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PREFACE.

In the first volume of this History we had to summarise the critical work of nearly two thousand years; in the second, that of two whole centuries, with the major part of that of the third. In this we have had the apparently more manageable task of considering the whole work of the nineteenth century only, with the *remanets* (left over, not by accident but design) from the eighteenth and earlier. Yet it would be a poor compliment to the reader's intelligence to waste time in explaining to him that the weight of the task is very little lightened by the lessened number of the years with which we have to deal. And the actual congestion of the volume ought all the less to be increased by repetition of things already said in former Prefaces, or by *single-stick play with reviewers*. Some points, which seemed to be really worth handling, I have dealt with in the text; the others I must let alone. I have little fear that many impartial and competent critics will dispute my claim to have surveyed the matter with the actual documents in hand, and not (save in the rare cases specified) from comments and go-betweens, from abstracts and translations; while such critics may even grant my "mass," as some indeed have in their kindness granted it already, a fair share of "agitating mind," under the conditions and with the limitations specified in the original preface. I may at least hope that I shall not be charged with

"la fretta
Che l'onestade ad ogni atto dismaga,"

in regard to a book which has been the actual work and companion of seven years in its composition, the result of more than seven-and-twenty in direct or indirect preparation.

After all it is, as Dante says elsewhere, for knowledge "not to prove but to set forth its subject," and I do not see any further necessity to argue against the notion that Criticism, alone of the departments of literary energy, is to be denied a simple and straightforward History of its actual accomplishments. That is what I set myself to give. If other people want other things, let them go and do them. When the next History of Criticism is written it will doubtless be, if the author knows his business, a much better book than mine; but I may perhaps hope that his might be worse, and would certainly cost him more time and labour, were it not for this.

One final point I think it may be well to take up. A friend who is at once friendly, most competent, and of a different complexion in critical thought, objected to me that I "treat literature as something by itself." I hastened to admit the impeachment, and to declare that this is the very postulate of my book. That literature can be *absolutely* isolated is, of course, not to be thought of, nothing human can be absolutely isolated from the general conditions of humanity, and from the other functions and operations thereof But in that *comparative* isolation and separate presentation which Aristotle meant by his caution against confusion of kinds, I do thoroughly believe. With which profession of faith, and with all renewed acknowledgments to friends and helpers, especially to Professors Elton, Ker, and Raleigh for their kindness in reading the proofs of this volume, I must leave the book to its fate.[1]

GEORGE SAINTSBURY.

HOLMBURY ST MARY, *Lammas* 1904.

[1] For uniformity's sake I have kept the title "to the present day." That day, however, was the day of the first volume, 1900; and should the book reappear it will read "to the end of the nineteenth century."

ADDENDA AND CORRIGENDA.

VOLUME I.

P. 63, note. "*Ludhaus*" should be "*Sudhaus*." I received from Professor Gudeman of Cornell University, along with the notice of this misprint, and some other minor corrections which I gratefully acknowledge, a large number of much more important animadversions, for noticing which generally I may make it a pretext. I have the highest respect for their author: and it is quite natural that to him, as a professed and professional classical philologist, my treatment should in many respects seem superficial, or amateurish, or even positively wrong. But on at least one point we are, I fear, irreconcilable. Professor Gudeman thinks that Kaibel has "settled once for all" the question of the Περὶ Ὕψους,—has "given incontrovertible proof" that it cannot be later than the first century. Now, as an old student of Logic and of Law, and as a literary critic of thirty years' standing, I absolutely deny the possibility of "settling once for all," of "incontrovertible proof," in this matter as in many others. The evidence is not extant, if it is existent. It may turn up, but it has not turned up yet. On this point—the point as to what constitutes *literary* evidence and what does not—I am well aware that I am at issue, perhaps with the majority, at any rate with a large number, of scholars in the ancient and modern languages; but I am quite content to remain so. As to another protest of Professor Gudeman's against my neglect of the latest editions, I might refer him to Schopenhauer (*v. infra*, p. 567); but I will only say that *for my purpose* the date of an edition is of very little importance, and the spelling of "*Gnæus*" or "*Cnæus*," "*iuris*" or "*juris*," of no importance at all. I am sorry to appear stiff necked in reference to criticisms made with many obliging expressions, but *Ich kann nicht anders*, as also in reference to Theophrastus, the Alexandrians, and others, whose substantive works are lost, but with whom Mr Gudeman would like me to deal in the usual manner of conjectural and inferential patchwork.

P. 280 I had not observed (oddly enough) that *Claris* had crept into text and headings, where it has no business, and that "Fabius" was misprinted "Falinus," till Professor Gudeman kindly brought both to my notice.

Pp 410, 411. I owe to Dr Sandys (in *Hermathena*, vol. xii. p. 438) the removal of certain ignorances or forgetfulnesses here. "Solymarius," as I most assuredly ought to have remembered, seeing that the information is in Warton, was a poem on the Crusades by Gunther, the author of the better known *Ligurinus* on Barbarossa, and the "Guntero" to whom I myself, in vol. ii. p. 96, alluded in connection with Patrizi. "Paraclitus" and "Sidonius" were two poems by Warnerius of Basle. I am even more indebted to Dr Sandys for a sheaf of privately communicated annotations on vol. i., of many of which I hope to avail myself in a future edition—if such a thing is called for.

VOLUME II.

P. 23 *sq.* A reference of Hallam's (*Literature of Europe*, iii. 5, 76, 77) to the *Miscellanies* of Politian has led some critics, who apparently do not know the book itself, and have not even read Hallam carefully, to object to its omission here. Their authority might have saved them; for he very correctly describes these *Miscellanies* as "sometimes grammatical, but more frequently relating to obscure customs and mythological allusions." In other words, the book—which *I* have read—is hardly, in my sense, critical at all.

P. 29, note 3, l. 3, *for* "ii." *read* "i." (The *first* vol. of Pope.)

P. 30, *for* "with his two great disciples" *read* "between his master Horace and his pupil Boileau."

P. 38, note, *for first sentence read* "But most of this latter part had been written in 1548-49, and all must have been before 1550, when T. died."

P. 51, l. 7 from bottom, *for* "Rote" *read* "Rota."

P. 67, l. 4, *for* "prose" *read* "poor."

P. 80, note. When I wrote on Castelvetro I was not aware that the Commentary on Dante (at least that on *Inf.*, Cantos i.-xxix.) had been recovered and published by Signor Giovanni Francesi (Modena, 1886) in a stately royal 4to (which I have now read, and possess), with the owl and the pitcher, but without the *Ἐκκύκλα*, and without the proper resolution in the owl's countenance. This may be metaphysically connected with the fact that the editor is rather unhappy about his author, and tells us that he was long in two minds about sending him out at last to the world. He admires Castelvetro's boldness, scholarship, intellect; but thinks him sadly destitute of reverence for Dante, and deplores his "lack of lively and cheerful sense of the Beautiful." If it were not that my gratitude to the man who gives me a text seals my mouth as to everything else, I should be a little inclined to cry "Fudge!" at this. Nobody would expect from any Renaissance scholar, and least of all from Castelvetro, "unction," mysticism, rapture at the things that give us rapture in Dante. All the more honour to him that, as in the case of Petrarch, he thought it worth while to bestow on that vernacular, which too many Renaissance scholars despised, the same intense desire to understand, the same pains, the same "taking seriously," which he showed towards the ancients. This is the true reverence: the rest is but "leather and prunella."

P. 87, l. 5, *for* "ideals" *read* "idols."

P. 107. Some time after vol. ii was published I came across (in the catalogues of Mr Voynich, who might really inscribe on these documents for motto

"Das Unzulängliche
Hier wird's Ereignis")

quite a nest of Zinanos, mostly written about that year 1590, which seems to have been this curious writer's most active time; and I bought two of them as specially appurtenant to our subject. One is a *Discorso della Tragedia*, appended (though separately paged and dedicated) to the author's tragedy of *Almerigo*, the other *Le Due Giornate della Ninfa overo del Diletto e delle Muse*, all printed by Bartholi, at Reggio, and the two prose books or booklets dated 1590. The *Discorso* is chiefly occupied with an attack on the position that Tragedy (especially according to Aristotle) ought to be busied with true subjects only. The *Giornate* (which contain another reference to Patrizzi) deal—more

or less fancifully, but in a manner following Boethius, which is interesting at so late a date—with philosophy and things in general, rather than with literature.

P. 140, l. 3 from bottom, *delete* "of" before Catullus.

P. 162, l. 17. "Thomas" should have been "George," as it appears correctly elsewhere: and "*fourth*" in the note should be "*quarto*" ("4th," "4to").

P. 191. "*Topmost* Verulam" should, of course, be "*large-browed* Verulam"—a curious instance of the tricks played by memory. I know *The Palace of Art* so well as to see it all printed before me, but the treacherous mind's eye must have slipped from the epithet of the first line, "topmost *oriels*," to the name of the third.

P. 248. In the line beginning *O, débile raison!* "lors" has been misprinted for "ores," thereby spoiling the metre.

P. 263, l. 12, *for* "Beni—Pacius" *read* "Beni and Pazzi (Pacius) as well as of Heinsius."

P. 301, note, "Grands Écrivains *Français*" should be "G. E. *de la France*."

P. 319, note. Gibert is, it seems, appended to some edd. of Baillet.

P. 322, bk. IV. chap i. I ought, perhaps, to have noticed in this context a book rather widely spread—Sorel's *De La Connoissance des Bons Livres*, Paris, 1671. It contains some not uninteresting things on literature in general, on novels, poetry, comedy, &c., on the laws of good speaking and writing, on the "new language of French." But it is, on the whole, as anybody acquainted with any part of the voluminous work of the author of *Francion* would expect, mainly not disagreeable nor ignorant *chat*—newspaper work before the newspaper.

P. 350 The opposition of the two "doctors" is perhaps too sharply put.

P. 376, note, *for* "Schenck" *read* "Strunk."

P. 436 I should like to add as a special "place" for Dennis's criticism, his comparatively early *Remarks on* Prince Arthur *and Virgil* (title abbreviated), London, 1696. It is, as it stands, of some elaboration; but its author tells us that he "meant" to do things which would have made it an almost complete Poetic from his point of view. It is pervaded with that refrain of "this *ought* to be" and "that *must* have been" to which I have referred in the text; and bristles with purely arbitrary preceptist statements, such as that Criticism cannot be ill-natured because Good Nature in man cannot be contrary to Justice and Reason, that a man must not like what he ought not to like—a doctrine underlying, of course, the whole Neo-classic teaching, and not that only; almost literally cropping up in Wordsworth; and the very formulation, in categorical-imperative, of La Harpe's "monstrous beauty." The book (in which poet and critic are very comfortably and equally yoked together) is full of agreeable things, and may possibly have suggested one of Swift's most exquisite pieces of irony in its contention that Mr Blackmore's Celestial Machines are directly contrary to the Doctrine of the Church of England.

P. 449, l. 1, *for* "is more curious" *read* "gives rather more."

P. 478, l. 12 from bottom, *for* "and in some cases" *read* "in the lady's case."

P. 546. Denina. This author is a good instance of the things which the reader sometimes rather reproachfully demands, when the writer would only too fain have supplied them. I could write more than a page with satisfaction on Denina's *Discorso sopra le Vicende della Litteratura*, which, rather surprisingly, underwent its second edition in Glasgow at the Foulis press (1763), and which not only deals at large with the subject in an interesting manner, but accepts

the *vestigia leoi* by dealing specially with *Scottish* literature. But, once more, this is for a fourth volume—or even a fifth—things belonging to the Thinkable-Unthinkable.

P. 550, note. Something like "pie" has been made of this. It should read: "This Gallicism was *not* universal. *As* Mr Ticknor," &c.

P. 554, l. 8. For the *Paragone* see the present volume under Conti, Antonio.

VOLUME III.

P. 254, note, *add*, "as well as sometimes on Southey"

P. 267, l. 4. I am glad to know that Blake's poems at least, and at last, are being edited more than competently.

P. 283, note 2. I accepted too hastily the statement that T. Wright contributed to the *Retrospective Review* proper. Dates (see Index) will show that he could not have done so, though he might to the so-called "Third" series.

P. 308, l. 8 from bottom, *for* "Mestre" *read* "Maestre."

P. 312, l. 24, *for* "nor" *read* "or."

P. 357, *for* "Walder" *read* "Wilder."

P. 357, *addenote*, *for* "Geschmack" *read* "Geschmacks."

P. 488 Perhaps the *most* remarkable example of this parody-criticism is Aytoun's *Firmilian*, an astonishing satire-judgment, not merely of the actual "Spasmodics," but of the long-subsequent class, all over Europe, of whom Dr Ibsen is the chief.

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BOOK VII

THE DISSOLVENTS OF NEO-CLASSICISM

"*May there not be something in the Gothic Romance peculiarly suited to the views of a genius and to the ends of poetry? And may not the philosophic moderns have gone too far in their perpetual ridicule and contempt of it?*"—HURD.

"*Quelquefois un besoin de philosopher gâte tout.*"—JOUBERT.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY AND RETROSPECTIVE.

SCOPE OF THE VOLUME—THE TERM MODERN—THE ORIGINS—NEED OF CAUTION HERE—CASE OF BUTLER ON RYMER, DENHAM—AND BENLOWES—OF ADDISON AND OTHERS—OF LA BRUYÈRE AND "TOUT EST DIT"—OF FÉNELON AND GRAVINA—OF DRYDEN AND FONTENELLE—THE MORE EXCELLENT WAY.

THE present volume takes the work of no more than one century, the nineteenth, as a whole; but, according to our plan, casts back to the eighteenth, and even earlier, in order to deal with those dissidents or pioneers who then laid the foundation of the chief critical performances of the nineteenth itself.

Scope of the volume.

For this work—foundation and superstructure—there is no more convenient and suitable appellation than "Modern," used neither in the complimentary and rather question-begging sense which has recently been attached to it,[1] nor in the more slighting one of Shakespeare, but with a merely accurate and chronological connotation. Some would call this criticism "Romantic", but that term, in addition to a certain vagueness, has the drawbacks both of question-begging and of provocation. There is no other that has the slightest claim to enter into competition, though we may have in passing to refer to such pretenders as "Æsthetic," "Dogmatic," "Scientific," and what not.

The term Modern.

The term "Modern" has, moreover,—so long as it is dis-

[1] Especially in the phrase "the Modern Spirit"—a *Geist* who seems to have received the blessing of a good opinion of himself, and to have no inclination to "deny" it.

sociated from any such futile belittling of "Ancient" as was implied in its use during the Quarrel,—the great advantage of keeping a secondary, but very convenient and in no way objectionable, opposition to "Ancient" itself. We have seen that, with much intelligent and judicious, there was more unintelligent and corrupt, following of the ancients during the period which we surveyed in the last volume: and that there was a still more dangerous and hurtful tendency to disfranchise modern literature as an equal source with ancient for the discovery of critical truths. Now, if there is a point wholly to be counted for righteousness, to at least the better part of the criticism which has prevailed for the last hundred years, and was a militant force for at least fifty years earlier, it is this taking into consideration of "Modern" literature, not to the exclusion of "Ancient," but on even terms with it It is no doubt much easier to say *nullo discrimine habebo*[1] than to carry it out, especially as a man grows older. But it is the cardinal principle of "Modern" criticism that the most modern of works is to be judged, not by adjustment to anything else, but on its own merits—that the critic must always behave as if the book he takes from its wrapper might be a new *Hamlet* or a new *Waverley*,—or something as good as either, but more absolutely novel in kind than even *Waverley*,—however shrewdly he may suspect that it is very unlikely to be any such thing.

The origins.

The actual investigation of the last volume brought us down to (and in La Harpe's case a little beyond) the close of the eighteenth century itself, and showed us the final stages of the Neo-Classic dynasty, which still, in all European countries except Germany, reigned, and even appeared to govern; but which, not merely in Germany but to some extent also in England, was on the point of having the sceptre wrenched out of its hands. We had traced this critical system from its construction or reconstruction by the Italians of the sixteenth century onwards; we saw its merits and its defects. And we saw likewise that, in the usual

[1] As I have known this quotation challenged, I may observe that there is a Tenth book of the *Æneid* as well as a First.

general, gradual, incalculable way, opposition to it, conscious or unconscious, began to grow up at different times and in different places. This opposition was a plant of early but slow and fitful growth in England, rather later but more vigorous and rapid in Germany, while in the Southern countries it hardly grew at all, and in France was cruelly attacked and kept down, if not exactly extirpated, by the weeding-hook of authority.

Need of caution here.

But it does not follow that we can put the finger on this and that person as having "begun" the new movement. Such an opinion is always tempting to not too judicious inquirers, and there has been no lack of books on *Le Romantisme des Classiques* and the like. The fact, of course, simply is that everything human exists essentially or potentially in the men of every time; and that you may not only find books in the running brooks but (what appears at first more contradictory) dry stones in them. while, on the other hand, founts of water habitually gush from the midst of the driest rock. Indagation of the kind is always treacherous, and has to be conducted with a great deal of circumspection.

Case of Butler on Rymer, Denham,

It would be difficult to find an author who illustrates this danger and treachery better than Butler, whom some may have been surprised not to find in the last volume. The author of *Hudibras* was born not long after Milton, and nearly twenty years before Dryden, who outlived him by the same space. His great poem did not give much room for critical utterances in literature; but the *Genuine Remains*[1] are full of it in separate places, both verse and prose. Take these singly, and you may make Butler out to be, not merely a critic, but half a dozen critics. In perhaps the best known of his minor pieces, the *Repartees between Cat and Puss*, he satirises "Heroic" Plays, and is therefore clearly for "the last age," as also in the savage and admirable "On Critics who Judge Modern Plays precisely by

[1] Published, not entirely, by Thyer of Manchester in 1759 (2 vols.) A handsome reprint of 1827 gives only a few of the prose "Characters": more of these, but not the whole, were given by Mr H. Morley in his *Character-Writing of the Seventeenth Century* (London, 1891) The verse remains may be found in Chalmers or in the Aldine (vol. ii., London, 1893).

the Rules of the Ancients," which has been reasonably, or certainly, thought to be directed against Rymer's blasphemy of Beaumont and Fletcher, published two years before Butler's death. The satirist's references and illustrations (as in that to "the laws of good King Howel's days") are sometimes too Caroline to be quotable; but the force and sweep of his protest is simply glorious. The *Panegyric on Sir John Denham* is chiefly personal; but if Butler had been convinced that *Cooper's Hill* was the *ne plus ultra* of English poetry he could hardly have written it: and though the main victim of "To a Bad Poet" has not been identified,[1] the lines—

> "For so the rhyme be at the verse's end,
> No matter whither all the rest does tend"—

could scarcely have been written except against the new poetry. The "Pindaric Ode on Modern Critics" is chiefly directed against the general critical vice of snarling, and the passages on critics and poets in the *Miscellaneous Thoughts* follow suit. But if we had only the verse *Remains* we should be to some extent justified in taking Butler, if not for a precursor of the new Romanticism, at any rate for a rather strenuous defender of the old.

But turn to the *Characters*. Most of these that deal with literature are in the general vein which the average seventeenth-century character-writer took from Theophrastus, though few put so much salt of personal wit into this as Butler. In "A Small Poet" the earlier pages might be aimed at almost anybody from Dryden himself (whom Butler, it is said, did not love) down to Flecknoe. But there is only one name mentioned in the piece; and that name, which is made the object of a furious and direct attack, lightened by some of the brightest flashes of Butler's audacious and acrid humour, is the name of Edward Benlowes.[2] Now, that Benlowes

and Benlowes.

[1] A blank rhyme indicates "Howard"—whether Edward or Robert does not matter. But another blank requires a trisyllable to fill it.

[2] Benlowes is a warning to "illustrated poets." It pleased him to have his main book (*Theophila, or Love's Sacrifice*. London, 1652, folio) splendidly decorated by Hollar and others; and the consequence is that copies of it are very rare, and generally mutilated when found. I congratulate myself

is a person *taillable et corvéable à merci et à miséricorde* by any critical oppressor, nobody who has read him can deny. He is as extravagant as Crashaw without so much poetry, and as Cleveland without so much cleverness. But he is a poet, and a "metaphysical" poet (as Butler was himself in another way), and an example, though a rather awful example, of that "poetic fury" which makes Elizabethan poetry. Yet Butler is more savage with him than with Denham.

The fact is that Butler's criticism is merely the occasional determination of a man of active genius and satiric temper to matters literary. Absurdities strike him from whatever school they come; and he lashes them unmercifully whensoever and whencesoever they present themselves. But he has no general creed: he speaks merely to his brief as public prosecutor of the ridiculous, and also as a staunch John Bull. If he had been writing at the time when his *Remains* were first actually published, it is exceedingly probable that he would have "horsed" Gray as pitilessly as he horses Benlowes; if he had been writing sixty years later still, that he would have been as "savage and Tartarly" to Keats and Shelley, or seventy years later, to Tennyson, as the *Quarterly* itself. This is not criticism: and we must look later and more carefully before we discern any real revolution in literary taste.

Of Addison and others.

It is even very unsafe to attempt to discover much definite and intentional precursorship in Addison, who was born sixty years after Butler. There is no need to repeat what has been said of what seems to me misconception as to his use of the word Imagination: nor is this the point which is principally aimed at here. But the more we examine Addison's critical utterances, whether we agree with Hurd or not that they are "shallow," we shall, I think, be forced to conclude that any depth they may have has nothing to do with Romanticism. Addison likes Milton, no doubt, because he is a sensible man and a good critic, as a general reason. But

on having first read Benlowes and William Woty, a minor poet of a century later, on the same day. To study *Theophila* and *The Blossoms of Helicon* in succession is quite a critical gaudy.

when we come to investigate special ones we shall find that he likes him rather because he himself is a Whig, a pupil of Dryden, and a religious man—nay, perhaps even because he really does think that Milton carries out the classical idea of Epic—than because of Milton's mystery, his "romantic vague," his splendour of diction and verse and imagery. So, too, the admiration of *Chevy Chase* is partly a whim or a joke, partly determined by the fact that at that time the Whigs were the "Jingoes," and that *Chevy Chase* is very pugnacious and very patriotic. Nowhere, from the articles on True and False Wit to the Imagination papers, do we find any real sense of unrest or dissatisfaction with the accepted theory of poetry. There is actually more in Prior, with all his profanation of the *Nut-browne Maid* and his distortions of the Spenserian stanza.

Of La Bruyère and "Tout est dit."

So if we look backward a little, and a little southward, we shall, despite the praise which we were able to accord to some critical dicta of La Bruyère, find very little reason to regard that admirable master of Addison himself as a "Romantic before Romanticism." He is a sensible man with a fairly catholic taste: but that is all. Nay, his principle of *Tout est dit*, though not quite irresistibly in practice, almost certainly leads to the conclusion that the oldest writers are likely to be the best, and to the habit of extending to new writers, or to the mass of precedent writing, a rather lukewarm welcome and a distinctly prejudiced criticism. In a certain sense, no doubt, all *has* been said long ago—in gist, in matter, in subject. But then in literature, and especially in poetry, there is so much which is beside the gist, that is superadded to the matter, that does *not* depend upon the subject! The thoughts suggested by birth and death, by dawn and sunset, by a blush and a smile, by the red wine when it moveth itself aright in the glass, and the green sea stretching from the white cliff-foot, and the "huge and thoughtful night," will always be at bottom and in essence the same. But he must be a blind person who does not see that at any moment any poet who *can* may give them an entirely new form and cast and presenta-

tion.* In this sense—and it is the sense of the best "modern" criticism—"tout est *à dire.*"

Of Fénelon and Gravina.

We may seem to have got into an *impasse:* nor will such excellent persons as Fénelon, and to go to yet another country, Gravina,[1] help us out of it. Fénelon indeed had, as we saw, some striking resipiscences, some individual pronouncements which, if they were as unaccompanied by others as they are disconnected from them, would be very promising indeed. But this very company that they do *not* keep disestates them unluckily: and you cannot doubt, as you read *Télémaque*, that if the world had had to depend upon its author for leadership in the migration from the critical House of Bondage, it would never have got over the Red Sea, if it had even started on the journey. Gravina, to that general perspicacity and equity which distinguishes all these doubtful cases, added an unusually early and thorough appreciation of *Greek*, and the advantage, peculiar to an Italian, of having an actual classical period of modern literature extending over four entire centuries: of all which he made good use. But it is at least very difficult to discover, either in his original work or in the general trend of his critical utterances, any dissatisfaction with the prevailing direction of criticism in his time, or any determination to take a wider outlook.

Of Dryden and Fontenelle.

Indeed, putting aside Dryden (whose method led straight to the Promised Land, and whose utterances show that he occasionally saw it afar off) as one who came too early to feel any very conscious desire of setting out on the pilgrimage of discovery, Fontenelle is perhaps the very earliest critic of distinction who shows a decided restlessness. And he, as we have sufficiently set forth, has too much of the critical Puck about him to be a safe guide for the wayfaring man. In fact, "Lord! what fools these mortals be!" is an exclamation which is always hovering on the door of his lips, and sometimes all but escapes it.

But this history must have been told to very little purpose if readers still expect sharp and decided turns, assignable to

[1] I do not make Vico my Italian example, for the same reasons which induced me to postpone him to this volume. See *inf.*, chap. v.

definite hours and particular men, in the evolutions of criticism. *The more excellent way.* Rather has it been one of our special lessons—it would be uncritical to say our special objects—to prove that these things are not to be expected. It is a part of the Neo-Classic error itself to assume some definite goal of critical perfection towards which all things tend, and which, when you have attained it, permits you to take no further trouble except of imitation and repetition. Just as you never know what new literary form the human genius may take, and can therefore never lay down any absolute and final schedule of literary kinds, and of literary perfection within these kinds, so you can never shape the set of the prevalent taste, and you can never do much more than give the boat the full benefit of the current by dexterous rowing and steering. Indeed, as we have seen, the taste in criticism and the taste in creation unite, or diverge, or set dead against each other in a manner quite incalculable, and only interpretable as making somehow for the greater glory of Literature. Somewhere about the time to which we have harked back—the meeting of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, or a little later, or much later, as the genius of different countries and persons would have it—a veering of the wind, an eddy of the current, *did* take place. And it is of this that we have to give account in the present Book—of the consequences of it that we have to give an account in the present volume.

CHAPTER II.

THE RALLY OF GERMANY—LESSING.

STARTING-POINT OF THIS VOLUME—NEO-CLASSIC COMPLACENCY AND EXCLUSIVENESS ILLUSTRATED FROM CALLIÈRES—BÉAT DE MURALT—HIS ATTENTION TO ENGLISH—AND TO FRENCH—GERMAN CRITICISM PROPER—A GLANCE BACKWARD—THEOBALD HOECK—WECKHERLIN AND OTHERS—WEISE, WERNICKE, WERENFELS, ETC.—SOME MUTINEERS: GRYPHIUS AND NEUMEISTER—GOTTSCHED ONCE MORE—BODMER AND BREITINGER—THE 'DISKURSE DER MALER'—GRADUAL DIVERGENCE FROM THEIR STANDPOINT; KONIG ON "TASTE"—MAIN WORKS OF THE SWISS SCHOOL—BREITINGER'S 'KRITISCHE DICHTKUNST,' ETC—BODMER'S 'VON DEM WUNDERBAREN,' ETC—SPECIAL CRITICISMS OF BOTH—BODMER'S VERSE CRITICISM—THEIR LATER WORK IN MEDIÆVAL POETRY, AND THEIR GENERAL POSITION—THE "SWISS-SAXON" QUARREL—THE ELDER SCHLEGELS: JOHANN ADOLF—JOHANN ELIAS—MOSES MENDELSSOHN—LESSING—SOME CAUTIONS RESPECTING HIM—HIS MORAL OBSESSION, ON 'SOLIMAN THE SECOND'—THE STRICTURES ON ARIOSTO'S PORTRAIT OF ALCINA—'HAMLET' AND 'SEMIRAMIS'—THE 'COMTE D'ESSEX,' 'RODOGUNE,' 'MÉROPE'—LESSING'S GALLOPHOBIA—AND TYPOMANIA—HIS STUDY OF ANTIQUITY MORE THAN COMPENSATING—AND ESPECIALLY OF ARISTOTLE—WITH WHOM HE COMBINES DIDEROT—HIS DEFICIENCIES IN REGARD TO MEDIÆVAL LITERATURE—THE CLOSE OF THE 'DRAMATURGIE' AND ITS MORAL—MISCELLANEOUS SPECIMENS OF HIS CRITICISM—HIS ATTITUDE TO ÆSCHYLUS AND ARISTOPHANES—FREDERIC THE GREAT—'DE LA LITTÉRATURE ALLEMANDE.'

Starting-point of this volume.

IT should not be necessary to make much further observation of the linking kind between this volume and the last; but a few more words may be desirable on the fact that from a very early period of the eighteenth century itself there were perceptible underground mutterings of revolt, and that, steadily or fitfully, another current of criticism, fed likewise by springs underground,

made its appearance side by side with, but running counter to, the orthodox, yet almost entirely neglected by orthodoxy. Orthodoxy indeed, in its special home, would have specially emphasised the scornful question, "Can any good thing come out of *Germany?*" The *locus* of Bouhours is hackneyed, and has been quoted already (ii. 315). But nothing can better show the state of complacent fatuity to which Neo-Classicism, *plus* national conceit, had reduced the French at the close of the seventeenth century, than the "Laws of Apollo," which, in the twelfth book of the treatise which has the honour to have given suggestions to Swift, Callières[1] represents the god as promulgating to appease the strife of Ancients and Moderns. *Les trois nations polies* are the French, the Italians, and the Spaniards: all others are more or less barbarians. These barbarians (including not only the Germans, but the nation which had to its credit Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare, Milton, and Dryden, with others who, if lesser than these, were the equals of the two or three best of France) may be allowed to write Latin as a concession to the literary incompetence of their own tongues; but the polished nations should not do so. Homer is the greatest of all poets, and Virgil the second; the third place had better remain vacant. No witchcraft or romance of chivalry is to be admitted into poetry. Acrostics and anagrams are to be banished from it. *Et patati et patata.* Apollo himself could at the time hardly have got into the head of Callières, not merely academician but diplomatist as he was, what an utterly ridiculous figure he would cut to all but the most philosophical and tolerant of posterity. Yet be it remembered that Gottsched held no different creed nearly fifty years after in Germany itself, and La Harpe no very different one more than a hundred years after in France; while among ourselves, and halfway between these two, even such iconoclasts in other ways as Adam Smith and David Hume would have made very little difficulty about accepting it. The overthrow of a belief of such prevalence, such toughness, such duration, cannot have been achieved but by agencies

Neo-Classic complacency and exclusiveness illustrated from Callières

[1] *V. sup.*, ii. 450, 553

widespreading, patient, various: and it is these agencies that we must now investigate.

Béat de Muralt

Not very many years later than the *Histoire Poétique* there was written, in French also, but not by a Frenchman, a document curiously different in tenor, though by no means ostensibly, or indeed to any great extent really, breaking with Neo-Classicism. The Swiss—as their peculiar position, not merely politically in the midst of Europe, but racially as overlapping and overlapped by France, Germany, and Italy, made almost necessary—had begun early to take a sort of bystander-view of European Literature. The excellent essay of Herr Hamelius[1] was perhaps the first recent document to attract much attention to the *Lettres sur les Anglois et sur les Francois* of Béat Louis de Muralt. Muralt was a French-writing but a German-speaking Swiss, he says (rather to his disadvantage as a critic, but usefully on this head) that "Houmour" is "ce que *nous* appellons *Einfall*," and what the French mean by "dire de bons mots," from which we can at least see that the excellent M. de Muralt had not the faintest notion of what Humour specifically is. He travelled in England during the last decade of the seventeenth century; but his *Letters* upon us and the French were not published till 1727, in 12mo, with no imprint of place. They acquired, after the fashion of the time, a sort of "snow-ball" increment of comment by apologists (a "Lord," of course, for England), and are chiefly valuable as symptoms. Muralt is, as we should expect, much more occupied with manners than with letters, and in fact, as regards English, deals in detail with hardly any literary kind save comedy. Here (as the *orbis terrarum* often remarks of our *alter orbis*) he thinks that we have too good an opinion of ourselves. "Sur toutes sortes de sujets il faut qu'ils se préfèrent au reste du monde." He thinks Corneille and Molière (whom he would specially avenge) ill-treated by the English dramatists who borrow from

His attention to English,

[1] *Op cit sup.*, ii. 425 note, p. 71 I am not certain whether this came before or after the 1897 reprint (by E. Ritter: Paris and Berne) of Muralt. But Dr Otto von Greyerz had some years earlier published a study of him (Frauenfeld, 1888), which I have not yet seen.

them. He accuses Dryden—not by name, but transparently and truly as "the most famous of their poets"—of stealing from Corneille and abusing him; neither of which articles is just. On the other hand, he is certainly too complimentary (though Saint-Evremond[1] was responsible for the exaggeration) in calling Shadwell "*one of* the most famous" of the same poets; and we may abandon *The Miser* to his arrows. He admits that our literature outside the theatre is "full of good sense and originality," but says little about it. He has himself the good sense to object to Louis Quatorze dress, for Romans and Carthaginians, on both stages.

and to French.

He is much more copious on French Literature; and his judgments here are more interesting, because he is at a more original angle. Much of his outlook is purely Neo-Classic. He has a thorough belief in Kinds; he has abundance to say "in the *abstract*" about *bon sens* and *bel esprit*; and for one writing so late he is surprisingly copious on Voiture and Sarrasin and Balzac. He thinks Rabelais quite "beneath humanity,"—having indeed, here and elsewhere, a good deal of solid German morals about him The most surprising thing is his attitude to Boileau, whom he pronounces to have plenty of sense and art, but no great genius This attitude, and the taking of English literature into serious literary consideration for almost the first time on the Continent, since Lilius Giraldus,[2] are the things which, from the literary side, deserve most note in Muralt.[3] And the latter—not by any means merely from that point of view of "preferring ourselves to others"—is the most important of all. So long as general critical attention to modern literature was confined to French, Italian, and Spanish, all intimately connected with and indebted to each other, and all descended from Latin, no real "fermentation" could take place. The English yeast set it going at once, in Germany as elsewhere.

[1] *V. sup.*, ii 271.

[2] *V. sup*, ii 63

[3] From the social-historical side he is very valuable. It is a pity, and rather a surprise, that Macaulay did not know—for if he had known he must have used—him. No foreign writer is more valuable as illustrating the astonishing coarseness and the less astonishing immorality which the Puritan curse had directly, or by reaction, brought upon England.

Muralt, however, was an exceptional and cosmopolitan sort of person, and the note which he sounded was not immediately taken up, though it is very noteworthy that when it was, it was again in Switzerland.

German Criticism proper.

The account which we gave of German criticism proper before 1700, and of that part of it which belongs to the Neo-Classic dispensation after that date, was avowedly scanty: the reasons for this apparent stinginess being twofold — the comparative paucity of the materials, and even more the comparative unimportance of almost all those that do exist. But we undertook in a manner to make good the seeming slight; and it is our present business to do so.[1]

A glance backward.

