve the utmost liberty compatible with the necessary regulation," wherein men wander about from occupa-

tion to occupation as whim or desire moves them; this republic of flowers, like the world evoked by William Morris's undisciplined fancy, is at bottom a dream of anarchy; it lies, if the word may be spoken without offence, in that happy heaven of Heine's where roast geese fly about with sauce spoons conveniently held in their beaks. With the true socialist Mr. Dickinson has only one thing in common,—the feeling of supreme discontent. And I confess that sometimes the thought of this discontent, gnawing at the very heart of our civilisation, strikes me with a kind of vague terror, as if I had strayed into a land swept by armies clashing ignorantly in the night, or had fallen into some dream of the streets of Troy where friend and foe surged together under the same standards. This is no slight current that sucks into its vortex minds so diverse as Mr. Dickinson's and Mr. Hillquit's; it is a terrible rebuke to those canting optimists who cry, "All 's right with the world," a warning to those who sit supinely at their ease.

In one sense, as Mr. Dickinson avers, the strength of the movement is "the weakness of the ruling class, the skepticism of the rich and the powerful, the slow, half-conscious detachment of all of them who have intelligence and moral force from the interest and the active support of their class." It is true that many of "those who deny socialism are most under its

power; their hollow cries of rage and desperation, their intellectual play with the idea of force, betray their bitter sense of a lost cause." And such a state of affairs may contain an element of comfort, in so far as the gradual defection of these men to socialism means the broadening of its policy and the impossibility of any attempt to carry out the narrower industrial programme. But it contains also a cause of alarm in so far as it betrays so wide-spread an unsettlement of ideals; and threatens, if unstayed, to create a period of sheer chaos. Meanwhile, until assured that they have not been dragged by their emotions into the camp of their natural enemies, the more idealistic malcontents, of whom Mr. Dickinson is a type,—their number is increasing with amazing rapidity,—should put a guard upon their words, and should consider how dangerous a thing it is

> . . . spargere voces
> In vulgum ambiguas.

He needs be a more cunning physician of souls than I, who will offer a remedy for so insidious a malady; my purpose has been simply to call attention to a curious inconsistency in a certain class of radicals. Yet, withal, it seems to me that I can at least lay my finger on the point where the lesion occurs. To Mr. Dickinson, as we have seen, socialism is no necessity of evolu-

tion, but the voluntary reaching of men toward their highest ideal. Well, I would make bold to say, after following his course step by step, that his acceptance of socialism is due to a condition, or diathesis, of uneasy idealism, if my meaning is plain, without a definite ideal—*quærebam quid amarem, amans amare.*

It is at bottom a religious question. This faith which is an emotional and volitional assumption, contrary to experience, that things are all right, this faith which stands so tragically with the dagger of science at its breast,—what is it, in simple English, but the longing regret for an ideal that has perished? And this finding of the supreme Good in the love of man for man, what is it but the absence from view of any definite goal, the praise of action for the sake of activity without any ultimate purpose? For love, unless it be a mere selfish indulgence of egotism, must desire the good of the beloved, and still leaves the nature of this good itself to be determined. To lengthen the period of love by continuing it through an eternity of personal duration is only to set the difficulty at a distance, not to rise above it. And, indeed, Mr. Dickinson's Ingersoll lecture, in which he discourses on the immortality of the soul as a thing probably true and certainly desirable, leaves with one the uncomfortable feeling of a spiritual void. When I read his concluding appeal to await the dis-

coveries of the Society of Psychical Research for our certainty of religion, I was reminded—it may be, unjustly—of Emerson's scorn of that itching curiosity to peep in at the back door of nature. Is religion to be a servant to the evidence obtained from trances and mediums and the mumbling of ghosts? Rather, must not a faith that is effective in human life be the immediate experience in the heart itself of some infinite reality which gives a meaning and a centre to all our acts? It is because such religious groping is an emotional and volitional assumption without knowledge, a state of idealism without definite ideal, that the mind, deprived of certain guidance, falls a prey to the dominant party of discontent, and we behold the disconcerting spectacle of idealist and materialist fighting in the same ranks.

How great a service Mr. Dickinson might perform if, instead of adding to the confusion of standards, he would turn his subtle intellect to discovering, and his eloquent pen to describing, the true Good that many desire and some to-day seek and cannot find! Then indeed we might follow him in his adventure of social reform, with the assurance of true progress; it would not be into socialism.

THE PRAGMATISM OF WILLIAM JAMES

It is one of the difficulties of coping with a philosophy of the flux, that no sooner have you come to grips with it than it flows into another form and eludes your grasp. To read the bold frontal attacks of Messrs. Schinz and Pratt[1] and then to find that the adversary in a simultaneous publication[2] has already slipped to one side, is to recall the Homeric wrestling match with the wily old man of the sea. No doubt he is Proteus still, and the contest is with the same foe, but the weapons must be changed and the grip altered.

[1] *Pragmatism—A New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking.* By William James. New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1907.

Anti-Pragmatisme. Par Albert Schinz, Professeur à l'Université de Bryn Mawr. Paris: Félix Alcan, 1909.

What is Pragmatism? By James Bissett Pratt, Assistant Professor of Philosophy in Williams College. New York: The Macmillan Co., 1909.

[2] *A Pluralistic Universe:* Hibbert Lectures at Manchester College on the Present Situation in Philosophy. By William James. New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1909.

The chief concern of Professor Schinz is to lay bare the social *milieu* out of which Pragmatism has grown, and his conclusions touch the problem of democracy and aristocracy. Professor Pratt is concerned more with the religious outcome of the movement than with its social meaning. The new philosophy is to him only a part of the scientific tendency of thought which, in the words of a distinguished biologist, describes the Moral Imperative as a "psychic correlate of a reflective, cerebro-spinal, ideo-motor process, the efferent end of which is organised into motor tracts coördinated for a specific action." Whereupon Mr. Pratt remarks gravely that this method "has pressed its splendidly useful and illuminating formulæ too far, it has attempted to simplify too much, and in doing so it has become somewhat narrow, somewhat blind, and somewhat unempirical." And he adds: "To my thinking, the pendulum has now swung too far in the anti-intellectualistic direction." Both writers make easy work with the equivocations of Mr. James's preceding book on *Pragmatism*. And indeed it needs no profound study to see the weak joints in a logic which would determine the inmost nature of things by what we regard as pragmatically useful in our own lives, and would find the limits of truth in what we think it expedient to believe.

There is something like the hilarity of sport

in dragging out the inconsistencies, if not insincerities, of a philosopher who has tried to defend rationally a system which is professedly an attack on rationalism. For just that, and nothing more, is Pragmatism. It is easy to show that such a philosopher ought, so far as the correspondence of logic and reality goes, to be a complete skeptic. Well and good. But what will you do if, before the ink is fairly dry on your book, this Proteus of the lecture hall is before the world with a recantation of his errors and a frank retreat to just such logical skepticism as you denounced him for not confessing. In one sense, Professor James's Hibbert Lectures are consistent with his past; they are in the right line of development from that temperamental impetus which by his own theory is the source of every philosophy, however he may have sloughed off various inconsistencies to attain this position. As a matter of fact, the word Pragmatism scarcely occurs in these lectures, and the attempt at their end to tack on a theory of creating, or even discovering, truth by the "practical reason" is purely perfunctory. Their central point, their crisis, so to speak, is the magnificent repudiation of the whole process of metaphysics:

> I saw [he says] that philosophy had been on a false scent ever since the days of Socrates and Plato, that an *intellectual* answer to the intellectualist's difficulties will never come, and that the real way out of them, far from consisting in

the discovery of such an answer, consists in simply closing one's ears to the question. When conceptualism summons life to justify itself in conceptual terms, it is like a challenge addressed in a foreign language to some one who is absorbed in his own business; it is irrelevant to him altogether—he may let it lie unnoticed. I went thus through the "inner catastrophe"; . . . I had literally come to the end of my conceptual stock-in-trade, I was bankrupt intellectualistically, and had to change my base.

To such an inner catastrophe, not unlike one of the conversions he has described so luminously in his *Varieties of Religious Experience*, he was brought after long struggling with the problem of reason and after covering hundreds of sheets of paper with memoranda of his self-questioning. As the worldling under the stroke of heaven forswears the world, so now he is "compelled to *give up logic*, fairly, squarely, and irrevocably." The apostle to him in this agony was the young sage of Paris, Henri Bergson, to whom many others, indeed, in these times of perplexity are turning inquisitive eyes, and to whom Mr. James devotes one of the most brilliant of his lectures. To that lecture itself, or to G. H. Luquet's *Idées générales de psychologie*, the questioner must be referred who hesitates to plunge into M. Bergson's own uncoördinated works.[1] Mr. James

[1] One may question, nevertheless, whether Mr. James has actually found in M. Bergson's writings just what he reports. It is a trait of Mr. James's generosity to attribute to others his own spontaneous ideas.

centres his exposition about the hoary and awful paradox which sets Achilles forever approaching and never overtaking a tortoise, since by the time he reaches the tortoise's first starting-point, the tortoise has already got beyond that starting-point to another, and so on *ad infinitum*, the interval between the two being endlessly subdivided but never obliterated—just as ½ plus ¼ plus ⅛ may be prolonged into an infinite series without equalling unity. The solution, which Mr. James reports from M. Bergson, is a statement of the absolute divorce between reason and sensuous experience; the former is discrete, the latter is concrete and continuous. To analyse actual experience into the terms of the intellect is simply to use words without meaning:

> You cannot explain [by abstract concepts] what makes any single phenomenon be or go—you merely dot out the path of appearances which it traverses. For you cannot make continuous being out of discontinuities, and your concepts are discontinuous. The stages into which you analyse a change are *states*, the change itself goes on between them. It lies along their intervals, inhabits what your definition fails to gather up, and thus eludes conceptual explanation altogether.

With this sling of metaphysical negation he attacks Mr. Bradley, the champion of monism, or abstract idealism, or pantheism, or whatever you choose to call it; and, believe me, he makes good sport with the doughty Goliath of Oxford.