We saw that up to the eighteenth century, and indeed nearly up to the end of its first quarter, German criticism had done very little, and that it was never to do much in the direction of "correctness." Indirectly, however, in the later half of the seventeenth century, when the *furia* of the Thirty Years' War had in a manner sunk to rest, something was done in the way of preliminary fermentation both by the late inoculation of Germany with the Euphuist-Marinist-Gongorist measles, which is there identified chiefly with the names of Lohenstein and Hoffmanswaldau, and by reaction

[1] For the special subjects of the present chapter, putting Lessing, and even him not wholly, out of the question, there exists a remarkably "ingoing" monograph, Herr Friedrich Braitmaier's *Geschichte der Poetischen Theorie und Kritik von den Diskursen der Maler bis auf Lessing* (Frauenfeld, 1889). This book has been of great use to me; and I do not think that any one can read it without respect for the author's learning, his good sense, and the clearness and definiteness of his report. His *compte rendu* of particular authors is often larger than it need be for a fair first view; while neither it nor anything else can ever dispense the thorough student from going to originals; and he might be here and there less polemical. But these things will not displease some readers, and certainly they do not spoil the book, which, however, be it observed, is deplorably in want of an index. With it should be taken the extremely full and informing introduction—almost a book in itself—of Herr Johann von Antoniewicz to the ed. of Joh. Elias Schlegel, cited below For almost all my German chapters I am also much indebted to the admirable *Grundriss der Geschichte d. Deutsch. Nationallit.* of Koberstein (ed 5, by Bartsch, Leipzig: 5 vols. and index, 1872-73)—a book which, let some say what they will, is not likely soon to be really obsolete.

against this,[1] while something further has, at least by some, been considered to have been done by Gottsched himself.

Theobald Hoeck.

The works of this period are not, I believe, very common even in Germany, but the unwearied intelligence with which the British Museum has been managed for the last two generations has supplied English readers with a very fair, though not yet quite satisfying, proportion of the most important. The earliest of these authors—a predecessor of Opitz even, who might, and perhaps should, have been mentioned in the last volume—was Theobald Hoeck, or as he is called on the title-page of his quaintly-named *Poems*,[2] Otho-blad Oeckhe. Hoeck makes the nineteenth chapter of his "Fair Field of Flowers" an ode of fourteen five-lined stanzas, *Von Art der Deutschen Poeterey*, which perhaps ranks next to, and certainly marks the new departure from, the vernacular Meister-song *Arts* referred to above.[3] But the style and the gist of the piece are, I think, fairly enough shown in the following stanza—

> "Warumb sollen wir denn unser Teutsche Sprache[n]
> In gwisse Form und Gsatz nit auch mogen machen,
> Und Deutsches Carmen schreiben,
> Die Kunst zu treiben
> Bey Mann und Weiben?"

But it is hard for the poet when he has both metre and rhyme to look to—when

> "Mann muss die *Pedes* gleich so wol scandiren
> Den dactylum und auch Spondaeum rieren,"

and at the same time see that his rhymes are proper. The thing is interesting as exhibiting modern German poetry in the

[1] The text-book for German seventeenth century criticism is that of Dr Karl Borinski, *Die Poetik der Renaissance und die Anfang der literarischen Kritik in Deutschland* (Berlin, 1886). This book is "choke-full" of information and indication, and the only possible faults that Momus himself could find with it are—first, that the author sometimes digresses somewhat from his path, which is itself so little trodden that one would like him to stick to it, and, secondly, that his dealings with his subject might be rather clearer and more methodic in the text, and, being what they are, are all the more in want of a clear and methodic table of contents. But I am too much indebted to him to quarrel.

[2] *Schones Blumenfeldt.* Lignitz, 1601. 4to

[3] ii. 360 note.

go-cart, with laudable anxiety on the part of the infant to go rightly.

Weckherlin and others.

The chief ferment, however, of German poetic and criticism of a kind did not come till towards the middle of the century and when the Thirty Years' War was dying down (though it is thought to have been to some extent determined by the sojourning of at least one German of letters[1] in England quite in the earlier stage of that convulsion): and it took final colour from French rather than from English, partly in the form of Pléiade and Louis Treize *ampullæ*, partly in that of "correctness" (as far as the Germans could reach it) *à la* Boileau. The earlier inquirers, such as Schottel, Zesen, Buchner, were painful and estimable rhetoricians, anxious to get German into good scholastic ways. Schottel, in his *Teutsche Sprachkunst*[2] and other works, is quite of the old fashion in compounding rhetoric-poetic-composition books with dictionary. Zesen's *Hochdeutscher Helikon*[3] is an extremely fat little book, the component parts of which are separately paged, and sometimes not paged at all, and which discusses with the utmost care the terms of the art in metre, rhyme, stanza-building, &c., gives rhyming dictionaries first of masculine then of feminine rhymes, supplies plenteous example-verse, and finishes with a *De Poetica* of a more general kind. Augustine Buchner[4] is still older-fashioned, and reminds one of the sixteenth-century Italians in his little tractate on the office and aim of poetry, its kinds, ornaments, &c.

These are hardly at all critical; they are rhetorical-preceptist. But the later men, such as Weise, Wernicke, and Werenfels, exhibit the revolt against the school of conceit and bombast which in the later part of the seventeenth century radiates from France all over Europe. Christian Weise, *Professor Poeseos* as he called himself, degrades Poetry in his *Curiose Gedanken neben*

Weise, Wernicke, Werenfels, &c.

[1] G. R. Weckherlin. See Borinski, p. 51. The influence of English literature on German was still pretty strong. Sidney's *Arcadia* was translated in 1629.

[2] Braunschweig, 1651.

[3] Berlin-Jena, 1656.

[4] *Kurzer Wegweiser zur Deutsch-Trchtkunst.* Je[h]na, 1663. Some of Buchner's original work seems to be lost, if it ever was published.

Deutschen Versen (1691) to the position of a mere *ancilla* of Rhetoric, and seems to have anticipated Shaftesbury in making "ridicule the test of truth." His namesake, Wernicke, in the "Ad Lectorem" of his *Poetische Versuche*,[1] extols Longinus, and makes "polite" remarks on Lohenstein and Hoffmanswaldau. But *the* German manifesto against the florid is the *Dissertatio de Meteoris Orationis* appended to the *De Logomachiis Eruditorum* of Samuel Werenfels, which appeared at Amsterdam within the eighteenth century,[2] dedicated to no less a person than Gilbert Burnet, but presents the matter of two theses composed fourteen and ten years earlier The *De Logomachiis* itself has a certain interest for us, as it hits among other things at frivolous and verbal criticism; but the *Dissertatio* is all ours. Werenfels, as usual basing himself upon Longinus, without the slightest suspicion that he will be undone by his reliance, distinguishes between ὑψηλα and μετέωρα — our old friends the True and the False Sublime. He admits the importance of Imagination, but will have it strictly ruled by Judgment, and makes another distinction (not without acuteness) between good Figures and bad. He harks as far back as Longolius and the Ciceronians for examples of literary will-worship; but is evidently thinking throughout rather of gorgeousness than of over-precision, and directs his attacks specially at Claudian among the ancients, though he names Gongora among the moderns. His final decision is that Italians, Spaniards, and Germans are all painfully given to the meteoric; the French are *sanores*.[3]

Some mutineers Gryphius and Neumeister.

The germaner spirit of Germany, however,—to speak "meteorically" and in character,—was by no means quenched by these *douches* of correctness, and continued to assert itself at intervals between the practice of the Silesians and the theory of the Swiss. The most considerable German dramatist of the seventeenth century, Andreas Gryphius, not merely neglected the "classical" rules in his plays, but made light of them in prefaces

[1] I use the Zürich reprint of 1749.

[2] 1702.

[3] A comparison of the three contemporaries, Gravina, Werenfels, and Addison, would make an interesting critical essay.

and lectures. Just before the end of the century, Erdmann Neumeister (who was to live sixty years longer and overlap the time of Goethe), enthusiastically recommending the fashionable opera, dismisses the rules with a contemptuous inaccuracy[1] much more humiliating than any polemic.

Without therefore wandering longer in these side-walks, we may say that they form a real approach to the Romantic Revolt of the next century, quite as much as—perhaps more than—they lead to the Gottschedian preciseness. And this should sufficiently justify the notice of them here.

Gottsched once more.

The most important—perhaps one might say the only important—critical document furnished by Gottsched himself to our general history is the *Kritische Dichtung*, which has been already disposed of,[2] and this is a document of the extremest Neo-Classicism. But he did not reach this point at once · and the successive hardenings of heart by which he did reach it are a curious topsy-turvy document in the other sense—a document of the growth of Romanticism, and its effect in making its enemies the more stubborn. These stages have been traced diligently and clearly, if perhaps with a little unnecessary *animus* and polemic, by Herr Braitmaier.[3] When the appearance of the *Diskurse der Maler* (*v. infra*) induced Gottsched (who is allowed by friends and foes to have had a very shrewd literary sense of the journalist's or publisher's kind) to imitate them in the periodical entitled *Die Vernunftigen Tadlerinnen*[4] — "The Intelligent Blamingwomen" or "Carperesses"—his attitude was not at first very different from that of his then friends, Bodmer and Breitinger, in appearance at least. But he proceeded to pay attention (perhaps guided by them) to French criticism and he henceforward followed it,

[1] "Some are so rigorous that they will only have a time of one *or two* days." I quote from Borinski, p. 364, not having seen the original.

[2] *V. sup.*, II. 552-557

[3] *Op. cit.*, Part I., Chaps 1-5 and 8. His special enemy or target is Danzel's *Gottsched und seine Zeit* (Leipzig, 1848), an unhesitating championship of the classical champion.

[4] 1725-26 These eccentric and sometimes *baroque* titles were a mania with German men of letters. It had become epidemic in the fifteenth century, and continued so till the eighteenth, if not longer, the last very distinguished patient being, of course, Jean Paul. In this the *feminine* is an exaggeration of the Addisonian tendency to "fair-sex it," as Swift says.

more and more to do evil in another periodical, the *Biedermann*, in the successive editions of his *Kritische Dichtkunst*, with increasing intensity in the important *Beitrage zur Kritischen Historie der Deutschen Sprache Poesie und Beredsamkeit*, which he directed from 1732 to 1744, and lastly, in the pamphlets and articles of the so-called Swiss-Saxon or Leipzig-Zurich war.

As for the claims of Gottsched to be not a mere critical fossil, but a real reformer and even a kind of precursor of the great German literary school, in criticism as well as on creation, from Lessing to Goethe, they were first put forward many years ago by Danzel, and after the usual manner of literary whitewashings of the paradoxical kind, have been accepted by some since. But they never could have commended themselves to impartial and instructed students of literary history: and they have been quite sufficiently disposed of by Herr Braitmaier. One may fully take the view which was put forward towards the end of the last volume about Gottsched's critical worth, and yet have formed it with full knowledge of the fact that he was an active and well-intentioned worker in that enormous effort towards self-improvement to which justice has there been done. But the notion that he was really a fellow-worker with the Swiss school is, I must repeat, mistaken; and the further notions of his having played the part of Dante, or at least of Du Bellay, towards the purification and exaltation of German language, and almost that of Dryden towards the refashioning of German literature, are but fond things.[1]

Bodmer and Breitinger.

The two Swiss professors, Bodmer and Breitinger, who have already several times been named, form one of the most curious pairs of brothers-in-arms whereof literary story makes mention. They were both born in or near the same town, Zurich; the long lives of both (though Breitinger's was a little the shorter at both ends) nearly coincided;

[1] He *had* a real zeal for his native tongue: and it is admitted that the *Beitrage*, by discarding the Spectatorian miscellaneousness, and concentrating attention upon letters, and by promoting, if mainly from the mere side of language, the study of elder German literature, did much good.

both were christened John James; and they very early began, and long continued, to qualify themselves for the position of heroes of a new "Legend of Friendship" without even finding it necessary to begin with a fight like Spenser's Cambel and Triamond. Both pugnacious, they always took the same side in their battles; they prefaced each other's books alternately, and sometimes finding even this association not close enough, signed them jointly J. J. J. J. In this kind of society it is generally difficult to be certain whether even the writings which appear to belong to one writer only do not contain a good deal of the other's, and therefore to assign a sharply differential character to either: nor is it really of much importance. The general opinion, I believe, is that Bodmer had more originality and enterprise, Breitinger a sounder judgment, wider learning, and a more philosophical *ethos:* but in such collaborations the parts are almost always thus distributed. There can, however, be no reasonable question that the pair were—more than any other pair or person—responsible for the Rally of Germany: or rather, to use the phrase of our saner custom, that they mark the turn of the tide which neither they nor any one could have caused. Nor is it surprising to find that this turn is at first almost imperceptible.

The *Discourses of the Painters* took its title directly from a sort of coterie which Bodmer had founded; and was named, probably after Italian models, but indirectly, as no doubt was the coterie also, from the strong prominence in the founder's mind of the doctrine *ut pictura poesis.* Started in 1721, the periodical was one, and the most important, of these imitations of *The Spectator* which, as has been said, played so great a part not merely in English, but in Continental, and especially German, culture. Like the model, the copy was intended to reform manners and morals, speech and style. In the latter respect Bodmer did not merely follow Addison, but fell back to some extent on the French preceptists of "correctness," cheerfully echoing Boileau's recommendations of "nature," though his eclecticism already appears in admiration of Fontenelle likewise. As Boileau himself had made awful examples of the extravagants of the Louis XIII. time, and as

The **Diskurse der Maler.**

Addison had denounced "false wit," conceits, and so forth, so did Bodmer take up his parable anew against the bombast and preciousness of the Lohenstein School in German. Like both, he believes thoroughly in "Taste," though the "German paste" in him is not contented without an attempt at a more philosophical treatment of this than either the Frenchman or the Englishman had thought necessary. He makes something of a theory of Poetry as Imitation of Nature: he refines upon the doctrines about Imagination which he finds in Addison. But in all this there is not very much advance upon Addison himself. Bodmer has only been brought by Addison to the threshold of Milton, and, it would seem, not even to that of Shakespeare,[1] while the divine, the instinctive, the all-saving caution, *antiquam exquirite matrem*, does not in the case of old German poetry carry him beyond Opitz as yet.

Gradual divergence from their standpoint; König on "Taste."

For some years, therefore, it was quite possible for Swiss and Saxons to work together. The literature of the Ancient and Modern quarrel had much influence on both; and that odd upshot of it, the Fénelonian and La Mothian dislike to rhyme, was destined to exercise a very great influence in Germany. For a time, however, attention was principally fixed on the general subject of "Taste,"[2] and a dispute, really important in its results, if not exactly in itself, grew up round a short dissertation by the Saxon Poet-Laureate König, and led, among

[1] It has been debated whether "Sasper" or "Saspar," by which names the Swiss critics sometimes (but very rarely) mention our poet, is a proof of ignorance or merely a phonetic accommodation. But it is admitted that the first German who felt his true inspiration and healing power was J. E. Schlegel, *v. inf.*

[2] I have been remonstrated with, in no unfriendly manner, for not discussing the origin, progress, and variations of this famous word. I can only say of this, as of some other remonstrances, that all show rather imperfect realisation of what I intended to do in this book. Such a discussion would form a most fitting part of a volume of *Abhandlungen* or *Excursus* on this History—a volume which, if I found any encouragement to do so, I would very gladly write, and for which I have all the materials ready But it and its possible companions would, according to my ideas of my plan, not merely enlarge the book itself too much, but throw it out of scheme and scale, if they were introduced into the text.

other things, to an exchange of letters between Bodmer and the Italian Conti,[1] on the nature of this much-discussed quality or faculty. König's work appeared in 1727, two years before the first edition of Gottsched's *Dichtkunst*, but in the same year with a treatise on Imagination from the Swiss side, in which may be seen the first sketch of their elaborate dealings with Poetics many years later.

Main works of the Swiss School.

By this time the tendencies of the contending parties—of Bodmer and Breitinger in the Æsthetic-Romantic direction, and of Gottsched in the Classical-Preceptist—had been strengthened and developed, in the one case by study of Milton specially, in the other by that of the French. and the gulf between them was deepened and widened in various writings, especially in the successive editions of Gottsched's *Dichtkunst*, and in occasional utterances of his *Beiträge*. But the great manifestos of the Swiss school —four in number, but it would seem representing a larger and more uniform scheme, of which the *Imagination* had been the pioneer—did not appear till nearly twenty years after the first publication of the *Diskurse*. Three of them came out at Zurich in the single year 1740, the fourth, a year later, in 1741. The titles given below require no comment in their exhibition of the odd enlacements of the pair.[2]

[1] Antonio Conti (1677-1749) is called author of that *Paragone* which in vol. ii. p 554 *sup* I called "anonymous," because Gottsched gave no author for it, and which was an offshoot of this correspondence in 1728 29. Conti was acquainted with Leibnitz and Newton, spent a long time both in England and in France, wrote tragedies and other things, which are imperfectly collected in his *Prose e Poesie*, Venice, vol. i., 1739; vol. ii. (posthumous), 1756 Professors D'Ancona and Bucci (*Manuale della Litt Ital*, Firenze, 1897, iv. 379) speak highly of him. The passage which they give from him on Dante and Petrarch is respectable and erudite, but gives no very high idea of his critical powers. Milton sticks to history and tradition, but Dante does all "out of his own head" Petrarch has in his poetry not only the sacred and the venerable, but the graceful and the delicate, &c., &c. For more on him and on König see note at end of chapter

[2] *Kritische Abhandlung von dem Wunderbaren in der Poesie und dessen Verbindung mit dem Wahrscheinlichen in einer Vertheidigung des Gedichtes Joh. Milton's von dem Verlorenen Paradiese.* [By Bodmer.] 1740

Kritische Abhandlung von der Natur, den Absichten und dem Gebrauche der Gleichnisse. [By Breitinger, edited (*besorget*) by Bodmer.] 1740.

Kritische Dichtkunst. Worinnen die

Of these the *Kritische Dichtung* is the largest, the most ambitious, and, according to Herr Braitmaier, the most important. It was certainly that which hurt and shocked Gottsched most, and which drew from him the pathetically ludicrous expostulation with its unpractical character, which was quoted in the last volume.[1] And no doubt it must appear so to those who pay most attention to the theory of poetry in general. As the very title shows, Breitinger here nails the poetic-pictorial principle to the mast, and he defends it in the book itself, and in the Dissertation on Similes, which is a sort of tender to it, with no insufficient learning and variety of application, with reinforcements of philosophy from Leibniz and Wolff, even with the sketching of a "Logic of Phantasy," which is to be regulator and administrator of things poetical.

Breitinger's Kritische Dichtkunst, &c.

From my point of view, however, the most important of the four is the *Abhandlung von dem Wunderbaren* by Bodmer, and next to this, the same writer's elaborate examination, in the *Poetische Gemahlde*, of *Don Quixote*, and of that *Durchlauchstigste Syrerin Aramena*, which is one of the chief German Heroic Romances, and one of the literary achievements of the House of Brunswick, having been written by Duke Anton Ulrich. The general-

Bodmer's Von dem Wunderbaren, &c.

Poetische Malerei in Absicht auf die Erfindung im Grunde untersuchet wird, &c. [By Breitinger.] 1740.

Kritische Betrachtung über die Poetischen Gemahlde der Dichter [By Bodmer, with an introduction by Breitinger.] 1741.

All these might, with advantage, be more accessible than they are. The *Kritische Dichtkunst* was promised long ago as a reprint in the *Litteraturdenkmale*. The originals appear to be rare, and when they occur are dear, and at once carried off.

[1] *V. sup.*, ii. 554. As an example of Gottsched in his less sad but more furious mood, nothing can be better than the passage quoted by Herr Braitmaier (*op. cit.*, p. 139) from the *Beitrage* (xxix. 8). After much vituperation of Shakespeare (*Julius Cæsar* had just been translated) and other English playwrights, even Addison, he winds up: "That the English stage helps in such a shameless fashion to nourish the two principal vices of the English people—cruelty and lust—is something so horrible that all honour-loving Englishmen must blush as often as they think of their theatre. There is scarcely a comedy wherein blood and murder do not come in just as if it were a tragedy, and wherein both sexes do not openly, and with the most revolting expressions, speak of things that can only occur in disreputable and forbidden houses." Poor Gottsched!

ities of the *Kritische Dichtkunst* are, no doubt, as one of the characters in *Westward Ho!* says, "all very good and godly": but the unfortunate Gottsched, if he had had a little more wit, might so have couched his complaint of their unpracticality that it would not have been ridiculous. "Logics of Phantasy" are all very well. doctrines that the poet must be thus and thus minded are all very well. But we want *poems*, we want imaginative literature itself; and these were the most difficult things in the world to get in the first half of the eighteenth century. Bodmer, in dealing with prose fiction, recognises, as few critics had recognised, the second greatest division of the imaginative literature of the world—greater even than drama in a way, because it borrows nothing from poetry, but stands on its own merits,—the division which was at last slowly rising from the ocean where it had been so long submerged. And in the *Dissertation on the Wonderful* he boldly unlocked the tabooed treasury wherein men had been so long forbidden to seek the true riches of poetry.

There was the real *labor*, the real *opus*. It is not too much to say that the prevailing doctrine—during the seventeenth century increasingly, and at the beginning of the eighteenth as a recognised orthodoxy—made poetry almost impossible. In spite of the grudging permission of such inadequate safety-valves as *furor poeticus*, *beau désordre*, "lucky license," and the rest, this doctrine was that even the *Wunderbar* had got to submit itself to the *Wahrscheinlich*, with a very distinct understanding that it was far the safer way to attend to the Verisimilar and let the Wonderful alone. Even Bodmer himself seems to have been rather led to a sounder creed by his admiration for Milton and his revolt against such things as Voltaire's condemnation of parts of *Paradise Lost*,[1] than by a clear, straightforward apperception of the prerogative of Wonder. Even he proceeds rather by extension of "machinery," by pointing out the capabilities and interest of the use of Angels and the like, than by any thorough-going anticipation of the Coleridgean "suspension of disbelief." But this was very natural and almost necessary: while it may be pointed out that his

[1] Which, be it remembered, B. himself translated.

attention to the Prose Romance—in which, for this reason or that, the unexpected and the exceptional had always held rather a prominent place—tended in the same direction as his doctrine of the Wonderful in Poetry.

Special criticisms of both.

It is, however, only fair to say that neither Breitinger nor Bodmer fails in that critical examination of actual literature which, as it has been one of the objects of this book to show, is the most fruitful way of the critic. Bodmer's study of *Paradise Lost*, which he translated, nay, even that of Opitz, who was edited by the pair, provided perhaps the most important element in his critical education. And whatever gaps there may have been in their literary accomplishment, they knew and used the greatest critics of antiquity. If they did not know or use all its greatest poets, they used what they did know freshly and independently. They knew French and Italian literature fairly, and Breitinger at least had studied the Ancient and Modern Quarrel. They knew something of English besides Milton, though little or nothing of "Sasper," and their earnest and affectionate study of German literature itself, reaching by-and-by to the treasures of the "Middle High" period, is, to me at least, one of their greatest titles to credit. They may have pushed the picture-poetry notion too far—Lessing was at the door with a veritable "two-handed engine" to cut off any superfluity here. But in their time, and in all times, it could but do more good than harm.

Bodmer's verse criticism.

With the commentatorial side of their activity may be connected the four verse pieces edited with much care by Herr Baechtold in the *Deutsche Literatur-Denkmale*.[1] The two last of these, dating from the author's latest years, when he felt himself among those that knew not Joseph—*Untergang der Beruhmten Namen*, and *Bodmer nicht verkannt*—are in hexameters, and are only pathetic curiosities. The first, *Character der Teutschen Gedichte*, 1734, with an appendix, *Versuch einer Kritik uber die Deutschen Dichter*, and a second but more independent sequel, *Die Drollingerische Muse* (Drollinger was a poet and friend of Bodmer's who had just died), have more substantive interest.[2] They are in Alexan-

[1] Heilbron, 1883.

[2] These latter date from 1742.

drines, duly arranged with masculine and feminine alternation, and contain not a little mostly sound criticism of mostly much-forgotten bards.

Their later work in mediæval poetry, and their general position.

I find myself, perhaps necessarily from the difference of our points of view, again in disagreement with Herr Braitmaier as to the critical importance of Bodmer's later industry (shared again in part by Breitinger) on older German literature. To me, the mere fact that Bodmer in 1748—that is to say, before the middle of the eighteenth century, and nearly twenty years before the appearance of Percy's *Reliques*—published with his faithful double J. J. his *Specimens of Old Suabian Poetry*, the Middle High German poetry of the thirteenth century; nine or ten years later, and still before Percy, before Hurd, *Fabeln aus der Zeiten der Minnesanger;* with, later again, parts of the *Nibelungenlied* and collections of Minnesong itself, is, as perhaps the reader knows by this time, an almost greater claim to importance in the *History of Criticism and Literary Taste* than his earlier directly critical work, and a much greater one than the more abstract æsthetic inquiries of Breitinger even, still more of Baumgarten and Sulzer and the rest. Taken with these earlier inquiries they give him and his coadjutor a high and most memorable place in the general story of the appreciation of literature. He was certainly not a man of much—and Breitinger does not seem to have been one of any—original poetical power; he does not himself seem to have had even so much as his colleague had of learning or acuteness: and both were *echt Deutsch* in their long-windedness and want of concinnity. But they did what they could, and it turned out that they had done a great deal.

The "Swiss-Saxon" quarrel.

Of the famous "Swiss-Saxon" quarrel[1] which followed the publication of Breitinger's *Kritische Dichtkunst* and Gottsched's denunciation thereof in a new edition of his own, I shall, according to my previous practice, say little. It has in all the books the usual disproportionate prominence of such things, and its actual importance was even

[1] It is well known that Germany was still intensely provincial. The "snorings under six-and-thirty monarchs," as Heine put it unkindly, almost a century later, were not peaceful by any means.

less than usual. A brief but good account of it, and of all the underground jealousies and littlenesses that led up to it, may be found in Braitmaier. These jealousies, especially the general revolt against the sort of tyranny of letters which Gottsched's skilful management of his periodicals and his pedagogic temper had instituted, were much more noticeable in it than any clear classic-romantic "dependence." But, *on the whole*, the revolt against Gottsched was in the direction of revolt against at least Neo-Classicism. By degrees, too, it branched out into an attack on, and a defence of, two particular poets—Haller and Klopstock; and though neither of these is very delectable "to us," both were distinctly in their time champions of the freedom of the poetic Jerusalem. It was fought out in Gottsched's *Beitrage* on his side, and in a kind of periodical entitled *Sammlung Kritischer, poetischer, und geistvoller Schriften*, which Bodmer brought out in opposition,[1] in divers others,[2] and in numerous pamphlets. The most important critics whom it produced, and these indirectly for the most part, were the elder Schlegels, especially the eldest, Johann Elias, who, from a contributor, though never exactly a partisan, of Gottsched, became one of the objects of his special indignation. Of others, Schwabe, Cramer, Mylius, Pyra, we can but take note in passing here. Gellert has been mentioned in the last volume.[3]

[1] Zürich, 1741-44.

[2] They were numerous from 1740 to 1760, and their titles — except those of the rather well-known *Bremer Beiträge*, itself a "short title," and the *Gelehrten Zeitungen* of Gottingen, are mostly rather cumbrous, *e.g.*, Cramer and Mylius' *Bemühungen zur Beförderung der Kritik und des Guten Geschmacks*, Halle, 1743-47. I do not pretend to a very extensive acquaintance with them, but what I have confirms Herr Braitmaier's statement that, excepting the Gottingen one, and this for the sake of Haller, chiefly, "All these newspapers did as good as nothing for the advancement of criticism."

[3] Gellert, who was a sort of "prefect" for his time in this school of modern German literature, gave at least one proof of practical wisdom which few men of letters have equalled. Frederic the Great sent for him, poured oil over him from his beard to the skirts of his clothing, and invited him again. Gellert did not go. As for the others, Christian Mylius, dying young, had the further good luck to be a friend of Lessing, who edited his *Vermischte Schriften* (Berlin, 1754). They run from Theology to Vivisection. The chief critical piece is a tractate (1743), *Von den Reimen und dem Sylbenmasse in Schauspielen*. Mylius is against rhyme both in Tragedy and in Comedy.

If not every schoolboy, every one with the slightest tincture of letters, is supposed to be aware that there were two persons of the name of Schlegel, who are of very great account in German and in European criticism. Not merely the schoolboy, but the person ordinarily tinged with letters, may perhaps be excused if he does not know that at least[1] *four* of the name and family have claim to rank here—Johann Elias, his younger brother Johann Adolf, August Wilhelm, and Karl Wilhelm Friedrich, these two last being sons of Johann Adolf. Of these the elder pair concern us in this particular place. And of them it will be most convenient to take Johann Adolf first, not for the sake of his famous offspring, but because his critical work is the less important. He took part in the obscure and uninteresting squabble over the Pastoral school,[2] but his main contribution to our subject is a translation, with notes and elaborate *Abhandlungen*, of Batteux. In this, published as early as 1751, and reprinted later,[3] he is still an evidence of the domination of French, which his more original brother at least partly rejected. But there are signs and tokens. He is constantly making respectful suggestions and limitations: "This conclusion is too large," "this is true *to a certain extent*," and so forth.

The elder Schlegels: Johann Adolf.

The *Abhandlungen* show the German tendency to generalisation and abstract disquisition—On the Origin of Arts, the Building up of Taste, the divisions of Poetry, its foundation in imitation or illusion, its distinction from History, and from Ornate Prose, &c. Schlegel is very much cumbered about Kinds, insists that we must try each new kind and see whether it comes naturally or not. If it does, that is right. The Wonderful has "a natural right to please us, a right

[1] I say "at least" because the youngest brother of the elder batch, Johann Heinrich, also meddled with literature But we need take no keep of him.

[2] A phase of, and sometimes identified with, the general "Swiss-Saxon" battle.

[3] I only know the third edition (Leipzig, 1770), which, as well as the second, 1758-59, seems to have been a good deal revised. There are eleven *Abhandlungen* here, two of which were new, while two others had been added in the second to the original seven.

founded in the constitution of our souls." The soul demands novelty, &c. But like his part-master, Gottsched, he is very doubtful about Ariosto and Milton (Death and Sin are such "*shadowy* persons"!), and I do not think he mentions Shakespeare. He has a considerable position in the list of writers on German versification, a subject which was acquiring much importance from the set against rhyme, mentioned above.

Johann Elias.

His elder brother, Johann Elias, is a much more original and independent person. The very high claims made for him by his editor, Herr von Antoniewicz,[1] and by Herr Braitmaier, may require some deduction when we consider his actual work, but not much. He died (1749) at a little over thirty: and during this short life he had been a diplomatist, a professor, a prolific and remarkable dramatist, and a miscellaneous poet. So that he had not much time to spare for criticism. But his work in it has that rare quality, or combination of qualities, which we have noted in Dryden, the quality of marking and learning the things that a man reads and writes of, and correcting himself by both processes. It is quite astonishing to read his first critical work, a "Letter on Ancient and Modern Tragedy," and to note, though his actual standpoint is not very advanced, the thoroughness and freshness of appreciation shown by a boy of one-and-twenty, in the very dawn and almost the twilight of the great period of German literature. Other interesting papers lead to the still more remarkable review of Borck's prose translation of *Julius Cæsar*, with its parallel between that play and the *Leo Armenius* of the German seventeenth-century dramatist, Andreas Gryphius. There is, of course, a danger, if this be uncritically read, of our failing to grasp Schlegel's standpoint in regard to both the subjects, and of the excellent Gryph appearing to us too much in the light in which Shakespeare himself appeared to Voltaire. Moreover, the German Alexandrine is—even to an ear broken to a thousand measures in half a dozen languages—one of the most disagreeable that can

[1] Ed. cit. *sup.*, J. E. S. *Aesthetische und Dramaturgische Schriften.* Heilbronn. 1887.

be found. But allow for all these things, as criticism demands, and you will have a piece of appreciation such as (so far at least as I know) had not appeared in German before, and one of which, *æquatis æquandis*, hardly any of the greatest English or French critics since need have been ashamed in his *Lehrjahre*. The discussions of Imitation,[1] which the lovers of abstract criticism seem to regard as Schlegel's greatest title to fame, and which are certainly his largest, though very sound and stimulating for their time, and not even obsolete in regard to the "realist" and "naturalist" debates of the latest nineteenth century, are a little scholastic in method. From reading some estimates of Schlegel the student might almost be prepared to find in him a promulgation of one of the last secrets of criticism, the discovery that not only need you not always realise but you nearly always must *dis*realise—give the things as they are *not* in nature; and that by no means merely to suppress uglinesses and the like. So far as this I do not think he gets anywhere,[2] but he gets pretty far: and his argument was most valuable at the time when Gottsched was priding himself on having once more based Poetic on a rigid Imitation-principle. But some of the best of Schlegel's work is to be found in the last example of it, the "Gedanken zur Aufnahme des Dänischen Theaters," where the good and bad points of both English and French drama, and the imitation or avoidance which they deserve accordingly, are set forth with an insight, a range, and a power of appreciation which do not come much behind Lessing, not to mention an impartiality which Lessing by no means always shows In the Shakespeare-and-Gryph parallel Johann Elias had practically founded German Shakespeare-study, and in this piece he takes the line necessary to prevent a too one-sided pursuit of it. His actual critical achievement is not, and could not be, large; but it is precious in itself, and it shows that, had he lived, there was almost nothing at all possible in his time that he might not have done in criticism.

[1] Ed. cit., pp. 96-166.

[2] He is nearest in the *title* of the first dissertation, "How Imitation must sometimes be *unlike* the originals," which may have deceived some But he does not quite live up to this, and mainly contents himself with arguing that you may *improve upon* your originals, embellish them, &c., to give more pleasure.

You could trust him, I think, on the English novel, and you could trust him on German and mediæval poetry, with the certainty that, in the long-run at any rate, he would come right.

Moses Mendelssohn.

Of the praiseworthy industry of Nicolai we have spoken in the last volume: and the only critic whom it is necessary to mention in any detail before passing to Lessing, who is himself in a way the critical sum and substance as well as the crown and flower of this period—Moses Mendelssohn—belongs rather to the æstheticians pure and simple. He did, however, much solid actual critical work, to a great extent in collaboration with both of the persons just mentioned. Those who are curious about him may consult the very extensive (indeed, I fear it must rather be called the disproportionately extensive) notice of him by Herr Braitmaier, who gives this learned Jew some two-thirds of his second volume, and not much less than one-third of his whole book. Mendelssohn, however, is really an important person in the history of German criticism, and probably counted for something in the development of Lessing, who was his intimate friend. He seems to have had little tincture of classical literature, but was intensely interested in modern; and was for some twenty years a constant reviewer of it. He inclines somewhat to the moral rather than to the purely literary judgment in his notices of English writers, even of Shakespeare, much more of Young and Richardson, and he was not disposed to accept the Wartonian view of Pope. Indeed, with all his merits he seems to me to be further "below proof," from the literary point of view, not merely than Lessing but than J. E. Schlegel. The actual critical work[1] of this Moses, as shown in his collected writings, leaves us, if not in the depths of the wilderness, at any rate at some distance from the Promised Land. There is a certain amount of criticism in his *Letters*, and he illustrates eighteenth-century tendencies by writing on *Das Erhabene und das Naive*. His general drift is very frankly displayed in the epistles of Aristes to Hylas, on "How the Young should read Old and New Poetry," where Plutarch's title[2] is not more

[1] *Sämmtliche Werke.* Wien, 1838. [2] *V. sup.*, i. 139.

closely followed than his spirit. The treatise, though in no way contemptible, is one of those which have been described (no doubt by a reminiscence of Hobbes) as "all *-keit* and *-lung*." And Mendelssohn's attitude to criticism could not be better indicated than in the following sentence[1] "We laugh at Regnard's *Le Joueur* and avoid being called gamblers; we weep over the English *Gamester* and are ashamed to be such." Perhaps so; perhaps also not. But the symptoms, if existent, are quite compatible with the existence of any degree of literary merit in either case, if not also with the existence of none.

Baumgarten, Sulzer, and some others must be relegated to the Æsthetic pound.

Lessing.

The general reputations which are wholly or mainly founded on criticism are so few that it behoves the historian thereof to approach them with unusual circumspection, to "put on the inquirer's holy robe and a purged considerate mind," as Mr Arnold says. There is the obvious danger of merely indorsing the general opinion in a tame and banal assentation, and there is the not much less obvious (and perhaps not a little greater) danger of succumbing to the temptation of "saying something different"—of aiming at a cheap distinction by paradox or eccentricity. Perhaps it is even easier to escape these dangers in reality than to seem to escape them: more particularly in the case of Lessing, of whom, in England at least, almost every educated person knows that he was a great critic, while only specialists know much more.

Some cautions respecting him.

That he was a great critic nobody can deny: but it is perhaps desirable to warn those who come to him knowing something of literary criticism already, and expecting great things in it from him, that they should not raise their expectations too high, and that they should thoroughly master certain preliminary facts. The most important of these is that Lessing's interests were not, as the interests of very great critics almost invariably have been, either wholly literary, or literary first of all, or, as in Aristotle's case, as literary as possible. As it was said of Clarissa that "there is always something that she prefers to

[1] Ed. cit., p. 958.

the truth," so there is nearly always something that Lessing prefers to literature, constantly as he was occupied with books. Now it is the theatre;[1] now it is art—especially art viewed from the side of archæology; now it is classical scholarship of the minuter kind; now philosophy or theology; now it is morals; not unfrequently it is more, or fewer, or all of these things together, which engage his attention while literature is left out in the cold.

His moral obsession, on Soliman the Second.

The most curious instance of his moral preoccupation (which, as the commonest and that with which we are most familiar, we may get rid of first) has reference[2] to Marmontel's *conte* of *Soliman the Second*[3] Lessing rather liked Marmontel, who had been civil to *Miss Sara Sampson*, I think, and whom he somewhere couples with Diderot, thereby showing that he at any rate was able to distinguish in the author of the *Eléments de Littérature* something very different from a *perruque*. He admits "the wit, the knowledge of the world, the elegance, the grace" of this "excellent and delightful" tale. But he is fearfully disturbed at its morality. The Sultan, it seems, is "a satiated libertine"; [but would not Rymer be for once justified in urging this as "a character worn by them in all ages of the world" in which there were Sultans?] Roxelane is "a baggage which gets its way." [Undoubtedly: but do not baggages as a rule get theirs?] Lessing, however, cannot away with "the thing," as he calls the owner of the *petit nez retroussé*. What a wretched part is the great Soliman made to play! He and Roxelane "belong neither to the actual world, nor to a world in which cause and effect follow a different order, but to the general effect of good."

[1] This separation of the drama (or at least of the theatre) and literature may shock some readers, but I can rely on support from persons who take a very different view of the acting theatre, and a very different interest in it from mine, yet who agree with me that the connection between literature and acted or actable drama is in no sense essential or necessary.

[2] *Hamburgische Dramaturgie*. §§ 33-35, vol xi.[6] p. 233 *sq.* of the other edition which I use There is a translation by Miss Zimmern and others of the *Dramaturgie*, the *Laocoön*, and one or two other things in Bohn's Library.

[3] *Œuvres*, ed. Belin (Paris, 1819), ii 17-28. A translation—the old contemporary version revised by the present writer—will be found in Marmontel's *Moral Tales* (London, 1895).

"The Turk only knows sensual love" [Rymer! Rymer!]. Lessing is afraid that the *lune rousse* will rise for Soliman on the very morrow of his wedding: and that he will see in Roxelane "nothing but her impudence and the *nez retroussé*." [Now as these were the very things that captivated him, it might rather seem that all would be well.] In Soliman the instructive is lacking. "We ought to despise both him and Roxelane; or rather one [which one?] ought to disgust and the other to anger us," though, or perhaps more particularly, *because* "they are painted in the most seductive colours."

There is really nothing to be said to this but ὦ πόποι! In the first place, all this good moral indignation simply explodes through the touch-hole. The tale is pure satire on the *actual* weakness of man and triumph of woman—and this actuality who dare deny? If Lessing does not think both Soliman and Roxelane natural, so much the worse for Lessing. In the second place, neither is in the least degree held up for our admiration, though the skill of the artist may deserve that admiration in almost the highest degree. We may, if we like pronounce Soliman a weak man and rather immoral ruler, and suspect Roxelane (as he suspected her himself) of being very little better than she should be. But not only does the critic waste his powder in the direction in which he actually fires; he loses the opportunity of bringing down excellent game. He lets slip altogether (as Tassoni[1] had *not* altogether, though he did not follow it out) the chance of arguing that most important and interesting critical question of the attraction of the irregular, the unexpected, the capricious, the teasing. He might have got "instruction" to his heart's content, for us and for himself, out of this shocking story of the great Sultan and the *petit nez retroussé*. Surely it were better done thus to profit by the curves of Roxelane's countenance than to read us a dull sermon on her want of moral rectitude? But Lessing does not think so—master though he be, at least according to German notions, of that very irony which should have kept him right.

His merely dramatic and his merely artistic preoccupations

[1] *V. sup.*, II 327, 417, 418.

deserve less severe treatment, because it cannot be said that they lead him wrong or even astray, except from our special point of view. But from that special point of view they *do* lead him astray: at least in the sense that he becomes sometimes unimportant to us. In the whole of the *Laocoon*, reserving a point to be returned to later, I remember only one passage of any length which is really literary,[1] and that is the famous and not undeserved, but somewhat insufficiently worked out, censure of Ariosto's description of Alcina.[2] Here Lessing does show what a critic he is by his triumphant demonstration that the carefully accumulated strokes which would in the sister art go towards making, if they would not completely make, a most attractive *picture*, produce very little definite effect as a *passage*. Even here he allows himself to be called off from the discovery which he was on the point, it might seem, of making. He excepts for praise the beautiful — in fact consummate — simile of the breasts which—

The strictures on Ariosto's portrait of Alcina.

> "Vengono e van, come onda al primo margo
> quando piacevole aura il mar combatte."

Here of course the charm arises from the fact that the image is *new*, personal—that is to say, that it is *literary* The curves of the wind-engrailed surge on the sand are not Vida's "stealings," they are originals—whoso takes them will not make them, though in themselves they remain delightful for ever They are like the "chrysoprase" eyes of Clarimonde in Gautier's *Morte Amoureuse*, which make that piece immortal. The man who *now* gives us eyes of chrysoprase might as well make them gooseberries. Lessing does not say this, does not hint it: indeed (as Lamb's Scotchman would point out) it would have been, in reference to the *Morte Amoureuse*, impossible for him

[1] Of course the *general* drift of the piece, with the corrections it introduces in the *ut pictura poesis* maxim, is very important indeed, and was of the very highest opportunity in supplying corrections to the different opinions on the subject of Du Bos and the Switzers. Moreover, such discussions as that of the Disgusting, &c., are undoubtedly things which we should have noticed in the first volume, and perhaps in the second. But the iron room is closing in.

[2] *Laocoön*, xx. Ed cit., x. 120 *sq.*

to do so. But he is on the way to saying it, and he instigates others to do so if he does not.[1]

Hamlet *and* Semiramis.

The objection indeed which may be most justly taken to these dramatic and artistic preoccupations is that they too often directly prevent him in this way from doing what he might have done. The *Dramaturgie* is to the student of properly literary criticism a mixture of irritation and delight—a parallel to Coleridge's conversation, in which "glorious" literary "islets" constantly loom through the dramatic haze, and then get engulfed again. How admirable in principle that comparison[2] of Voltaire's and of Shakespeare's ghosts! Yet how we sigh for concrete illustrations from the actual *words*—for a little, little *Zusammensetzung*, say, of

"This eternal blazon,"

—three words only, but three words with the whole soul of poetry in them, and of

"Arrête! et respecte ma cendre."[3]

The defence of Thomas Corneille's *Comte d'Essex*[4] against Voltaire's unhistorical history is very good; but then it is so unnecessary! and in the longest criticisms of all, those given to the greater Corneille's *Rodogune*[5] and to Maffei's and Voltaire's *Merope*[6] (once more one wishes that Lessing could have taken in Mr Arnold's), the entanglements of the preoccupation reach, for a literary critic, the exasperating.

The Comte d'Essex, Rodogune, Mérope.

The truth is that in reading the *Dramaturgie*[7] one cannot

[1] Observe that it will be quite useless for the "parallel passage" marine-storekeeper to point out, even if he can, earlier uses of either image. Neither was a *stock* image at the time of use.

[2] *H. D.*, No. (or Stück) 11 and part of 12; xi 144 *sq.*

[3] *Semiramis*, III. vi. *sub fin.*

[4] *H. D.*, No. 22 *sq.*

[5] Ibid., 29 *sq.*

[6] Ibid., 86 *sq.*

[7] Some of the original dates of Lessing's works may be usefully grouped in a note: Early critical work, 1750 onwards; *Abhandlungen über die Fabeln*, 1759; *Laocoön*, 1766; *Hamb. Dramaturgie*, 1767-68; *Anmerkungen über das Epigramm*, 1771. But the whole thirty years of his literary life—at least until his unlucky attack of anti-theological mania towards its close—were fruitful in criticism.

help remembering Carlyle's capital complaint of Voltaire that "to him the Universe was one larger patrimony of St Peter from which it were good and pleasant to chase the Pope," and regretting that Lessing should have thought it necessary to substitute Voltaire himself for the Holy Father. It was inevitable perhaps and necessary for the time: but the result is tedious. And unfortunately this Gallophobia in general, this Corneliophobia and Voltairiophobia in particular, affects, and very unfavourably affects, those rectifications and reconstructions of Aristotle which have given the *Dramaturgie* its great reputation. With all his talent, all his freshness, Lessing is to a very great extent merely varying the Addisonian error—and indeed, as with all these early German critics, Addison himself had too great an influence on him As Addison had wasted his powers on showing that Milton, whom the pseudo-Aristotelians had decried, was very Aristotelian, or at least Homeric, after all, so Lessing devotes a most unnecessary amount of energy to showing that the pseudo-Aristotelians themselves were not Aristotelian at all. It was true; it was in a sense well worth doing; but there was so much else to do! There is a famous passage at the beginning of No. 7 which itself really annihilates the whole proceeding, and laughs "boundary lines of criticism" out of court. Nor is Lessing's aberration a mere accidental one. It comes from the fact that he had not cleared up his own mind on some important parts of the question. He says, for instance, in his criticism of *Rodogune* (No. 31, beginning), "The revenge of an ambitious woman should never resemble that of a jealous one." *Æternum vulnus!* What is "*the* revenge of *an* ambitious woman?" "*the* revenge of *a* jealous one?" Show me the revenge of your jealous Amaryllis, the revenge of your ambitious Neæra; and *then* I will tell you whether they are right or not.

Lessing's Gallophobia

The fact is, that on what we may call the other side of his virtue—to call it the defect of his quality would be rather to beg the question—he is, after all, a preceptist with some difference. Not merely is he an unflinching and almost "right-or-wrong" Aristotelian, but from genuine agreement of taste and judgment he still criticises almost

and typomania.

wholly by Kinds. It is *the* drama, *the* epic, *the* fable, *the* lyric, *the* epigram that he makes for, across or sometimes almost outside of the actual examples of their classes. And here, too, we find that the more poetical divisions and the more poetical aspects of these and others have no very special appeal to him. He belittles Lyric altogether; if he is particularly fond of the Fable in the special sense, it is because it also has a "fable" in the general, it is an imitation of life, a criticism of it. His attempt to prove that Horace had no looking-glasses in his bedroom[1] is a pleasant pendant to his indignation with Roxalana's *minois chiffonné:* and though there is a great deal to be said for Martial, Lessing[2] is bribed to adopt the *vita proba* view rather by the Roman poet's intense *vivacity* than by his literary merit.

His study of antiquity more than compensating.

Yet this, once more, is but "the other side of a virtue." The best authorities agree that to Lessing may be assigned absolutely the return to, if not the very initiation of,[3] a direct, scholarly, intelligent, *literary* study of the ancients themselves. As far as the Greek Theatre itself is concerned, Brumoy had anticipated him: far too little justice has often been done to the work of this modest and solid scholar. But Brumoy's outlook was wanting in range. Lessing had in his mind, as well as Latin and Greek, English,[4] French and German always, Italian, even Spanish[5]

[1] This important and edifying problem has attracted much attention from scholars. M. Kont, the author of a really admirable monograph on *Lessing et l'Antiquité* (2 vols, Paris, 1894-9), devotes almost an excursus to it. The original may be found in vol 15 of Herr Göring's (the collected) ed., and it is fair to say that the latter part of Lessing's dissertation does much to save the earlier.

[2] Again see M. Kont for comment and the "Anmerkungen uber das Epigramm," *Works*, xv. 73 *sq.* for text. Lessing also proclaimed his admiration for Martial in his preface to the early collection of his writings, in 1758.

[3] The not uncommon ascription even of this is a result of that unjust neglect or depreciation of Scaliger and Castelvetro and the other Italians, which we have attempted *pro viribus* to repair.

[4] Lessing's curiosity as to at least the English Drama was so insatiable that he actually translated part of Crisp's (Fanny Burney's "Daddy" Crisp's) *Virginia* — that play, the doleful effects of whose failure or doubtful success Macaulay, according to Mrs Ellis, so much exaggerated.

[5] That he knows and quotes the *Arte Nuevo* is much more surprising than that he does not fully comprehend Lope's position.

to some extent. And he read the Latin and the Greek in themselves — and with all due apparatus of technical scholarship considering his time. He was as far from the twice- and thrice-garbled sciolism of the average French, and even English, critic of the late seventeenth and earlier eighteenth century, as from the arid pedantry of the Dutch and German scholars of the same date. To him, more perhaps than to any one else, it is due that modern criticism has not followed, more than it has done, the mere foolishness of the "modern" advocates in the Quarrel—that it has fortified itself with those sound and solid studies which antiquity alone can supply. For once more let it be said that if, from the pure critical point of view, Ancient without Modern is a stumbling-block, Modern without Ancient is foolishness utter and irremediable.

And especially of Aristotle.

Perhaps Lessing's greatest glory is that he has given answer to the despairing question which his master quoted in the Ethics.[1] "If the water chokes, what must one drink on the top of it?" "More and purer water" is that answer, of course; and Lessing scoured the clogged and stagnant channels of Neo-Classicism by recurrence to the original fount. Of course he was not himself absolutely original. He owed something to Heinsius, in that most remarkable tractate to which we did justice in its place, among the more distant moderns, to Dacier, pedant as he is, to Brumoy, to Hurd among the nearer. But more than to any of them he devoted himself to the real text of the *Poetics*, interpreted by a combination of scholarship and mother-wit. To this day he has to be consulted upon the *cruces* of Fable and Character, of Unity, of knotting and unknotting, of *katharsis*.[2] That he has said no final word on them matters nothing: final words are not to be said on things of opinion and probability

Until God's great *Venite* change the song.

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[1] *Eth. Nic.*, VII. ii. 10.

[2] I wish that M. Kont had not fallen into a common error by saying that Bernays has "proved" Lessing's interpretation wrong in part. When will people learn, in critical discussion, to see that to "make a thing probable" is not to "prove" it?

But on these and not a few other matters he reorganised the whole method and the whole tenor of the inquiry. And so he not only earns his own place in the story, but half unintentionally establishes, or helps us to establish, the great truth that the whole *is* a story, a history, a chain of opinion and comment on opinion, now going more, now less, right, but to be kept as a chain.

With whom he combines Diderot.

Nothing can illustrate this better than the fact that Lessing's second master in criticism is—Diderot! He does not regard that erratic and *cometic* genius as he regards Aristotle, he does not think the *Bijoux Indiscrets*, and the remarks on the *Fils Naturel*, and the rest, as being "as infallible as the *Elements of Euclid*."[1] He would have disqualified himself from serious consideration if he had. He dissents from some of Diderot's opinions; he combats some of his arguments But he admits, almost in so many words, and in a constant attitude which is more valuable than any verbal admission, that this most irregular, revolutionary, *casual* of modern thinkers has set him on his own path of independent revaluation of critical principles.

His deficiencies in regard to mediæval literature.

And we find confirmation of this in those of his critical writings which have not yet been mentioned, as well as illustrations of other critical characteristics in him. It is curious that Lessing, so sensitive and receptive to ancient and later modern influences, is almost as proof against mediæval and (in his own language) early modern as Gottsched himself. His low estimate of Lyric seems to come partly from the fact that Aristotle had slighted it, or at least passed it over, partly from the fact that in relation to Germany he is not thinking of her ballads and lays, not even of the extravagances of the seventeenth century, but of the tame Anacreontic of Hagedorn, Gleim, and Company. Even his study of Shakespeare has not set him right in this respect. It is most curious to read his contemporary Hurd, a contemporary for whom Lessing had a just respect, and to

[1] Apparently Lessing would not have disagreed much with the reactionary modern who said that "the only really valuable articles in the present English school curriculum are Greek and Euclid."

remember that Hurd could appreciate not merely both Aristotle and Shakespeare, but both Horace and Spenser. And there are few things which bring out more clearly that immense debt to Shakespeare and Spenser themselves which has been insisted on as due by English criticism. It was too early for Lessing to have gone back to Gottfried and Walther;[1] the German Renaissance had nothing (save the ballads, which he would not have) to offer him.

The close of the Dramaturgie *and its moral.*

The greatest places of the *Dramaturgie* are those at the close of No. 95, and the penultimate passage of all. In the former, after a long discussion of the Aristotelian commentaries of Hurd and Dacier, he refashions his master's famous dictum in other matter, that "accuracy must not be expected." He is not, he says, "obliged to solve all the problems he raises." His thoughts may seem desultory, or even contradictory: but it does not matter if they supply others with the germ of individual thought. He would but scatter "*fermenta cognitionis.*" In the other, he proceeds still farther, though still perhaps without a clear idea how far the path itself will lead. Germans, he says (I shorten somewhat here), had imitated the French because the French were believed to be your only followers of the ancients. Then English plays came in, an entirely different style of drama was revealed, and the Germans concluded that the aim of tragedy could be fulfilled without the French rules—that the rules were wrong. And then they went on to object to rules altogether as mere genius-hampering pedantry. "In short, we had very nearly thrown away in wantonness all past experience, insisting that the poet shall in every instance discover the whole art for himself." Lessing has endeavoured "to arrest this secondary fermentation," and that is all.

[1] Not that he did not pay some attention to Old German: but it had little effect on him, and he was evidently fonder of the fifteenth century than of the thirteenth. Nor is what has been said above to be taken as meaning that Gottsched himself neglected mediæval writers. On the contrary, he studied them very carefully as a part of his general patriotic "Germanism." Only he did not in the least feel their drift. Opinions on Lessing's own attitude to mediæval literature differ remarkably, but I cannot see much real appreciation in it.

Invaluable words! and, if somewhat extra-literary,—or, from another point of view, directed to too narrow a part of literature,—yet in their true acceptation governing and guiding the whole method, the entire campaign, of literary criticism. Whether Lessing had taken any suggestion from Batteux,[1] who had written long before him, I do not know: but the different attitude of the French critic and the German is most interesting, and gives the reason why we have treated Batteux in the last volume and are treating Lessing in this. Both writers perceive, each in his own fashion, that every work of genius is, or at any rate contains, a rule. I do not even know that it can be denied that Lessing, almost as much as Batteux, though under happier stars, has an idea of working out one genera rule of all the particulars—a process which is but too likely to lead back again into the House of Bondage, but his actual notion takes a far more catholic form, leads far more directly to the way of salvation You must study each work of genius in order to get its contribution to the Inner Rule, the highest formula. And if you do this all will be well. It is not the Rule—as some falsely hold, and as perhaps some even have falsely thought that the present writer holds—that does the harm, but its exclusive and disfranchising application *a priori* —not even the Kind, but its elevation into a caste, with the correlative institution of pariahdom. And Lessing's principle of never neglecting study of former experience saves this danger at once.[2]

[1] *V. sup.*, vol. ii. p 523. As we have seen, J A. Schlegel had translated the Frenchman when Lessing was barely of age.

[2] To illustrate this before going further, we may take account both of the *Theatrical Miscellanies*, which fill vols. vii. and viii. of the *Works*, and of the similar miscellanies of a more general kind contained in vol. xiv. The latter include many short reviews and notes of the kind elsewhere noticed: the former supply by far the most remarkable instance of that extraordinary *industry* — that mania, so to speak, for assimilating all the material furnished by older and more accomplished literatures—which is the great note of this period of German culture. Much, as was almost necessary, is mere abstract, such as in vol 7 the above-noticed analysis of Crisp's *Virginia* and the long article on the Tragedies of Seneca, where, however, there is not a little actual criticism of Brumoy, &c. The *Lives* of Thomson ("Jacob" Thomson) and of Destouches show us by contrast what a great thing Dr Johnson did in elaborating the biographical-critical *essays*: and

Miscellaneous specimens of his criticism.

But the twenty volumes of Lessing's Works, or rather the round dozen, more or less, of them which contain or concern criticism, are not to be passed over without some more detailed mention. The first contains (besides the early and not uninteresting Preface to his collected *Poems* in 1753) the famous Dissertations on the Fable, which, whether one agrees or not with them, give an admirable example of the thoroughness, the sense, and the scholarship of Lessing's critical method. He lays out the history of opinion on his subject from Aristotle and Aphthonius to Breitinger and Batteux; he combats, not long-windedly but scientifically, those opinions with which he disagrees, he sets forth his own with such further disposition of the subject as he thinks proper. And in sixty pages he has given as masterly an example of "criticism on a *kind*," of general criticism (for we must maintain the reservations above outlined), as need be desired—an example uniting antique clearness and proportion, scholastic method, and modern vivacity and illustrative variety. A somewhat different kind of document, but the kind which we have so often looked for in vain hitherto, is given by the great mass of reviews, literary letters, the rhetorical discussions of various kinds, and the like, which fill four successive volumes.[1] From the very first, written when Lessing was but two-and-twenty, his scholarship, his reading, and his formidable and rather aggressive intellectual ability, appear unmistakably. Much is mere abstract, but more independent work appears from the long and early criticism of the *Captivi*[2] to the review of Meinhardt's *Italian Poets*, which came just before the *Laocoon*.

Here may be found all manner of dealings with interesting and heterogeneous subjects and persons, from Rousseau's Dijon Discourse through Klopstock and Piron, Bodmer's sacred epics

even the *Dissertations* on *tragédie larmoyante* give little more than a frame of Lessing's, the painters being Chassiron and Gellert. One article in vol. 8, "Von Johann Dryden," might have been of the very highest critical interest; but it is a mere fragment. And the "Outlines of a History of the English Stage," though showing Lessing's astonishing scholarship in his favourite subject, are only outlines.

[1] vi.-ix. of the edition cited.

[2] This occupies more than fifty pages (91-145) of vol. vi.

("Three Epic Poets in Germany at once!" says Lessing, setting the tone of mischievous reviewing early; "too much! too much of a good thing!"), and "Gentil" Bernard on the Art of Love, to elaborate dissertations on Simon Lemnius, the author of that edifying work the *Monachopornomachia*.[1] And later,[2] in more extensive reference to German Literature, much about the early work of Klopstock and Wieland, a sustained polemic against Gottsched, ranging from serious attacks on his authority as a literary historian and critic to "skits" tending to prove that he was the author of *Candide*,[3] not unaccompanied by businesslike abstracts of the critic's own work to adjust the same to more general acceptance.[4]

Of the *Kleinere Philologische Abhandlungen*, which fill the 15th volume, the curious "Rettungen des Horaz" have been glanced at above. The opening "Vademecum fur Lange," a vitriolic and practically destructive retort on that blundering translator of Horace himself, who had not had the sense to sit down quietly under a severe but not offensive review of Lessing's, is one of the capital examples of its kind—a kind questionable but sometimes to be allowed. The "Anmerkungen uber das Epigramm," the principal single constituent of the volume,[5] are very noteworthy. The rest consist mainly of textual and other animadversions of the kind which we reluctantly leave out here from the Renaissance downward. The chief are on Paulus Silentiarius, and on that interesting book the fables of the so-called *Anonymus Neveleti*.

He returns to this in one[6] of the numerous papers of vol. XVI., another collection of notes, notices (some of Old German Literature), and reviews, the last mostly very short and sometimes a little perfunctory. What might have been the most,

[1] Lessing is less tolerant in this case than in that of Martial. The fact is that, in spite of its outrageousness, the libel would be rather amusing if it were not so exceedingly *tautologous*—with the tautology of a certain class of *graffiti*.

[2] Vol. IX.

[3] P. 205.

[4] P. 173.

[5] XV 73-155. The *thirteenth* volume is wholly archæological, and contains among other things the polemic with Klotz as to the *Laocoön*, and the tractate *On Ancient Representations of Death*.

[6] *Ueber die sogenannten Fabeln aus den Zeiten der Minnesinger*, XVI. 47-87.

and is not the least, interesting of these,[1] has for subject a German translation of the first two volumes of *The Rambler* in 1754. Lessing does not name Johnson, nor does he seem to know anything about him; but he praises the Essays highly. Now, if you could have combined the good points of these two, and "sprinkled in," as Mambrun might say,[2] a little *furor romanticus*, it would have been difficult to get a better critical mixture than the result.

The still further collection of critical miscellanea in vol. xix. is mostly philosophical or, according to Lessing's unfortunate later habit, theological in character,[3] but the long "Pope als Metaphysiker" deserves mention as at least partially literary and as more than partially good. Finally, the numerous and not seldom interesting notes or motes of the *Kollectaneen* or Commonplace Book published after Lessing's death, though they frequently approach or flit round strictly literary criticism, never, I think, actually constitute it.[4]

His attitude to Æschylus and Aristophanes.

In the case of so great a name occupying the most prominent position at the last turning-point of the recorded critical course, it is necessary to insist on those reserves which have been made already. Everybody who has read Lessing carefully must have noticed, whether with immediate understanding of the reason or not, the very small attention which he pays to two writers in his own favourite department, whom some would call the very greatest in it, as far as Greece is concerned, and to whom hardly any nowadays would deny a place among the greatest of Greece or of the world—that is to say, Æschylus and Aristophanes. His defenders are prompt with an excuse at least as damaging as most excuses. People did not, says Lessing's very able and very erudite commentator, M. Kont, fully understand in those

[1] P. 270. The Germans could not get nearer to the title than *Der Schwärmer oder Herumstreifer* I suppose *Der Schlenderer* would have been not "noble" enough. Lessing's English does not seem to have been very idiomatic, for he says that the word "Rambler" means properly "a landlooper who has no regular abiding-place."

[2] *V. sup.*, II. 267.

[3] It is curious that three great critics of the three great literary countries of modern Europe, Lessing, Sainte-Beuve and Mr Arnold, should all have forgotten in their later years the caution "Be not critical *overmuch*."

[4] See, for instance, the art. on Hagedorn, xx. 108.

days the importance of Æschylus in connection with Greek myths: and the forms of drama which he, and still more Aristophanes, adopted were unsuitable to that modern use and application which Lessing always had at heart. Alas! the value of an author in connection with Greek myths is so exceedingly indifferent to literature! and his value as helping to fill a stage at the present day is also of so very little importance! If ignorance of one of these things and consciousness of the absence of the other determined Lessing's neglect of the greatest tragic poet of Greece,—of the greatest comic poet, except Shakespeare, of the world,—then it will be but too clear that whatever Lessing cared most for, it was not poetry,—that his care for poetry as such—nay, for literature as such—was even rather small. To call him a "king of criticism" is foolish, because that is just what he is not. He is grand-duke of not a few critical provinces which, somehow or other, he never can consolidate into a universal monarchy of critical wit.

Let me, however, assure any of my readers who are apt to regard as "unfriendly" or "unsympathetic" criticism which is not eulogy thick and slab, neat and unmixed, that there is no intention here of belittling Lessing's critical qualities,[1] only one of indicating critically what they were and what they were not. The gift of critical expression he most certainly had in a very high degree. His exposition is masterly: though he is constantly, as has been said, leading the discussion aside from concrete to abstract, and from particular to general points, he is scarcely ever obscure, confused, or vague. His language is precise, without being technical or jargonish. He has something of the German lack of urbanity, but he often has a felicity of expression that is French rather than German, with depth and humour which are far more German than French. Never has one of the tricks of the critical pedant—common to the kind in our day as in his—been so happily described as in the opening of *Wie die Alten den Tod gebildeten*: "Herr

[1] I most particularly, for instance, do *not* wish to seem of the mind of an American Professor who announces in a periodical as I revise this book that he believes he has "overthrown most of Lessing's ideas" in the *Laocoön*, "shown that his statements about Homer are wrong, his psychology wrong, and his reasoning often fallacious."

Klotz always thinks he is at my heels. But when I look back at his yelp, I see him lost in a cloud of dust quite astray from the road I have trodden."[1] The unlucky distraction of his later years to theological or anti-theological squabbling may—nay, must—have lost us much. But as it is, he never fails for long together to give those *fermenta cognitionis* of which he speaks. He is always "for thoughts": that fecundity, as a result of the critical congress, which we shall remark in his part-master Diderot, is everywhere present in him.

Frederic the Great

Lessing, whom the king neglected, may suggest Frederic the Great, whose *De la Littérature Allemande* (1780) the Germans have most forgivingly translated into the language despised by the writer, and adopted as a "monument" of its literature.[2] It is certainly a monument of a kind, and the most striking contrast possible to Lessing's work. I shall not say that it shows, as a Carlylian not less fervent than myself[3] has admitted of Frederic's historian on Marryat, that Frederic "was stupid for once in his life" But it certainly shows that he could be absurdly narrow and perverse, and could push the confidence of ignorance to a wonderful length. That Frederic *was* very ignorant of literature there is no doubt. It is known that he "had small Latin[4] and *no* Greek"; his expressions about English, the language and the literature, in this very tractatule, are, if possible, more impudently ignorant than those about German. he does not, I think, so much as name a Spanish author, and his references to Italian might have been, and probably were, derived from mere hearsay.

All this was a good preparation for judging a literature in the very peculiar state of German in 1780, when, to do it justice, a man should have had the knowledge, then almost

[1] Lessing did not always keep so cool The *Briefe Antiquarischen Inhalts* (vol. 13, ed cit.) not unfrequently betray a rise of temperature, and at the last boil over in coarse and self-forgetful language.

[2] *Deutsche Litteraturdenkmale.* Heilbronn, 1883 One cannot be too grateful for the admirable re-edition of this by Herr L Geiger. Berlin, 1902.

[3] Mr David Hannay, Introduction to *Jacob Faithful* London, 1895.

[4] Goethe, *Conv. Eck.*, i. 125, says *none.*

impossible, of the various periods from "Middle High" onwards, the power to appreciate its very different phases, which few had, and the power, which hardly anybody ever has, of appreciating the literary present, and even future. But Frederic need not have made so near an approach to stupidity as he makes here.[1]

De la Littérature Allemande.

That there is considerable truth and shrewdness in the king's censure of his subjects' pedantry and want of taste is quite certain; that the German language was in a less favourable condition for literature than any other of the great European languages is certain also. Many of his practical precepts are as sensible as we should expect from a man so great in affairs But his literary criticism is rather worse than we should expect even from a disciple of Voltaire, whose pet prejudices they not merely reflect but exaggerate. Of all the "answers" (a most interesting list of which, with account of them where possible, from that one of Goethe's, which has the here most deplorable "defect of being lost," downwards, will be found in Herr Geiger's Introduction) the happiest is in three words of Herder's, which describe the treatise as "*ein comisches Meisterstuck.*"[2] Frederic attributes to Horace, and in the *Ars Poetica* too, four words[3] which do not occur there, which would not be very easy to get into the metre without destroying their juxtaposition, and which it would be not much easier to adjust to any context of the actual piece. He attributes to Aristotle not merely the Three Unities, but instead of the "Unity of *Action*" the "Unity of *Interest*," thus handing over

[1] As in his smartness (p. 12, ed. cit.) on the phrase (which he misattributes, but this is nothing), "Ihre Majestat Glanzen wie ein Karfunkel am Finger der Jetzigen Zeit" "Peut on," asks this other Majesty with fine irony, "rien de plus mauvais! Pourquoi une escarboucle! *Est-ce que le temps a un doigt?* Quand on le représente, on le peint avec des ailes, parcequ'il s'envole sans cesse, avec un clepsydre parceque les heures le divisent, et on arme son *bras* d'un faulx pour désigner qu'il fauche ou détruit tout ce qui existe." The question as to the carbuncle is, of course, an example of pure ignorance, as is the general objection to the consecrated phrase and figure of the "finger of time" and its ring. But "arms" generally have "fingers," unless these are cut off; and how, *Ihre Majestat*, does Time work his scythe without them?

[2] Quoted by Geiger, *op. cit.*, p. xxvi.