I confess that to me monism has always been merely another word for monomania, and I have followed Mr. James's sallies into the madhouse with a kind of gay amusement. The attempt to catch and hold the universe in a syllogism, denying thereby all our concrete experience, all our sense of multiplicity and change, all our knowledge of evil, denying life itself for an abstract unity of the reason, has been one of the tyrannous obsessions of metaphysics. Common-sense might protest against monism as a madness, but common-sense is apt to shrivel away under the frown of a supercilious Reason, and Reason declares there shall be no contradiction in the sum of our experiences. The only escape is to deny the validity of reason itself as the sole criterion of reality. To this liberation Mr. James has been guided, or has at least been confirmed therein, by the new luminary of Paris, and now proclaims his gratitude. His protest against the whole school of German intellectualism will find an exultant echo in many labouring breasts. It is in a very literal sense the "psychological moment" for such an authoritative utterance as this:

> The English mind, thank heaven, and the French mind, are still kept, by their aversion to crude technique and barbarism, closer to truth's natural probabilities. Their literatures show fewer obvious falsities and monstrosities than that of Germany. Think of the German literature

of æsthetics, with the preposterousness of such an unæsthetic personage as Immanuel Kant enthroned in its centre! Think of German books on *Religionsphilosophie*, with the heart's battles translated into conceptual jargon and made dialectic.

Macte virtute! we cry, and toss hats into the air. There is no hope in Kant, neither in his followers nor in his metaphysical enemies; for, as Mr. James rightly asserts, both wings of modern philosophy rest on intellectualist logic, "the absolutists smashing the world of sense by its means, the empiricists smashing the absolute—for the absolute, they say, is the quintessence of all logical contradictions. . . . Neither impugns in principle its general theoretic authority." I, for one, am ready to follow any leader out of the Egypt of Kantian metaphysics, and I would not belittle the honour due to M. Bergson and to Mr. James as the Moses and the Aaron of this exodus. Yet a word of demur must be entered against so extreme a statement as that "rationalism has never [before] been seriously questioned, . . . and Bergson alone has been radical." Such an avowal rouses the suspicion that Mr. James himself has not really looked beyond the circle drawn by the wizard of Königsberg: that he too stands entranced in the illusion of the present. Sometimes as I consider with myself how this illusion daily more and more enthralls and impoverishes our mental life by cutting off from it all the rich

experience of the past, it is as though we were at sea in a vessel, while a fog was settling upon the water, gradually, as it thickened, closing in upon our vision with ever narrower circle, blotting out the far-flashing lights of the horizon and the depths of the sky, throwing a pall upon the very waves about us, until we move forward through a sullen obscurity, unaware of any other traveller upon that sea, save when through the fog the sound of a threatening alarm beats upon the ear. Mr. James, who has pondered so well Bergson's analysis of the individual consciousness as a summing up of all the past, should have seen the application of the same definition to the general consciousness of mankind. He should have seen that Bergson's rejection of reason as the arbiter of reality was no new thing, but the old insight re-defined in the terms of modern psychology. Had he been more completely freed from the vicious circle of the present, he would have known that in denouncing Platonism as the type and source of rationalistic metaphysics, he had in mind not the Greek Plato, but a Plato viewed through Teutonic spectacles. The doctrine of reminiscence, and indeed of ideas themselves if properly understood, should have taught him that Plato's instrument of truth was an intuition far closer to the facts of experience than is any canon of discrete logic, and at one with the faculty of religious insight wherever and when-

ever this is found. The Neo-Platonists developed this method—while denuding it of vitality, making it "thin," as Mr. James would say—in their distinction between intelligence (νοῦς) and the non-intelligible One or the First Good. Henry More, in his tantalising obscure rhymes, sought to unite this higher skepticism with Christian theology, as, for instance, in his *Life of the Soul* (ii., 98):

How then, said Graco, is the spirit known
If not by reason? To this I replied,
Only the spirit can the spirit own.
But this, said he, is back again to slide
And in an idle Circle round to ride.
Why so, said I, is not light seen by light?
Straight Graculo did skilfully divide
All knowledge into sense and reason right.
Be 't so, said I, Don Graco, what 's this reason's might?

If then, said he, the spirit may not be
Right reason, surely we must deem it sense.
Yes, sense it is, this was my short reply.

And Pascal meant the same thing when he declared that "there is nothing so conformable to reason as this disavowal of reason," and that "the heart has its reasons, which the reason does not know." To this extent the insight of faith is in agreement with the common-sense of the street, in so far as to both the meaning of the world is given by immediate experience rather than by any metaphysical system; and they are both in

agreement with the complete skeptic in so far as they all hold their judgment in a state of suspension (ἐποχή)[1] toward the pretensions of reason to act as the final arbiter of reality: "The truth is Pyrrhonism," said Pascal. In this contrast to rationalism, saint and man of the world and skeptic are at one; they diverge on other lines. It has seemed worth while to point, in passing, to this kinship of Bergson's negative super-rationalism with the constant attitude of faith,[2] because the aspect of Mr. James's work which most deserves censure is the encouragement afforded therein to the particular vanity of our age—a smart contemporaneity. He should have pondered the scope of his own pregnant sentence: "If we do not feel both past and present in one field of feeling, we feel them not at all."

With this reserve, we may regard the call

[1] "It shall well befit our Christian modesty," says the ever memorable Mr. John Hales in one of his sermons, "to participate somewhat of the Skeptic, and to use their ἐπέχειν till the ὑστέρημα and remainder of our knowledge be supplied by Christ." It would perhaps introduce more of philosophical modesty into the language of our modern metaphysicians if they reflected oftener on the hoary antiquity of their debates.

[2] It should be added that in the positive side of his philosophy M. Bergson, if I understand him, is as far removed as is Mr. James from the constant attitude of faith. For intellectualism they would both substitute the lower infra-rational instincts, whereas faith depends upon the super-rational instincts.

from metaphysics to a philosophy of immediate experience as altogether wholesome. Abstract reason is not in its own field a false thing, nor is it without indispensable usefulness in the application of experience to life; nevertheless, not through it shall we come into intimate touch with reality, but through life itself; the truth for us is not what we have defined logically, but what we actually feel and will. It does not follow, however, that in accepting heartily this method we must equally accept Mr. James's statement of the relative values of what he reports as obtained by the method; we may even suspect that in his evaluation he is still imprisoned in the very error from which he is so eager to save us. Consciousness, he says, is not discrete, or divided into discontinuous moments, as it is presented to us by the reason, but is continuous; nor has it any conformity with the static void of monism. Time and change are of its essence, and if we wish to *know* reality we must "dive back into the flux itself." His cry is like the command of Faust to leave the musty cell and throw one's self into the stream of the world —*Hinaus ins Freie!* There is grave irony as well as stirring exhortation in Mr. James's personal appeal to his audience:

> If Oxford men could be ignorant of anything, it might almost seem that they had remained ignorant of the great empirical movement towards a pluralistic panpsychic view

of the universe, into which our own generation has been drawn, and which threatens to short-circuit their methods [of monistic dogmatism] entirely and become their religious rival unless they are willing to make themselves its allies. Yet wedded as they seem to be to the logical machinery and technical apparatus of absolutism, I cannot but believe that their fidelity to the religious ideal in general is deeper still. . . . Let empiricism once become associated with religion, as hitherto, through some strange misunderstanding, it has been associated with irreligion, and I believe that a new era of religion as well as of philosophy will be ready to begin. That great awakening of a new popular interest in philosophy, which is so striking a phenomenon at the present day in all countries, is undoubtedly due in part to religious demands.

A pluralistic panpsychic view of the universe —that is to say: as our only knowledge is experience and our experience is an inner consciousness flowing with ceaseless change about endlessly differing sensations presented to it from without, so the truth of the world for us is not monism, but pluralism. We are *du réel dans le réel;* but this reality is an infinite group of interacting interpenetrating forces, over which no absolute law can be found to govern. And as these forces, like our states of consciousness, are in a constant mutation, so, like ourselves, they may very well be, in part at least, other streams of consciousness, meeting and embracing and repelling one another. How else, indeed, can they have any meaning or reality to us? The universe may thus be panpsychic, and one of the most interesting of Mr. James's lectures is a revival of Fech-

ner's animism, with his vision of the world-soul enveloping and nourishing the souls of men. For the proof of such a theory Mr. James goes to what he deems the facts of experience:

> In a word, the believer is continuous, to his own consciousness, at any rate, with a wider self from which saving experiences flow in. Those who have such experiences distinctly enough and often enough to live in the light of them remain quite unmoved by criticism, from whatever quarter it may come, be it academic or scientific, or be it merely the voice of logical common-sense. They have had their vision and they *know*—that is enough—that we inhabit an invisible spiritual environment from which help comes, our soul being mysteriously one with a larger soul whose instruments we are.

By such steps the pragmatist, now rather choosing to be called the radical empiricist, arrives at the belief in a deity, who is by no means the static timeless absolute of the monist, with its foreignness from all things human, but a mighty God above other gods, "having an environment, being in time, and working out a history just like ourselves."

It is a seductive theory and has at least that quality of "thickness" which Mr. James, with his genius for phrase-making, contrasts with the "thinness" of idealism. It is charming, but then the dog that trails always at the heels of the pragmatist will have his bark: Is it true? This "pluralistic panpsychic view of the universe," we are told, belongs to a "great em-

pirical movement." We remember then that Mr. James himself has condemned the empiricists for "smashing the absolute" by means of a conceptualist logic, and we begin to wonder whether he is quite as free as he would have us believe from the rationalistic net. Somehow one cannot be quite at ease in this new pluralistic panpsychic Zion, and, reading M. Luquet's analysis of Bergsonism, I seem to divine where the trouble lies. When we enter upon the study of psychology, says that expositor, we must begin by discarding the logic which we used in the sciences. In this field contradictories no longer exclude each other. Every state of consciousness is at once an existence and a knowledge, the thing known and the knower, a part and the whole, unity and multiplicity. Here identity and change, past and present, are simultaneous attributes of the same subject. And he continues:

> Hence we explain at once the existence and the falseness, at least relative, of the two opposed psychological doctrines called phenomenalism and spiritism. The latter sees in the ego an immutable substance which looks on with indifference at the unrolling states of consciousness; the former sees in the ego only a succession, a collection of isolated states of consciousness, of which the first has ceased when the second is produced.

This truth explains, I surmise, something more than the two present modes of psychology.

Is not this irreconcilable dualism of consciousness the source of the two opposing schools of philosophy, which, ever since Parmenides and Heraclitus set forth the paradox of absolute rest and absolute motion, unity and multiplicity, identity and change, have been at each other's throats? Logic demands the rejection of a contradictory; and as the temperament of a man leads him to dwell on one or the other phase of his inner experience, so, if he is a metaphysician, he forthwith sets out to build a rational theory of the universe on that phase to the exclusion of the other. What, at bottom, is this Pluralism of Mr. James, but the same ancient presumption of the reason which he has himself so shrewdly denounced. His feeling for flux and change and multiplicity as an undeniable part of our conscious experience is a reality, a great and desirable reality, set over against the monist's exclusive sense of unity; but is it the whole of reality? How can one recall the innumerable witnesses of religion, or hearken to the self-revelation of the poets, how can one look into the mirror of one's own life, and not perceive that the sense of something immutable and unmoved exists in some way side by side with the sense of everlasting flux, that there is within us some

> central peace subsisting at the heart
> Of endless agitation?