[3] "*Tot verba, tot pondera.*"—Ibid., p. 18.

the whole position to the anti-Aristotelians after a fashion which, if one of the king's own generals had imitated it in actual war, would have "broken" him for life, if it had not put him against a wall, and opposite to a file of grenadiers. He thinks that Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius wrote in Latin; that Toland wrote the *Leviathan*; that Marot, Rabelais, and Montaigne wrote a jargon at least as bad as any German—"gross and destitute of grace.' In the most celebrated passage[1]—perhaps the only one generally known—he not only out-Voltaires Voltaire by speaking of the "abominable pieces of Shakespeare," those absurd "farces worthy of Canadian savages," but stigmatises *Goetz von Berlichingen* as a "detestable imitation" of them. He hardly knows of any other German writers, and of those whom he praises Gellert and Gessner are the only ones who have retained the least reputation. If for one thing that he did—the injunction to write in German and not take refuge in other languages—one is tempted to spare him, the merit almost disappears when one remembers that he meant the German to be written in the teeth of the natural bent of the language. The bulk of his positive directions has nothing to do with literature whatsoever, but with the teaching of physical science, of law, &c. And the real apex of the *comisches Meisterstuck* (for Herder's words are too good not to be repeated) is to be found at the end. He prophesies, and (such is the unending and unfathomable irony of Fate!) he prophesies quite truly, that "the palmy days of our Literature have not come, but they are approaching," that he is their harbinger, that they are just about to appear, "that though he shall not see them, his age making it hopeless, he, like Moses, sees the Promised Land, but must not enter it." The inevitable jests at Moses himself, and the bare "rocks of sterile Idumea," follow. But it was Moses who laughed last. Every word of Frederic's prophecy came true; but it was because Germany neglected every item of Frederic's prescription. The palmy days did come: they lasted for fifty glorious years and (with Heine) longer. But their light was the light borrowed from the

[1] P. 23.

abominable Shakespeare, and their leader was the author of *Goetz von Berlichingen.*[1]

[1] By an accident not worth dilating upon I was unable to incorporate the results of careful reading of Konig and Conti in the text The former's treatise on Taste is very respectable for its time, and must then have been quite stimulating, but it belongs to the obsolete box of our matter Taste, excellent in the palmy times of Greek literature, declined later, was revived by the Romans, lost in the Middle Ages, recovered at the Renaissance, lost again and recovered by the French, and so on He is much cumbered (as some other excellent persons have been) about the origin of the *word* Taste—deprives the Spaniards of the honour of inventing it, and very properly finds its origin in Graeco Roman times It must be natural, but can be improved by acquirement. It is more *immediate* than judgment. It extends to quite trivial things—snuff, wine, foppery in dress, sensual pleasures, &c

Conti's work, in the edition quoted, has the great drawback of being presented almost wholly, as far as the critical part of it is concerned, in abstracts made from MS. by the editor. It consists, besides Letters to the Doge Marco Foscarini, to Maffei, to Muratori, &c, of Treatises on "Imitation," "Poetic Fantasy," and the like and of animadversions on classical and Italian Poetry, on Fracastoro, on Gravina, and others It does not come to very much.

CHAPTER III.

THE ENGLISH PRECURSORS.

THE FIRST GROUP—MEDIÆVAL REACTION—GRAY—PECULIARITY OF HIS CRITICAL POSITION—THE LETTERS—THE 'OBSERVATIONS' ON ARISTOPHANES AND PLATO—THE 'METRUM'—THE LYDGATE NOTES—SHENSTONE—PERCY—THE WARTONS—JOSEPH'S 'ESSAY ON POPE'—THE 'ADVENTURER' ESSAYS—THOMAS WARTON ON SPENSER—HIS 'HISTORY OF ENGLISH POETRY'—HURD HIS COMMENTARY ON ADDISON—THE HORACE—THE DISSERTATIONS—OTHER WORKS—THE 'LETTERS ON CHIVALRY AND ROMANCE'—THEIR DOCTRINE—HIS REAL IMPORTANCE—ALLEGED IMPERFECTIONS OF THE GROUP—STUDIES IN PROSODY—JOHN MASON HIS 'POWER OF NUMBERS' IN PROSE AND POETRY—MITFORD: HIS 'HARMONY OF LANGUAGE'—IMPORTANCE OF PROSODIC INQUIRY—STERNE AND THE STOP-WATCH.

We have already, in the last volume, seen that in England, about the middle of the eighteenth century, the tables of criticism turned, and that a company of critics, not large, not as a rule very great men of letters, began slowly, tentatively, with a great deal of rawness, and blindness, and even backsliding, to grope for a catholic and free theory of literature, and especially of poetry. We are now to examine this group[1] more narrowly.

[1] One celebrated person, much associated with it in some ways, and referred to in passing above, will not appear here Horace Walpole did, for such a carpet knight, real service in the general movement, but he was a literary critic *pour rire* only. His admiration of Mme. de Sévigné is not really much more to his credit than his sapient dictum (to Bentley, Feb. 23, 1755) that *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is "forty times more nonsensical than the worst translation of an Italian opera-book." "Notre Dame des Rochers" talked of subjects that interested him in a manner which he could understand: Shakespeare was neither "Gothic" nor modern. So he liked the one and despised the other—uncritically in both cases.

With the not quite certainly to be allowed exception of Gray, no one of them could pretend to the first rank in the literature of the time; and most of them (Hurd and Percy were the chief exceptions) did not live to see, even at the extreme verge of life, the advent of the champions who were to carry their principles into practice. But they were the harbingers of the dawn, little as in some cases (perhaps in all) they comprehended the light that faintly and fitfully illuminated them beforehand.

The first group

Three of the writers of this class whom it is necessary to name here have been alluded to already; the others were Shenstone and the Wartons. As so often happens in similar cases, it is exceedingly difficult to assign exact priority, for mere dates of publication are always misleading; and in this case, from their close juxtaposition, they almost of themselves give the warning that they are not to be trusted. How early, in his indolent industry at Cambridge, Gray had come to a Pisgah-sight of the true course of English poetry; Shenstone, in pottering and maundering at the Leasowes, to glimpses of the same; Percy and Shenstone again to their design, afterwards executed by Percy alone, of publishing the *Reliques;* the Wartons to their revolutionary views of Pope on the one side and Spenser on the other; Hurd to his curious mixture of true and false *aperçus;*—it is really impossible to say. The last-named, judging all his work together, may seem the least likely, early as some of that work is, to have struck out a distinctly original way for himself; but all, no doubt, were really driven, *nolentes volentes*, conscious or unconscious, by the Time-Spirit.

Mediæval reaction.

The process which the Spirit employed for effecting this great change was a simple one, indeed, we have almost summed up his inspiration in the oracular admonition, *Antiquam exquirite matrem.* For more than two hundred years literary criticism had been insolently or ignorantly neglecting its mother, the Middle Age—now with a tacit assumption that this period *ought* to be neglected, now with an open and expressed scorn of it. But, as usually happens, a return had begun to be made just when the

opposite progress seemed to have reached its highest point. Dryden himself had "translated" and warmly praised Chaucer; Addison had patronised *Chevy Chase*. But before the death of Pope much larger and more audacious explorations had been attempted. In Scotland—whether consciously stung or not by the disgrace of a century almost barren of literature—Watson the printer [1] and Allan Ramsay [2] had, in 1706–11 and 1724–40, unearthed a good deal of old poetry. In England the anonymous compiler [3] of the *Ballads* of 1723 had done something, and Oldys the antiquary, under the shelter of "Mrs Cooper's" petticoat, had done more with the *Muses' Library* of 1737. These examples [4] were followed out, not without a little cheap contempt from those who would be in the fashion, and knew not that this fashion had received warning. But they *were* followed, and their most remarkable result, in criticism and creation combined, is the work of Gray.

Gray

We have not so very many fairer figures in our "fair" herd than Gray, though the fairness may be somewhat like that of Crispa,[5] visible chiefly to a lover of criticism itself. His actual critical performance is, in proportion, scantier even than his poetical; and the scantiness may at first sight seem even stranger, since a man can but poetise when he can, but may, if he has the critical faculty, criticise almost when he will and has the opportunity. That opportunity (again at first sight) Gray may seem to have had, as scarcely another man in our whole long history has had it. He had nothing else to do, and was not inclined to do anything else. He had sufficient means, no professional avocations, the knowledge, the circumstances, the *locale*, the wits, the taste, even the velleity—everything but, in the full sense, the will. This indeed he might, in all

[1] *Choice Collection of Scots Poems.* In three Parts Reprinted in 1 vol (Glasgow, 1869).

[2] *The Evergreen, The Tea-Table Miscellany.* Reprinted in 4 vols (Glasgow, 1876).

[3] Said to be Ambrose Philips. If so, the book, despite its uncritical and heterogeneous character, is "Namby-Pamby's" best work by far. There is a reprint, without date (3 vols.), among the very valuable series of such things which were published by Pearson c. 1870.

[4] For more on them, see chap. vi. of this book.

[5] Ausonius, Ep. 77.

circumstances and at all times, have lacked, for Mr Arnold showed himself no philosophic student of humanity when he said that at the date of Milton, or at the date of Keats, Gray would have been a different man. His *work* would doubtless have been a different work; but that is another matter. At all times, probably, Gray would have had the same fastidiousness, the same liability to be "put off"; and if his preliminary difficulties had been lightened by the provision, in times nearer our own, of the necessary rough-hewing and first research by others, yet this very provision would probably have prevented him from pursuing what he would have disdainfully regarded as a second-hand business. We may—we must—regret that he never finished that *History of English Poetry* which he hardly began, that he never attempted the half-dozen other things of the kind, which he was better equipped for doing than any man then living, and than all but three or four men who have lived since. But the regret must be tempered by a secret consciousness that on the whole he probably would *not* have done them, let time and chance and circumstance have favoured him never so lavishly.

Peculiarity of his critical position.

Yet this very idiosyncrasy of limitation and hamper in him made, in a sense, for criticism; inasmuch as there are two kinds of critical temperament, neither of which could be spared. There is the eager, strenuous, almost headlong critical disposition of a Dryden, which races like a conflagration[1] over all the field it can cover, and there is the hesitating, ephectic, intermittent temperament of a Gray, which directs an intense and all-dissolving, but ill-maintained heat at this and that special part of the subject. In what is called, and sometimes is, "originality," this latter temperament is perhaps the more fertile of the two, and Gray has it in an almost astounding measure. Great as was his own reading, a man might, I think, be as well read as himself without discovering any real indebtedness of his, except to a certain general influence of literary study in many times and tongues. He knew indeed, directly or indirectly, most of the other agents in the quiet and gradual revolution which was coming on English poetic and literary taste; but he

[1] With acknowledgments to Longinus.

was much in advance of all of them in time. Well as he was read in Italian, he nowhere, I think, cites Gravina, in whom there was something to put him on new tracks; and though he was at least equally well read in French, and does cite Fontenelle, it is not for any of the critical germs which may be discovered in that elusive oracle. The one modern language to which he seems to have paid little or no attention was German,[1] where the half-blind strugglings of the Zurich school might have had some stimulus for him. Whatever he did, alone he did it; and though the volume of his strictly critical observations (not directed to mere common tutorial scholarship) would, if printed consecutively, perhaps not fill twenty—certainly not fifty—pages of this book, its virtue, intrinsic and suggestive, surpasses that of libraries full not merely of Rymers but of (critical) Popes.

The Letters.

From the very first these observations have, to us, no uncertain sound. In a letter to West,[2] when the writer was about six-and-twenty, we find it stated with equal dogmatism, truth, and independence of authority that "the language of the age is never the language of poetry except among the French, whose verse, where the thought or image does not support it, differs nothing from prose," with a long and valuable citation, illustrating this defence of "poetic diction," and no doubt thereby arousing the wrath of Wordsworth. Less developed, but equally important and equally original, is the subsequent description of our language as not being "a settled thing" like the French. Gray, indeed, makes this with explicit reference only to the revival of archaisms, which he defends; but, as we see from other places as well as by natural deduction, it extends to reasonable neologisms also. In this respect Gray is with all the best original writers, from Chaucer and Langland downwards, but against a respectably mistaken body of critics who would fain not merely introduce the caste system into English, but, like

[1] Mr Gosse, I find, agrees with me on this point. It is well known that ignorance of German was almost (Chesterfield, I think, in encouraging his son to the study, says roundly that it was quite) universal among Englishmen in the mid-eighteenth century.

[2] Gray's *Works* (ed. Gosse, 4 vols., London, 1884), II. p. 106, Letter xliv., dated April, without the year; but the next gives it: 1742.

Sir Boyle Roche, make it hereditary in this caste not to have any children.

This same letter contains some of Gray's best-known criticisms, in his faint praise of *Joseph Andrews* and his warm appreciation of Marivaux and Crébillon. I am not quite certain that, in this last, Gray intended any uncomplimentary comparison, or that he meant anything more than a defence of the novel generally—a defence which itself deserves whatever crown is appropriated to critical merit, inasmuch as the novel had succeeded to the place of Cinderella of Literature. However, both Fielding and Smollett were probably too boisterous for Gray, who could appreciate Sterne better, though he disliked "Tristram's" faults.

But the fact is that it is not in criticisms of his contemporaries, or indeed in definite critical appreciation at all, that Gray's strength lies. For any defects in the former he has, of course, the excuse that his was a day of rather small things in poetry; but, once more, it is not quite certain that circumstances would have much altered the case. We must remember that Mr Arnold also does not come very well out of this test; and indeed, that second variety of the critical temperament which we have defined above is not conducive to enthusiasm.[1] It is, of course, unlucky that Gray's personal affection for Mason directed his most elaborate praises to a tenth-rate object; but it is fair to remember that he does reprehend in Mason faults—such as excessive personification—which were not merely those of his friend, the husband of "dead Maria," but his own. It is a thousand pities that, thanks to Mason himself, we have the similar criticisms of Beattie only in a garbled condition; but they too are sound and sensible, if *very* merciful. The mercy, however, which Gray showed perhaps too plentifully to friends and relations he did not extend to others. That the "frozen grace" of Akenside appealed little to him is less remarkable than his famous pair of judgments on "Joe" Warton and Collins.

[1] Gray has been upbraided with his description (in part at least) of Boswell's Paoli-book as "a dialogue between a green goose and a hero." It does him no discredit; in fact, he might have summarised the whole of Boswell's work, had he lived to see it, as that of a green goose (a thing like him more admirable dead than alive) with a semi heroic love for heroes.

The coupling itself, moreover, and even the prophecy that "neither will last," are less extraordinary (for the very keenest eyes, when unassisted by "the firm perspective of the past," will err in this way, and Joseph's *Odes* are, as his friend, Dr Johnson, said of the rumps and kidneys, "very pretty little things") than the ascription of "a bad ear" to Collins. This is certainly "a term inexplicable to the Muse." It was written in 1746. Five years later an undated but clearly datable letter to Walpole contains (lxxxiv., ed. cit) in a notice of Dodsley's *Miscellany*, quite a sheaf of criticisms. That of Tickell—"a poor short-winded imitator of Addison, who had himself not above three or four notes in poetry, sweet enough indeed, like those of a German flute, but such as soon tire and satiate the ear with their frequent return"—is very notable for this glance backward on the great Mr Addison, though it would have been unjust to Tickell if (which does not quite appear) it had been intended to include his fine elegy on Addison himself, and the still finer one on Cadogan.[1] Gray is quite amiable to *The Spleen* and *The Schoolmistress*, and *London;* justly assigns to Dyer (the Dyer of *Grongar Hill*, not of *The Fleece*) "more of poetry in his imagination than almost any of our number," but unjustly calls him "rough and injudicious," and brushes most of the rest away, not too superciliously A year later (December 1752, to Wharton) he grants to Hall's Satires "fulness of spirit and poetry; as much of the first as Dr Donne, and far more of the latter." In the elaborate "buckwashing" of Mason's *Caractacus* ode, which occupies great part of the very long letter of December 19, 1756, there is a passage of great importance on Epic and Lyric style, which exhibits as well perhaps as anything else the independence, and at the same time the transitional consistency, of Gray's criticism.

He says first (which is true, and which no rigidly orthodox Neo-Classic would or could have admitted): "The true lyric style, with all its flights of fancy ornaments, heightening of expression, and harmony of sound, is in its nature superior to every other style." Then he says that this is just the cause why it could not be borne in a work of great length; then

[1] I am well aware that the "parallel-passagers" have tried their jaws on these.

that the epic "therefore assumed graver colours," and only stuck on a diamond borrowed from her sister here and there; then that it is "natural and delightful" to pass from the graver stuff to the diamond, and then that to pass from lyric to epic is to drop from verse to mere prose. All of which seems to argue a curious inequality in clearing the mind from cant It *is* true, as has been said, that Lyric is the highest style. But surely the reason why this height cannot be kept is the weakness, not of human receptivity but of human productiveness. Give us an *Iliad* at the pitch of the best chorus of the *Agamemnon*, and we will gladly see whether we can bear it or not. Again, if you can pass from the dress to the diamond, why not pass from the diamond to the dress? It is true that in Mason's case the diamonds were paste, and bad paste; but that does not affect the argument. When, in still a later letter (clxii.) to the same "Skroddles"[1] he lays it down that "extreme conciseness of expression, yet pure, perspicuous, and musical is one of the grand beauties of lyric poetry," we must accentuate *one of the*. But there is a bombshell for Neo-Classicism in cvii., still to "Skroddles." "I insist that sense is nothing in poetry, but according to the dress she wears and the scene she appears in."

Gray's attitude to *Ossian* is interesting, but very much what we should have expected. He was bribed by its difference from the styles of which he was weary; but he seems from the very first to have had qualms (to which he did some violence, without quite succeeding, in order to stifle them) as to its genuineness.

The Observations *on Aristophanes and Plato.*

No intelligent lover of the classics, whose love is not limited to them, can fail to regret that by very far the larger bulk of Gray's critical *Observations* is directed to Aristophanes and Plato. The annotator is not incompetent, and the annotated are supremely worthy of his labours; but the work was not specially in need of doing, and there have been very large numbers of men as

[1] After all, he may be forgiven much apparent over valuation of Mason for this name. Whatever its meaning between the friends, it "speaks" the author of *Elfrida* and *Caractacus*, and the *Monologues* and the *Odes*, and all but those lines of the epitaph on his wife which Gray wrote for him. "To skroddle" should have been naturalised for "to write minor poetry."

well or better qualified to do it. Such things as this—*Aves*, 1114: "These were plates of brass with which they shaded the heads of statues to guard them from the weather and the birds"—are things which we do not want from a Gray at all. They are the business of that harmless drudge, the lexicographer, in general, of a competent fifth-form master editing the play, in particular. But there was probably at that time not a single man in Europe equally qualified by natural gifts and by study to deliver really critical and comparative opinions on literature, to discuss the history and changes of English, and the like. Nor has there probably at any date been any man better qualified for this, having regard to the conditions of his own time and country. One cannot, then, but feel it annoying that a life, not long but by no means very short, and devoted exclusively to literary leisure, should have resulted, as far as this special vocation of the author is concerned, in nothing more than some eighty small pages of Dissertation devoted to English metres and to the Poems of Lydgate.

Let us, however, rather be thankful for what we have got, and examine it, such as it is, with care.

The Metrum.

In the very first words of the *Metrum* it is curious and delightful to see a man, at this early period, cutting right and left at the error of the older editors, who calmly shoved in, or left out, words and syllables to make what they thought correct versification for Chaucer, and at the other error committed by the majority of philologists to-day in holding that Chaucer's syntax, accidence, and orthography were as precise as those of a writer in the school of the French Academy. Even more refreshing are, on the one hand, his knowledge and heed of Puttenham, and, on the other, his correction of Puttenham's doctrine of the fixed Cæsura, his admissions of this in the case of the Alexandrine, and his quiet demonstration that the admission of it in the decasyllable and octosyllable would make havoc of our best poetry. The contrast of this reasonable method and just conclusion, not merely with the ignorant or overbearing dogmatism of Byssbe half a century earlier, but with the perversity, in the face of light and knowledge, of Guest a century later, is as remarkable as anything in the history of English criticism.

Gray, of course, was fallible. He entangles himself rather on the subject of "Riding Rhyme"; and though he, first (I think) of all English writers, notices the equivalenced dimeter iambics of Spenser's *Oak and Briar*, and compares Milton's octosyllables with them, he goes wrong by saying that this is the *only* English metre in which such a liberty of choice is allowed, and more wrong still in bringing Donne's well-known ruggedness under this head. And he does not allow himself to do more than glance at the Classical-metre craze, his remarks on which would have been very interesting.

His subsequent analysis of "measures," with the chief books or poems in which they are used, is of very great interest, but as it is a mere table it hardly lends itself to comment, though it fills nearly twenty pages. The conclusion, however, is important, and, without undue guessing, gives us fair warrant for inferring that Gray would have had much (and not a favourable much) to say on the contemporary practice he describes if the table had been expanded into a dissertation. And the table itself, with its notes, shows that though his knowledge of Middle English before Chaucer was necessarily limited, yet he knew and had drawn right conclusions from Robert of Gloucester and Robert of Brunne, *The Oul and the Nightingale*, the early English Life of St Margaret, and the *Poema Morale*.[1]

His observations on "the pseudo-Rhythmus" (which odd and misleading term simply means Rhyme), with the shorter appendices on the same subject, present a learned and judicious summary of the facts as then known.

The criticism on John Lydgate which closes Gray's critical *dossier* might have been devoted to a more interesting subject, but they enable us to see what the average quality of the *History* would have been. And they certainly go, in scheme and quality, very far beyond any previous literary history of any country with which I am acquainted. The article (as we may call it) is made up of a

The Lydgate Notes.

[1] As printed in Mr Gosse's edition he is made to say that the *Moral Ode* was written "almost two hundred years *after* Chaucer's time." The sense, however, as well as the use of the word "Semi-Saxon," shows that he meant "before," so that "after" must be a slip either of his own pen or of the later press.

judicious mixture of biography, account of books (in both cases, of course, as far as known to the writer only), citation, exposition of points of interest in subject, history, manners, &c., criticisms of poetical characteristics in the individual, and now and then critical *excursus* of a more general kind suggested by the subject. In one place, indeed, Gray does introduce Homer in justification of Lydgate: but no one will hesitate to do this now and then; and it is quite clear that he does not do it from any delusion as to a cut-and-dried pattern, or set of patterns, to which every poem, new or old, was bound to conform.

And to this we have to add certain facts which, if not critical utterances, speak as few such utterances have done—the novelty of Gray's original English poetry, and his selection of Welsh and Scandinavian originals for translation and imitation. These things were themselves unspoken criticism of the most important kind on the literary habits and tastes of his country, and of Europe at large. The, to us, almost unintelligible puzzlement of his contemporaries—the "hard as Greek" of the excellent Garrick, and the bewilderment of the three lords at York races, establish [1] the first point; as for the second, it establishes itself. To these outlying languages and literatures nobody had paid any attention whatever previously; [2] they were now not merely admitted to literary attention, but actually allowed and invited to exercise the most momentous influence on the costume, the manners, the standards of those literatures which had previously alone enjoyed the citizenship of Parnassus.

Small, therefore, as is the extent of deliberate critical work which Gray has left us, we may perceive in it nearly all the notes of reformed, revived, we might almost say reborn, criticism. The two dominants of these have been already dwelt upon—to wit, the constant appeal to history, and the readiness to take new matter, whether actually new in time, or new in the sense of having been hitherto neglected, on its own

[1] See Letter to Wharton, October 7, 1757 (CXXVI., II., 340, ed. cit.).

[2] I mean, of course, nobody except specialists. On the vexed question of Gray's *direct* knowledge of Norse, on the priority or contemporaneousness of Percy's "Five Pieces," and on the subject generally, an interesting treatise, Mr F. E. Finlay's *Scandinavian Influences on the English Romantic Movement* (Boston, U.S.A., 1903), has appeared since the text was written.

merits; not indeed with any neglect of the ancients—for Gray was saturated with "classical" poetry in every possible sense of the word, with Homer and Virgil, as with Dante and Milton and Dryden—but purely from the acknowledgment at last of the plain and obvious truth, "other times, other ways." As a deduction from these two we note, as hardly anywhere earlier, a willingness to take literature as it is, and not to prescribe to it what it should be—in short, a mixture of catholicity with tolerance, which simply does not exist anywhere before. Lastly, we may note a special and very particular attention to prosody. This is a matter of so much importance that we must[1] ourselves bestow presently some special attention upon it, and may advantageously note some other exercitations of the kind at the time or shortly afterwards.

Shenstone.

Of the rest of the group mentioned above, Shenstone[2] is the earliest, the most isolated, and the least directly affected by the mediæval influence. Yet he, too, must have felt it to have engaged, as we know he did, with Percy in that enterprise of the *Reliques* which his early death cut him off from sharing fully. From his pretty generally known poems no one need have inferred much tendency of the kind in him: for his Spenserian imitation, *The Schoolmistress*, has as much of burlesque as of discipleship in it. Nor are indications of the kind extremely plentiful in his prose works. But the remarkable *Essays on Men and Manners*, which give a much higher notion of Shenstone's power than his excursions into the rococo, whether versified or hortulary, are full of the new germs Even here, however, he is, after the prevailing manner of his century, much more ethical than literary, and shows deference, if not reverence, to not a few of its literary idols. The mixed character of his remarks

[1] Despite the curious infuriation which such attention seems to excite in some minds by no means devoid of celestial quality. Gradually it will be seen that current views of prosody are a sort of "tell-tale" or index of the state of poetic criticism generally. They concern us here, however, only at certain moments.

[2] My copy of him is Dodsley's third edition, in 2 vols., of the *Poems and Essays* (London, 1768), with the second edition of the additional volume containing the *Letters* (London, 1769). These latter are described by Gray in the less agreeable Grajan manner, as "about nothing but" the Leasowes "and his own writings, with two or three neighbouring clergymen who wrote verses also."

on Pope[1] (which are, however, on the whole very just) may be set down by the Devil's Advocate to the kind of jealousy commonly entertained by the "younger generations who are knocking at the door"; and his objection to the plan of Spenser is neo-classically purblind But his remarks on Prosody[2] breathe a new spirit, which, a little later, we shall be able to trace in development. His preference for rhymes that are "long" in pronunciation over snip-snaps like "cat" and "not"; his discovery—herald of the great Coleridgean reaction—that "there is a vast beauty in emphasising in the eighth and ninth place a word that is virtually a dactyl"; the way in which he lays stress on harmony of period and music of style as sources of literary pleasure; and above all the fact, that when examining the "dactylic" idea just given, he urges the absurdity of barring trisyllabic feet in *any* place, and declares that a person ignorant of Latin can discern Virgil's harmony,—show us the new principles at work. Perhaps his acutest critical passage is the maxim, "Every good poet includes a critic: the reverse will not hold", his most Romantic, "The words 'no more' have a singular pathos, reminding us at once of past pleasure and the future exclusion of it"[3]

Percy.

Shenstone's colleague in the intended, his executor in the actual, scheme of the *Reliques* was allowed by Fate to go very much further in the same path. At no time, perhaps, has Bishop Percy had quite fair play. In his own day his friend Johnson laughed at him, and his enemy

[1] Ed cit., II 10-13, 158-161, and elsewhere

[2] Most of the quotations following are found in two Essays on "Books and Writers," II 157-180, 228-239

[3] II. 172; II 167 The first of these has been echoed, perhaps unconsciously, by more than one great Romantic writer For the second, compare Regnier s *regret pensif et confus, D'avoir été et n'être plus.* Shenstone's *Letters* (as is implied in the very terms of Gray's sneer) deal with literary subjects freely enough, but their criticism is rarely important, though I have noted a good many places. Some of the most interesting (p 58 *sq*, ed cit) concern Spenser, and Shenstone s gradual conversion "from trifling and laughing to being really in love with him" From another (lxii p 175) we learn that at any rate when writing, S was still in the dark about "the distance of the rhymes" in *Lucidas*. There is seen in Letter xc, viii sq., on "Fables," an intimation (c m p. 321) of the ballad plan with Percy, praise of *The Rambler* a defence of light poetry as being still poetry, &c. &c It is almost all interesting as an example of Critical *Education.*

Ritson attacked him with his usual savagery. In ours the publication at last of his famous *Folio Manuscript*[1] has resulted in a good deal of not exactly violent, but strong language as to his timorous and eclectic use of the precious material he had obtained, and his scarcely pardonable tamperings with such things as he did extract. Nobody indeed less one-sided and fanatical than Ritson himself, or less prejudiced than the great lexicographer, could ignore the vastness of the benefit which the *Reliques* actually conferred upon English literature, or the enormous influence which it has directly and indirectly exercised; but there has been a slight tendency to confine Percy's merits to the corners of this acknowledgment.

Yet there is much more, by no means always in the way of mere allowance, to be said for Percy than this. His poetic taste was not perfect: it could not be so It was unlucky that he had a certain not wholly contemptible faculty for producing as well as for relishing verse, and an itch for exercising this; while he suffered, as everybody did till at least the close of his own life, from failing entirely to comprehend the late and rather decadent principle that you must let ruins alone—that you must not "improve" your original. But a man must either be strangely favoured by the gods, or else have a real genius for the matter, who succeeds, at such a time and in such circumstances, in getting together and publishing such a collection as the *Reliques* Nor are Percy's dissertations destitute of critical as well as of instinctive merit. Modern scholarship —which has the advantage rather of knowing more than Percy could know than of making a better use of what it does know, and which is much too apt to forget that the scholars of all ages are

> "Priests that slay the slayer
> And shall themselves be slain"—

can find, of course, plenty of errors and shortcomings in the essays on the Minstrels and the Ancient Drama, the metre of *Piers Plowman*, and the Romances; and they are all unnecessarily adulterated with theories and fancies about origin, &c But this last adulteration has scarcely ceased to be a favourite

[1] By Messrs Hales & Furnivall 3 vols and Supplement. (London, 1867-68.) As for Percy's Scandinavian inquiries, see note above.

"form of competition" among critics; while I am bound to say that the literary sense which is so active and pervading in Percy seems to have deserted our modern philologists only too frequently.

At any rate, whatever may be his errors and whatever his shortcomings, the enormous, the incalculable stimulus and reagency of the *Reliques* is not now matter of dispute; while it is equally undeniable that the poetical material supplied was reinforced by a method of historical and critical inquiry which, again with all faults, could not fail to have effects almost equally momentous on criticism if not quite so momentous on creation.

The Wartons.

The two Wartons and Hurd gave still more powerful assistance in this latter department, while Thomas Warton at least supplied a great deal of fresh actual material in his *History*. To none of the three has full justice, as it seems to me, been recently done; while to one of them it seems to me that there has been done very great injustice. The main documents which we have to consider in the case of the two brothers are for Joseph, his *Essay on Pope* (1756–71), and the numerous critical papers in *The Adventurer*; for Thomas, the *Observations on The Faerie Queene* (1754), and of course *The History of English Poetry* (1774–81)

Joseph's Essay on Pope.

Warton's *Essay on Pope*[1]—vaguely famous as a daring act of iconoclasm, and really important as a document in the Romantic Revolt—almost literally anticipates the jest of a hundred years later on another document, about "chalking up 'No Popery!' and then running away." It also shows the uncertainty of standpoint which is quite pardonable and indeed inevitable in these early reformers. To us it is exceedingly unlucky that Warton should at page ii. of his Preface ask, "What traces has Donne of pure poetry?" Yet when we come immediately afterwards to the (for the time) bold and very nearly true statement that Boileau is no more poetical than La Bruyère, we see that Warton was thinking only of the satirist, not of the author of *The Anniversaries* and the "Bracelet" poems.

[1] Vol. i. appeared in 1756, vol. ii. not till 1782—which gap of a quarter of a century is not imperceptible in the work itself, and must be remembered in reading the text.

Further, Warton lays down, *sans phrase* and with no Addisonian limitations, that "a poet must have imagination." He is sure (*we* may feel a little more doubtful) that Young, his dedicatee, would not insist on being called a poet on the strength of his own Satires. And he works himself up to the position that in Pope there is nothing *transcendently* sublime or pathetic, supporting this by a very curious and for its time instructive division of English poets into four classes. The first contains poets of the first rank on the sublime-pathetic-imaginative standard, and is limited to three — Spenser, Shakespeare, and Milton. The second company—headed by Dryden, but including, not a little to our surprise, Fenton—has less of this poetic intensity, but some, and excels in rhetorical and didactic vigour. The third is reserved for those—Butler, Swift, Donne, Dorset, &c—who, with little poetry, have abundant wit; and the fourth "gulfs" the mere versifiers, among whom we grieve to find Sandys and even Fairfax herded with *Pitt and Broome*.

There is evidently, both in its rightgoings and its shortcomings, considerable matter in this for discussion, were such discussion in place. But the main heads of it, which alone would be important, must be obvious to every one In the body of the *Essay*, Warton, as was hinted above, rather "hedges." He maintains his position that Pope was not *transcendently* a poet; and indulges in much detailed and sometimes rather niggling criticism of his work; but readmits him after a fashion to a sort of place in Parnassus, not quite "utmost, last, provincial," but, as far as we can make out, on the fence between Class Two and Class Three. The book, as has also been said, is a real document, showing drift, but also drifting. The Time-Spirit is carrying the man along, but he is carried half-unconsciously.

The Adventurer Essays.

Warton's *Adventurer* essays are specially interesting. They were written early in 1753–54, some years before the critical period of 1760–65, and two or three before his *Pope* essay; and they were produced at the recommendation, if not under the direct editorship, of Johnson. Further, in the peroratorical remarks which were usual with these artificial periodicals, Warton explains that they were planned with a definite intention

not merely to reintroduce Criticism among polite society, but to reinvest her with something more of exactness and scholarship than had been usual since Addison followed the French critics in talking politely about critical subjects. Warton's own exercitations are distinguished by a touch which may be best called "gingerly." He opens (No. 49) with a "Parallel between Ancient and Modern Learning," which is in effect an almost violent attack on French critics, with exceptions for Fénelon, Le Bossu, and Brumoy. Then, taking the hint of Longinus's reference to "the legislator of the Jews," he feigns a fresh discovery of criticisms of the Bible by the author of the Περὶ Ὕψους He anticipates his examination of Pope by some remarks (No. 63) on that poet from the plagiarism-and-parallel-passage standpoint, upholds the *Odyssey* (Nos. 75, 80, 83) as of equal value with the *Iliad*, and of perhaps greater for youthful students; insinuates some objections to Milton (No. 101); studies *The Tempest* (Nos. 93, 97) and *Lear* (Nos. 113, 116, 122) more or less elaborately.[1] Throughout he appears to be conditioned not merely by the facts glanced at above, by the ethical tendency of these periodicals generally, and by his own profession of schoolmaster, but also by a general transition feeling, a know-not-what-to-think-of-it. Yet his inclination is evidently towards something new—perhaps he does *not* quite know what—and away from something old, which *we* at least can perceive without much difficulty to be the Neo-Classic creed He would probably by no means abjure that creed if it were presented to him as a test, but he would take it with no small qualifications.

Thomas Warton on Spenser

For a combination of earliness, extension, and character no book noticed in this chapter exceeds in interest Thomas Warton's *Observations on Spenser*[2] To an ordinary reader, who has heard that Warton was one of the great ushers of Romanticism in England, and that Spenser was one of the greatest influences which these ushers

[1] On this, as on other points in this chapter and the preceding more particularly, as well as elsewhere, a most valuable companion has been supplied, as was noted above, by Mr D. Nichol Smith's excellent edition of *Eighteenth Century Essays on Shakespeare*. (Glasgow, 1903.)

[2] The full title is *Observations on the Faerie Queene of Spenser* (ed. 1,

applied, the opening of the piece, and not a very few passages later, may seem curiously half-hearted and unsympathetic. Such a reader, from another though closely connected point of view, may be disappointed by the fragmentary and *annotatory* character of the book, its deficiency in *vues d'ensemble*, its apologies, and compromises, and hesitations. But those who have taken a little trouble to inform themselves on the matter, either by their own inquiries or by following the course which has been indicated in this book, will be much better satisfied. They will see that he says what he ought to have said in the concatenation accordingly.

It is impossible to decide how much of yet not discarded orthodoxy, and how much of characteristic eighteenth-century compromise, there is in the opening about "depths of Gothic ignorance and barbarity," "ridiculous and incoherent excursions," "old *Provençal* vein," and the like. Probably there is a good deal of both;[1] there is certainly a good deal which requires both to excuse it. Yet before long Warton fastens a sudden petard on the main gate of the Neo-Classic stronghold by saying: "But it is absurd to think of judging either Ariosto or Spenser by precepts which they did not attend to." Absurd, indeed! But what becomes of those antecedent laws of poetry, those rules of the kind and so forth, which for more than two hundred years had been accumulating authority? It is no good for him to go on: "We who live in the days of writing by rule . . . Critical taste is universally diffused . . ." and so on. The petard goes on fizzing and sparkling at the gate, and will blow it in before long.

In the scattered annotations, which follow for a long time, the attitude of compromise is fairly kept; and even Neo-Classics, as we have seen, need not necessarily have objected to Warton's demonstration[2] *pièces en main*, that Scaliger "had no notion of simple and genuine beauty"; while the whole of

London, 1754; ed. 2, 1762 (of which is my copy). From Hughes's editions of 1715 to Upton's of 1758 (*after* Warton's first edition) a good deal of attention had been paid to Spenser, if not quite according to knowledge. For a long list of imitations in the eighteenth century see Mr H. A. Beers (*English Romanticism in the Eighteenth Century*, London, 1899, pp. 854–55, note), who copies it from Prof. Phelps.

[1] i 15, ed. cit.

[2] Ed cit., i. 96.

his section (iv.) on Spenser's stanza, &c., is full of *lèse-poésie*, and that (vii.) on Spenser's inaccuracies is not much better. But the very next section is an important attack on the plagiarism-and-parallel-passage mania which almost invariably develops itself in bad critics; and the defence of his author's Allegory (§ x.), nay, the plump avowal of him as a Romantic poet, more than atones for some backslidings even here. Above all, the whole book is distinguished by a genuine if not always understanding *love* of the subject; secondly, by an obvious refusal—sometimes vocal, always latent—to accept *a priori* rules of criticism; thirdly, and most valuably of all, by recurrence to contemporary and preceding models as criteria instead of to the ancients alone. Much of the last part of the book is occupied with a sort of first draft in little of the author's subsequent *History*, he is obviously full of knowledge (if sometimes flawed) and of study (if sometimes misdirected) of early English literature. And this is what was wanted. "Nullum numen abest si sit *conscientia*" (putting the verse aside) might almost be the critic's sole motto if it were not that he certainly cannot do without *prudentia* itself. But Prudentia without her sister is almost useless: she can at best give inklings, and murmur, "If you are not conscious of what has actually been done in literature you can never decide what ought and ought not to have been done"

His History of English Poetry

This is what gives the immense, the almost unequalled importance which Warton's *History of English Poetry*[1] should possess in the eyes of persons who can judge just judgment. It has errors: there is no division of literature in which it is so unreasonable to expect accuracy as in history, and no division of history to which that good-natured Aristotelian dictum applies so strongly as to literary history. Its method is most certainly defective, and one of its greatest defects is the disproportion in the treatment of authors and subjects. When the author expatiates into

[1] Originally issued in the years 1774–78–81. The editions of 1824 and 1840, with additional notes by Price and others, are valuable for matter, and that of Mr W. C. Hazlitt (4 vols., London, 1871), with the assistance of Drs Furnival, Morris, Skeat, and others, invaluable. But Warton's own part is necessarily more and more obscured in them.

Dissertation, he may often be justly accused of first getting out of his depth as regards the subject, and then recovering himself by making the treatment shallow.[1] And I do not know that his individual criticisms betray any very frequent or very extraordinary acuteness of appreciation. To say of the lovely

"Lenten is come with love to town,"

that it "displays glimmerings of imagination, and exhibits some faint ideas of poetical expression," is surely to be, as Dryden said of Smith and Johnson in *The Rehearsal*, a "cool and insignificant gentleman"; and though it is quite accurate to recognise "much humour and spirit" in *Piers Plowman*, it is a little inadequate and banal.

But this is mere hole-picking at worst, at best the necessary or desirable ballast or set-off to a generous appreciation of Warton's achievement. If his erudition is not unflawed, its bulk and mass are astonishing in a man of his time; if his method and proportion are defective, this is almost inevitable in the work of a pioneer; and we have seen enough since of critics and historians who make all their geese swans, not to be too hard on one who sometimes talked of peacocks or humming-birds as if they were barndoor fowls or sparrows. The good which the book, with its wealth of quotation as well as of summary, must have done, is something difficult to realise but almost impossible to exaggerate. Now at least, for England and for English, the missing links were supplied, the hidden origins revealed, the Forbidden Country thrown open to exploration. It is worth while (though in no unkind spirit) once more to recall Addison's *péché de jeunesse* in his *Account of the English Poets*, in order to contrast it with the picture presented by Warton. Instead of a millennium of illiteracy and barbarism, with nothing in it worth noticing at all but Chaucer and Spenser—presented, the one as a vulgar and obsolete merryandrew, and the other as half old-wives'-fabulist and half droning preacher—century after century, from at least the thirteenth onward (Warton does not profess to handle Anglo-Saxon) was presented in regular literary development, with abundant examples of complicated literary kinds, and a crowded

[1] *De quo fabulat?*

bead-roll of poets, with specimens of their works. Men had before them—for the first time, except in cases of quite extraordinary leisure, opportunities, taste, and energy—the *actual* progress of English prosody and English poetic diction, to set against the orthodox doctrine that one fine day not so very early in the seventeenth century Mr Waller achieved a sort of minor miracle of creation in respect of both. And all these works and persons were accorded serious literary and critical treatment, such as had been hitherto reserved for the classics of old, for the masterpieces of what Callières calls *les trois nations polies* abroad, and for English writers *since* Mr Waller. That Warton did not gush about them was no fault; it was exactly what could have been desired. What was wanted was the entrance of mediæval and Renaissance poetry into full recognition; the making of it *hoffähig;* the reconstitution of literary history so as to place the work of the Middle Period on a level basis, and in a continuous series, with work ancient and modern. And this Warton, to the immortal glory of himself, his University, and his Chair,[1] effected.

Hurd His Commentary on Addison.

The remaining member of the group requires handling with some care. Not much notice has been taken of Bishop Hurd for a long time past, and some authorities who have given him notice have been far from kind. Their unkindness, I think, comes very near injustice; but Hurd has himself to blame for a good deal of it. As a man he seems to have been, if fairly respectable, not in the least attractive, an early but complete incarnation of the disposition called "donnishness", a toady in his younger manhood, and an exacter of toadying in his elder. He lived long enough to endanger even his critical fair fame, by representing his admiration for Shakespeare as an aberration, and declaring that he returned to his first love Addison.[2] And his work upon Addison himself (by which, I suppose, he is most commonly known) is of a meticulous and peddling kind for the most part, by no means likely to conciliate the majority of

[1] See Appendix I.

[2] He is, however, exquisitely characteristic in his description of Addison's own critical work (see the Bohn ed., ii. 383) as "discovering his own good taste, and calculated to improve that of the reader, but otherwise of no great merit."

recent critics. Most of Hurd's notes deal with mere grammar; and while nearly all of them forget that writers like Addison make grammar and are not made by it, some are choice examples of the sheer senseless arbitrariness which makes grammar itself too often a mere Lordship of Misrule and Abbacy of Unreason.[1] Yet even here there are good things; especially some attempts[2]—very early and till recently with very few companions in English—to bring out and analyse the rhythmical quality of prose. But it may be frankly admitted that if the long-lived Bishop[3] had been a critic only in his Addisonian commentary, he would hardly have deserved a reference, and would certainly have deserved no long reference, here.

His own *Works*[4] are of much higher importance. The edition (with commentary, notes, and dissertations) of Horace's *Epistles to the Pisos and to Augustus* is in part of the class of work to which, in this stage of our history, we can devote but slight attention, but even that part shows scholarship, acuteness, and—what is for our purpose almost more important than either—wide and comparative acquaintance with critical authorities, from Aristotle and Longinus to Fontenelle and Hume[5]

The Horace.

The "Critical Dissertations" which follow mark a higher flight, indeed, as their titles may premonish, they rather dare that critical inane to which we have more than once referred. Hurd is here a classicist with tell-tale excursions and divagations. In his *Idea of Universal Poetry* he will not at first in-

[1] *e g* iii. 171 "*Men's minds* Men's, for the genitive plural of *man*, is not allowable."

[2] *Vide* ed. cit., ii 417, and especially iii 389–91, a long note of very great interest I do not know whether Hurd had condescended to take a hint from the humble dissenting Mason (*v inf*)

[3] He was born only twenty years after the death of Dryden, and died the year before Tennyson was born

[4] My copy in 10 vols (London, 1777) appears to be made up of different editions of the separate books—the fifth of the *Horace* and *Dialogues*, the third of the *Cowley*

[5] These qualities are particularly shown in a really admirable note, ii. 107–15, on the method and art of criticism, with special reference to Longinus, Bouhours, and Addison. Hurd is, however, once more, and in more detail, too severe on Addison. It may be repeated that Lessing pays very particular attention to Hurd in the *Hamburgische Dramaturgie*, and speaks of him with great respect.

clude verse in his definition, nor will he accept the commonplace but irresistibly cogent argument of universal practice and expectation. Poetry is the only form of composition which has pleasure for its end; verse gives pleasure; therefore poetry must use verse. The fiction or imitation is the soul of poetry; but style is its body (not "dress," mark). Hurd even takes the odd and not maintainable but rather original view that the new prose fiction is a clumsy thing, foolishly sacrificing its proper aids of verse.[1] He is most neo-classically peremptory as to the laws of Kinds, which are *not* arbitrary things by any means, nor "to be varied at pleasure."[2] But the long Second Dissertation *On the Provinces of the Drama*, which avowedly starts from this principle, shows, before long, something more than those easements and compromises by which, as we have already said, eighteenth-century critics often temper the straitness of their orthodoxy "It is true," says Hurd,[3] "the laws of the drama, as formed by Aristotle out of the Greek poets, can of themselves be no rule to us in this matter, because these poets had given no examples of such intermediate species." It is, indeed, most true, but it will be a little difficult to reconcile it with the prohibition of multiplying and varying Kinds. The Third and Fourth Dissertations, filling a volume to themselves, deal with *Poetical Imitation* and its *Marks*, the hard-worked word "imitation" being used in its secondary or less honourable sense.

The Dissertations.

The Discourses are, in short, of the "parallel passage" kind, but written in a liberal spirit,[4] showing not merely wide reading but real acuteness, and possessing, in the second instance, the additional interest of being addressed to "Skroddles" Mason, who certainly "imitated" in this sense pretty freely. Even here that *differentia* which saves Hurd appears, as where he says,[5] "The golden times of the English poetry were undoubtedly the reigns of our two queens," while, as we saw in the last chapter,[6] Blair was teaching, and for years was to teach,

[1] ii. 153.
[2] ii 154.
[3] ii. 220.
[4] Almost too liberal, as where he falls foul of Jeremias Holstenius for saying the plain truth that "but for the *Argonautics*, there had been no fourth book of the *Æneis*" (iii. 49).
[5] iii 153.
[6] P. 464.

his students at Edinburgh, a scheme of literary golden ages in which that of Elizabeth was simply left out.

Still, these three volumes, though they would put Hurd much higher than the Addison Commentary, are not those which give him the position sought to be vindicated for him here.

Neither will his titles be sought by any one in his *Lectures on the Prophecies:* while even that edition of Cowley's *Selected Works* the principle of which Johnson[1] at one time attacked, while at another he admitted it to more favour, can only be drawn on as a proof that Hurd was superior to mere "correctness" in harking back to this poet. Nay, the *Moral and Political Dialogues* (which drew from the same redoubtable judge[2] the remark, "I fear he is a Whig still in his heart"), though very well written and interesting in their probable effect on Landor, are not in the main literary. Literary characters—Waller, Cowley, and others—often figure in them, but only the third, "On the Age of Queen Elizabeth," has something of a literary bent, and this itself would scarcely be noteworthy but for its practically independent appendix, the *Letters on Chivalry and Romance.* Here—not exactly in a nutshell, but in less than one hundred and fifty small pages—lie all Hurd's "proofs," his claims, his titles: and they seem, to me at least, to be very considerable. It is true that even here we must make some deductions. The passages about Chivalry and about the Crusades not merely suffer from necessarily insufficient information, but are exposed to the diabolical arrows of that great *advocatus diaboli* Johnson when he said[3] that Hurd was "one of a set of men who account for everything systematically. For instance, it has been a fashion to wear scarlet breeches; these men would tell you that according to causes and effects no other wear could at the time have been chosen." This is a most destructive shrapnel to the whole eighteenth century, and by no means to the eighteenth century only; but it is fair to remember that Hurd's Romance was almost as distasteful to Johnson as his Whiggery. And

Other Works.

The Letters on Chivalry and Romance.

[1] Boswell, Globe ed., pp. 363, 441.
[2] Ibid., p. 598.
[3] *Works*, ed. cit., vol. vi., p. 196.

now there is no need for any further application of the refiner's fire and the fuller's soap, while on the other hand what remains of the *Letters* (and it is much) is of altogether astonishing quality. I know nothing like it outside England, even in Germany, at its own time; I know nothing like it in England for more than thirty years after its date; I should be puzzled to pick out anything superior to the best of it (with the proper time allowance) since.

Their doctrine.

At the very opening of the *Letters*, Hurd meets the current chatter about "monkish barbarism," "old wives' tales," and the rest, full tilt. "The greatest geniuses," he says, "of our own and foreign countries, such as Ariosto and Tasso in Italy, and Spenser and Milton in England, were seduced by these barbarities of their forefathers, were even charmed by the Gothic Romances. *Was this caprice and absurdity in them? Or may there not be something in the Gothic Romance peculiarly suited to the views of a genius, and to the ends of poetry? And may not the philosophic moderns have gone too far in their perpetual contempt and ridicule of it?*" There is no mistake possible about this; and if the author afterwards digresses not a little in his "Chivalry" discussions—if he even falls into the Addisonian track, which he elsewhere condemns, of comparing classical and romantic methods, as a kind of apology for the latter, one ought, perhaps, to admit that it was desirable, perhaps necessary, in his day to do so. But when he returns to his real subject, the uncompromisingness and the originality of his views are equally evident, and they gain not a little by being compared with Warton, whose *Observations on the Faërie Queene* had already appeared After arguing, not without much truth, that both Shakespeare and Milton are greater when they "use Gothic manners" than when they employ classical, he comes[1] to Spenser himself, and undertakes to "criticise the *Faërie Queene* under the idea not of a classical, but of a Gothic composition." He shows that he knows what he is about by subjoining that, "if you judge Gothic architecture by Grecian rules, you find nothing but deformity, but when you examine it by its own the result is quite different."

[1] In *Letter VIII.*, ibid., p 266 *sq.*

A few pages later[1] he lays the axe even more directly to the root of the tree. "The objection to Spenser's method arises from your classic ideas of Unity, which have no place here." There is unity in the *Faerie Queene*, but it is the unity not of action, but of design.[2] Hurd even reprobates the additional unities which Spenser communicates by the ubiquity of Prince Arthur, and by his allegory. (He may be thought wrong here, but this does not matter.) Then he proceeds to compare Spenser with Tasso, who tries to introduce classic unity, and gives the Englishman much the higher place, and then again he unmasks the whole of his batteries on the French critics. He points out, most cleverly, that they, after using Tasso to depreciate Ariosto, turned on Tasso himself; and, having dealt dexterous slaps in the face to Davenant, Rymer, and Shaftesbury, he has a very happy passage[3] on Boileau's *clinquant du Tasse*, and the way in which everybody, even Addison, dutifully proceeded to think that Tasso was *clinquant*, and nothing else. Next he takes the offensive-defensive for "the golden dreams of Ariosto, the celestial visions of Tasso" themselves, champions "the fairy way," and convicts Voltaire out of the mouth of Addison, to whom he had appealed. And then, warming as he goes on, he pours his broadsides into the very *galère capitaine* of the pirate fleet, the maxim "of following Nature" "The source of bad criticism, as universally of bad philosophy, is the abuse of terms."[4] A poet, no doubt, must follow "Nature"; but it is the nature of the poetical world, not of that of science and experience. Further, there is not only confusion general, but confusion particular. You must follow the ordinary nature in satire, in epigram, in didactics, *not* in other kinds. *Incredulus odi* has been absurdly misunderstood.[5] The "divine dream"[6] is among the noblest of the poet's prerogatives. "The *Henriade*," for want of it, "will in a short time be no more read than *Gondibert*."[7] And he winds up a very intelligent account of Chaucer's satire on Romance in *Sir Thopas* by a still more intelligent argument, that it was only the abuse of Romance that Chaucer satirised,

[1] P. 271.
[2] P. 273.
[3] P. 290.
[4] P. 299.
[5] P. 306.
[6] P. 309.
[7] P. 313.

and by an at least plausible criticism of the advent of Good Sense, "Stooping with disenchanted wings to earth."

"What," he concludes, "we have gotten is, you will say, a great deal of good sense; what we have lost is a world of fine fabling, the illusion of which is so grateful to the charmed spirit that, in spite of philosophy and fashion, 'Fairy' Spenser still ranks highest among the poets; I mean, with all those who are either come of that house, or have any kindness for it."

And now I should like to ask whether it is just or fair to say that the work of the man who wrote this thirty-three years before *Lyrical Ballads* is "vapid and perverted," that it is "empirical, dull, and preposterous," and, at the best, "not very useful as criticism"?

His real importance.

On the contrary, I should say that it was not only useful as criticism, but that it was at the moment, and for the men, the *unum necessarium* therein. Why the Time-Spirit chose Hurd[1] for his mouthpiece in this instance I know no more than those who have used this harsh language of him; this Spirit, like others, has a singular fashion of blowing where he lists. But, at any rate, he does not blow hot and cold here. Scraps and orts of Hurd's doctrine may of course be found earlier—in Dryden, in Fontenelle, in Addison, even in Pope; but, though somebody else may know an original for the whole or the bulk of it, I, at least, do not. The three propositions—that Goths and Greeks are to be judged by their own laws and not by each other's; that there are several unities, and that "unity of *Action*" is not the only one that affects and justifies even the fable; and that "follow Nature" is meaningless if not limited, and pestilent heresy as limited by the prevailing criticism of the day—these three abide. They may be more necessary and covereign at one time than at another, but in themselves they are for all time, and they were for Hurd's more than for almost any other of which Time itself leaves record.

Literary currishness and literary cubbishness (an ignoble

[1] Hurd knew Gray (who, characteristically in both ways, described him as "the last man who wore stiff-topped gloves") pretty well (see the references in Mr Gosse's Index). He may have caught some heat from one who had plenty, though he concealed it (*Loci Critici* contains extracts from Hurd.)

but hardy and vivacious pair of brethren) have not failed almost from the first to growl and gambol over the mistakes which—in most cases save that of Gray—were made by these pioneers. Some of these mistakes they might no doubt have avoided, as he did, by the exercise of a more scholarly care. But it may be doubted whether even Gray was not saved to a great extent from committing himself by the timidity which restrained him from launching out into extensive hypotheses, and the indolence or bashfulness which held him back from extensive publication, or even writing. It was indeed impossible that any man, without almost superhuman energy and industry, and without a quite extraordinary share of learning, means, health, leisure, and long life, should have at that time informed himself with any thoroughness of the contents and chronological disposition of mediæval literature. The documents were, to all but an infinitesimal extent, unpublished; in very few cases had even the slightest critical editing been bestowed on those that were in print; and the others lay in places far distant, and accessible with the utmost difficulty, from each other; for the most part catalogued very insufficiently, or not at all, and necessitating a huge expense of time and personal labour even to ascertain their existence. At the beginning of the twentieth century any one who in these islands cannot find what he wants in a published form could in forty-eight hours obtain from the librarians at the British Museum, the Bodleian, the Cambridge Library, that of Trinity College, Dublin, and that of the Faculty of Advocates in Edinburgh, information on the point whether what he wants is at any of them, and by exerting himself a little beyond the ordinary could visit all the five in less than a week. When the British Museum was first opened, in the middle of the last century, and Gray went to read in it "through the jaws of a whale," it would have taken a week or so to communicate with the librarians; they would probably have had to make tedious researches before they could, if they chose to do so, reply, and when the replies were received, the inquirer would have had to spend the best part of a month or more in exhausting, costly, and not always safe journeys, before he could have got at the books.

Alleged imperfections of the group.

There was, therefore, much direct excuse for the incompleteness and inaccuracy of the facts given by Percy, and Warton, and even Hurd; and not a little indirect excuse for the wildness and baselessness of their conjectures on such points as the Origin of Romance and the like. It is scarcely more than thirty or forty years—it is certainly not more than fifty or sixty—since it began to be possible for the student to acquaint himself with the texts, and inexcusable for the teacher not to do so. It is a very much shorter time than the shortest of these since theories, equally baseless and wild with those of these three, have been confidently and even arrogantly put forward about the origin of the Arthurian legends, and since mere linguistic crotchets have been allowed to interfere with the proper historical survey of European literature. The point of importance, the point of value, was that Percy, and Warton, and Hurd, not only to the huge impatience of Johnson, the common friend of the first two, devoted their attention to ballad, and romance, and saga, and mediæval treatise—not only recognised and allowed the principle that in dealing with new literary forms we must use new literary measures—not only in practice, if not in explicit theory, accepted the pleasure of the reader, and the idiosyncrasy of the book, and the "leaden rule" which adapts itself to Art and not Art to itself, as the grounds of criticism, but laid the foundations of that wider study of literary history which is not so much indispensable to literary criticism as it is literary criticism itself.

To this remarkable group of general precursors may be added, for a reason previously given, a couple of pioneers in a particular branch—one contemporary with and indeed in most cases anticipating their general work; the other coming level with its latest instances[1] The fact of them is not contestable, and, as we have seen already, the tyranny of the absolutely syllabic, middle-

Studies in Prosody

[1] The original *History of Criticism* contained a passage promising a larger treatment of the special subject of Prosody, if possible, which promise the writer has since been able to carry out The performances of Mason and Mitford, however, are extremely characteristic of the general trend of "preceptive" criticism at this time, and it seemed unnecessary to omit the account of them But from this point onwards the handling of infinitely prosodic matters will be for the most part eschewed.

paused, end-stopped couplet coincides exactly with the "prose-and-sense" dynasty in English poetry. We have seen also that most of the precursors, explicitly or incidentally, by theory or by practice, attacked or evaded this tyranny. But not one of them—though Gray's *Metrum* shows what he might have done if in this matter, as in others, he could only have persuaded himself to "speak out"—had the inclination or the courage to tackle the whole subject of the nature and laws of harmony in English composition. The two whom we have mentioned were bolder, and we must give them as much space as is allowable without unduly invading the province of the other History.

John Mason: his Power of Numbers *in Prose and Poetry.*

In 1749 appeared two pamphlets, on *The Power of Numbers and the Principles of Harmony in Poetic Compositions*, and on *The Power and Harmony of Prosaic Numbers*. No author's name is on either title-page, but they are known to be by a Dissenting minister named John[1] Mason. He seems to have given much attention to the study and teaching of elocution, and he published another pamphlet on that special subject, which attained its fourth edition in 1757.[2]

In his poetical tractate Mason plunges into the subject after a very promising fashion, by posing the question with which he has to deal as "What is the cause and source of that pleasure which, in reading either poetry or prose, we derive not only from the sound and sense of the words, but the order in which they are disposed?" or, as an alternative, "Why a sentence conveying just the same thought, and containing the very same words, should afford the ear a greater pleasure when expressed one way than another, though the difference may perhaps arise only from the transposition of a single word?" One feels, after reading only so far, that De Quincey's well-known phrase, "This is what you can recommend to a friend!" is applicable—that whether the man gives the right answers or not he has fixed at once on the right questions, and has

[1] "Skroddles" was *William*.

[2] My copy contains all three bound together. It is interesting, though not surprising, to find that there was no demand for the two original and valuable constituents, and a brisk one for the commonplace third.

acknowledged the right ground of argument. Not "How ought sentences to be arranged?" not "How did A. B. C. arrange them or bid them be arranged?" but "How and why do they give the greatest *pleasure* as the result of arrangement?"

So also, in his prose tractate, Mason starts from the position that "numerous" arrangement adds wonderfully to the *pleasure* of the reader. To enter into the details of his working out of the principle in the two respects would be to commit that "digression to another kind" from which we have warned ourselves off. But it is not improper to say that, a hundred and fifty years ago, he had already cleared his mind of all the cant and confusion which to this day beset too many minds in regard to the question of Accent *v.* Quantity, by adopting the sufficient and final principle[1] that "that which *principally fixes and determines* the quantities in English numbers is the accent and emphasis"; that though he is not quite so sharply happy in his definition, he evidently uses "quantity" itself merely as an equivalent for "unit of metrical value"; that he clears away all the hideous and ruinous nonsense about "elision," observing[2] that in

"And many an amorous, many a humorous lay"

there are fourteen syllables instead of ten, and that "the ear finds nothing in it redundant, defective, or disagreeable, but is sensible of a sweetness not ordinarily found in the common iambic verse." Further, he had anticipated[3] Hurd by giving elaborate examples of quantified analysis of prose rhythm. The minutiæ of all this, interesting as they are, are not for us; the point is that here is a man who has not the fear of Bysshe before his eyes, or the fear of anybody; who will not be "connoisseured out of his senses," and whose brain, when his ear tells it that a line is beautiful, proceeds calmly to analyse if possible the cause of the beauty, without troubling itself to ask whether anybody has said that it ought not to exist.[4]

[1] *Power of Numbers*, p. 9.

[2] Ibid., p. 27.

[3] *Prosaic Numbers*, passim.

[4] Mason's very errors are interesting, as where his delight in recovered *rhythm*—in full melody of variety—leads him to something like the old blasphemy of *rhyme* ("one of the lowest ornaments and greatest shackles of modern poesy" (*Power of Numbers*, p. 14).

Mitford—his Harmony of Language.

These inquiries into prosody and rhythm formed no unimportant part of the English criticism of the mid-eighteenth century.[1] The two different ways in which they were regarded by contemporaries may be easily guessed, but we have documentary evidence of them in an interesting passage of the dedication to John Gilpin[2] of the second edition of the book in which they culminated, and to which we now come. Mitford's *Inquiry into the Principles of Harmony in Language* represents himself as having paid a visit to Pye, afterwards Laureate; and, finding him with books of the kind before him, as having expostulated with "a votary of fancy and the Muses" for his "patience with such dull and uninteresting controversy." Pye, it seems, replied that "the interest in the subject so warmly and extensively taken by English men of letters" had excited his curiosity, which had been gratified by Foster's elucidation of the subject itself. And Mitford, borrowing the book, soon found his own excited too[3]

The volume of which this was the genesis, appeared first in 1774.[4] The second edition, very carefully revised and ex-

[1] Even at this early date Mason was able to quote not a few writers—Pemberton, Manwaring, Malcolm, Gay, who, as well as Geddes, Foster, Galley, and others, had dealt with this subject In fact, the list of such authors in the eighteenth century is quite long, though few of them are very important For an excellent reasoned bibliography see Mr T S Omond's *English Metrists* (Tunbridge Wells, 1903) Henry Pemberton, Gresham Professor of Physic, and a man of various ability, published on the to us surprising subject of Glover's *Leonidas*, in 1738, *Observations on Poetry*, which I had hunted in the catalogues for a long time, when Mr Gregory Smith kindly gave me a copy It shows, as the election of its text may indicate, and as its date would further suggest, no very enthusiastic or imaginative appreciation of the Muse, but is remarkably learned, not merely in the ancients and the modern Frenchmen, but in Italians like Minturno and Castelvetro Pemberton deals with Epic and Dramatic poetry—their rise, dignity, fable, sentiment, character, language, and difference, with Versification, where his standpoint may be guessed, from his denouncing "the mixture of iambic and trochaic" as a blemish on *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*, with the Sublime He is not an inspiring or inspired writer, but holds some position, both as influential on the Germans, who not seldom quote him, and in the history of Prosody.

[2] Not Cowper's hero, but a son of "Picturesque" Gilpin. Mitford had been a pupil of Gilpin the elder.

[3] Foster's (John) *Essay on the Different Nature of Accent and Quantity* (second edition, Eton, 1763) is duly before me also, but I must not touch it here.

[4] As *An Essay on the Harmony of Language*. My friend, Mr T. S.

tended, was not published till 1804. It may appear at first sight unfortunate, but on reflection will probably be seen to have been a distinct advantage, that even this second edition preceded the appearance of any of the capital works of the new school except the *Lyrical Ballads*. For had it been otherwise, and had Mitford taken any notice of the new poetry, we should in all probability have had either the kind of reactionary protest which often comes from pioneers who have been overtaken and passed, or at best an attempt at awkward adjustment of two very different points of view. As it is, the book, besides exhibiting much original talent, belongs to a distinct school and platform—that of the later but still eighteenth-century Romantic beginners, while at the same time it represents a much greater knowledge of old literature, helped by Ellis's *Specimens*, by Ritson's work, and other products of the last years of the century, than had been possible to Shenstone, to Gray, or even to Warton.

Once more, its detailed tenets and pronouncements, with all but the general methods by which they are arrived at, belong to another story. But these general methods, and some special exemplifications of them, belong to us. Rightly or wrongly, Mitford sought his explanations of the articulate music of poetry from the laws of inarticulate music itself. For this reason, or for another, he was disposed to join the accentual and not the quantitative school of prosodists, and to express strong disapproval of the adoption of classical prosodic terms in regard to English. He is sometimes arbitrary, as when he lays down[1] "that in English every word has one syllable always made eminent by accent"; and we have to remember that he was writing after nearly a hundred years of couplet verse on Bysshian principles before we can excuse—while we can never endorse—his statement[2] that "to all who have any familiarity with English poetry a *regularity* in the disposition of accents is its most striking characteristic." He is rather

Omond, in the quite invaluable bibliography referred to above, thinks this "clearer, shorter, more pointed" than the second. It is at any rate well to remember that when it appeared, Johnson had ten years to live, and Scott, Wordsworth, and Coleridge were in their nurseries

[1] *Harmony of Language*, second edition, p. 51.

[2] Ibid., p 81.

unsound on the Pause, but lays down the all-important rule that "rhyme is a time-beater" without hesitation. He admits trisyllabic feet even in what he calls "common time"; but (in consequence of his accentual theories probably) troubles himself with "aberration" of accent (*i.e.*, substitution of trochee for iamb), with redundant or extra-metrical syllables in the middle of the line, and with other epicyclic and cumbrous superfluities. But the most important thing in the whole book—the thing which alone makes it really important to *us*—is that he supports his theories by a regular examination of the whole of English verse as far as he knows it, even back to Anglo-Saxon times, and that in making the examination, he appeals not to this supposed rule or to that accepted principle, but to the *actual* practice of the *actual* poets as interpreted to him by his own ear.

In his errors, therefore (or in what may seem to some his errors), as well as in his felicities, Mitford exhibits himself to the full as an adherent of that changed school of poetical criticism which strives in the first place to master the actual documents, in the second to ascertain, as far as possible and as closely as possible, their chronological relation to each other, and in the third to take them as they are and explain them as well as it may, without any selection of a particular form of a particular metre at a particular time as a norm which had been painfully reached and must on no account be departed from. He shows the same leaning by his constant reference to the ear, not the rule, as the authority. The first draft of his book was published not only when Johnson was still alive, but long before the *Lives of the Poets* appeared; and it is most interesting to see the different sides from which they attack the prosodic character, say of Milton. Johnson—it is quite evident from his earlier and more appreciative handling of the subject in the *Rambler*—approaching Milton with the orthodox decasyllabic rules in hand, found lines which most undoubtedly do not accord with those rules, and termed them harsh accordingly. Mitford approaches the lines with nothing but a listening ear, finds them "not harsh and crabbed, but musical as Apollo's lute," and then proceeds to construct, rightly or wrongly, such a rule as will allow and register their music.

The truth is, that these inquirers both builded and pulled down better than they knew. Many persons besides Mitford have begun by thinking controversies about prosody dull and uninteresting, while only too few have allowed themselves to be converted as he did; nor is it common to the present day to find a really intelligent comprehension of the importance of the subject. On the contrary, a kind of petulant indignation is apt to be excited by any criticism of poetry which pursues these "mechanical" lines, as they are called, and the critic has sometimes even to endure the last indignity of being styled a "philologist" for his pains.

Importance of prosodic inquiry.

Yet nothing is more certain than that these inquiries into prosody were among the chief agencies in the revolution which came over English poetry at the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the next. A sort of superstition of the decasyllable, hardened into a fanaticism of fixed pause, rigidly dissyllabic feet and the rest, had grown upon our verse-writers. A large part of the infinite metrical wealth of English was hidden away and locked up under taboo. Inquiries into prosody broke this taboo inevitably; and something much more than mere metrical wealth was sure to be found, and was found, in the treasure-houses thus thrown open.

One expected figure of a different kind may perhaps have been hitherto missed in this part of our gallery. Sterne's well-known outburst as to criticism, in the twelfth chapter of the third book of *Tristram Shandy* is far too famous a thing to be passed over with the mere allusion given to it in the last chapter, or with another in this. Nay, it may be said at once, from its fame and from its forcible expression, to have had, and even in a sense still to have, no small place among the Dissolvents of Judgment by Rule. "Looking only at the stop-watch" is one of those admirable and consummate *phrases* which settle themselves once for all in the human memory, and not merely possess—as precisians complain, illegitimately—the force of an argument, but have a property of self-preservation and recurrence at the proper

Sterne and the stop-watch

moment in which arguments proper are too often sadly lacking.

Further, it must be admitted that there are few better instances of the combined sprightliness and ingenuity of Sterne's humour. "Befetiched with the bobs and trinkets of criticism" is in reality even happier than the "stop-watch," and of an extraordinary propriety. Though he did "fetch it from the coast of Guinea," nothing was ever less far-fetched or more home-driven. The "nothing of the colouring of Titian" is equally happy in its rebuke of the singular *negativeness*—the attention to what is *not* there, not to what is—of Neo-Classicism; while the outburst, again world-known, as to the "tormenting cant of criticism," and the ingenious and thoroughly English application of this cant itself to the eulogy of the curse of Ernulphus, are all too delightful, and have been too effective for good, not to deserve the heartiest acknowledgment.