Mr. James does, indeed, throw out hints that he has caught the meaning of this dualistic reality of experience, but, like other philosophers, he soon cowers at the imperious command of reason, and tries to hide the nature of his own submission to one horn of the dilemma by merriment over the writhing of Mr. Bradley on the other; meanwhile common-sense stands like *das Weltkind in der Mitte*. We deceive ourselves if we believe that in Mr. James at last a mediator has been found " between the spirit and its environment, . . . between fate and faith, between the march of things and the impulsion of ideas, between the will of nature and the will of man, between science and religion." In attempting that mediation he has sought to supplant reason by immediate experience; in fact, he has been borne along by "the march of things," and, accepting these lower intuitions of change as the whole of experience, has straightway proceeded to build thereon his rationalistic theory of a universe which is altogether subject to mutability.

And if the Pluralism of Mr. James is no true substitute for dualism, but a rejection of the one for the many, so his Panpsychism commits the other error of metaphysics in translating a fact of inner experience into a theory of the universe at large. The comfortable belief in these world-souls and commingled spirits and finite Jehovahs is even a projection of our consciousness of per-

sonal change into the void, just as the monist's absolute abstraction is born of his consciousness of personal identity. No doubt we are not alone in the universe. Forces beat upon us from every side and are as really existent to us as ourselves: their influence upon ourselves we know, but their own secret name and nature we have not yet heard—not from Mr. James, or Mr. Bradley, or another. Until that prophet has appeared, I do not see what better thing we can do than to hold our judgment in a state of complete skepticism, or suspension, in regard to the correspondence of our inner experience with the world at large, neither affirming nor denying; while we accept honestly the dualism of consciousness as the irrational fact. Or, if any assumption is to be made, why not assume that the universe is, like our own inner experience, an illogical self-contradiction? Reason, I should suppose, may be our guide in determining the relative values to us of our opposed phases of consciousness. The will may be no Will to Believe—for we know the truth so far as it concerns us—but a power to make of this choice of values the motive of contemplative and practical life. And, if I have read correctly the lesson of the past and of the present, faith, I dare avow, is something that strikes deeper than the mythologies of religion, or the imaginings of a fevered Pragmatism; it is the voice from our

own centre of calm, asserting through all the noise of contradiction: "I am the better self and the higher value, the stronger life and the finer joy." To many who have looked steadfastly into the meaning of their inner life, that "wider self from which saving experiences flow in" will seem to be indeed a *wider self* rather than any environment of ghosts; and they will feel that in this belief they have a firmer assurance of reality than is offered to them by the new mythology of Pragmatism or Panpsychic Pluralism. They will think that John Woolman uttered the truth of dualism and of religion when he said: "The necessity of an inward stillness hath appeared clear to my mind; in true silence strength is renewed."

While this essay is going through the press, Mr. James has himself passed away beyond our troublesome debates of the one and the many, leaving his doctrine to be developed and promulgated by his disciples. This is no place to pay tribute to his memory as a man. He had the rare good fortune to be as much beloved personally by his enemies in philosophy as by his friends.

CRITICISM

Of all Matthew Arnold's books I sometimes think that not the least precious is the slender posthumous volume published by his daughter in 1902. It was long his habit to carry in his pocket a narrow diary in which he jotted down engagements for the day, mingled with short quotations from the books he was reading to serve as amulets, so to speak, against the importunities of business. The quotations for a selection of years printed by Mrs. Wodehouse from these *Notebooks* form what might be called the critic's breviary. Here, if anywhere, we seem to feel the very beating of the critic's heart, and to catch the inner voice of recollection and duty, corresponding to the poet's "gleam," which he followed so devoutly in his life. I do not know to what work in English to liken it unless it be the notebooks containing quotations from Marcus Aurelius and Epictetus written down by the author of the *Characteristics* with his comments, which Dr. Rand edited in 1900 as the *Philosophical Regimen of Anthony, Earl of Shaftesbury.*

Nor is it mere chance that Matthew Arnold and Shaftesbury should have left for posthumous publication these private memoranda, which with all their differences of form and substance are in their final impression upon the mind so curiously alike; for the two men themselves, in their outlook on life and in their relation to their respective ages, had much in common, and there is perhaps no better way to reach a dispassionate understanding of the virtue and limitations of criticism than by comparing Arnold with his great forerunner of the early eighteenth century. Both men were essentially critical in their mental habit, and both magnified the critic's office. "I take upon me," said Shaftesbury, "absolutely to condemn the fashionable and prevailing custom of inveighing against critics as the common enemies, the pests and incendiaries of the commonwealth of Wit and Letters. I assert, on the contrary, that they are the props and pillars of this building; and that without the encouragement and propagation of such a race, we should remain as Gothic architects as ever." And the purpose of Shaftesbury in upholding the function of criticism was much the same as Arnold's; he too was offended by the Gothic and barbarous self-complacency of his contemporaries—the Philistines, as he might have called them. As Arnold protested that the work of the English romantic revival

was doomed "to prove hardly more lasting than the productions of far less splendid epochs"; that Byron was "empty of matter," Shelley "incoherent," and Wordsworth "wanting in completeness and variety," just because they lacked critical background; so his predecessor censured the literature of his day. "An English author would be all genius," says Shaftesbury. "He would reap the fruits of art, but without study, pains, or application. He thinks it necessary, indeed (lest his learning should be called in question), to show the world that he errs knowingly against the rules of art."

Against this presumption of genius on the one hand and the self-complacency of Philistinism on the other, both critics took up the same weapons—the barbs of ridicule and irony. With Shaftesbury this method was an avowed creed. His essays are no more than sermons on two texts: that of Horace, "*Ridiculum acri Fortius et melius magnas plerumque secat res*—a jest often decides weighty matters better and more forcibly than can asperity"; and the saying of Gorgias Leontinus,[1] which he misinterprets and expands for his own purpose, "That humour was the only test of gravity; and gravity of humour. For a subject which would not bear raillery was suspicious; and a jest which would not bear a

[1] Quoted by Aristotle: *τὴν μὲν σπουδὴν διαφθείρειν γέλωτι τὸν δὲ γέλωτα σπουδῇ.*

serious examination was certainly false wit." With this touchstone of truth he proceeds to test the one-sided enthusiasms of his day, the smirking conceits, the pedantic pretensions, and the narrow dogmatisms whether of science or religion. "There is a great difference," he says, "between seeking how to raise a laugh from everything, and seeking in everything what justly may be laughed at. For nothing is ridiculous except what is deformed; nor is anything proof against raillery except what is handsome and just." The comic spirit is thus a kind of purgation of taste, and a way of return to nature. How deliberately Matthew Arnold used this weapon of ridicule in the service of sweet reasonableness, which is only his modern phrase, a little sentimentalised, for eighteenth-century nature; how magisterially he raised the laugh against his enemies, the bishops and the great austere toilers of the press and the mighty men of political Philistia, no one needs be told who has enjoyed the elaborate irony of *Culture and Anarchy* or of *Friendship's Garland.*

Sweet reasonableness, or "sweetness and light," to use the phrase as Arnold took it from Swift's *Battle of the Books*, is, I have suggested, little more than the modern turn for the deist's nature and reason; how nearly the two ideals approach each other you may see by comparing the "good-breeding," which is the aim of Shaftes-

bury's philosophy, with the "culture" which is the end of Arnold's criticism. "To philosophise," said the former, "in a just signification, is but to carry good-breeding a step higher. For the accomplishment of breeding is, to learn whatever is decent in company or beautiful in arts, and the sum of philosophy is, to learn what is just in society and beautiful in Nature and the order of the world." I have wondered sometimes whether Matthew Arnold had these words in mind when he formulated his definition of culture; whether his famous command is really but another echo from the ancient quarrel of the deists. The whole scope of the essay on *Sweetness and Light* is, he avows, "to recommend culture as the great help out of our present difficulties; culture being a pursuit of our total perfection by means of getting to know, on all the matters which most concern us, the best which has been thought and said in the world [Shaftesbury, too, like Arnold, is insistent on the *exemplaria Græca*]; and through this knowledge, turning a stream of fresh and free thought upon our stock notions and habits."

There is, I trust, something more than a pedantic curiosity in such a parallel, which might yet be much prolonged, between the author of *Culture and Anarchy* and the author of the *Characteristics*. It proves, if proof is necessary, more clearly than would any amount

of direct exposition, that Matthew Arnold's method of criticism was not an isolated product of the nineteenth century, but that he belongs to one of the great families of human intelligence, which begins with Cicero, the father of them all, and passes through Erasmus and Boileau and Shaftesbury and Sainte-Beuve. These are the exemplars—not complete individually, I need not say—of what may be called the critical spirit: discriminators between the false and the true, the deformed and the normal; preachers of harmony and proportion and order, prophets of the religion of taste. If they deal much with the criticism of literature, this is because in literature more manifestly than anywhere else life displays its infinitely varied motives and results; and their practice is always to render literature itself more consciously a criticism of life. The past is the field out of which they draw their examples of what is in conformity with nature and of what departs from that norm. In that field they balance and weigh and measure; they are by intellect hesitators, but at heart very much in earnest. They are sometimes contrasted to their detriment with the so-called creative writers, yet they themselves stood each among the first writers of his day, and it is not plain that, for instance, Tennyson, in any true estimation, added more to the intellectual life of the world than Matthew Arnold, or Lucretius

than Cicero, though their method and aim may have been different. The more significant comparison at least is not with the so-called creative writers, but with the great fulminators of new creeds—between Matthew Arnold and the Carlyles and Ruskins and Huxleys of his day; between Shaftesbury and, let us say, Rousseau; Boileau and Descartes; Erasmus and Luther; Cicero and St. Paul. Such a contrast might seem at first to lie as much in efficiency as in quality. In the very nature of things the man who seizes on one deep-reaching idea, whether newly found or rediscovered, and with single-hearted fervour forces it upon the world, might appear to have the advantage in power over the man of critical temper, who weighs and refines; who is for ever checking the enthusiasm of the living by the authority of the dead; and whose doctrine, even though in the end he may assert it with sovereign contempt of doubters, is still the command to follow the well-tried path of common-sense. Better the half-truth that makes for action and jostles the world out of its ruts, men cry, than such a timid search for the whole truth as paralyses the will, and may after all prove only an exchange of depth for breadth. That might appear to be the plain lesson of history; yet I am not so sure. Is there not a possibility that in our estimate of these powers we are a little betrayed by the tumult of the