At the same time the Devil's Advocate—who is always a critic, if a critic is not always an officer of the devil—may, nay must, point out that Sterne's main object in the passage is not strictly literary. It is assuredly from the sentimental point of view that he attacks the Neo-Classic "fetichism"; the "generous heart" is to "give up the reins of its imagination into the author's hands," to "be pleased he knows not why, and cares not wherefore." To which Criticism, not merely of the Neo-Classic persuasion, can only cry, "Softly! Before the most generous of hearts gives up the reins of imagination (which, by the way, are not entirely under the heart's control) to an author, he must show that he can manage them, he must *take* them, in short. And it is by no means superfluous —it is highly desirable, if not absolutely necessary—to know and care for the wherefore of your pleasing." Nor, wide as was Sterne's reading, and ingenious as are the uses which he makes of it, does it appear that he had any very great interest in literature as such—as being *good*, and not merely odd, or naughty, or out-of-the-way, or conducive to outpourings of heart. He might even, by a very ungenerous person, be described as by no means disinterested in his protests. For certainly his own style of writing had very little chance of

being adjudged to keep time according to the classical stop-watch, of satisfying, with its angles and its dimensions, the requirements of the classical scale. So he is rather a "Hal o' the Wynd" in the War of Critical Independence—he fights for his own hand, though he does yeoman's service to the general cause.

CHAPTER IV.

DIDEROT AND THE FRENCH TRANSITION.

THE POSITION OF DIDEROT—DIFFICULT TO AUTHENTICATE—BUT HARDLY TO BE EXAGGERATED HIS IMPRESSIONISM—THE RICHARDSON ÉLOGE—THE 'REFLECTIONS ON TERENCE'—THE REVIEW OF THE 'LETTRES D'AMABED'—THE EXAMINATION OF SENECA—THE QUALITY AND EMINENCE OF HIS CRITICAL POSITION—ROUSSEAU REVISITED—MADAME DE STAEL—HER CRITICAL POSITION—AND WORK—THE 'LETTRES SUR ROUSSEAU'—THE 'ESSAI SUR LES FICTIONS'—THE 'DE LA LITTÉRATURE'—THE 'DE L'ALLEMAGNE'—HER CRITICAL ACHIEVEMENT IMPUTED—AND ACTUAL—CHATEAUBRIAND: HIS DIFFICULTIES—HIS CRITICISM—INDIRECT—AND DIRECT—THE 'GÉNIE DU CHRISTIANISME'—ITS SATURATION WITH LITERARY CRITICISM—SURVEY AND EXAMPLES—SINGLE POINTS OF EXCELLENCE—AND GENERAL IMPORTANCE—JOUBERT. HIS REPUTATION—HIS LITERARY αὐτάρκεια—THE LAW OF POETRY—MORE ON THAT SUBJECT—ON STYLE—MISCELLANEOUS CRITICISMS—HIS INDIVIDUAL JUDGMENTS MORE DUBIOUS—THE REASON FOR THIS—ADDITIONAL ILLUSTRATIONS—GENERAL REMARKS—THE OTHER 'EMPIRE CRITICS'—FONTANES—GEOFFROY—DUSSAULT—HOFFMAN, GARAT, ETC.—GINGUENÉ—M. J. CHENIER—LEMERCIER—FELETZ—COUSIN—VILLEMAIN—HIS CLAIMS—DEDUCTIONS TO BE MADE FROM THEM—BEYLE—RACINE ET SHAKESPEARE—HIS ATTITUDE HERE—AND ELSEWHERE—NODIER.

The position of Diderot.

ONE of those judgments of the Common Sense which, while sometimes finding it necessary to contest or correct them, we have also found in the main not untrustworthy, has long ago decided that for good or for ill, the weakening of the neo-classic tradition in its great stronghold, France, is due originally to Denis Diderot more than to any one else—nay, that the Germans themselves owe him a heavy quit-rent. With this decision we shall have no quarrel here;

on the contrary, a long familiarity with the writings[1] of this voluminous and disorderly genius, has made the present writer one of its very strongest supporters. There is not the slightest need to engage either in controversy or in compromise with others, or to hark back upon our own demonstrations that in Fontenelle, in La Motte, and elsewhere, there are seeds and germs of a critical calculus very different from Boileau's. We may at this stage take these things for granted. Far be it from us to say that "there's nothing new or true, and it doesn't matter." But we may very modestly, but very unflinchingly say that there is nothing wholly new or old; that there are at least very few things wholly true or false; and that it matters very much that it should be so.

Therefore, or however (for either link of the argument would be defensible) it is reasonable or convenient to start this chapter with Diderot. Yet he can hardly have, in mere space, a treatment proportionate—as proportion has been in other cases observed—to his importance. It is an importance rather of attitude and suggestion than of explicit pronouncement, and the explicit pronouncements are so many, and so various, that to summarise and discuss them would require far more than the utmost room that we have given to our very greatest authorities. Moreover, that inadequate universality, that flawed all-round-ness, which every competent critic has noticed in Diderot, would make wildernesses of proviso and commentary necessary. It is not quite safe to leave unread a single page of the twenty big octavos of his works, in arriving at an independent estimate of his critical, as of his general quality: and those who do not care to undertake so considerable an investigation, must take the word of those who have undertaken it, to some extent on trust. Further, though Diderot is by no means a mere general aesthetician—though his very

Difficult to authenticate.

[1] 20 vols., ed. Assézat and Tourneux: Paris, 1875–76. I had known Diderot before, not merely from Carlyle and Mr Morley, but from Génin's extraordinarily well-chosen *Pensées Choisies* in the Didot collection. But I remember very well, after more than a quarter of a century, the delight with which I read this edition as the successive volumes reached me at their appearance. I cannot take them down without that anticipation of sentences at particular places of the page which one only feels in such a case. They are quarrelling with the edition now, of course: but that does not matter.

critical value consists largely in the fact that he flies upon the corporal work of art like a vulture—yet his utterances in different arts concern and condition one another after a fashion, of which, before his time, there was hardly any example. We cannot possibly here bestow space on the *Paradoxe sur le Comédien* and the vast and tempting assemblage of the *Salons*. Yet the person who attempts to examine Diderot's purely literary pronouncements without examining these, will do so at his peril certainly, and almost certainly to his damage. *Le Neveu de Rameau* is imperative: nay, the much-abused *Jacques le Fataliste* itself must not be neglected.[1]

But hardly to be exaggerated. His Impressionism.

Diderot is the first considerable critic—it would hardly be too much to say the first critic—known to history who submits himself to any, to every work of art which attracts his attention, as if he were a "sensitised" plate, animated, conscious, possessing powers of development and variation, but absolutely faithful to the impression produced. To say that he has no theories may seem to those who know him a little, but only a little, the very reverse of the truth: for from some points of view he is certainly a *machine à théories* as much as Piron was a *machine à saillies*. But then the theory is never a theory *precedent;* it never (or so seldom as to require no correction of these general statements) governs, still less originates, his impression; it follows the impression itself and is based thereon. Not seldom the substructure, if not even the foundation, of the impression itself may seem to us quite disproportionate to the originating work of art—be it book, or play, or picture; but that is not the point. Constantly, the enthusiasm which had made Diderot give himself up to the fascination of his new subject may seem to lead him into all sorts of extravagances. The best known and perhaps the best example of these extravagances, the almost famous *éloge* of Richardson, has been drawn

[1] Cf p 160, vol. vi. ed cit "*Vous avez péché contre les règles d'Aristote, d'Horace, de Vida, et de Le Bossu.*" Even if (as so much else in the book is) this was partly suggested by Sterne, it is none the less a genuine fling of Diderot's own irony and recalcitrance. And an indignant note of the earlier edition of Brière, shocked in 1821 at the substitution of Le Bossu (then much forgotten) for Boileau, who was, though on the eve of dethronement, in full dictatorship, is a valuable document for us, and for this chapter.

upon by nearly everybody who has written on Diderot, and by most who have written on Richardson, for examples.

The Richardson éloge

This marvellous dithyramb[1] really exceeds, in the superlatives of its commendation of a work of originality and genius, the most "azure feats" of a modern reviewer on a tenth-rate novelist or minor poet. Richardson puts in action all the maxims of all the moralists: and yet all these maxims would not enable one to write a single page of him. Diderot was constantly going to cry out [He *does* constantly cry out "O Richardson!"] "Don't believe him! Don't go there!" to the characters, and especially to Clarissa. This author sows in the mind whole crops of virtues, which are sure to come up sooner or later. He knows *every* kind of life, and scrutinises its secrets infallibly. He preaches resignation, sympathy, justice. He has made Diderot so melancholy that his friends ask him tenderly "What is the matter?" But Diderot would not be cured for anything. To think that there should be pedantic, frivolous, insensible wretches who reproach Richardson with being long-winded! He must be read in the original He should be discussed in society. Richardson is a new gospel: he will always be popular, though thoroughly appreciated only by the elect. He is truer than history; his intense interest hides his art; a friend of Diderot, who had only read the French translation, omitting the burial and will of Clarissa, wept, sobbed, abused the Harlowe family, walked up and down without knowing what he was doing, on perusing the original. Richardson simply haunts Diderot, stifles his genius, delays him from work and effort. Ye Ages! begone and hasten the full harvest of the honours due to Richardson!

Very extravagant, no doubt; rather absurd, if anybody likes. But fair and softly; let us, as usual, examine the nature and the circumstances of this extravagant, this absurd, critical fact.

In the first place, we have to remember that it *was* a work of genius—whatever its faults—that was brought under Diderot's notice; in the second, that as at least a majority, if not a consensus, of competent critics has long ago decided, it was an example or collection of examples of genius applied in a new way—that without going to the pedantic extremes to

[1] *Œuvres*, ed. cit., v. 211–227.

which some have gone in their definition of the novel, it has been found impossible to discover before Richardson the necessary mixture of incident and character-interest, the unity (not necessarily a dramatic or even an epic unity) of plot, the mingled appeal to, and play upon, passions and manners. Then let us ask ourselves whether the systems of criticism and the critics, with which and with whom we are up to this point familiar, have as a rule proved themselves equal to cope with new geniuses and new kinds of composition—whether their tendency has not rather been distinctly to frown upon such things; at any rate, to give them the coldest and most distrustful welcome. Let us remember that Hurd, about the same time as Diderot,[1] and in the very act of defending the older and more poetical romance, was throwing cold water on prose fiction as a clumsy upstart. And finally, let us ask ourselves whether all Diderot's exaggerations are not, after all, exaggerations of the truth—owing their weak points to an excitable nature and a prevalent fashion of expression, their strong ones to a genius, and a perception of truth itself, not unfairly comparable in their way to Richardson's own in his.

The Reflections on Terence.

Side by side in the Works with this effusion there are some *Reflections on Terence*[2] written within a year of the other. In the famous Roman dramatist there is neither novelty, nor intense sentiment, nor multiplicity of individual character, nor volume of story. He was the darling of those critics from whom Diderot differed most. His faults—at least his shortcomings—are obvious to infinitely less acute, restless, and rapid judgments than that of the great Encyclopædist. His excellences are of the kind which might seem least likely to appeal to Diderot. Yet Diderot is not merely just to him, not merely bountiful, but not in the least clumsy or haphazard in his bounty. He will not have the time-honoured (or *dis*honoured) putting off of the praise of Terence on Scipio and Lælius. Admitting his "lack of verve," he gives him full credit for its compensation of even humanity, for his "statuesque" and quiet perfection.

[1] The *éloge* dates from 1761: exactly the middle point between the earliest of Hurd's *Dissertations* in 1757 and his Letters in 1765 (*v. sup.*).

[2] Ibid., 228–239.

He adds remarks on translation which are excellent; and if he may have taken the idea of holding up Terence *and* Molière together for admiration from La Bruyère,[1] he escapes La Bruyère's mistake of suggesting the *mixture* of the immiscible.

Take a third example of a very different kind. We have a short review[2] by Diderot (first extracted by M. Assézat from MS.) of Voltaire's *Lettres d'Amabed*. This book, it is hardly necessary to say, is anti-religious: and Diderot was violently anti-religious himself. It is saturated with Voltaire's sniggering indecency: and Diderot was the author of *Les Bijoux Indiscrets*.[3] Lastly, it was by Voltaire, of whom Diderot, though an independent, was an eager and faithful champion. But it is "without taste, without *finesse*, without invention, a botching up of stale blackguardisms about Moses and Christ and the rest; it has no interest, no fire, no verisimilitude, but plenty of dirt and of clumsy fun." This is the plain critical truth about the *Letters of Amabed*, and it is Diderot who says it in so many words, and says it moreover in MS.—which could curry no favour with, and obtain none from, public hypocrisy and cant.

The Review of the Lettres d'Amabed.

Turn the examining instrument from these short pieces to the long critical examination of Seneca,[4] which forms the second part of the *Essai sur les Règnes de Claude et de Néron*. It is open to any one to agree or disagree with Diderot's uncompromising, though by no means indiscriminate, championship of the usurious philosopher-statesman; as a matter of fact, though it is a matter of only argumentative importance, I am, except on the head of style, one of those who disagree with it. But agree or disagree as he may with the conclusion, no competent critic, I should suppose, can fail to admire the thoroughness with which Diderot has taken in and digested his complicated literary subject, the range and extent of literary knowledge with which he illustrates it, the readiness of his argumentation and ex-

The Examination of Seneca.

[1] *V. sup.*, ii. p. 303.

[2] *Œuvres*, vi. 366, 367.

[3] Let us remember that this evil-famed book itself contains admirable critical passages, notably (chap xxxviii.) that attack on the French theatre which Lessing extracted in Nos 84, 85 of the *Hamburgische Dramaturgie*.

[4] *Œuvres*, iii. 200–407.

position, and, above all, the craftsmanlike and attractive fashion in which he combines analysis and criticism. Again, I doubt whether there is an earlier example of what we may call "freehand" criticism—the criticism which is not tethered to the necessity of applying or expounding rules in reference to its subject, but can take that subject in, can deal with it on its own plan and specification—can, in fact, *appreciate*, without being bound to refer to and obey some official book of prices. There are some two hundred pages of this appreciation, and one's only reason (itself rather uncritical) for qualified satisfaction with it is that it does not handle some writer of greater intrinsic value and wider artistic appeal.

The quality and eminence of his critical position.

I should be prepared to multiply the citation and discussion of the critical "places" in Diderot to almost any extent, if such multiplication were reconcilable with my plan; but, as has been said, to do so would be as superfluous logically as it is methodically impossible [1] Diderot's commanding position, in criticism as well as in aesthetics, is due not more to the number and variety of his individual utterances than to the fact that he certainly obtrudes, and in all probability conceals, no general æsthetic "preventions" (as the French would say, and as Dryden very wisely does say) whatsoever. One of the great resources and one of the great charms of his criticism is the way in which he draws it from, and returns it to, all the arts without letting any of them interfere with the other The pedants of art-criticism have of course said that his is too literary; but the pedant is always pedantic, and always negligible, whether he draws his principles from French classrooms in the seventeenth century or from French studios in the nineteenth and twentieth. No matter whether he is talking of writing or of acting, of painting or of sculpture, the work of art is for Diderot something which ought to give the human sense and the human soul pleasure, which, if it does so, is to be welcomed and extolled, not without (if anybody feels thereto disposed) inquiry into the manner and the causes,

[1] Fortunately the contents and indices of the Assézat-Tourneux edition are admirably abundant and clear, a merit not so common in French books as some others.

rather mediate and immediate than ultimate, of that pleasure. He can everywhere display a really encyclopædic "curiosity," in the good sense. He can be extremely inventive and subtle, as in the famous *Paradoxe;*[1] he can enter into infinite detail and yet never lose grasp of principle, as in the essay *De La Poésie Dramatique;*[2] he can glance and digress in lightning fashion as he does everywhere, but especially in the *Salons* As good an instance of this as any is the admirable excursus on Mannerism in the *Salon* of 1767,[3] which is applicable to literature quite as much as to painting.

Certainly, if any devout Arnoldian says that Diderot's greatness is due to his "fertility in ideas," no contradiction will be thought of here. But then we have the old difficulty as to what "ideas" mean I do not remember that Mr Arnold himself makes much reference to our Denis; and, indeed, Diderot must have been, from some points of view, nearly as horrible—let us lay cards on table and say as incomprehensible —to him as to his friend M. Scherer. But it may be that the critical "idea" is neither more nor less than the result of that contact of subject and critic which has been glanced at before—a contact intimate, physical, uninterrupted, and resulting in conception and birth. This, if anything, is the "idea" of modern criticism; and while few have been more prolific of such results than Diderot, none before him and hardly any since have so invariably and consciously guided themselves by its law. I do not know that he has ever positively stated this law; I really do not know that it ever has been explicitly laid down by any of the constituted, or even the non-constituted, critical authorities. But his whole work is an exemplification of it.

And the result is, that this whole work, wherever it approaches criticism, is alive; and that he cannot help its becoming alive, even if he has apparently given hostages to

[1] *Œuvres*, viii 339–426. The English reader has at his disposal the excellent translation of Mr W H Pollock (London, 1883), with a preface by Sir Henry Irving I should like also to mention here Mrs L. Tollemache's *Diderot's Thoughts on Art and Style*, an interesting selection which has, I think, been more than once published.

[2] *Œuvres*, vii. 299–410 (with appendices)

[3] *Œuvres*, xi. 368–373.

Death by attempting set dissertations on cut-and-dried subjects, or by dallying with science, or atheism, or what not. It is a further reason why even such contemporaries as Lessing, and later, Goethe, found in him such an extraordinary stimulus. The dead, mechanical deductions of too many critics under the older system could produce nothing but copies, even more dead and more mechanical than themselves, though, as we have seen in many a figure of our gallery, the principle of life in human nature made the greater critics of the older dispensation sometimes quicken under it. But Diderot's fecundity was contagious: his "cultures" have propagated themselves from generation to generation directly, have set the example of a similar creation of critical entities to fit subjects ever since. From a formula you will never get anything but formulas: from the living contact of critic and subject you will get live criticism.

Rousseau revisited.

I was so severely rebuked by an excellent and friendly critic for dismissing Rousseau, with but a reference, from the last volume, that I thought it my duty to reconsider the matter, though the principal plea of the rebuker, that M. Texte had devoted some hundred pages to Jean-Jacques, appeared to me *nihil ad rem*. But I might have committed an error as to the *res* itself, and so I took down the four quartos, and went through them to see if my memory had played me false, as that faculty sometimes does when one is walking in the browner shades. I need not have alarmed myself; but it is perhaps worth while to spare a page to put the *pièces* actually before the reader. *There is in Rousseau practically no literary criticism at all from the first line of the "Confessions" to the last of the "Correspondence."*[1] No writer known to me abstains with such an inevitable and tell-tale deflection from "judging of authors." His attitude is that of his favourite Plutarch heightened to a Jean-Jacquian in-

[1] The chief exceptions, such as a letter to Panckoucke (May 25, 1764) and a sensible one to Chamfort (Oct 6, same year) have a very little. The words *Vous admirez Richardson* to the elder Mirabeau (April 8, 1767) may raise expectations they will be cruelly dashed. *Cf.* the indignant renunciation of the description *homme de lettres* a little later (May 13), and the long and important review of his own career to Saint-Germain, dated "1770$\frac{3}{4}$." The fact is, that a maniac of egotism and self-torment cannot be a critic, the subject under consideration being inevitably turned out of court by Self.

tensity. It is always of the moral, never of the literary, character and effect of a book that he is thinking. His fervid sensibility to the fascination of women, of scenery, of mere food and wine (for he admits this), does not seem to have extended to literature at all. By an extremely humorous coincidence (I do not know whether any one has noticed it before me, but probably some one has) he writes from Venice—the very place where he had just received, or was just to receive, the withering advice, "*Zanetto! studia la matematica!*"—to order books from Paris; and they are nearly all mathematics. The famous *Discours* about arts and sciences blinks the literary point of view altogether. The famous Letter to D'Alembert on Plays would almost adjust itself to plays in dumb show, except that spoken words have an additional moral or immoral effect. When Saint-Preux writes to Julie about her studies, he never so much as glances at the literary value of books: nor is this touched in all the talk about Education in *Emile*. The everlasting moral has dinned the Muses out. So it is in the two only less famous letters to Voltaire; so everywhere. I replace my four quartos, having found just one really critical sentence, in allocation and application only, for Jean-Jacques, probably, was not thinking of literature at all. But when he asked himself, "Serais-je damné?" and replied, "Selon mes Jansénistes la chose était indubitable, mais selon ma conscience il me paraissait que non," he does *mutatis mutandis* suggest the revolt of the Romantic conscience against the Neoclassic.

"Ah, but," they say, "Rousseau's influence on the mind of Europe counted for so much in its changes of critical and creative taste." *A la bonne heure!* and I have recognised this, and shall recognise it in the proper places. But the agencies that bring about changes of critical and creative taste, proper to be mentioned, are not also as proper to be worked out here. Of such influences the capture of Constantinople is a famous and undoubted one. Was I bound to tell the story of Byzantine decadence, and the story of Mussulman progress? It has in innumerable instances, if not universally, influenced a man's criticism, a man's creation—whether he is in love at the time; whether he has arrived at that right and happy point, which Mr Thackeray would not call "a *pint*" in the drinking of good

wine; whether he has been under the soothing influence of the Indian weed. Am I therefore bound to insert in this History a treatise on "Feminine Attraction," a book on "The Wines of the World," and an "Anti-Counterblast" to King James? In all seriousness, it may, I think, be requested once more of readers and of critics that they will "look at the bill of fare." If the meat and the wine suit them, well and good; if not, are there not, in this particular instance, M. Texte and his hundred pages to make *quaere aliud diversorium* no merely churlish or vindictive dismissal? While, as to such remarks as *are* proper to be made here on the general critical temper and tendency of the Romantic movement, they were deliberately postponed in the last volume, and will find their proper place, not here, but in the Interchapters of the present.

This indirect influence of Rousseau, with the direct influence of Diderot, no doubt cast a mighty leaven into the mind of France during the later decades of the eighteenth century; and it is noteworthy that, of the three remarkable writers with whom we shall next deal, while Madame de Stael directly and Chateaubriand indirectly express the first, Joubert was much in contact with Diderot during his youth. But the dominant criticism of the last twenty or five-and-twenty years of the century remained neo-classic, and we have accordingly dealt with it[1] in the last volume. Nay, the dominant criticism of the first twenty or so of the next abode in no very different state. Here we shall deal with what has not yet been handled of this half century, or nearly so, in France, isolating more or less the three great figures above mentioned, and dealing more in group with these "Empire Critics," who in different ways reflect the transition to Romanticism.

Of the interest, the influence, the significance, and, in so far as these important things go, the importance, of the work of

[1] One book of some traditional note and interest from the eminence of its author in other ways, Condillac's *Art d'Écrire* (which forms part of his elaborate *Cours d'Étude* for the Prince of Parma: Parma, 1769-1773), was not there noticed. It is of little intrinsic importance, being a mere treatise on "Composition"—a common-sense and common-place *Rhetoric* adjusted to late French eighteenth century standards. Its definition of style as depending on "netteté *et* caractère," is an obvious attempt to combine the elder with the Buffonian ideal.

Madame de Staël[1] in criticism, there can, as to their mere existence, be no two well-formed opinions. I wish that I could think this statement—made frankly in intention, and with deliberate consideration of the weight of every word—likely to obtain for the examination which follows the credit of impartiality which I think it deserves. Unfortunately, we are now approaching closely matters which are distinctly *cinis dolosus*. At every step the apparently irreconcilable difference between those who mean by criticism the judging and judicial enjoyment of literature, and those who mean by it theorising about the ultimate causes of such judgment and such enjoyment, is likely—is sure—to interfere. Nor does it seem possible for the philosophers to agree to keep these points of law for the appropriate tribunal, and to let the rest of the case be stated on its own merits.[2]

Madame de Staël.

Now "Corinne" is about the first person in whose case this difficulty and this difference become acute and annoying. She is not quite so popular with the critics of "ideas" as she used to be; they have, belike, discovered at last her rather awkward sciolism of fact; her very theories are not theirs; the "hideous hum" of "Madame de Stael: ideas; Chateaubriand: images," ceases to tire the weary ear quite to the same extent as it used to do in histories of literature and critical discussions thereof. But historically she is not to be denied; there is no doubt that no one has ever done the popularising of "metacritic" throughout Europe as she did.

Her critical position

But if the painful historian were only left to his own hod-and-trowel work instead of having to draw the sword and don the helmet against metacritical raiders, his task would not be a difficult one. Madame de

And work.

[1] My copy is the Didot edition of the *Œuvres*, in three large vols (Paris, 1873). As, however, this is very cumbrous to hold, I also use and here cite the smaller separate edition (same publishers Paris, 1876) of the *De l'Allemagne*.

[2] Even after publishing the two previous volumes, I find myself accused of "*not having taken the trouble to acquaint myself with* the fact that the application of psychological tests has profoundly altered criticism," or words to that effect. εἰθ' ὤφελ' Ἀργοῦς μὴ διαπτάσθαι σκάφος. I only wish I had *not* had to thread these more dismal and dangerous Symplegades! But I am at any rate trying to save others from their danger.

Stael, unlike her countryman and in some sort master, Rousseau, *is* a critic, not merely indirectly, conjecturally, and by dint of the "must have," but frankly, plainly, in honest straightforward deliverances *ad hoc*. The documents of her criticism are mainly four: the early *Letters* on Rousseau himself, the later but still early *Essay on Fiction*, the famous *De La Littérature*, and the more famous *De l'Allemagne*. In all, but in increasing measure as they come, we see the curious and interesting development and production of a temperament originally no doubt possessing some masculine gifts of thought, as well as many feminine ones of feeling, excited and almost irritated to the highest activity by the word-fencing of the *philosophe* salons, and presented with all the current doctrines or fancies in regard to literature and its precincts, by contact with the most active minds of Geneva, Paris, and Germany. With her half-masculine vigour and her wholly feminine receptivity, she absorbs and reproduces, *tant bien que mal*, all or a large part of the ideas which had been fermenting in all countries more or less, but especially in Germany, for the great part of a century,—French-Godwinian perfectibility, the æsthetic of Lessing and Winckelmann, the historical theories of Herder, as much as she could of the applied criticism of Goethe and Schiller and the Schlegels. Her different works show her of course at different stages of this influence. They show also —with equal necessity and undisguised by a system of explanatory and supplementary notes in the later editions— what actual knowledge of literature she had, what stock of material to expose and submit to all this complicated apparatus, all this varied range of reagency.

The Lettres sur Rousseau.

The very early work on Rousseau is of course the most immature, and it meddles the least with purely literary criticism, but it is, for reasons obvious *à priori*, not the least interesting, and it is perhaps not the least satisfactory on acquaintance. The contrast between the modest (but not fairly to be called mock-modest) brevity of the original Preface, and the pomp and cant and claptrap of the second, twenty-six years later, may raise a sigh in amiable breasts. But the text, whether one agree or disagree with its sentiments and estimates, by no means lacks merit. The

writer is well acquainted with the actual matter of discussion (which was by no means always the case with her later): she is in intelligent as well as emotional sympathy with it. She does not indeed take the purely literary side very strongly; she had her master's own practice as warrant for not doing so. But her remarks (some of which are perhaps innocently borrowed from Longinus) on Rousseau's style, and the inapplicability of the word "perfection" to it are not despicable: and the characterisations of the various works, though always tending to the moral and material side, are very far from negligible. It may be worth noting that while objecting, not without reason, to "les plaisanteries de Claire,"[1] she does not seem to know that they are only a corrupt following of Richardson. But the whole is a very fair *début* in criticism, inclined as we should expect to the moral side, but not illegitimately so.

The Essai sur les Fictions.

The *Essai sur les Fictions*, a sort of after-thought introduction to the three little stories, *Mirza, Adelaide et Théodore*, and *Pauline*, is a slight and rather curious defence of the novel of actual life moralised, as the most useful of fictitious or imitative writings, by means of a survey of such writings under three heads: "Marvellous and allegorical fictions," "historical fictions," and "natural fictions," *i.e.* novels proper, where nothing is true, but everything *true-like*. The first two are very insufficiently treated, and her condemnation of the historical novel is deprived of all weight by the fact that she wrote too early to know any really good example of it. Perhaps the same may be said of the third.

The De La Littérature.

The *Rousseau*, however, is but the work of a novice, and the *Sur Les Fictions* is still something of an essay-piece: yet in both one may observe a *nisus* towards large generalising, which was the natural result of the author's time, temperament, and education. This *nisus* turns into a full spread of wing in *De La Littérature*, published

[1] In the *Nouvelle Héloise*. The omission (perhaps due to a juvenile unwillingness to acknowledge her idol indebted to anybody) is the more striking because we know, and could have been sure if we did not know, that she was early acquainted with, and enthralled by, the English master.

as the centuries met, and when the author was four and thirty. Its avowed central principle is a transformed "Modernism,"—the application of the favourite *philosophe* doctrine of perfectibility to literature, with an inflexible determination that though Greek literature may be better than anything before it, Roman shall be better than Greek, and (though there is *hiatus valde lacrimabilis* about mediæval), that modern literature shall be greater than either. To those who are not pure "ideologists," and who do not think that an ounce of generalisation, however silly, however demonstrably false, is better than a ton of sober consideration and array of fact, this theory condemns itself at once. Here, at any rate, we may legitimately echo Mr Burchell and his "Fudge!" Yet Corinne's attempts to prove it are interesting, and would be more so, if she had had skill enough to hide her ignorance of the facts themselves, or knowledge enough of them to gild her paradox. Her actual method is not merely characteristic of time and person, but has a certain ingenuity: indeed, it no doubt deceived herself. She will not take literature *per se*, but she takes it in its relations with "virtue," "glory," "liberty," "happiness," first in the abstract, and then under these categories as illustrated by Greek, Roman, "Northern," "Southern," and individual national literatures, paying special attention to English, and defending it from the objections of French eighteenth-century critics. It is, of course, easy to see how, by showing, or trying to show, that virtue, &c., is, *according to her*, better displayed in literature as it goes on, she proves, or attempts to prove, her general point.

Unfortunately, in the course of the argument, the most enormous errors of fact, the most startling assertions, which cannot take the benefit of *de gustibus*, simply pullulate. The book nearly drops from one's hands when one reads "Eschyle ne présente aucun résultat moral": and the reference to the *Prometheus* by which this statement is supported, suggests very forcibly that the writer knew nothing else, and did not understand this. More allowance must be made, no doubt, for the point of view, when we read further that "les héros (of Greek tragedy) n'avaient pas cette grandeur soutenue que leur a donnée Racine"; but what a point of view it is![1] We are in

[1] I. 216 of the larger ed. cited.

full topsyturvydom with the statement[1] that "la philosophie des Grecs me paraît fort au-dessous de celle de leurs imitateurs les Romains," and we do not get out of the country as long as the contrast of Greek and Roman continues But here, it may be said, we are in the region of opinion. The plea cannot be urged for the astounding statements which diversify the defence of our own barbarous poetry. In believing *Ossian* genuine, as in admiration for it, she, of course, had respectable companions: but the person who could say[2] "les poètes Anglais qui *ont succédés aux bardes écossais* ont ajouté à leurs tableaux," &c., could have possessed neither the faintest knowledge of literary, or even political, history, nor the least extensive acquaintance with actual examples. The note,[3] "le docteur Blair n'aurait pu juger en Angleterre Shakespere avec l'impartialité d'un étranger," betrays the most obvious and complete ignorance of what *le docteur Blair* had actually said The description in the text[4] of Falstaff as a *charge*, a "caricature populaire," a "plaisanterie grossière," speaks the lady's critical competence with a voice of doom. But the most utterly damning page is that[5] which denies inventive imagination to English poetry; airily dismisses Waller and Cowley as unsuccessful imitators of the Italians; adds *je pourrais y joindre Downe* (sic), *Chaucer*, &c; and a moment later despatches at a blow, as showing this want of inventive imagination, *The Rape of the Lock* (full of faults of taste), *The Faerie Queene* (the most tiresome thing in the world), *Hudibras* (witty, but dwelling too long on its jokes). Admit (it is a good deal to admit) that there may be faults of taste in the *Rape;* admit that more than one Englishman has been unfortunate enough to find Spenser tedious; admit that there is even some justice in the charge against *Hudibras.* How (except by the easy method of having never read them) can you leash these three books together? and, most of all, by what prank of her own elves does "that Elfish Queen" find herself between Trulla and Belinda? I have myself not the slightest doubt that though Madame de Stael may have glanced at the *Rape*, and disliked the sylph machinery, she had never so much as opened

[1] I 220 of the larger ed cited.
[2] Ibid., pp. 252, 253.
[3] Ibid., p. 257.
[4] Ibid., p. 263.
[5] Ibid., p. 265.

"Downe" or Chaucer, Butler or Spenser, and I should not be surprised if she knew nothing, save at second-hand, of Waller or Cowley.

I could multiply examples *ad lib.*, from the German chapters especially, but the "matter of Germany" had better be dealt with under the book exclusively devoted to it. As for general strictures on the *Littérature*, they also will best be postponed till the *De l'Allemagne* has been dealt with

That this book is, as far as criticism goes, her masterpiece, there can be no doubt, and it would be surprising if it were not so. She was older; she had read more; and she had enjoyed very distinguished "coaching." This kept her fairly straight in matters of fact within the comparatively limited range which she here allowed herself as far as literature is concerned. German literature had taken itself by this time pretty seriously for a couple of generations: and the German men of letters whom she interrogated or "led about," were perfectly competent and apparently not unwilling[1] to keep her from such absurdities as we have just been noticing. Very much of the book is plain, straightforward *compte rendu*, and generally *très bien rendu*, whatever minor faults one may find here and there. Above all, the expressed and very fairly carried out purpose of comparative study which made Napoleon so angry, and with such good reason,[2] gives the book an honourable place as a precursor, if not, indeed, an absolute origin, in a new way which had to be trodden. If Napoleon's innate and colossal vulgarity had not been constantly tripping up his immense cleverness, he might have perceived that here was a new feather of some consequence to stick in his sham crown-imperial. The analyses and *précis* of such short things as *Lenore* and the *Braut von Korinth* are rather excessive for a book: but neither piece is easily translatable into French, and Madame de Stael probably knew very well that few of

The De l'Allemagne

[1] Goethe and Schiller might laugh at her, but there is no doubt that they were secretly flattered at her interest in the things of Germany

[2] The Duke of Rovigo's blunt information in his letter of expulsion, that "the book is not French" (see the *Preface*, or any account of Mme. de Stael), summarises his master's terror very well.

her dear quasi-countrymen were likely to learn German, in order to read them.

The old leaven of French and *philosophe* taste and culture shows itself at intervals interestingly. She cites[1] (a little generously perhaps in any case) the line in Raynouard's *Les Templiers*, when the reprieve arrives too late to save the knights who have been chanting hymns on the pyre

"Mais il n'était plus temps ; les chants avaient cessés,"

in connection with the yoke of the unities. But, strangely enough, she does not seem to notice the weakening and watering down of what she calls *l'un des mots les plus sublimes qu'on puisse entendre au théâtre*, by its being made part of the speech of a messenger. The voices of the warrior-priests ceasing one by one in agony, and the reprieve coming on the silence of the last, would be, though a rather *melo*-dramatic, a really dramatic moment. The recital of the situation is a little less ordinary than talk "of the rain and the fine time," and that is all.

This, however, is succeeded by some really acute, and in French quite novel, criticism of Shakespeare as too subtle, too impartial, &c., for the stage—criticism which she had probably learnt from Schlegel,—and the whole chapter[2] is important; as is that on "Comedy," though the definition[3] from Schlegel himself, with which it starts, is very nearly *galimatias*.

There is much good sense in the criticism of German romance, though the old leaven once more appears in the statement that "verse is required for the marvellous; prose will not do."[4] Always on Goethe she is good, and, "philosophess" as she is, she has some very sensible remarks on the over-dose of metaphysic in Schiller's criticism. On most of her subjects, indeed, from Wieland to Jean Paul, she is still worth reading.

Her admirers, however,—or the partisans of the school of

[1] P. 176 of the smaller edition cited; i. 80, of the larger

[2] "De l'art dramatique."

[3] Chap. xxvi. *L'idéal du caractère tragique consiste dans le triomphe que la volonté remporte sur le destin et sur nos passions; le comique exprime au contraire l'empire de l'instinct physique sur l'existence morale* From which it will follow that *Hamlet* and *Lear* are not tragedies, and that *As You Like It* and *Much Ado About Nothing* are not comedies.

[4] P. 340, chap II. 148.

criticism, which, as has been said, she did so much to "vulgarise" —would no doubt regard this matter as merely, in Luther's famous epithet of contempt, "stramineous." It is on her attempt to grasp the principles not merely of kinds but of literatures, to identify or at least connect these with national characteristics, and to extend the definition and comparison beyond even the bounds of nations to national groups —that they would base her claims. Here, perhaps, we may find ourselves in a distressing inability to follow. Certainly, no one will deny that there are some apparent national characteristics in literature; certainly no one will say that it is useless or idle to attempt to separate the national and the generic from the individual. But, in the first place, there was nothing absolutely new in this, though it might be for almost the first time used as a frequent implement, and as a fertile store-cupboard, in literary research. Even the despised Middle Ages had had national tickets for the different states of the European republic—had discovered that the Englishman had a proud look and a high stomach, that he took his pleasure sadly, and so forth. And had it been newer than it was, it might still have been distrusted. After all, the literature of a nation, though we talk of it as if it were something existent *per se*, is merely the aggregate of the work of individuals. It is the work of those individuals that you have to judge; and it is open to the very gravest doubt whether, in trying the several cases, the general inductive-deductive ready-to-hand estimate of the national quality is not more of a snare than of a help. At any rate, experience proves that those who have been readiest to use it, from Madame de Staël to M. Taine and M. Texte—to name no living examples—have been more snared than helped by it. Your preoccupation with the idea that the Englishman will be insular and rebel to ideas, the German unpractical and "inner-conscious," the Frenchman logical, witty, tasteful, may very likely, according to the weaknesses of the poor but constant creature Human Nature, rather lead you to dispense with inquiry into the fact whether he, the individual Briton, Teuton, or Gaul, does really exhibit these characteristics. It will tempt you in the same way to exaggerate what tendencies he may have to them—to force them on him if he has them

Her critical achievement —Imputed.

not—or even to leave him out of consideration if he is so impudent as too incontestably not to have them.

And there is also the gravest possibility of doubt whether, even in themselves, they have sufficient truth to make them of more than the slightest value. After all, a man is a man before he is an Englishman or a Frenchman; it is scarcely too paradoxical to say that he is himself before he is even a man. The very greatest men of course carry this disconcerting triumph of individuality furthest; all but the very smallest help to flaunt its banner now and then. And when the hasty generaliser generalises still more hastily, and talks about Literature of the North and Literature of the South, the Rebellion of Fact is more inconvenient still. You lay it down that the literature of the North does not busy itself with frank youthful passion, and you have to settle matters with *Romeo and Juliet;* that the Italian is a light-hearted being whose only wants are sunshine, an olive or two, a flask of red wine with a wisp of tow in it, and a *donna leggiadra*, and there rises before you the *Divina Commedia*.

But this argument would tempt ourselves out of the way; and, even in so far as it is legitimate here at all, is rather for the Interchapters. Let it suffice that Madame de Stael is undoubtedly a notable figure in the mere History of Criticism, and that, like nearly all such figures, she has by no means lost her actual critical value; that she is no "shadow"; that she is still, dead as she is, a speaking voice of some of the perpetual forms and phases of criticism itself. That her intellectual ability, if only of the receptive and transmissive kind, was somewhat extraordinary, there can be little question. She frequently claims for herself the invention of the word "vulgarity": and though she lived to be so unfortunate as to apply it[1] to Miss Austen—though it has perhaps been more misused than any other single word of criticism—it was needed. Nor was she herself much the dupe of words, though she often was of supposed ideas. She has somewhere quoted from Rousseau, and expanded, a wise protest against the requirement of a pedantic adherence to definition in termin-

And actual.

[1] Of course not in the worst English connotation, but only in that of "commonplace," "ordinary," "undistinguished."

ology. It was unlucky for her, no doubt, that to some extent she came at, and could not but represent, one of those rather unsatisfactory transition periods which are neither quite one thing nor quite another. She has touches of classic "dignity" and of philosophic cant, harlequinned with others of Romantic *sehnsucht* and "naturalistic" passion. Or rather she is like one of the picture-cleaners' sign-portraits—half in eighteenth century shadow, half in nineteenth century light—or the other way about, if anybody chooses.

Yet the ill-luck is not total, and may perhaps even seem to be but apparent. For it is precisely this *bariolage*, this partition, this intermixture, which gives her not merely her historical position, but even, I think, her intrinsic attraction as a critic. She helps us by giving a fresh "triangulation," a fresh aspect, a midway stage. Her perfectibilism keys on as interestingly from the literary side to the old Ancient-and-Modern dispute as on the political side to the Republican manias of the time. Her struggles to retain some conviction of the supremacy of Racine make more interesting, and are made more interesting by, her admiration for Shakespeare and the Germans. Her assimilations, or her attempts to assimilate, the new aesthetic, the new historical theories, the new wine generally, would have far less interest if she had put away all fancy for the old bottles. And so she figures worthily and interestingly in what we have called the French Transition, with a quaint enough contrast to Diderot, who opens it, and who taught her German teachers. She is a figure of far less originality, strangeness, and charm, but she has a more definite gospel, she is much less diffused and dissipated over the *orbis scientiarum*, she points more clearly to a clearly marked out path, and so she is much more likely to be followed by the multitude, if not by the elect.

Chateaubriand his difficulties.

But she does not figure in her place alone: for side by side with her, and with a face looking still more forward, is another figure, not less curious, not less blended in its composition, but to some at least far more interesting and far greater. Chateaubriand is one of those literary personages to whom it is peculiarly difficult to do justice, and to whom accordingly justice has very seldom

been done. I admit that it was long before I could myself regard him through glasses sufficiently achromatic, or divest him of his accidents with a satisfactory thoroughness. His personality—that troublesome and disturbing factor from which we are so fortunately free in the case of most ancient writers, and with which we are so teasingly confronted in the case of most modern—is a little enigmatic and more than a little unsympathetic. He trails with him the trumpery of two different times—Classical emphasis, arbitrariness, even to some extent prejudice, Romantic tawdriness, inconsequence, gush. He has curious adulteries of pedantry and foppishness—strange and indecent communions of ignorance and knowledge. And yet he is, in literature, so great a man that one sometimes hardly knows how to construct any definition of greatness which shall keep him out of the highest class. He has, and has by anticipation, all the gifts of Byron except the gift of writing verse: he can write prose which is hardly inferior to Byron's verse in the qualities where verse and prose touch nearest, and not much below all but Byron's best in some where they are farther apart. And he has other gifts to which Byron can lay no claim.

His Criticism,

The chief of these gifts is criticism—a department in which Byron, for all his shrewdness, simply does not count, because of the waywardness, egotism, and personal prejudice which tinge every one of his critical utterances, eulogistic or depreciatory. Now Chateaubriand counts in criticism for a very great deal. By those who allow indirect critical influence to rank Rousseau as a great critic, Chateaubriand ought to be ranked as a critic infinitely greater; by those who observe a more rigid and legitimate calculus, he can, as we shall shortly show, be ranked almost, if not quite, in the first class. When a French critic or historian[1] pronounces him the father of modern criticism, the first to start the comparative method, and so forth, he is, as we are all inclined, and as French critics used to be extravagantly, and are still rather excessively inclined to do, speaking as if what is true of his own nation and literature were true universally. We must, of course, go a long way back in time, and some way afield in place—to the

[1] M. Des Essarts in the Petit de Julleville *History.*

middle of the eighteenth century in the one case. to England and Germany in the other—for the real first appearances ("origins" is always a misleading word) of these things, and even if we cling to France we must deal with the vaguer but far older claims of Diderot. But Chateaubriand represents them powerfully. He represents them practically before Madame de Stael, in a much more literary fashion, and with much more literary power, and he represents them with a magic, with a contagious influence, to which she cannot pretend. Further, he possesses that claim which is the first, if not the sole claim for us, though it seems to be regarded by some with jealousy, and almost with resentment, the claim of having actually written criticism, and a great deal of it.

Indirect

The champions of the Indirect have, it must be confessed, not a little to rely upon in Chateaubriand. He was so much more intensely *literary* than Rousseau, and even than Madame de Stael, that *Atala*, *René*, *Les Natchez*, *Le Dernier Abencérage* still more, *Les Martyrs* most of all, and even not a few things in the *Mémoires d'Outre Tombe*, may without violence be twisted into a literary bearing. All, in their different degrees and ways, exhibit the author's insatiable curiosity as to the literature of different times, countries, religions, languages, and his indefatigable industry in staining and twining his own literature with the colours and the threads of these others. But it is quite unnecessary to twist and infer, to force the "this must have" and the "we can see," when we have two such documents before us as the *Essai sur La Littérature Anglaise*, and, above all, the *Génie du Christianisme*.

and Direct.

As a matter of fact, by far the larger part of this latter famous book, the *revanche* for Voltairianism, the manifesto of the whole earlier, and not a little of the later nineteenth century, the main pillar of its author's fame,[1] is literary criticism pure and simple. It is so odd a place to look for this that it sometimes escapes. Accounts of Chateaubriand have been written (I am, I fear, guilty of one myself) in

[1] For *René* is only an episode of the *Génie* itself, and *Les Martyrs* a prose-poem in illustration of its theories.

which it has had no adequate recognition. But when we have once sighted our panther,[1] she cannot escape us; and we may try here to do justice to the real sweetness of her breath.[2]

The Génie du Christianisme

So odd a place: and that, too, in more ways than one. At first sight—and perhaps to hasty or not thoroughly informed readers permanently—the *Génie*[3] may appear an inextricable tangle, or a frank flinging together of fragments without even the connection of being tangled. It would be improved (and perhaps such a thing has been done) by a table like that which Burton wisely prefixed to the *Anatomy*. One has to realise the utter *terrassement* in France of Christian doctrine and practice—the all but total triumph of that purely secular education and atmosphere for which a hundred years later some of our Non-conformists pant—to appreciate the real art and the practical necessity of the fashion in which Chateaubriand "lets everything go in" against Philosophism. It seems temerity, but was probably wisdom, to begin, as he begins, with the altitudes of faith and dogma. And he glides off from them, cunningly but most naturally, to those ceremonies, sacramental and other, for which the Republic had substituted unmeaning and unaffecting civil functions. Then he once more attacks the *philosophes* on their own ground—on the subject of morals and that "virtue" which they had so tediously dinned into the

[1] See vol i p 425.

[2] Chateaubriand's *Mélanges Littéraires* contain in their later numbers some interesting reviews, especially that of February 1819 on the *Annales Litteraires*, which supplied almost the *Défense et Illustration* of the Romantic outburst. But I do not know that the early pieces on English literature dating from the last year of the eighteenth century, are not as important. In these the writer, either from policy (for though he had a friendly editor in Fontanes, he was writing under the eyes of Bonaparte's police) or really imperfect conversion, approximates much more to the "dunghill-and-pearl" view of Shakspere than the innocent might think likely, and has not quite reached his future state (*v. inf*) of illumination as to *Ossian*. He is very severe on Young, and has a very curious passage on the English view of the subject at the moment, which is probably not far from the truth, and at any rate helps us to understand the half-way-house attitude of men like Jeffrey and Campbell. The Queen Anne men, we are told, were at a discount—Richardson was little read, Hume and Gibbon were thought gallicisers, and so forth But these things are at best useful sidelights on their author's position in the *Génie*

[3] I use the 2-vol ed. of the *Collection Didot*.

public ear, but of which they had made so little private exhibition,—and grapples courageously, though perhaps not rashly, considering the extreme sciolism of most of his adversaries, with cosmology and teleology, with physic and metaphysic, with Hell and Heaven themselves. In all, his rhetoric serves him admirably, if nothing else does; but we have as yet little or nothing to do with literature or with criticism. It is quite different when we come to the "Second Part," *Poétique du Christianisme*, and here Chateaubriand begins to present his credentials as a critic. Nor, with some digressions, does he again drop the character throughout the book.

Its saturation with literary criticism.

The proceeding[1] was probably more logical than it seems. On the one hand the attack on religion had been overwhelmingly, and the attack on civil order very largely, literary in its own character and weapons. In the second, the everlasting *philosophe*-republican chatter about the Greeks and the Romans had more than reconstituted the old classical and "ancient" prejudice. Madame de Stael had not shared this latter; but she had failed to share it principally because of her perfectibilism, which had put down the merits of the ancients chiefly to their republican constitutions. Here were a whole host of things for Chateaubriand to deal with; and in every case the literary way was an obvious line of attack, as well as one intensely congenial to the new champion. He is no perfectibilist, of course; in fact, one of the appendices of the *Génie* is a *Letter to Fontanes*[2] on the second edition of the *De la Littérature*, combating its views. But his championship of "modern" literature is based upon its Christianisation, and he compares famous ancient with famous modern poets on purpose to show first, how Christianity has enabled the latter to rise to nobler heights; secondly, how some at least of the best points of the ancients themselves are to be found in contact with Christian ethics. Like his feminine opponent, he has some not quite cleanly rags of classicism and Gallicism about him. A too sanguine hope may be dashed when it finds him talking about the "bad

[1] Six "books" of *dogma*, twelve of *recherches littéraires*, six of *culte*, is the author's own summary of his scheme (*Génie*, II. i. 1).

[2] Ed. cit., II. 306-326

taste" of Dante, and the "defects" of his age. But Romanticism, no more than its far-off godmother Rome, was to be built in a day.

Survey and examples.

And we very soon see that for all these remains of "the old man," and for all a certain necessary ignorance (he thinks there is nothing mediæval before Dante but "a few poems in barbarous Latin)," despite also such antiquated arbitrarinesses as the admission as a fault in the Milton whom he so much admires, and in the Dante whom he admires rather less, that "the marvellous is the *subject* and not the *machine* of the poem"—we very soon see on what side Chateaubriand is fighting. He hazards at the very opening the doctrine—shocking to the whole French eighteenth century, and contrary to Aristotle—that the Epic is not only larger in bulk, but higher, greater, more varied, more universal indeed, in kind and range, than the drama. And perhaps this is as much a dividing principle of criticism as anything else. I hold myself, as has been made obvious, with those who think that the drama is only accidentally literary, though it has been so now and again, for long periods, in the very highest degree; while the epic is literary or nothing—it is, with lyric, the beginning of all literature. But, however this may be, the whole drift of his criticism is anti-neoclassic. Again and again he contrasts passages and long scenes from Homer and Milton,—not to show how superior Homer is, as the French neoclassics would have done, as Addison had done—not even to show how superior Milton himself is—not to defend Milton by Homer's example,—but to show how they are *differently* excellent. A most interesting and novel critical suggestion is that of trying to realise how a modern poet *would have* done what an ancient poet *has* done, the whole lesson of the comparative method being here in little.

I shall hardly be expected, though I should much like, to analyse and represent the whole of these twelve books, to which something has even to be added from the six last. The turning of the tables on the *Henriade*[1] (which is treated most politely), with a sincere lament that, while the finest places of its author's poems are inspired by religion, he has not more

[1] II i. 5.

fully inspired himself therewith in this particular poem (the subject of which so obviously requires it!) is ingeniously malicious. We may take mediocre interest in the contrasts of Lusignan and Andromaque, Guzman and Iphigénie,[1] but they are full of delicate and acute critical observation, which shows itself again in the comparison of Virgil and Racine.[2] So too we may dispute the epigram that "la barbarie et le polythéisme ont produit les héros d' Hómère; la barbarie et le Christianisme ont enfanté les chevaliers du Tasse";[3] but the whole passage where this occurs is connected with the all-important devotion to Chivalry. When he comes to passion we may again desiderate something different from the comparison of Dido and Phèdre.[4] But this was what was wanted "for *them*"; and there is no fault to find with the treatment of Pope's handling of Héloise.[5] With the author's ecstacies over *Paul et Virginie*,[6] few people now living can sympathise; but once more *Paul et Virginie* was good "for *them*." Virginie is only a victim of nasty prudishness when you compare her to Nausicaa, but she might easily be taken for a mirror of purity in the age of Madame de Warens and Madame de Puisieux. The fine passage on "Le Vague des Passions" which serves to introduce *René* is of great critical importance, though it may have been partly suggested by Bossuet.

The paradox of the beginning of the book on the Marvellous[7]—that mythology belittled nature and made description abortive—is at least exceedingly ingenious, as is what follows on Allegory; but Chateaubriand's account of the history of modern descriptive poetry itself suffers from want of knowledge.[8] Still, in attacking the position that pagan mythology was a more poetic subject than Christian, it must be admitted that he is excellent on Angels,[9] and that his comparison of Venus in the Carthaginian woods and Raphael in Eden, is one

[1] II. ii. 5-8.
[2] II. ii. 10.
[3] Vol I p 235.
[4] II iii 2, 3
[5] Vol I p 257.
[6] II. iii 7.
[7] II. iv.
[8] Ibid., chap ii.
[9] Chap viii It is a pity that Chateaubriand did not live long enough to read Mr Ruskin (who had begun to write before his death) on "The Angel of the Sea"—one of the great conceptions whose poetic suggestiveness he has himself here indicated.

of the best of those companion-pieces in which he so delights, and which are such engaging criticism. We cannot follow him through dreams and through "machines," through Hell and through Tartarus; nor even give much space to the bold, elaborate, and often admirably critical comparison of Homer and the Bible.[1] But these things, like the others mentioned before, all illustrate the range, the height, the Pisgah quality—or rather that still higher quality of the mountain view in *Paradise Regained*—to which Chateaubriand's criticism can justly pretend. These thirty pages are perhaps his most elaborate and ambitious critical attempt, and they deserve to be thoroughly studied.

Hardly less remarkable is the Third Part, which deals with a sort of clash of influences—that of Christianity on the Fine Arts, and that of the Fine Arts, Christianity, and Literature on each other. The wonderfully prophetic instinct of the writer is shown in what he says of the Gregorian chant, as well as of Gothic architecture, and he brings them very close to letters; but of course he comes closer still in dealing with History, Oratory, and the like. And he manages, in a surprising fashion, not to keep very far from it, even in his last part, that of "Worship."

Single points of excellence,

These exercitations are diversified and illustrated by constant expressions and *aperçus* of real critical power, showing, if, as we have said, necessarily not complete, yet very considerable, and for the time remarkable knowledge. Chateaubriand knows all about *Ossian;* and he corrects Madame de Stael's amiable and ignorant enthusiasms with a politeness which must have been insufferable to the good lady. He has the right phrase exactly[2] for that singular failure of a genius the Père Lemoyne—a phrase which may not improbably have suggested Flaubert's gorgeous *Tentation*, and which is, as it were, a keynote or *remarque*-index in relation to the critical imagination of modern times. He has not merely this altered tone in *excelsis*, but also in details:—

[1] This fills the whole of the Fifth or last Book of the Second Part, and shows the author at nearly his best.

[2] *Il y règne* (in Saint Louis) *une sombre imagination très propre à la peinture de cette Egypte, pleine de souvenirs et de tombeaux, et qui vit passer tour à tour les Pharaons, les Ptolemées, les solitaires de la Thebaïde, et les soudans des barbares.*

as witness the very remarkable note at i. 260, on the effects of a particular vowel (whether "first discovered" or not does not matter). On the very same part his open-mindedness is shown in the warm and just praise given to André Chénier—dead and unpublished—and a little later in a delicate protest against the inconsistency of Rivarol's translation of *Quel giorno piu non vi leggemmo avante*. The characters of the ancient historians are sketched with a masterly brevity in III. iii. 3, and there is an astonishing moderation and justice, as well as a sort of chivalry, in his frequent encounters with Voltaire.

and general importance.

But the greatest glory of Chateaubriand is that he is, if not the creator, the first brilliant exponent of what we have called above the Critical Imagination—the first great practitioner of imaginative criticism since Longinus himself. Lessing and Diderot had no doubt shown the way to this, but the first was not quite enthusiastic enough, and the second was enthusiastic to and over the verge of dithyramb. The Schlegels and Goethe had practised it; but the two former were not great enough men of letters, and the most ambitious attempts of Goethe, such as that in *Wilhelm Meister*, are spoilt by deplorable longwindednesses and pedantries. Chateaubriand is one of the very first to take the new stream, *remis atque velis*, plying the oars of the intellect, and catching the wind of the spirit. His occasional delinquencies in the use of the phrase *mauvais goût*; his deference to the old opinion that the hero of tragedy must necessarily be what we called then in English "a high fellow"; other things of the same kind; do not matter in the very least. Every one of them could be set off against a corresponding expression of freedom from neo-classic prejudice; and there would remain a mighty balance of such utterances on the credit side.[1]

The critical position of Joubert, acclaimed soon after the posthumous publication of his work[2] by the greatest critical

[1] I have not thought it necessary to notice Chateaubriand's literary judgments in the *Essai sur les Révolutions* at the beginning, or in the *Mémoires d'Outre Tombe* at the end of his career. The first, interesting as it is, is too crude (*v. inf.*, Bk. viii. Ch. ii.), the second too much spoilt by "cooking of spleen," and both too personal and egotistic.

[2] Chateaubriand, Joubert's intimate friend, printed some of this privately after the author's death, and in 1842 Joubert's nephew published two vols. of *Pensées*, Letters, &c. These, with

authorities, has sometimes been questioned in later days, but quite idly. Readers of these pages must have seen, if indeed they did not know it long before, that a large body of critical, as of other opinion, is merely negligible It does not rest upon any solid knowledge or argument; it is in many cases not even the expression of a genuine personal preference, illusion, or impression of any kind. Sometimes the critic does not like the other critics who have expressed approval of the author; sometimes he does not like some individual utterance or group of utterances of the author's own; more often he simply wishes "to be different"—to blame where his predecessors have praised, and to extol to the skies what they have disapproved or left unnoticed In all such cases the verdict need not even be seriously fought before any court of cassation; it is self-quashed.

Joubert—his reputation.

The remarkable body of judgment by French critics[1] from Sainte-Beuve downwards, which is prefixed to the usual editions of the *Correspondance*, especially if it be supplemented by Mr Arnold's famous essay, is almost "document" enough of Joubert's worth; but we cannot here avoid full examination of him, especially as hardly one of these critics has taken our exact point of view. We can neglect the great body of Joubert's miscellaneous *Pensées* and concentrate ourselves on those affecting literature, which practically begin[2] under the heading *De l'Antiquité*, appear both here and in the subsequent headings with general titles, and of course constitute the substance of "On Poetry," "On Style," "On the Qualities of the Writer," and "Literary Judgments."

In literature, with an exception to be noticed presently, his time exerts remarkably little influence on Joubert. This is not the case elsewhere; in his religious, political, moral, social judgments we feel—and it could not be but that we should feel—the pressure, and the shadow, and the sting, of the Revolution everywhere.

His literary αὐτάρκεια.

some subsequent augmentations, had reached their 10th ed in 1901. There is an English translation of part by Mr Attwood, and perhaps others.

[1] Sainte-Beuve, Sylvestre de Sacy, Saint-Marc-Girardin, Géruzez, and Poitou—the last a scholarly lawyer and man of letters, who contributed to the *Deux Mondes*, wrote books of various kinds, and died in 1880

[2] At p 203 of the usual ed, extending to the end, and filling nearly half the book.

But the literature is—as literature is but too seldom and ought always to be—presented (except in one way) with a sort of *autarkeia*. Joubert was born in mid-eighteenth century, and he died just as the Romantic movement was in full bud and had begun to burst, with the *Odes et Ballades*. But he is neither a hard and fast classic, nor a revolter of the extreme kind against classicism, nor, like those not uninteresting contemporaries of his whom we shall group after him, blown hither and thither by the wind of this or that doctrine. He betrays, indeed, the enfranchising and widening influence of Diderot; but he has worked this out quite independently, and with a "horizontality" and comparative range of view in which the early Romantics themselves (except Sainte-Beuve) were conspicuously lacking, and which even Sainte-Beuve never fully attained. The famous, the immortal, ninth "Pensée" of the Poetry section,[1] "Rien de qui ne transporte pas n'est poésie · La lyre est en quelque manière un instrument ailé," is positively startling. It is, of course, only Longinus, dashed a little with Plato, and transferred from the abstract Sublime to the sublimest part of literature Poetry. But generations had read and quoted Longinus without making the transfer; and when made it is *en quelque manière* (to use the author's judicious limitation, which some people dislike so much), final. Like other winged things, and more than any of them, poetry is itself hard to catch; it is difficult to avoid crushing and maiming it when you think to catch it. But this is as nearly perfect a definition by resultant, by form, as can be got at.

The Law of Poetry

Of course all the utterances are not at this level. The fault of the "Pensée" itself in general, is that, in human necessity, it will miss, or only go near ten times (perhaps a hundred) for once that it hits, and it is easy enough for a hostile critic in turn to hit the misses. But it is the hits that count; and, as for them, how astonishing is it to come across at this date (No. xxv.), "Les beaux vers sont ceux qui s'exhalent comme des sons ou des parfums," where you have, put perfectly, all the truth that exists in the "symbolist" theory of some seventy

More on that subject.

[1] P. 265 ed cit.

years later! Again (xxxviii.) "Dans le style poétique chaque mot retentit comme le son d'une lyre bien montée, et laisse toujours après lui un grand nombre d'ondulations"—where the great quality of the best nineteenth-century poetry, of that poetry of which hardly anything had been written in France and Germany, and of which Joubert could hardly know what had already been written in England—the contingent, additional music superadded to meaning,—is hit off perfectly once more. Then there is the second best known and most famous passage (xli.), forbidding the "lieu trop réel," the "population trop historique," and enjoining the "espèce de lieu fantastique," in which the poet can move at pleasure; and that other fatal saying (xlvi), "On ne peut trouver de poésie nulle part quand on n'en porte pas en soi," and the reiteration (xlix) of the capital doctrine as to the beauty of words—of words even detached from context. Taking them together, these ten pages of Joubert contain more truth—more stimulating, suggestive, germinal truth—about poetry, than any other single treatise from Aristotle down to the present day. This is the way a man must think of poetry if he is to be saved; though not every clause of the Joubertian creed is thus Athanasian.

On Style.

The Style section is equally astonishing. I think I first read Joubert about thirty years ago; I know his ancestors and his successors much better now; but he astonishes me just as much as ever. In another rather longer[1] stretch you have the best things in Aristotle, Longinus, and others—some at least of which he pretty certainly had neither read nor heard of—revised and applied; you have the principles and the practice of Hugo, Gautier, Saint-Victor, Flaubert, of Ruskin, Arnold, Pater, put plumply or by suggestion beforehand in eighteen pages.

Here is everything: the necessity of choice which is the condition of good style, and which works so differently in ancient and modern times; the powers of "the word" in all their varied bearings; the excellence of archaism rightly understood, and the occasional charms of the *kuria* as a rest and interval for refreshment; the right to reinvest an old word with new meaning; the "science of names"; the placing

[1] P. 273–300.

of words; the freedom which the reader possesses of improving on his author by keeping his word and adding to his sense; the difference between musical and pictorial style; the impossibility of literature when words are used with an absolutely fixed value; the unpardonable sin of mere purism; the natural and justifiable idiosyncrasy of dictionary and even grammar in good writers, with the due guards against its excess; the variety of degree in which ancient authors are to be followed; the value and the danger of idioms. These and a hundred other things will all be found, sometimes of course (the fault of the form again) put too absolutely; sometimes, though very rarely, intermixed with things more dubious—but always present at short, at all but the shortest notice. Never, I think, did any critical writer enter so much into the marrow of things in so limited a space. the section is a sort of *Tinctura Fortior*, as the pharmacopœias say, or even like those older "drop-cordials" of story, where a vial the size of the little finger contained the virtue of a whole pharmacy.

Miscellaneous Criticisms.

These two sections form the *aureus libellus* of Joubert—if I knew a wealthy and sensible, intelligent and obliging bibliophile, they should be printed on vellum and adorned by the greatest decorative artists of the age, and bound in the simplest but the most perfect coat obtainable. We decline slightly with the two remaining chapters—though there is still plenty of gold to be found—and the decline is continuous. In the section "Des Qualités de L'écrivain et des Compositions Littéraires" we once more approach the merely philosophic side, and it is Joubert himself who has left us, apropos of *Corinne*, the memorable proposition that sometimes "un besoin de philosopher gâte tout."[1] A fine distinction (not so expressed) between realist and idealist literature[2] is an instance of the consolation which is constantly occurring; but we must look for relapses. What do we learn by being told[3] that "Homer, Euripides, and Menander" (O groves of Blarney!) had more *facilité pour le beau* than Hesiod and Sophocles; Æschylus, Dante, and La Bruyère less than Fénelon and J. J. Rousseau? The context indeed shows (not by any means in so many words) what gloss is to be put on

[1] P. 387 [2] XXIII. VIII., pp. 303, 304 [3] Ibid, XVI., p. 305.

facilité and what on *beau* to get out Joubert's meaning; but the result is not worth the trouble. And when we find afterwards that *la facilité est opposée au sublime* we agree, but, recurring, ask whether Homer is less sublime than Hesiod? The sub-sections on criticism (§ cxl. *sq.*) are excellent, and a fairly severe winnowing would leave a residue not much less valuable than in the other two: but the winnowing is necessary.

His individual judgments more dubious.

The fact may prepare the wary reader for some further inequality in the last section of "Jugements Littéraires," with which should be taken certain letters to Molé in the *Correspondance*. To prevent disappointment and even puzzlement it is here necessary to remember Joubert's "time, country, and circumstance." He was a man, let it be repeated, of the mid-eighteenth century by birth; a Frenchman, and not, it would seem, by any means widely acquainted with foreign languages and literatures, except classics. He always speaks as if he could only read Milton in translations; his knowledge of Shakespeare, though he admired him, is derived from the same untrustworthy source; of any large part of English literature he necessarily knows nothing at all. Accordingly—in a fashion which is nearly unique in this history, but which is priceless in its unicity — the disadvantages which have been powerless to affect his general conceptions recover their hold upon him, to some extent, in particulars. He is still sound on what the *general* merits of poetry and of literature should be; but he sees those merits in the wrong place. At first sight, to an English reader who is not thoroughly broken to the ways of our difficult art, it may seem impossible, inconceivable, a bad joke, that the author of the aphorisms above quoted as to the necessity of "transport," the power of words, and all the rest of it, should admire Delille and not admire Milton. But remember, he understood the *words* of Delille—they had, feeble as they were, the power to excite, according to his own true and profound theory, that poetry which was ready to answer and magnify them in his own soul. He did not understand the *words* of Milton, and they could not touch him; while he is certainly not to blame for not being touched by the words of Louis Racine.

This is the most striking instance, the most astounding at first, the most illuminative afterwards; and it will give us a key to all the rest. It must for instance be a fresh stumbling-block, and no small one, to find Joubert, who could prefer Delille to Milton, quite cool, almost harsh, to Racine, saying that Racine is "the Virgil of the ignorant," that those whom he suffices are "poor souls and poor wits." But the way round the obstacle is perfectly clear to the practised traveller in our country. Racine's was not the poetry of Joubert's own time and generation; Delille's was. His language, his words, his imagery could convey whatsoever of poetry was in them—though it might not be very much—to Joubert's ears and wit and soul better than Racine's could. And once more, as those ears and wit and soul were exquisitely sensitive to even a trace of poetry that *did* reach them, the difficulty becomes no difficulty at all, but, on the contrary, a real paradox of the most illuminating and helpful kind, constantly to be remembered, and especially good against those estimable doctrinaires who will have a hard and fast hierarchy in poetry, a "best, better, good, not so good, bad," arranged in rigid classes. *That is poetry to a man which produces on him such poetical effects as he is capable of receiving.* The reader takes it, as the writer makes it, *poeticamente.* You may possibly—it is not certain, but it is possible—*educate* his poetic sense; say to it, "Friend, come up higher." You may certainly remove merely mechanical obstacles, such as Joubert's ignorance of English. But until something of this kind is done, it is better that the man should even excessively admire Burns or Béranger, Macaulay or Moore, than that he should simulate admiration of Shelley, or Hugo, or Heine. It would be pleasant to dwell on this, which has never, I think, been dwelt upon, or expounded fully before; but words to the wise must be here, as always, our motto: the hints given can easily here, as elsewhere, be expanded by those who have the wits and the inclination.

The reason for this

Some further instances, however, may and must be given of the working of this curious state of things, which makes a critic equal to the very greatest we have met in abstract appreciation of poetry and literature, the inferior of many we have met—if not of most who were good

Additional illustrations.

critics at all—in his appreciation of individuals. There is the germ of a most important general censure on "Naturalism" (a thing once more far ahead) in his remark on Boccaccio, that he "adds nothing to the story," that he "respects the tale as he would respect a truth," a position interesting to compare with the constant protests of the Goncourts and their fellows against what has been called "*dis*realising."[1] "Boileau est un grand poète, mais dans la demi-poésie," though a little epigrammatic, is true enough. His few remarks on Molière argue, as we should expect, a rather lukewarm admiration, but he is among the highest praisers of La Fontaine, ranking him as (of course this is before the nineteenth century) fuller of poetry than any other French author. (Note again that this means, "fuller of poetry *which can bring itself into contact with Joubert's mind.*") He admits that his beloved Delille has only "sounds and colours" in his head, but then they are the sounds and colours that Joubert can see and hear, and he knows rightly that sounds and colours make more than half of poetry. As for the ancients, he remarks with great truth, that Cicero, whom nevertheless he admired much, has "more taste and discernment than real criticism." And then we find the moralist in the remark, that Catullus unites the "two things which make the worst mixture in the world, *mignardise* and coarseness," and that "ses airs sont jolis, mais son instrument est baroque," another curious instance of the inability of the Latin race to value the second greatest poet of Latin. Joubert, you see, did not like the indecency of Catullus, and he did not like his "bitterness," as Quintilian calls it; and the dislike barred the poetic contact. On the other hand, he could see and feel Tacitus. That Pascal is "exempt from all passion" seems an odd judgment, though I could, I think, explain it. He is excellent on Bossuet and Fénelon: less so, I think, on Malebranche.