times, just as we are prone in other things to mistake bustle for movement? The critical spirit, as it has been exercised, may have its limitations and may justly be open to censure, but I doubt if its true reproach will turn out in the end to be a lack of efficiency in comparison with the more assertive force of the reformers. I am inclined to believe, for instance, that the balancing spirit of Erasmus is really more at work among us to-day than that of the dogmatic and reforming Luther; that Cicero's philosophy, though they would gape to hear it said, is really more in the hearts of the men you will meet in the street than is the theology of St. Paul. This may be in part because the representatives of the critical spirit, by their very lack of warping originality and by their endeavour to separate the true from the false, the complete from the one-sided, stand with the great conservative forces of human nature, having their fame certified by the things that endure amid all the betrayals of time and fashion. I know the deductions that must be made from that kind of fame. Cicero, it will be said, when in his *De Finibus* he brought together the various experiences of antiquity in regard to the meaning and values of life, weighing the claims of Stoic and Epicurean and the others, may have stood for something more comprehensive and balanced than did St. Paul with his new dogma of

justification by faith. Yet St. Paul's theory of justification by faith, though it may be losing for us its cogent veracity, was the immediate driving force of history and a power that remade the world, while Cicero's nice discussions remained a luxury of the learned few. In one sense that is indisputably true; and yet, imprudent as it may sound, I question whether it is the whole truth. When I consider the part played by Stoic and Epicurean philosophies in the Renaissance and the transcendent influence of Cicero's dissertations upon the men of that day; when I consider that the impulse of Deism in the eighteenth century, as seen in Shaftesbury and his successors, was at bottom little more than a revival of this same Stoicism, as it had been subdued to the emotions by Cicero and mixed with Epicureanism; that Shaftesbury was, in fact, despite his worship of Epictetus, almost a pure Ciceronian; and when I consider that out of Deism sprang the dominant religion and social philosophy of our present world—when I consider these and many other facts, I question whether Cicero, while he certainly represents what is more enduring, has not been also, actually and personally, as dynamic an influence in civilisation as St. Paul, though the noise, no doubt, and the tumult have been around the latter. We are still too near Matthew Arnold's day to determine the resultant of all the

forces then at work, yet it would not be very rash even now to assert that his critical essays will be found in the end a broader and more lasting, as they are a saner, influence than the exaggerated æstheticism of Ruskin or the shrill prophesying of Carlyle or the scientific dogmatism of Huxley. No, if there is any deduction to be made to the value of criticism, it is not on the side of efficiency. It is well to remember Matthew Arnold's own words. "Violent indignation with the past," he says, "abstract systems of renovation applied wholesale, a new doctrine drawn up in black and white for elaborating down to the very smallest details a rational society for the future—these are the ways of Jacobinism. . . . Culture [it is his word here for criticism] is always assigning to system-makers and systems a smaller share in the bent of human destiny than their friends like."

Perhaps it is a secret inkling of this vanity of the critic in its widest bearing, besides a natural antagonism of temper, that leads so many to carp against him and his trade. The inveterate hostility of "creative" writers to criticism is well known, and has been neatly summed up by E. S. Dallas in *The Gay Science:*

> Ben Jonson spoke of critics as tinkers, who make more faults than they mend; Samuel Butler, as the fierce in-

quisitors of wit, and as butchers who have no right to sit on a jury; Sir Richard Steele, as of all mortals the silliest; Swift, as dogs, rats, wasps, or, at best, drones of the learned world; Shenstone, as asses, which by gnawing vines first taught the advantage of pruning them; Burns, as cut-throat bandits in the path of fame; Walter Scott, humorously reflecting the general sentiment, as caterpillars.

The droll thing about it is that every one of these critics of criticism was so ready to act himself as butcher or ass or caterpillar. It is a common trick of the guild. For a modern instance, turn to Mr. Horace Traubel, the shirt-sleeved Boswell of Walt Whitman, and you will find pages of conversation recorded in which the seer of Camden belabours the professors of criticism and in almost the same breath exercises the art upon his brother poets with delightful frankness and at times rare penetration. But this ancient feud of the gentlemen of the pen is a special form, due in part to special causes, of the hostility that so often manifests itself against the critical spirit in general. The man of system and the man of unhesitating action are likely to feel something like contempt for the mind that balances and waits. The imperial Mommsen felt this contempt, and showed it, in his treatment of Cicero; it is rife even yet in the current tone of condescension toward Erasmus as compared with Luther, to which Matthew Arnold replied by calling Luther "a Philistine of genius"; War-

burton showed it in his sneers at Shaftesbury as the man of taste, and Cardinal Newman has, with splendid politeness, echoed them; Matthew Arnold was equally feared and despised in his own lifetime, and it is an odd fact that you will to-day scarcely pick up a piece of third-rate criticism (in which there is likely to be anything at work rather than the critical spirit), but you will come upon some gratuitous fling against him. Most bitter of all was Henry Sidgwick's arraignment of "The Prophet of Culture" in *Macmillan's Magazine* for August, 1867. There if anywhere the critical spirit was stabbed with its own weapon. You will recall the image of the pouncet-box:

> Mr. Arnold may say that he does not discourage action, but only asks for delay, in order that we may act with sufficient knowledge. This is the eternal excuse of indolence—insufficient knowledge. . . . One cannot think on this subject without recalling the great man who recommended to philosophy a position very similar to that now claimed for culture. I wish to give Mr. Arnold the full benefit of his resemblance to Plato. But when we look closer at the two positions, the dissimilarity comes out: they have a very different effect on our feelings and imagination; and I confess I feel more sympathy with the melancholy philosopher looking out with hopeless placidity "from beneath the shelter of some wall" than with a cheerful modern liberal, tempered by renouncement, shuddering aloof from the rank exhalations of vulgar enthusiasm, and holding up the pouncet-box of culture betwixt the wind and his nobility.

Such an onslaught on our prophet of culture as a languid and shrinking dilettante was fair enough in the heat of controversy and was at least justified by its own art, if not by certain affectations of its victim's style; but I protest against accepting it as essentially true. Any one might perceive that Matthew Arnold had beneath the irony and suavity of his manner a temper of determined seriousness; that, like the bride of Giacopone di Todi in his sonnet, his Muse might be young, gay, and radiant outside, but had

> a hidden ground
> Of thought and of austerity within.

It would be interesting in this respect to continue the comparison of Arnold and Shaftesbury, and to show how near together they stood in their attitude toward nature and society and in their religion, and how profound was their own enthusiasm beneath their hostility to the sham or undisciplined enthusiasms of the day. Lord Shaftesbury might say that we have "in the main a witty and good-humoured religion," as Matthew Arnold might ridicule the sourness of the Nonconformists and the bleakness of the reformers in whose assemblies any child of nature, if he shall stray thither, is smitten with lamentation and mourning and woe; but there was solemnity enough, however we may rate

their insight, in their own search for the God that sits concealed at the centre. Shaftesbury's creed became the formula of the deists. "Still ardent in its pursuit," the soul, he says, "rests not here, nor satisfies itself with the beauty of a part, but, extending further its communicative bounty, seeks the good of all, and affects the interest and prosperity of the whole. True to its native world and higher country, 't is here it seeks order and perfection; wishing the best, and hoping still to find a just and wise administration. And since all hope of this were vain and idle if no universal mind presided; since without such a supreme intelligence and providential care the distracted universe must be condemned to suffer infinite calamities; 't is here the generous mind labours to discover that healing cause by which the interest of the whole is securely established, the beauty of things and the universal order happily sustained." Matthew Arnold condensed that rhetoric into a phrase: "The stream of tendency, not ourselves, which makes for righteousness."

But the strongest evidence of their austerity of purpose is seen in those private notebooks which led me to couple their names together in this study of the spirit of criticism. This is not the time to deal at length with that sober and anxious self-examination of the noble Lord, as Shaftesbury's enemies of the Church were so fond of

calling him. It is one of the important documents to show how completely Deism was a revival of pagan morality. It is, in brief, no more than a translation of the great maxims of antiquity into modern purposes: the inner record of a man seeking character in the two elements of attention (*προσοχή*) and the harmony of life (*veræ numerosque modosque vitæ*), and of a man who thought that this pursuit must be maintained unrelentingly. Of the two books it may seem strange that Matthew Arnold's, which consists merely of brief quotations without comment, should really open to us more intimately the author's heart than does the direct self-questioning of Shaftesbury's. Yet a book more filled with sad sincerity, a more perfect confession of a life's purpose, will scarcely be found than these memoranda. "I am glad to find," he wrote once in a letter to his sister, "that in the past year I have at least accomplished more than usual in the way of reading the books which at the beginning of the year I had put down to be read. . . . The importance of reading, not slight stuff to get through the time, but the best that has been written, forces itself upon me more and more every year I live." Now the *Notebooks* not only preserve some of these annual lists of books to be read, but show, in quintessential phrase, just what the books actually read meant to him. Some of the quotations are repeated a

number of times, and if frequency of repetition can be taken as a criterion the maxim closest to Arnold's heart was the sentence, from what source I do not know: "*Semper aliquid certi proponendum est*—always some certain end must be kept in view." It is but an expansion of the same idea that he expresses in the words set down more than once from some French author: "A working life, a succession of labours which fill and moralise the days!" and in the beloved command of the *Imitation:* "*Cum multa legeris et cognoveris, ad unum semper oportet redire principium*—when you have read and learned many things, it is necessary always to return to one principle." That principle he sets down in aphorisms and exhortations from a hundred diverse sources—nowhere, perhaps, more succinctly than in the broken phrases of the stoic Lucan:

> servare modum, finemque tenere
> Naturamque sequi—
> Nec sibi, sed toti genitum se credere mundo—
> In commune bonus.

(To preserve measure, to hold fast to the end, and follow nature—To believe oneself born not for oneself alone but for all the world—good for the community of mankind.)

He might well have applied to his own pursuit of culture the eulogy he quotes concerning another: "Study, which for most men is only a

frivolous amusement and often dangerous, was for Dom Rivet a serious occupation consecrated by religion."

It was not a mere dilettante of sweetness and light who day by day laid such maxims as these upon his breast; it was not one who held up the pouncet-box of culture betwixt the wind and his nobility. Matthew Arnold, if any man in his generation, was by temperament a stoic for whom duty and submission and reverence made up the large part of life; and there is something of what we call the irony of fate in the thought that he who made σπουδαιότης, *high seriousness*, the test of great literature, should have suffered the reproach of levity. Yet, after all, fate is never quite blind in these things, and if criticism has thus drawn upon itself the censure of men like Sidgwick we may feel assured that in some way it has failed of the deeper truth. Those reproaches may in part be due to prejudice and revenge and the inevitable contrast of temperaments; they may err in ascribing to the critic a want of efficiency, as they may be wantonly perverse in denouncing him for frivolity; but they have a meaning and they cannot be overlooked. Now the future is often a strange revealer of secret things, and there is no surer way to detect the weak side of a leader than by studying the career of his disciples, or even of his successors.

You are familiar with the story of the concluding chapter of Pater's *Renaissance*—how it was withdrawn from the second edition of that book because the author "conceived it might possibly mislead some of those young men into whose hands it might fall"; and how it was restored, with some slight changes, to the later editions where it now stands. And you know the moral of that essay: that life is but an uncertain interval before the universal judgment of death, a brief illusion of stability in the eternal flux, and that "our one chance lies in expanding that interval, in getting as many pulsations as possible into the given time." And "of this wisdom," he concludes, "the poetic passion, the desire of beauty, the love of art for art's sake, has most; for art comes to you professing frankly to give nothing but the highest quality to your moments as they pass, and simply for those moments' sake." That philosophy of the Oxonian Epicurus and its scandal in a very un-Epicurean land are familiar enough; but perhaps we do not always stop to think how plausibly this doctrine of crowning our moments with the highest sensations of art flows from Matthew Arnold's definition of criticism as the disinterested endeavour "to know the best that is known and thought in the world, irrespectively of practice, politics, and everything of the kind."

The next step from Pater's Epicureanism, and

so by a further remove from Arnold's criticism, brings us to one whose name, unfortunately, must always be mentioned with regret, but who is more significant in the development of English letters than is sometimes allowed. At the time when Paterism, as a recent writer has said, was "tripping indelicately along the Oxford High and by the banks of the Cherwell," a young votary of the Muses from Dublin came upon the scene, and began to push the doctrine of Pater as far beyond what the master intended as Pater had gone beyond Matthew Arnold. This is the young man who "would occasionally be seen walking the streets carrying a lily or a sunflower in his hand, at which he would gaze intently and admiringly." He had fashioned himself deliberately to pose as the head of a new sect of "æsthetes," as they styled themselves, who expanded Arnold's excluded tribe of Philistines to embrace all the sober citizens of the world. The fate of Oscar Wilde is still like a fresh wound in the public memory. What I wish to call to your mind is the direct connection (strengthened no doubt by influences from across the Channel) between Pater's philosophy of the sensation-crowded moment and such a poem as that in which Wilde attempted to concentrate all the passionate moments of the past in his gloating revery upon *The Sphinx*. He was himself not unaware of the treachery of the path he had chosen; the sonnet

which he prefixed to his book of poems is sincere with the pathos of conscious insincerity, and is a memorable comment on one of the tragic ambitions of a century:

> To drift with every passion till my soul
> Is a stringed lute on which all winds can play,
> Is it for this that I have given away
> Mine ancient wisdom, and austere control?
> . . . . . .
> Surely there was a time I might have trod
> The sunlit heights, and from life's dissonance
> Struck one clear chord to reach the ears of God:
> Is that time dead? lo! with a little rod
> I did but touch the honey of romance—
> And must I lose a soul's inheritance?

The answer to the poet's query he was himself to write in *The Ballad of Reading Gaol:*

> Silently we went round and round,
> And through each hollow mind
> The Memory of dreadful things
> Rushed like a dreadful wind,
> And Horror stalked before each man,
> And Terror crept behind.

This Memory of dreadful things is the too logical end, step by step, of the philosophy of the sensation-crowded moment; the concealed suspicion of it in Matthew Arnold's definition of criticism was the justification, if any there be, of the contempt hurled upon him by some of his contemporaries.

It is necessary to repeat that such a derivation from Matthew Arnold is essentially unfair because it leaves out of view the real purpose and heart of the man. If we could not read his great moral energy in his *Essays*, as I trust we all of us can, and if we did not know the profound influence of his critical philosophy upon the better life of our age, we could still dispel our doubts by looking into the *Notebooks*, in which memory is not turned to dreadful things for the soul's disgrace, but is the guide and impulse to strong resolution and beautiful forbearance. Yet withal it remains true that the Epicureanism of Pater and the hedonism of Oscar Wilde were able to connect themselves in a disquieting way with one side of Matthew Arnold's gospel of culture; and it behooves us who come upon the heels of this movement and who believe that the critical spirit is still to be one of the powers making in the world for right enjoyment, it behooves us to examine the first definition of culture or criticism—the words had about the same meaning as Arnold used them—and see whether something was not there forgotten. The fault lay not in any intrinsic want of efficiency in the critical spirit, nor in any want of moral earnestness in Matthew Arnold or Shaftesbury: that we have seen. But these men were lacking in another direction: they missed a philosophy which could bind together their moral and their

æsthetic sense, a positive principle besides the negative force of ridicule and irony; and, missing this, they left criticism more easily subject to a one-sided and dangerous development.

To the nature of that omission, to the *porro unum necessarium*, we may be directed, I think, by the critical theory of the one who carried the practice, in other respects, to its lowest degradation. In Oscar Wilde's dialogue on *The Critic as Artist*, one of the most extraordinary mixtures ever compounded of truth flaunting in the robes of error and error assuming the gravity of truth, you will remember that the advocate of criticism at the height of his argument proclaims the true man of culture to be him who has learned "the best that is known and thought in the world" (he uses Matthew Arnold's words), and who thus, as Matthew Arnold neglected to add, "bears within himself the dreams, and ideas, and feelings of myriad generations." The addition is important, how important, or at least how large, may be seen in the really splendid, if somewhat morbid, passage in which the idea is developed. Let me quote at some length:

> To know anything about oneself, one must know all about others. There must be no mood with which one cannot sympathise, no dead mode of life that one cannot make alive. Is this impossible? I think not. By revealing to us the absolute mechanism of all action, and so freeing us from the self-imposed and trammelling burden

of moral responsibility, the scientific principle of Heredity has become, as it were, the warrant for the contemplative life. It has shown us that we are never less free than when we try to act. It has hemmed us round with the nets of the hunter, and written upon the wall the prophecy of our doom. We may not watch it, for it is within us. We may not see it, save in a mirror that mirrors the soul. It is Nemesis without her mask. It is the last of the Fates, and the most terrible. It is the only one of the Gods whose real name we know.

And yet, while in the sphere of practical and external life it has robbed energy of its freedom and activity of its choice, in the subjective sphere, where the soul is at work, it comes to us, this terrible shadow, with many gifts in its hands, gifts of strange temperaments and subtle susceptibilities, gifts of wild ardours and chill moods of indifference, complex multiform gifts of thoughts that are at variance with each other, and passions that war against themselves. And so, it is not our own life that we live, but the lives of the dead, and the soul that dwells within us is no single spiritual entity, making us personal and individual, created for our service, and entering into us for our joy. . . . It can help us to leave the age in which we were born, and to pass into other ages, and find ourselves not exiled from their air. It can teach us how to escape from our experience, and to realise the experiences of those who are greater than we are. The pain of Leopardi crying out against life becomes our pain. Theocritus blows on his pipe, and we laugh with the lips of nymph and shepherd. In the wolfskin of Pierre Vidal we flee before the hounds, and in the armour of Lancelot we ride from the bower of the Queen. We have whispered the secret of our love beneath the cowl of Abelard, and in the stained raiment of Villon have put our shame into song. We can see the dawn through Shelley's eyes, and when we wander with Endymion the Moon grows amorous of our youth. Ours

is the anguish of Atys, and ours the weak rage and noble sorrows of the Dane. Do you think that it is the imagination that enables us to live these countless lives? Yes: it is the imagination; and the imagination is the result of heredity. It is simply concentrated race-experience.

Now, this theory of race-experience, as Oscar Wilde formulated it, lends itself, no doubt, to an easy fallacy. I am aware of the rebuke administered to one who was by the range of his knowledge and by his historic sense much more justified in such a presumption than was Oscar Wilde. "Is it not the strangest illusion," exclaimed the biographer of Renan, "to believe that the mere reading of the Acts of the martyrs is sufficient to give us their soul, to transfer to us in its real intensity the ardour which ravished them amidst their tortures? . . . Those who have lost all the energy of living and acting may, if they choose, shut themselves up in this kingdom of shadows; that is their affair. But that they should proclaim theirs as the true life, is not to be conceded to them." Séailles was right. These men, whether it be a paradox-monger like Oscar Wilde or a great scholar like Renan, should have laid to heart the favourite maxim of Matthew Arnold, *semper aliquid certi proponendum est:* true culture has always before its eyes a definite end and is for self-discipline not for revery. Nor am I unaware that the theory as expressed by Oscar Wilde, is mixed up with his

own personal taint of decadence. One thing at least is certain: that the way of the true critical spirit is not to free us, as he boasts, from "the self-imposed and trammelling burden of moral responsibility." His avowal in the same dialogue that the sole aim of art is to produce the "beautiful sterile emotions" so hateful to the world, his shameless vaunt that "there is nothing sane about the worship of beauty," his whole philosophy of the ego as above the laws of society, cannot be severed from the memory of dreadful things in which his own song ended: such a philosophy is in fact a denial of the validity of that very race-experience out of which he attempts to derive it. In this respect again he should have remembered the maxim of Matthew Arnold: "A working life, a succession of labours that fill and moralise the days." The aim of culture is not to merge the present in a sterile dream of the past, but to hold the past as a living force in the present. In omitting these aspects of criticism Pater and, to a greater extent, Oscar Wilde fell into extravagance far more deleterious to culture than was any omission or incompleteness on the part of Matthew Arnold.

Nevertheless, with all its false emphasis and its admixture of personal error, that positive and emotional reassumption of the past, that association of the contemplative life (the *βίος θεωρητικός*)

with the rapture of memory, contains the hint of a great truth which must be grasped and properly exercised if criticism is to confirm itself against such hostility as has hitherto kept it on the defensive. I would not say even that the mysticism, out of which Oscar Wilde's critical theory really springs, though expressed in the modish language of scientific evolution, is essentially perverse. For in a very true sense the past of mankind, by the larger race-memory and particularly by that form of it which we call literature, abides as a living reality in our present. We suffer not our individual destiny alone but the fates of humanity also. We are born into an inheritance of great emotions—into the unconquerable hopes and defeated fears of an immeasurable past, the tragedies and the comedies of love, the ardent aspirations of faith, the baffled questionings of evil, the huge laughter at facts, the deep-welling passion of peace. Without that common inheritance how inconceivably poor and shallow would be this life of the world and our life in it! These recorded emotions are, indeed, not for us what they were in actuality, nor by sitting at our own ease with memory can we enter into the exact emotions of the martyr at the stake and the hero in his triumph. These things are now transmuted into something the same and different, something less and greater.

The intensity of the actual moment they cannot possess, but on the other hand with this loss of separate reality they are associated with life as a whole, and in that unity of experience obtain, what they lacked before, a significance and design. They bear in a way the same relation to practical life as that life bore to the ideal world out of which it arose and into which it is continually passing. And thus this larger memory, in its transmuting and unifying power, may not unmeaningly be regarded as the purpose of activity, and literature may not too presumptuously be cherished as the final end of existence. Some such mystery as this was hinted in the Greek and Gnostic doctrine of the *logos*, the Word, and in the Hindu name for the creator as *vâcas pati*, Lord of the Word. And if such a theory sounds too absurdly metaphysical for the ears of prudent common-sense, consider that Homer, no philosopher of empty phrases surely, meant nothing very different when he judged of actions by their fame in future story. To him the warring of armies for ten long years and the desolation of Troy was for no other purpose than that the inner life of the race might be enriched by memory:

> Thus the gods fated, and such ruin wove
> That song might flourish for posterity.

And in this theory of memory criticism has an

important office. We are beginning to hear a good deal these days about the French metaphysician, M. Henri Bergson, of whom Prof. William James has avowed himself a willing disciple, and whose disquisitions on *Matière et mémoire* and *L'Évolution créatrice* are perhaps more talked of than any other recent books of philosophy. I do not pretend to pronounce on the full scope of his theories, but his conception of the function of memory is rich with applications to the matter we have in hand. Our consciousness, that is to say our very self, is not, he says, a thing born new with each moment, not a *mens momentanea*, but an uninterrupted stream of activity, and what we now feel is directly bound up with what we have felt before. Nor is this consciousness, on the other hand, a mere heaping together indiscriminately of perceptions and emotions, but it is an active faculty, or, I should prefer to say, the servant of some active faculty, that depresses this particular experience into the background and centres attention upon that other experience, thus by a process of criticism secreting the present, so to speak, out of the past. Such a philosophy finds a new and profound truth in the saying of Pascal: "*La mémoire est nécessaire à toutes les opérations de l'esprit*—memory is necessary to all the operations of the mind."

This notion of the active memory is, I am

told by those who should know, mixed up in Bergson with a questionable metaphysic, yet in itself alone it should seem to be nothing more than the laborious expression of a very simple fact. We have all of us met now and then in our daily intercourse a man whose conversation impressed us immediately as possessing a certain ripeness of wisdom, a certain pertinency and depth of meaning. If we wished to characterise such a man in a single word, we should perhaps say that he was essentially educated. We feel that he has within him some central force which enables him to choose consistently amidst the innumerable conflicting impulses and attractions and dissipations of life, that he moves forward, not at haphazard, but by the direction of some principle of conduct, and that he can be depended upon for counsel and comfort. Well, if you stop to analyse this quality of mind, which we will call education, you will discover in every case, I believe, that the determining trait is just the force of a critical memory. I do not mean by this the mere facility of recalling the emotions and events and spectacles which have come to a man with the years; for such undisciplined reminiscence may be but a shabby wisdom to the man himself, as it may be the very contrary of joy to his hearer. I mean rather the faculty of selection as well as of retention, the weighing of cause and effect, the constant and active assumption of the past in the

present, by which the events of life are no longer regarded as isolated and fortuitous moments, but are merged into a unity of experience. Those in whom this faculty rules are commonly the possessors of practical wisdom, but there are others, a few, who by its virtue are raised into another kind of wisdom. With these men the selective, reconciling memory is associated, more or less consciously, with the Platonic reminiscence in such a manner that not only are the past and present of passing time made one but our ephemeral life is fitted into that great ring of eternity which Henry Vaughan saw as in a dream. So it is that to them the things which others behold as sudden unrelated facts are made shadows and types of the everlasting ideas; and with the accumulation of knowledge they grow ripe in vision,

> Till old experience do attain
> To something like prophetic strain.

And as our private memory is not a merely passive retention of sensations, so in literature the critical spirit is at work as a conscious energy of selection. The function of criticism, as thus understood, is far removed from the surrender to luxurious revery which the impressionists believed it to be; nor is the good critic, as Anatole France said, he who recounts the adventures of his soul amid masterpieces; he is rather one who

has before him always the *aliquid certi*, the definite aim of a Matthew Arnold. He does not, like Oscar Wilde, seek by losing the present in the past to throw off "the self-imposed and trammelling burden of moral responsibility"; he is rather one whose life is "a succession of labours that fill and moralise the days"—not in the narrow didactic sense, it need scarcely be said, but in so far as his task is a continual weighing of values. But the critical spirit is also something deeper than Matthew Arnold perceived, or, at least, clearly expressed. The error of criticism in his hands, as in the hands of his predecessors, was that in the exercise of judgment it used the past too much as a dead storehouse of precepts for schoolmastering the present; it was not sufficiently aware of the relation of this faculty of judgment to the indwelling and ever-acting memory of things. Here is the one touch of insight needed, I think, to raise criticism, while not forgetting its special duty of discrimination and judgment, to a more independent and self-respecting *genre*. In its conscious creation of the field of the present out of the past it takes an honoured, if not equal, place by the side of those impulses, more commonly recognised as creative, which are continually adding new material for its selective energy. "Valuing is creating," said Nietzsche; "to value is the treasure and jewel among all things valued." The

critical spirit is thus akin to that force of design or final cause in the Aristotelian sense, which we are beginning once more to divine as the guiding principle, itself unchanged, at work within the evolutionary changes of nature; and in so far as it becomes aware of this high office it introduces into our intellectual life an element outside of alteration and growth and decay, a principle to which time is the minister and not the master.

Literary criticism is, indeed, in this sense only the specific exercise of a faculty which works in many directions. All scholars, whether they deal with history or sociology or philosophy or language or, in the narrower use of the word, literature, are servants of the critical spirit, in so far as they transmit and interpret and mould the sum of experience from man to man and from generation to generation. Might not one even say that at a certain point criticism becomes almost identical with education, and that by this standard we may judge the value of any study as an instrument of education, and may estimate the merit of any special presentation of that study? It is at least, in the existing chaos of pedagogical theories, a question worthy of consideration.

VICTORIAN LITERATURE

(The Philosophy of Change)

To write a history of English literature from 1837 to 1901, in all its ramifications from political economy to fiction, is a task to make any but the stoutest heart quail, and, whatever else may be said of Professor Walker's volume, it bears evidence of industrious reading and patient understanding.[1] Like most works of its kind it suffers somewhat from uncertainty of aim, being neither quite encyclopædic in completeness of detail nor sufficiently arbitrary in selection to deal effectively with ideas. But its arrangement by subjects and its inclusion of so much that is commonly rejected from literary history offer this great compensation that we are enabled to see the interworking of the various intellectual currents: Darwin and Tennyson, Malthus and Matthew Arnold, Spencer and Newman, thus appear as fellow labourers, mould-

[1] *The Literature of the Victorian Era.* By Hugh Walker. Cambridge University Press. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1910.

ing and expressing that subtle, evasive thing we call the spirit of the age. Evasive in a way that spirit is, as the inner forces of life must always be, yet there is one date and one book so pre-eminent that no one can go astray in seeking the centre of the manifold activities of Victorian thought. At the close of the reign—Professor Walker recalls the incident that every one will remember—a London daily paper asked its readers to send in lists of the ten books, English or foreign, which in their judgment were the greatest and most influential of the century past. The lists varied widely, save in one respect: in every list stood Darwin's publication of 1859, *The Origin of Species*.

One is not inclined to take these plebiscites very seriously, yet this was really an extraordinary event. I doubt if such an agreement on the preëminence of a contemporary book would have been possible in any country in any other age of the world; nor is the nature of the selection less remarkable than its unanimity. Probably not half the persons who named *The Origin of Species* had ever seriously read it, yet they all felt in some vague way that this book had struck the keynote of the century; their concurrence showed a certain lack of individual intelligence, but it was unmistakably significant. In Darwin's hypothesis, though they may not have comprehended its full bearing, they thought

the mind of man had found at last that for which it had long been seeking—the perfect scientific formula: it looked to them as if a new and everlasting basis for truth had been laid. Descartes had reduced the physical world to a mechanical system, and Newton had formulated its mathematical laws. But Descartes had, theoretically at least, separated the sphere of the human spirit from his system, and to bring the living world, exclusive of man, within its control he had, by a gross violation of facts, denied to animals all reason and emotion and treated them as mere machines; while Newton in his laws merely ignored the whole organic creation. This extra-scientific field Darwin finally reclaimed. Evolution, indeed, was an old hypothesis, and long before Darwin's day had been brought into considerable prominence; but in the earlier romantic philosophers of France and Germany it had not been fortified by the patient unemotional accumulation of observed facts, and in the theory of Lamarck, the greatest of the scientific ante-Darwinians, it had not purged itself of various complications with some incalculable principle guiding the development of organic nature to a definite end. By the elimination of teleological and other foreign elements and by the authority of his vast patience Darwin raised evolution to the side of gravitation. As an equivalent of the me-

chanical law of motion in the inanimate world he gave precise expression to the absolute law of change in the animate, thus uniting inorganic and organic (including all that is man) in one universal scheme of science. The new law left no place for a power existing outside of nature and controlling the world as a lower order of existence, nor did it recognise a higher and a lower principle within nature itself, but in the mere blind force of variation, in the very unruliness to design or government, found the source of order and development. Chance itself was thus rendered calculable, and science reigned supreme through "all this changing world of changeless law." No wonder that men were a little dazed by the marvellous simplicity and finality of this formula, and were ready to exclaim, with a new meaning to the words:

> Let the great world spin for ever down the ringing grooves of change.

But like all other monistic theories of the reason, whether in science or metaphysics, Darwinism soon discovered within itself a principle of disintegration, and the ancient truth was again vindicated that any logical explanation of the world when carried to its conclusion is illogical. Fitness, in the new creed of evolutionary survival, meant adaptability to environment, but environment itself was produced by fitness, and the

theory was thus seen to be revolving in a vicious circle. Fitness, which was to explain the mystery of order and apparent design, becomes, unless it is made relative to something outside of the things fit, a perfectly empty word, and the whole system falls to the ground. Against so illogical a theory Paley's simple argument for design in creation from the analogy of the watch is entirely valid. That syllogism may not prove the existence of a personal God, as Paley desired, or confirm the Thirty-nine Articles, but it does expose the inadequacy of holding that we can explain the origin of an orderly system of nature through any such hypothesis as the Darwinian law of flux and probability. Like other cosmical theories it may have little affirmative value, but it is strong to devour its rivals. As a matter of fact the insufficiency of Darwinism in its purest form has been pretty widely acknowledged by men of science themselves. In the recent celebration of Darwin's centennial two things were remarkable: the great reverence accorded to the memory of the man, and the fact that his successors are making desperate, and so far unaccepted, efforts to supplement or supplant the law of survival as the driving force of evolution. An unscientific skeptic might hint—his words will do no harm—that there is something paradoxical in this extreme reverence for Darwin undisturbed by this

discontent with his chief hypothesis. The admiration is not due to the character of the man alone, for others have devoted their lives nobly and unreservedly to the search for scientific truth; it is rather the recognition of the fact that he at last was able to impose for a while on the world an hypothesis of life which was purely "causo-mechanical," and which eliminated everything divine and incalculable above or within nature. The discontent is a forced avowal that no such hypothesis is tenable. The additions to the Darwinian theory or the substitutes for it—and they are to-day almost as numerous as the great centres of biological study—are with one or two exceptions steps away from the sufficiency of the mere law of change which was to correspond to the law of motion in the inorganic sphere; some of the substitutes are, in fact, not far from the submission to teleological principles which are frankly beyond the scope of scientific formulation.

All this may seem rather remote from Victorian literature, but in fact it is, as the anecdote related by Professor Walker indicates, the very heart of the matter. Science has been, admittedly, the dominating intellectual force of the age, and the point of contact of science with literature is just this law of change. For it must not be forgotten that law, as it is understood in science, is a formulation of motion in the organic and of change

in the inorganic realms as a power sufficient without any added principle of control to work out the ends of creation as we see them amplified in orderly recurrence and progress. Science and romanticism sprang up together and have grown side by side. In one respect they have embraced diverse, even hostile, temperaments—on this side the man who deals with facts and tends to a hard materialism or a dry intellectualism, on the other the man of sentiment who dreams and loses himself in futile revery. Yet it is a notorious, if paradoxical, fact that the effect of science on art and literature has been to reinforce a romantic impressionism, and that the man of scientific training when he turns to the humanities is almost always an impressionist. The reason is plain: he simply carries into art the law of change with which he has dealt in his proper sphere, and acknowledges no principle of taste superior to the shifting pleasure of the individual. In this he is typical of the age, for if the particular causo-mechanical theory of evolution promulgated by Darwin has proved untenable, evolution itself has remained as almost, if not quite, the universal creed of those who believe that some such hypothesis will ultimately be found adequate to explain all the processes of life. Men of science are only servants of the law of change in their special field of material observation, and it is easy to trace the working of the same

belief in other regions of contemporary thought, most easy no doubt in philosophy which is nothing more than the effort of the reason to interpret in its own terms the common impulse and ambition of a period. There is a respectable school of idealists who hold to a theory of absolute unity and stability in which all the diversity and motion of the world are in some transcendental way absorbed. But these are not the regnant and effective teachers; they are so to speak the beautiful relics of a past creed. Pragmatism is the slogan of the hour, and there is a kind of truth in the remark thrown out recently in an English review that William James was the most influential leader in the spiritual life of the present generation. Now Pragmatism is just the culmination of what may be called the central philosophising of the past century. It has assumed various forms and has often been denied by its followers, but its general tendency is plain: it is at once romantic and scientific, an adventurous revolt against the dogmatic intellectualism in which science has involved itself and at the same time thoroughly evolutionary, even Darwinian, in theory. In the words of Professor Dewey[1]:

When he [Darwin] said of species what Galileo had said

[1] *The Influence of Darwin on Philosophy, and Other Essays in Contemporary Thought.* By John Dewey. New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1910.

of the earth, *e pur si muove*, he emancipated, once for all, genetic and experimental ideas as an organon of asking questions and looking for explanations.

As a result we have the metaphysical conception "of a wide open universe, a universe without bounds in time or space, without final limits of origin or destiny"—in short, to use the elegant pragmatic diction borrowed from the police courts, "a universe with the lid off." No, continues our philosophical guide,

Nature is not an unchangeable order, unwinding itself majestically from the reel of law under the control of deified forces. It is *an indefinite congeries of changes.* Laws are not governmental regulations which limit change, but are convenient formulations of selected portions of change followed through a longer or shorter period of time, and then registered in statistical forms that are amenable to mathematical manipulation.

I am not here attempting to controvert Pragmatism, though it may be worth while to hint in passing that the supercilious tone of its votaries is utterly unjustifiable until the causo-mechanical theory of evolution on which it is based has found some commonly accepted formulation among biologists, and to repeat what I have said elsewhere, that it is just as much a one-sided rationalisation of the data of experience as the contrary theory of idealism which Professor Dewey brushes aside contemptuously as "intellectual atavism." To the self-sufficiency

of the pragmatist and idealist alike there is one reply: "There are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in your philosophy."

Of the other manifestations of the law of change, I may speak even more briefly. In religion it is exhibited in the extraordinary influence of Cardinal Newman upon Brunetière and other French modernists who see, or think they see, in his "theory of development of doctrine" a means of reconciling Christian dogma with the scientific spirit of the age. The Catholic theory of development as expounded by Newman meant the slow grasping by human intelligence of great ideas which were nevertheless "communicated to the world once for all by inspired teachers"; it is a perception of change playing about a fixed basis of unchangeable truth, with a growing tendency to lay weight in this dualism upon the element of change. The so-called "new theology" of Protestantism is more thorough-going and, virtually dispensing with the relation of mankind to an immutable deity, discovers all of religion that is necessary in the varying sympathy of man with his fellow man unregulated by any divine command or revelation.

Economics in its acceptance of the temper of the times has undergone a strange but perfectly logical reversal. Synchronously with the growth of the evolutionary theory arose the economic

doctrine of *laissez-faire*, culminating in the Manchester school which held that a world of economic order would develop mechanically from the free play of individuals upon one another without the intervention of any governmental and, so to speak, external regulation of competition. It was the perfect counterpart to the Darwinian notion of the survival of the fittest amidst the accidental and competitive variation of individuals.[1] Such a theory was pragmatic with a vengeance, and brought its pragmatic penalty of social disease and rebellion. In its place has arisen the socialistic creed, which for the struggle of individuals sets up the warfare of classes and a foreordained democracy, and which bears roughly to the Manchester school the same relation that some of the aspects of "orthogenesis" bear to Darwinism. It is withal as

[1] In theory, and in the practice of some individuals, the Manchester school of economics was mixed up with various philanthropic schemes. Throughout the century there is to be noted a fluctuation between the harshest egotism and the most sentimental sympathy; the two moods springing indeed from the same surrender to the philosophy of change and easily passing into each other. The compensation is doubtful, and as a matter of fact egotism will always under the stress of circumstances take the upper hand, unless controlled by some principle more foreign to itself than sympathy. As regards the relation of evolution to economics, it is well known that both Darwin and Wallace were led to the survival theory by the reading of Malthus.

convincedly evolutionary as was its predecessor, —however much it may threaten revolution in practice,—and as impatient of any law of control outside of material forces, only these forces have assumed a social instead of an individualistic form. Both self-developing individualism and self-developing socialism are the children of the law of change, and the admixture of humanitarian sympathy in both is really only another aspect of the same principle.

The theory of education has naturally gone along with these economic and philosophic innovations. Thus, the elective system in its present form is plainly a late-born offspring of the individualistic doctrine of *laissez-faire*. The whole shift of emphasis from the classics and humanities to scientific or quasi-scientific studies is a revulsion from the old notion that the experience of life in its essential phases is permanent and has once for all been expressed, to the conception of man as completely immersed in the *indefinite congeries of changes* which we call nature. We sometimes blame the teachers of Latin and Greek for certain disquieting weaknesses that have shown themselves in the recent results of education; as a matter of fact their only fault has been the lack of sufficient insight and strength to stem the tide of custom; by endeavouring to bring classical instruction into conformity with the spirit of the age they have largely forfeited its distinct

virtue and have so far rendered it superfluous. If Greek affords no discipline corrective of the influence of science and different from that of the languages in which modern tendencies are expressed, the study of it is merely an enormous waste of time.

These things are the commonplaces of criticism and will scarcely be disputed. I have thought it worth while to bring them together in these brief statements, because in this way we get a clearer perception of the principle that has been everywhere and busily at work in the imaginative product of the nineteenth century and of our own day. Poetically the sources of Victorian literature go back to Wordsworth, who is emotionally the father of us all. No doubt the originating power of Wordsworth has in one sense been exaggerated, or at least misunderstood, for his return to nature is no new thing but a logical outgrowth of the philosophy of Rousseau and beyond him of the natural religion of the English deists. Yet there is withal a difference between the deistic and the romantic spirit toward nature as profound as it is hard to define. Almost the precise Wordsworthian note may be heard now and then in the poets and philosophers of the early eighteenth century, but in general one feels that their absorption of humanity in nature was by a conscious and clear process of elimination. The higher part of man,

all that we associate with the mystic and indefinable, was plainly omitted from the deistic union of the human and the natural, and there was consequently no confusion in their ideas. You may walk in the meadow land of their new world with a feeling of ease and comfort, unperturbed by the intrusion of alien and higher cravings, but rather with the assurance that at will, if the moment of dissatisfaction comes, you may lift your eyes away from its homogeneous beauty to an utterly different region. In Wordsworth's sphere, on the contrary, you are caught as it were in a web of illusion, from which there is no escape save by a violent rupture. When his fervid soul, dismayed by the outcome of the Revolution, turned for solace to the quiet of the fields and the sublimity of the hills, he carried into that communion all the enthusiasm which an earlier age had reserved for the religion of the supernatural and which the deists in their satisfaction with natural religion had deliberately and completely shut out from their consciousness. In thus obliterating the distinctions of the reason Wordsworth introduced into the worship of nature the great pathetic fallacy which was to bewilder the minds and hearts of poets for an indefinite period.

And inevitably as science, becoming aware of the sway of change in nature, tried to formulate this power in terms of a causo-mechanical law,

so poetry attempted to give it expression in human emotion. If any one thing is learned from such a survey of the poets of the past age and of to-day as we get in Professor Walker's volume, it is the constant immanence of this philosophy of change, manifesting itself in both the form and the substance of our verse. Walt Whitman is taken by many to be the most significant poet of America, not on account of his mere democracy, but because his democracy was part and parcel of his proclamation of the philosophy of change and motion. The universe to his eye was a strange motley procession of shifting forms, at which he gazed undismayed, calling upon no passing appearance to stay for an instant and deliver its meaning. To William Morris also the world was a swift-moving succession of forms, glinting now with iridescent colours and breathing entranced melodies, with always the haunting fear in the observer's mind that if for one moment they should pause in their headlong flight they would vanish irrevocably into the void: life is many-hued, intricate motion; rest is death. And the evocation of Swinburne was essentially the same unintermittent flux of phenomena, though with him it took the special form of dissolving the earth into endless impressions of blowing wind and billowing water, with no solid ground beneath the feet. In Browning the new philosophy took the disguise

of a buoyant revelling in the mere conflict and tumult of life without any formal restraint upon its multiform activity. His joyous acceptance of the world and his optimistic assurance that all things will of themselves work out right have passed with many for spiritual insight, whereas in reality his appeal to the present is due to his blind courage in waiving the critical check of the spirit of permanence. So one might go on enumerating the major poets of the age, but the repetition would only add tedium to the argument, and, indeed, I have already touched on this point many times in my essays on individual writers.

There is of course another aspect of Victorian poetry which must not be ignored. As no age, even the most self-satisfied, is entirely itself, but carries with it the memory of all that has gone before, so these singers of the flux are troubled at times by echoes of a past experience. Now and again a line, a note, will slip in that recalls the old desire of changeless rest and of the consummation of peace. It might even be more exact to say that the poets of the century as a whole do not so much give utterance to the unhesitating acceptance of the official philosophy as they express its ever growing predominance. And thus the most characteristic voices among the Victorians were just the two, Tennyson and Matthew Arnold, who felt most

poignantly and sang most clearly, though in diverse ways, the transition from the old to the new. In Tennyson the two fields lay curiously side by side, and it is the sign of a certain lack of hardness in his mental fibre that he never seemed to perceive their mutual antagonism. At one moment he is the conscious laureate of science and evolution and of a self-evolving change moving to some far-off divine event; at another he is the prophet of insight, singing the mystery of the timeless, changeless spirit. Matthew Arnold's intelligence was too well-knit to suffer any such disruption of its powers. With him the error was deeper, yet more logical. Emotionally he was about equally susceptible to the prevailing currents of his day and of the past, and their intimate fusion produced a strange uneasiness of mind and heart, leaving him at home neither in this world nor the other. He looked abroad and saw nothing but change, and it seemed to him as if the permanent things that his soul craved were themselves in a state of transition. So it was he made his famous complaint, which is in a way the confession of his generation, at the Grande Chartreuse:

> Wandering between two worlds, one dead,
> The other powerless to be born,
> With nowhere yet to rest my head,
> Like these, on earth I wait forlorn.

But if this confusion in Matthew Arnold, or

parallelism in Tennyson, of the past and the present is characteristic of Victorian poetry, the victory in the end is coming overwhelmingly to the new philosophy. If any one writer represents the thought of those who are most deeply immersed in the spirit of the passing day, it is George Meredith, and there is no poet or prose-writer in English who more speaks and exalts the belief in humanity as completely involved in the process of natural growth. This I suspect, rather than any perversity of wit, is the true reason, that the few who have not yet utterly bent the knee to the time-spirit are at once attracted by his subtlety of superficial observation and repelled by the absence of those deep underlying emotions which they have learned to expect in great literature. He has written out his reading of life in *The Woods of Westermain*, and the heart of his reading is at the end of his glorification of Change as the wondrous renovator and revealer:

> Change, the strongest son of Life,
> Has the Spirit here to wife.

Perhaps we do not often enough consider the profound innovation that such a sentiment indicates, nor look unflinchingly into the great gulf that is separating our little space of time from all that has preceded. Innumerable poets of the past have reflected on the law of mutability and

on its part and meaning in human destiny, and their testimony, until this moment of ours, has been almost universally that which Spenser sang so exquisitely well in the unfinished book of *The Faerie Queene:*

> What man that sees the ever-whirling wheele
> Of *Change*, the which all mortall things doth sway,
> But that therby doth find, and plainly feele,
> How MUTABILITY in them doth play
> Her cruell sports, to many mens decay?

No doubt there is much to admire in our modern poets, with the great name of Tennyson at their head, who have bowed down in the temple of the idol of Mutability. They have many traits of beauty and strength; they tease us with subtle appeals to the heart and brain; they write from a wide and complicated experience, and their concern over "the hopeless tangle of the age" gives them often an air of profundity; yet withal they leave us doubting whether there is in them the solid stuff to endure. Some deeper satisfaction or assurance is wanting to their work, and they themselves seem in a way transitional and transitory, as their themes and their very rhythms spring from the spirit of change. If any one thing may be called certain in criticism, it is that the quintessence of poetical emotion, the very kernel of the bitter-sweet passion of life and the world,

arises from the simultaneous perception in man's destiny of the ever-fleeting and of that which is *contrayr to mutabilitie.* The contrast takes a thousand forms and conceals itself under many obscure disguises, but always, if you search deeply, you will discover its presence in the passages of verse, or even of prose, that stir in the reader's heart the lasting response of art. If illustrations are necessary, the most familiar are the best. Thus Andrew Marvell, in the poem inscribed *To His Coy Mistress*, starts suddenly from the contemplation of her several charms to that never-forgotten outcry:

> But at my back I always hear
> Time's wingèd chariot hurrying near,
> And yonder all before us lie
> Deserts of vast eternity.

In those lines, more perhaps than anywhere else in English, the coming together of change and changelessness, the conflict between the passionate desire of ephemeral beauty and the motionless depths of man's eternal nature, rises to a sublimity that is closer to fear than to pleasure. Oftener it speaks the language of regret or wistful playfulness, as in Waller's inimitable descant on the old, old theme:

> Go, lovely Rose!
> Tell her that wastes her time and me—

where the sting of the pathos is due to a kind of pretty condescension of the spirit to the transitory symbols of time. When I consider all the richness of emotional content that must go out of poetry with the loss in our consciousness of anything "stayed upon the pillars of eternity," I am filled with concern for the future of letters. Already the impoverishment of Victorian literature in this respect is notable, and even where the contrast between the two spheres of our nature is implied it comes generally with a significant assimilation of the higher to the lower; as in the well-known couplet of William Cory's *Mimnermus in Church:*

> But oh, the very reason why
> I clasp them, is because they die.

The Victorian age, even more than others, was a time of transition. It has passed, and one thing at least is sure: we shall have no great literature again until we have looked once more within our own breasts and learned that there is something in human nature besides an *indefinite congeries of changes.* As it is now the very mould and *genre* of the higher emotion have been lost. It is almost inconceivable, for example, that a true tragedy should be composed to-day; for the tragic character, whether it be Antigone breaking herself magnanimously in the name of the unwritten eternal laws against the edicts of

Creon, or Œdipus bruised and blinded by his ignorance of the divine purpose but caught up after years of submission into mystic fellowship with the gods, or Hamlet musing undecided while he listens to the fateful voices—everywhere the tragic mood depends on the unresolved conflict in human motives between the universal and the particular, the changeless law and the temporal passion. It even seems that, with the disappearance of the greater form, there is passing away the ambition to write greatly. And naturally. For if the permanence of a work of art is due to its fit expression of the permanent in human desire and experience, what room is there for the long hope, or what impulse to sacrifice present popularity for enduring fame, when the very notion has become discredited of any principle contrary to ceaseless change?

I have been concerned here primarily with literature, but obviously the destiny of literature is bound up with that of the practical world. If the disregard of permanence means formlessness and the absence of the higher emotion in letters, it means the same thing in society; nor under the existing worship of change, whether economic theory follows the individualism of Cobden or the collectivism of Karl Marx, can there be any escape for civilisation from the present dominance of material forces.

Relax those brutal bulwarks against the inrush of ungoverned change and the result is simple anarchy. Nor is there real hope from the mitigating influence of that humanitarian sympathy which has accompanied the growth of scientific intellectualism; for such sympathy is but another aspect of the same absorption in change, being an attempt of the individual to flow, so to speak, in the direction of every emotional impact from the world. It contains no power of resistance or principle of restraint, but tends on the contrary to make man a more helpless prey of the ever-encroaching flood. The only salvation is in the recognition of some superior guiding and dividing law of just rule and right subordination, in the perception, that is, of something permanent within the flux.

There is need of firm hearts and clear brains to bring us out of this slough of indifference, but unfortunately the strong men are too often paralysed by a curious superstition of words. The saying has gone abroad that strength means joy in change and that he who would question change is reactionary and effeminate; and so in the name of progress and virility we drift supinely with the current. If by reactionary is understood only the man who shudders at all innovation and who cries out for some impossible restoration of the past, the charge is well made. Such a man

in the social realm corresponds to the metaphysician who would deny the existence of change and the many for an exclusive and sterile idealism of the one. But reaction may be, and in the true sense is, something utterly different from this futile dreaming; it is essentially to answer action with action, to oppose to the welter of circumstance the force of discrimination and selection, to direct the aimless tide of change by reference to the co-existing law of the immutable fact, to carry the experience of the past into the diverse impulses of the present, and so to move forward in an orderly progression. If any young man, feeling now within himself the power of accomplishment, hesitates to be called a reactionary, in this better use of the term, because of the charge of effeminacy, let him take courage. The world is not contradicted with impunity, and he who sets himself against the world's belief will have need of all a man's endurance and all a man's strength. The adventurous soul who to-day against the reigning scientific and pragmatic dogma would maintain no vague and equally one-sided idealism, but the true duality of the one and the many, the absolute and the relative, the permanent and the mutable, will find himself subjected to an intellectual isolation and contempt almost as terrible as the penalties of the inquisition, and quite as effective in producing a silent con-

formity. If a man doubts this, let him try, and learn. Submission to the philosophy of change is the real effeminacy; it is the virile part to react.

THE END

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