On his own eighteenth century one turns to him with much interest, but the utterances are too detailed for us to linger on them. They have the perspicacity (if sometimes a little of the injustice) of an escaped pupil of the *philosophes* He is very valuable on Rousseau, but that "a Voltaire is good for nothing

[1] P. 376. But as there is in the book a sufficient index, I need not perhaps multiply note-indications.

at any time," though he had acknowledged many literary gifts and graces in this Voltaire, is not merely unjust, but *saugrenu*. Still it certainly raises the point of law, whether "good for nothing" literature, which is good literature, is not good for something.

General remarks.

A few more general remarks may perhaps be made on this critic, who contrasts so remarkably with all the rest of the critics of the Empire, and not least remarkably with his friend Chateaubriand and with Madame de Stael, beside whom alone of this numerous group he can be placed. It will be seen that while he is free from "Corinne's" hasty generalisations and indigestible "philosophy of literature," while he has a less extended knowledge of literatures (though probably a much more accurate one) than hers, he actually far transcends her in real philosophy of view, that he takes a sight of all poetry, all literature, and their qualities, which is aquiline alike in sweep and searchingness. Further, that though his knowledge is again more accurate than Chateaubriand's, it is more circumscribed, and that he cannot relish some particular things which Chateaubriand could, yet that once more he excels his friend in clearness, ideality, comprehension, and depth. That finally (though the matter of this is to come), in comparison with all the other Empire critics, from Fontanes and Geoffroy downwards, a similar *distinguendum* has to be observed. One Joubert—the Joubert of the general views and of the sections on style and poetry—is far over their heads, out of their sight and reach. The other Joubert—the Joubert of the particular judgments—is very much nearer them, though he is sometimes, not always, their superior.

What is certain, however, is, that this particular kind of doubleness (we have seen others more common) is extraordinarily rare—that though faint touches of it may appear here and there, they are not more than faint. Joubert's descriptions of poetry and his admiration of Delille are no parallel to Longinus' definitions of the Sublime and his failure fully to admire the *Odyssey*. There is no conflict of the higher and the lower rule, but only an unexampled—yet when we come to think of it, perfectly natural—inability to get the higher rule into play. If one could have had not merely the gift of

tongues, but the gift of conferring it, it would have been perhaps the most interesting experiment possible in the critical sphere to have made Joubert a thorough proficient in English, and *then* to have seen whether he failed to see the beauties of Milton. Meanwhile he remains isolated. I do not think Mr Arnold's comparison of him to Coleridge a very happy one, though there are no doubt certain resemblances—the Coleridgean depreciation of French poetry in relation to the Joubertian of English is the most striking of these, and might seem sufficient. I do not think Coleridge depreciated French poetry because he could not hear it: Mr Arnold himself practically admitted that *he* did, and he is therefore himself a better parallel. And Coleridge had the excuse, which Mr Arnold had not, that French had, in literature accessible to him, hardly tried the whole compass of its lyre at all. But this is a digression, only excused by its helping to point the assertion that there is no one like Joubert—for Mr Arnold himself knew French very well indeed.

The other "Empire Critics."

To all these three remarkable writers the term "Empire Critics," which has obtained a certain solid position in critical history from the use made of it by Sainte-Beuve,[1] might, as far as chronology goes, be applied. But they are not the writers who are generally denoted by the term, these being rather a group extending from Fontanes through Ginguené, Garat, Geoffroy, Dussault, Feletz, Lemercier, Marie-Joseph Chenier, Hoffman, and others, down to Villemain and Cousin, who belong in part even to the Second Empire, but still represent an older tradition than the men strictly of 1830. They have been of late somewhat forgotten and neglected, despite Sainte-Beuve's weighty pleas for them;[2] and perhaps in hardly a single case (I am not forgetting the once mighty name of Villemain himself) do they supply us with a critic of the highest class. But they are extremely

[1] The numerous articles on the individual persons named and to be named—most of which will be found indicated in the general index-volume to the *Causeries du Lundi*, &c—are importantly supplemented by a more general dealing in *Chateaubriand et Son Groupe Littéraire* (*v. inf.*, Bk. viii Ch. ii). This is a "standing order" of reference to the end of the chapter.

[2] Especially the brilliant paper in *C. du L.*, I 371–391, on *M. de Feletz et la Crit. Litt. sous l'Empire*, February 25, 1850.

important to history; we cannot really understand the criticism of the last seventy years itself without them. And I do not regret the time that I have myself spent on them, though I do not propose, as Agamemnon would say, to equal my treatment of them to that time itself.

Fontanes

The novice in these matters who goes from Sainte-Beuve's repeated and respectful notices of Fontanes to the latter's *Œuvres*[1] may be a little puzzled, even if he take due heed to the fact that these Works are, as far as the criticism goes at any rate, only "selected." There is not very much in bulk; and what there is may not seem, according to the severe Arnoldian standard, "chief and principal." An introduction and some notes to his translation of the *Essay on Man*, articles on Chateaubriand, on Madame de Stael, on the "emphatic" Thomas, &c.:—"we can do all these for ourselves if we want them, which we mostly do not," is likely to be the verdict of the impatient.

But it should not be allowed to stand. Fontanes shows us, in a manner made more historically important by the fact that for a long time he was a sort of Minister of Literature to Napoleon, that turning, that transition, which is the subject of this whole chapter. He still, and naturally, has a great deal of the eighteenth century in him; but he can see the vacuity and the frigidity of eighteenth-century "emphasis." He is responsible[2] for teaching Victor Hugo that Voltaire taught *us* to admire Shakespeare, one of the most remarkable mare's-nests in critical history. But, his eyes perhaps sharpened a little by personal friendship, he perceived to a very large extent, if not fully, the importance of the *Génie du Christianisme*. So there may have been mixed motives in his different reception of Madame de Stael's theories; but there is a singular and satisfactory compound of eighteenth-century good sense and nineteenth-century catholicity in his dealing with her fantasticalities about North and South. He is himself rather rhetorical at times, but seldom to the loss of sobriety; and he is altogether a good sample, a good tell-tale, of the attitude of the inhabitants of a landslip—as we may call it—who see their old marks changing relation and bearing, who do not wholly

[1] 2 vols., Paris, 1839.

[2] v. Victor upon William.

like it, but who are capable of adapting themselves, at any rate to some extent, to the change.

Geoffroy.

Another interesting and representative person is Geoffroy,[1] who incurred the strictures of Joubert, and has had them "passed on" by Mr Arnold. Geoffroy—the pillar for many years of the *Année Littéraire* and of the *Débats*, the "Folliculus" of Luce de Lancival—has received from Gosse (M. Etienne, not Mr Edmund) the praise of having "toujours marché dans la même route et à la lueur du flambeau qu'il avait choisi dès le commencement." In other words *immutatus et immutabilis*—an attribution magnificent in some relations of life; not, perhaps, as we have before noted, in criticism. Geoffroy's road and torch might have been better chosen.

He, too, feels his time—if he is by no means a Romantic before or at the birth of Romanticism, he is hardly more of a Voltairian. But he is first of all "against" everything and everybody — a child of Momus.[2] He is doubtful about Corneille and Molière; even Racine is not "perfect" for him. But his most characteristic passage is perhaps one which occurs at page 137, vol. ii., of his work cited below. It is a real *point de repère*, because it is one of the last authoritative expressions of a sentiment—no doubt not yet extinct, but for a long time kept to some extent in check—the French belief in the absolute superiority of French literature and the impossibility of a foreigner being a judge of it—the impertinence even of his attempting to judge it. Geoffroy rates Blair in the most approved pedagogic fashion for expressing the opinion—now probably entertained by the majority of Frenchmen themselves—that *Phèdre* is a greater play than *Iphigénie*, and for assigning the reason that *Iphigénie* is too French. He blames the Edinburgh professor roundly for "meddling with our authors"; the opinions are not disputable opinions merely—they are "errors"; Blair and Edinburgh "ought to be ashamed"

[1] His chief work available in book-form is his *Cours de Littérature Dramatique*, 6 vols., Paris, 1825.

[2] This makes the almost inevitable coupling of him with his contemporary and (*mutatis mutandis*) namesake, Jeffrey, a little unfair. He was a genuine critical highwayman, who fired at the coach wherever he found it. Jeffrey only peppered passengers who went the stages after he had himself got down.

of them; they show that the critic "knows nothing about the matter." Similar things are, of course, said to-day in England as well as in France; but *they* only show the temper of the particular critic, not the theory of prevailing criticism. Yet Geoffroy, if only from cross-grainedness, helped in the unsettling of the merely traditional view of literature: and so did service.

Dussault.

His contemporary and fellow-worker on the *Débats*, Dussault, is of a different type.[1] He is much more amiable in his judgments —has, indeed, the credit of being a sort of maker of things pleasant all round, but he is in principle much more reactionary—he is perhaps the most so of this group of critics, till they were exacerbated by the Revolters, to whom he himself refers as *anarchistes littéraires*. He is a staunch Bolæan; and if he has to admit (as with the growth of literary history it was by his time almost impossible for any one not to admit) that the *Art Poétique* is not complete, *c'est du moins bien écrit*. But he goes far beyond this elsewhere, and on the 26th of April, 1817—the very year when a certain *enfant sublime* presented himself as a competitor for an Academic prize—he asks, undoubting of the fact, "Pourquoi la constitution du Parnasse est elle si solide et si durable?" That the disciples of the Greek and Latin Muses should have anything to learn by going to "Runes" and such like things is *nullement possible*. Fairy tales are "absurd." Even the *avant-courriers* of the French classic age meet with no mercy; and Balzac himself is credited merely with "bad taste."

Hoffman, Garat, &c.

Of another member of the staff of the *Débats* in its early days, Hoffman, I know less than of these.[2] He was, like most of the group, a dramatist, and as might be expected and as was the case with all of them, the double employments reacted not quite beneficially on each other. Like Geoffroy (with whom, however, he was at variance, and who told him in effect, with characteristic sweetness, to go back to his dramatic gallipots and leave criticism alone) he frowned on the youth of Romanticism, and seems generally to

[1] *Annales Littéraires*, 5 vols., Paris, 1818–1824.

[2] I have seen things of his, but have somehow missed his *Œuvres*, 10 vols., Paris, 1828.

have been of the race and lineage of Rymer. Garat, not very weighty as a politician, possesses little more worth, if any, as a critic, though he had vogue as an *éloge*-writer. Daunou, who wrote noticeable notices on Ginguené and others, began his career by a critical essay, two years before the Revolution, on the influence of Boileau, and was during all his life more or less concerned with criticism. But he was more of a historian and student of the political sciences than of a literary critic of the pure breed. Etienne, Fiévée, Legouvé the elder, the two Lacretelles, Andrieux,[1] and others, we must also pass by, though I have matter for speaking of all of them: but Ginguené, M. J. Chénier, Népomucène Lemercier, and Feletz are not to be thus dismissed.

Ginguené.

The first was an older man than most of the group—in fact, he was over forty at the date of the Revolution, from the tender mercies of which he was only saved by Thermidor. But he ranks in literature, and especially in critical literature, chiefly by his *Histoire Littéraire d'Italie*,[2] which did not begin to appear till the second decade of the nineteenth century had opened, and was one of the earliest of these comprehensive surveys of literature—other than the writer's own or than that of antiquity — which have had almost more to do than anything else with the formation of modern criticism. He has been accused of relying too much on Tiraboschi for his material; but the vice of looking rather at the commentators than at the texts was an old one, inherited from classical scholarship, and is by no means extinct a hundred years after Ginguené's time; and he is rather less tinged with it than we might expect. His judgments on such —to a Frenchman of the eighteenth century—dangerous writers as Dante and La Casa have considerable merit.

Marie-Joseph Chénier, in other respects besides his relations

[1] Andrieux deserves a note, perhaps, as having occupied a place of strength —the chair of French Literature in the Collége de France—during the critical time 1814–1833, and as having defended the Capitol valiantly against the invaders But his valiancy was greater than his *vaillance*, and instead of criticising him it is nobler to salute him, with M. de Jouy and some others, as respectably mistaken.

[2] 9 vols., Paris, 1811–1824. Ginguené died in 1816, and the book, published in part posthumously from his MSS, was completed by another hand.

to his ill-fated and illustrious brother, appears to have been an unpopular and disputable person: nor, putting his considerable satiric power aside, can he be called a great man of letters. But, I think, his *Tableau de la Littérature Française depuis* 1789,[1] has been rather undervalued. It is not, of course, free from the common defects of these surveys, especially when taken *à bout portant*; it notices much that we do not want noticed at all, belittles important things, takes refuge in stock phrases and *clichés* so as to get the business over. But it is often acute and very much less one-sided and hide-bound than La Harpe or Geoffroy—recognising, for instance, in opposition to the latter, that Blair is "always just" to French writers. And it supplies us, written as it was just before the dawn of Romanticism (for Chénier died in 1811), with some interesting and necessarily unbiassed views. People, he says,[2] do not read Le Bossu at all, and they read Bouhours very little. He greatly prefers Diderot and Marmontel (though he thinks them "paradoxical") to Batteux; and if he is complimentary to Voltaire and even to Thomas, rejoices in Fénelon and Corneille. He cannot, or will not, understand Chateaubriand;[3] but he takes frequent opportunity, under the guise of noticing translations, to refer to and estimate English and German literature. In short, he is open to the reproach of "not knowing where he is," but the very evidences of this are useful to us.

M. J. Chenier.

Still more relatively, and very much more intrinsically interesting, is Népomucène Lemercier — that singular first sketch of a Victor Hugo, who, naturally enough, would have none of Victor Hugo himself when he appeared, and who, in a cruel trick of Fate and Death, was actually supplanted by Hugo in his Academic Chair. It is unfortunate that Lemercier's *Cours de Littérature Générale*[4] is

Lemercier.

[1] It may be found subjoined to the *Pantheon Littéraire* edition of La Harpe vol. iii., Paris, 1840. In his *Œuvres*, 5 vols (Paris, 1826), and *Œuvres Posthumes*, 3 vols (Paris, 1828-30), there is not much else of importance.

[2] Chap. iii., *op. cit.*

[3] Chap. vi.

[4] 4 vols, Paris, 1817. The lectures had been delivered in 1811-14. I have had to rely on my reading of the British Museum copy, the only one which I have ever seen in a catalogue, though rather high-priced, having been sold before I could get it, and my advertisements for another (it is a book worth

not a very common book. It has something of the excessive generalisation of the eighteenth-century—men were struck by the effect of measured sounds and wrote poetry, &c ; and he still sticks to Kinds a good deal. But his independence is unmistakable. He slights the unities superbly; has what is, I think, the finest passage on Shakespeare written by a Frenchman up to his day, on "The English Aeschylus;" condemns *la pernicieuse manie de critiquer opiniâtrement;* qualifies and redeems his tendency to begin "in the air" with "*the* chimerical," "*the* marvellous," "*the* allegoric," &c., by invariably condescending upon particulars in the true critical way, and, as became the author of the *Panhypocrisiade* and *Pinto*, defends Aristophanes against La Harpe. Unfortunately he followed (intentionally or not) Aristotle in confining himself to Drama and Epic But he is a really stimulating and germinal writer, and represents the morrow among his own contemporaries.

Feletz.

Our last critic, before we come to those who in a way stand for both Empires, is a curious contrast both to the critic of the type of Geoffroy and to the critic of the type of Lemercier. Charles Marie Dorimont, Abbé de Feletz,[1] who died in the very middle of the nineteenth century at the age of eighty-three, was with Geoffroy himself, Dussault, and Hoffman, one of the *Débats* Four, and like them was something of an anti-Romantic. But he was a man of amiable temper, of many friends and of much addiction to society, so that he rather flicked than lashed. His information as to the foreign subjects which he often affected was not exhaustive, and the praise, as well as the blame, of his not quite novel remark that in the *pièces difformes et barbares* of Shakespeare there are *beautés veritables*, are both weakened by the fact that he thinks Falstaff is hanged on the Stage in the *Merry Wives*. But he reviews novels obviously by preference, can like *Joseph Andrews*, and can enjoy Miss Edgeworth. In which things a door, great and effectual, is opened, though Feletz doubtless knew it not.[2]

having) not being successful. Some accounts (*e.g.*, that of Vapereau) are quite unfair to it.

[1] *Mélanges*, 6 vols., Paris, 1828–1830.

[2] I must find room, if only in a note, for the unfortunate Auger, who succeeded Suard as universal provider of *éloges* and Introductions in the classic

Of the remarkable pair[1]—united in their lives, their careers and their reputation—who, being first known under the first Empire, died in the same year a little before the close of the second, Cousin concerns us less than may be generally thought. He touched not a few literary subjects,[2] but always preferably, and for the most part exclusively, from the philosophical, social, or some other non-literary side. With Villemain it is different. He, too, was a politician, a historian, and what not, but he was a man of letters, and a man of critical letters, first of all. His second Academic prize, as a very young man, was gained by a paper on "The Advantages and Disadvantages of Criticism;" of the fifteen volumes of his collected works[3] the greater part consists of literary history or estimate; he was Professor of "Eloquence Française," that is to say French Literature; he was for a long period of years almost autocratic in the distribution of prizes and promotions at the Academy, of which he was "Secrétaire Perpetuel;" and it has long been, and to some extent still is, the correct and orthodox thing to speak of him as having initiated the modern critical movement in France, and shared with the Schlegels the credit of initiating that of Europe generally.

Cousin.

Villemain.

From all this men must come to the fifteen volumes with high expectations—a little chequered perhaps in the case of the wary by some cautions of Sainte-Beuve's.[4] To describe the result as unmixed disappointment would be unfair. The mere dates and contents of the books taken together establish the fact that the debt owed by literary and

his claims:

sense, who served as victim to one of Daudet's most ignoble transcripts of reality in *L'Immortel*, and whose *ton sec et rogue* Sainte-Beuve has somewhere despatched and impaled for ever in one of his really immortal phrases.

[1] Some will no doubt expect that a third, Guizot, should be joined to them. He did much reviewing in his youth (as did his first wife, Pauline de Meulan), and his much later companion volumes on Corneille and Shakespeare are more than respectable. But he was perhaps even less of a critic "in his heart" than Cousin

[2] Besides his better known works, such as those on Plato and Descartes, and on the *grandes dames* of the seventeenth century, which touch the subject on different sides, his *Fragments Littéraires* (Paris, 1843) may be consulted. I fear that his summary dismissal may surprise some and enrage others. but I cannot help it. I have nothing to do with his psychology, and he has next to nothing to do with *my* criticism.

[3] *Œuvres*, Paris, 1854–1858.

[4] *C. de L.* I. 108, *sq* on the literary work of both Cousin and Villemain.

critical history to Villemain is great, and one of those which will never be written off the *grand livre* of the subject. That between 1816, the year of his appointment as Professor, and 1828, that of the first publication of his *Cours de la Littérature Française*, French students first, and then French readers, had presented to them for the first time a survey of their literature, which included a historical view of its own origins and earlier achievements, and something like a comparative view of the achievements of other nations, is a thing the greatness of which is not likely to be denied or minimised here. Villemain's style is always correct and agreeable, and he did much to establish, for French criticism in the nineteenth-century, that repute for "honeying the cup," which has become something of a superstition. Sainte-Beuve, in the passage just referred to, may give him a little too much credit for acuteness and wit in his individual observations, but he has both.

Unluckily, however, the entries on the other side of the sheet are numerous and grave. There is not merely the fault, which his great successor justly brings against him—a fault from which, by the way, Sainte-Beuve himself was by no means free—that Villemain is afraid of *concluding*, that he seldom or never gives you a clear, "grasped," summed-up view of his whole subject or man. Very few critics do. But in details also his work is too often unsatisfactory. His numerous "Reports" on academic competitions, which give opportunity for excellent criticism, are elegant, but hollow and rhetorical, as is his rather famous *Tableau de l'Eloquence Chrétienne au IVème Siècle* His notices of various ancient and modern writers are much boiled down from others, with the result, not usual in physical boiling-down, of being not thick but thin—those of Lucretius, and of the tempting and almost virgin subject of the Greek Romances, especially so. Comparative and liberal as he is, his judgment of Shakespeare will not stand beside Lemercier's (he says definitely that Shakespeare does *not* provide, in the same proportion as the Greeks, "universal beauties"), and his estimate of Milton is beggarly beside Chateaubriand's. With all his reputation for rehabilitating mediæval literature, he seems to have known it little: he is not merely very superficial on Chaucer, which

Deductions to be made from them.

might be pardonable in a Frenchman, but actually sweeps the mighty volume of the *Chansons de geste* away at one stroke by the words "we had no poetry at once rude and vigorous." He is sound upon *Ossian*—that craze was dying and could survive even rudimentary comparative study of literature in no one of talent; and his thirty-ninth and fortieth lectures in the *Cours* on Criticism itself deserve to be very well spoken of. But on the whole he is disappointing. We must, of course, make allowance—very large allowance—for a pioneer who begins early, who finds others, during the course of his long life, extending his own explorations far beyond his own limits, and who, from other engagements, from routine, or from sheer disenchantment or worse, declines to follow them; we must increase it for his industry in other matters; we must give him his just part and royalty in the accomplishment of those who followed, and not a few of whom he actually taught, while all owed him something indirectly. But intrinsically and absolutely I do not find him a *very great or even a very good critic. He is deficient in* enthusiasm, in originality, in grasp: nor does he quite make up the deficiency by erudition and method.

Beyle.

Two remarkable persons, one standing apart a little—as he, like his disciple Mérimée, always and in all things did—the other a polyhistoric talent just short of genius, have yet to be mentioned: and these are Henri Beyle and Charles Nodier. Beyle was, in a sense, nothing if not critical; and the spirit of criticism pervades all his work, both the earlier and better known novels and non-descripts, and the *posthumous* volumes (deserving very much the same alliteration), which have more recently been made known by the devoted labours of M. Stryienski. But the "place" for his literary criticism is, of course, *Racine et Shakespeare*, published in 1822, ere yet the Romantic party (to which Beyle himself never belonged) was fully formed, but when the principles "atmosphered" by Diderot, and held in various ways and degrees from Chateaubriand and Madame de Stael onward, had already begun to influence Frenchmen at large.

The book itself[1] is a very curious one. Originally making

[1] It dates from the spring of 1823: I have used the complete posthumous edition (Paris, 1854).

its bow as a couple of review articles, it received all sorts of accretions, internal and appended, and, in its latest form especially, is something of a *potpourri*. The title so far applies to the whole that the author is generally supporting the *methods* of Shakespeare against the *methods* of Racine: but a very small portion of the book is directly occupied with either. And an unwary reader, expecting to find a straightforward and consistent Romantic propaganda, may be almost hopelessly puzzled, not merely by Beyle's zigzag digressions striking in all directions like forked lightning, but by such things as his constant and sustained polemic against Molière, who has generally been the one writer of the *grand siècle* (or with Corneille one of the two writers) taken under Romantic protection. In fact no book can better illustrate the confusion and yeastiness of thought in that early Romantic period, and the unconquerable, even when perverse, idiosyncrasy and individuality of Beyle himself. Much of the piece is an attack upon verse-tragedy *as* verse, for here, as elsewhere, this partisan of the greatest of all poets distinctly frowns on poetry as such. He bases himself on Scott almost as much as on Shakespeare, yet he is terribly disturbed by Sir Walter's politics, and recurs again and again, more in sorrow than in anger, but with singular lack of humour,[1] to the story of the glass that George IV. drank out of, and that Scott first pocketed and then sat upon. Politics, indeed, run very high throughout, and one is never quite sure that Beyle's dislike of Racine and Molière is not mainly (he would himself admit it as partly) based on dislike of an absolute monarchy and a courtly state of society. Here he divagates into a long controversy with the unfortunate *perruque* Auger: elsewhere into an almost totally irrelevant excursus on Lord Byron, Italy, and the wickedness of the English aristocracy. Yet he cannot help being critically valuable almost everywhere, and he generally "says true things," though he constantly "calls them by wrong names." How forcible and original is the definition of Scott's[2] form of novel as "a romantic tragedy [or, we may add, 'a

Racine et Shakespeare.

[1] For so great an ironist Beyle *did* lack humour to a surprising degree.

[2] P. 6, ed. cit.

romantic comedy'], with long inserted descriptions." His battle[1] early in the piece with a "Classic" on the dramatic *illusion parfaite* and *illusion imparfaite*, is conducted in a masterly and victorious manner, though some of us would like to challenge the victor to another duel, on the point whether *theatrical* illusion is not always, and of necessity, even less than "imperfect," and whether to obtain perfect "illusion" you must not *read* and read only.[2] Excellently acute too, for his time, though to ours it may seem a truism, is his attribution of most critical errors to *l'habitude choquée:*[3] and though there is both exaggeration and undue restriction in saying that "Romanticism is the art of giving people themselves pleasure, Classicism that of giving them what pleased their grandfathers,"[4] we know what he means. He is very sound on taste and fashion; and his severity on Voltaire is refreshing, because it cannot be attributed, as it is the fashion to attribute severities on that patriarch, to the *odium theologicum*. The whole, even in its singularities and shortcomings, is an invaluable testimony to the set of the current at the time[5] but its words are not lightly to be taken as other than "words to the wise," and they are not invariably the words *of* the wise.

Beyle's attitude in this tract has been commented on in a fashion very illuminative (if you apply the proper checks in each case) by two persons of unsurpassed competence, but not of quite unsurpassed disinterestedness, Mérimée and Sainte-Beuve. The former[6] says plumply, "Pour lui la poésie était lettre close," and quotes the famous *boutade* in *De l'Amour*, that "Verse was invented as an aid to memory." His objection, says his disciple, to Racine (who "met with his sovereign displeasure") was that he had no character or local colour: his reasons of pre-

[1] P. 14 *sq.*

[2] As some have said: "When you *read Twelfth Night*, you are in Elysium, when you *see* it, you are not even in Illyria."

[3] P. 19.

[4] P. 32.

[5] Lamartine, in a letter given in the book (p. 129 *sq*), says roundly of Beyle: "Il n'y a selon lui et selon nous d'autres règles que les exemples du génie", and though I do not remember that Beyle himself formulates this Brunonian (*v.* vol. II. p. 95 note) trenchancy, he evidently adopts it.

[6] P. 180 *sq*, ed. cit. *inf.* All this passage is important, especially the reference to B.'s habit of "taking the other side," a habit common with critics, but not critical.

ference for Shakespeare, that poet's knowledge of the human heart, the life and individuality of his characters, his command of the nicest shades of passion and sentiment. Sainte-Beuve, on his side,[1] affects rather to pooh-pooh the whole matter, as if it were a battle of kites and crows, where the blood (if any) has been long absorbed, the torn feathers blown away, and the dust settled to quietness. Beyle was a fairly early, but excited and not quite judicious partaker in it. He was unjust to La Harpe (Sainte-Beuve defending La Harpe is rather good!), too much on the side of the *Edinburgh Review* (this is better,[2] the "Blue and Yellow" as a Romantic organ!). One remembers, of course, at once that both these great men of letters were, if not exactly deserters and traitors in regard to Romanticism, at any rate Romantics whose first love had grown pretty cold. Yet we must not forget to notice that Sainte-Beuve practically confirms Mérimée on Beyle's "exclusion of poetry" in judging even Shakespeare.

His attitude here

Nor do we need these great accuser-compurgators. The singular self-revelations which have been communicated so lavishly of late years, tell us, sometimes on every page, sometimes at longer, but never at very long, intervals, of Beyle's abiding interest in literature, and of its curious character, Most part of the letters[3] which he, as little more than a boy. wrote to his younger sister, Pauline, is occupied with literary and educational advice, nearly as surprising in its meticulous and affectionate pedagogism as the writer's almost contemporary *Journal* is in very different ways. In both, and elsewhere, we find the ever-growing passion for Shakespeare, from the dramatic and psychological side, the ever-growing distaste for Racine, the admiration of Corneille, and the contempt of Voltaire—the latter an excellent subject for separate and careful study, inasmuch as we have in it Beyle's Romanticism engaging and overcoming his anti-religiosity. Among the most curious documents noted here—where I think I have noted some that are curious—is the letter to Pauline of May 12, 1807, from Berlin, where Beyle has just

and elsewhere.

[1] *C. du L.*, ix. 314 *sq.*

[2] It is fair to say that the oddity is Beyle's own. See for instance his *Lettres Inédites*, p. 235.

[3] *Lettres Intimes de Stendhal* (Paris, 1892).

discovered *Lenore* "across the veil which covers the genius of the German tongue from" him, and thinks it very touching.

Indeed Beyle in point of criticism is *polypidax:* though the streams are, as it were, underground for the most part, they gush out in the most apparently unlikely places. I have dozens of noted passages, for instance, in that singular and most readable book the *Mémoires d'un Touriste*,[1] certainly not a probable title-source of our matter, and some even in the *Promenades dans Rome.* He resembled Hazlitt in the way in which his criticism was liable to be distorted and poisoned by extra-literary prejudice, more particularly of the anti-clerical kind. I never knew a man so tormented with the idea of something in which he did not—or said he did not—believe, as Beyle is with the idea of Hell. It sometimes makes him very nearly silly, and constantly makes him lose occasions of combined magnanimity and pure literary judgment, as wherever he speaks of Joseph de Maistre.[2] But, as in Hazlitt's case also, you seldom or never find a literary judgment of Beyle's, free from prejudice, which is not sound.

Nodier.

For those who like *Vitae Parallelae*, with a spice, or more than a spice, of contrast, Nodier[3] makes an excellent pendant to Beyle: and while his influence was much more rapid, it was wider also, if not deeper. Nodier began his romantic and "xenomaniac" excursions with the century, writing on Shakespeare in 1801 and on Goethe in 1802. I have chased in the catalogues, but without bagging, a collection of early reviews of his, published by Barginet of Grenoble in 1822, which ought to be of very considerable interest for our purpose. It is well known how, especially after his appointment to the librarianship of the Arsenal in 1823, his abode became a rallying-place, and he himself a sort of Nestor-

[1] My copy is in 2 vols (Paris, 1879).

[2] Himself a terrible critic in a certain sense: hardly one at all in others, and in most parts of ours

[3] There is no complete edition, either of Nodier's collected work or of his criticism. and many of his books are not at all easy to obtain separately The editor of the *Tales*, &c., in the Charpentier collection, has, however, most wisely prefixed certain capital articles to the various volumes—*Des Types en Littérature* to the *Romans*; *Quelques Observations sur la nouvelle école Littéraire* to *Les Proscrits*, *Du Fantastique en Littérature* to the *Contes*. All these are important.

Ulysses of Romanticism, while his delightful fantastic, or half-fantastic stories (the best of them to my thinking is *Inès de las Sierras*), which are Sterne *plus* Hoffmann *plus* something else, form no small part of the choicest outcome of the movement. But in criticism proper, Nodier, though a great propelling and inspiring force, has left rather inadequate recorded examples of this force in application. This is partly due to the fact that his intense interest in pure bibliography, and in the "curiosities of literature," drew him, as similar interests have often drawn others, a little away from that severer altar on which burns the fire of pure literary and critical appreciation. His principal book of this kind, perhaps his principal non-creative work, *Mélanges tirés d'une Petite Bibliothèque*,[1] shows this very clearly: and it may rather be feared that Nodier would have preferred a perfectly worthless book, of which he possessed an unique copy, or an extremely eccentric one, of which hardly anybody had ever heard, to the greatest work which everybody knew and had on their shelves. But still he did like much of the best of what was known, and, fortunately, directed his liking most to that of the best which was not so well known as it ought to be. And so there are few more characteristic names—and few names of more power—than his in the French Transition.

[1] One of Crapelet's best produced books (Paris, 1829).

CHAPTER V.

ÆSTHETICS AND THEIR INFLUENCE.

THE PRESENT CHAPTER ITSELF A KIND OF EXCURSUS—A PARABASIS ON "PHILOSOPHICAL" CRITICISM—MODERN ÆSTHETICS: THEIR FOUNT IN DESCARTES AND ITS BRANCHES—IN GERMANY NEGATIVE AS WELL AS POSITIVE INDUCEMENTS—BAUMGARTEN—'DE NONNULLIS AD POEMA PERTINENTIBUS'—AND ITS DEFINITION OF POETRY—THE 'ALETHEOPHILUS'—THE 'ÆSTHETICA'—SULZER—EBERHARD—FRANCE: THE PÈRE ANDRÉ, HIS 'ESSAI SUR LE BEAU'—ITALY VICO—HIS LITERARY PLACES—THE 'DE STUDIORUM RATIONE'—THE 'DE CONSTANTIA JURISPRUDENTIS'—THE FIRST 'SCIENZA NUOVA'—THE SECOND—RATIONALE OF ALL THIS—A VERY GREAT MAN AND THINKER, BUT IN PURE CRITICISM AN INFLUENCE MALIGN OR NULL—ENGLAND—SHAFTESBURY—HUME—EXAMPLES OF HIS CRITICAL OPINIONS—HIS INCONSISTENCY—BURKE ON THE SUBLIME AND BEAUTIFUL—THE SCOTTISH ÆSTHETIC-EMPIRICS: ALISON—THE 'ESSAY ON TASTE'—ITS CONFUSIONS—AND ARBITRARY ABSURDITIES—AN INTERIM CONCLUSION ON THE ÆSTHETIC MATTER

The present chapter itself a kind of excursus.

It was announced at the very opening of this History that it would not deal, except incidentally and under *force majeure*, with those vaguer problems of general Criticism or metacriticism which, during the last two centuries, have taken the general name of Æsthetics. But some of my critics have not been content with this announcement, and it is perhaps permissible in this place to notice certain exceptions which have been taken to the absence of—or rather to the pretty definite abstention from—"philosophical" discussions and speculations in this book. For while in Italy I have been pronounced *digiuno di filosofia*, the huntsmen have been up in America against my "confusion of thought"

A parabasis on "philosophical" criticism.

and my writing about Criticism without defining what criticism is.

As for the first point, I may perhaps be allowed to say that "divine Philosophy" has been by no means such a stranger or stepmother to me as some of my critics seem to suppose. I have duly sojourned in her courts, and have found them the reverse of unamiable: I have eaten of her bread and found it both palatable and nourishing. But it is Philosophy herself who teaches us, by the mouth of not her least but, as some have thought, her greatest exponent, not to shift or mix the Kinds. And, to my possibly heretical judgment, the "kind" of Criticism seems one into which such "general ideas" as my critics desiderate can only be introduced by a most doubtful and perilous naturalisation. I suppose it would be generally granted that no "philosophical" critics stand higher than Plato and Coleridge: Aristotle himself has, in comparison with them, but contented himself with middle axioms and empirical observation. And the result of this is that—again to my possibly heretical thinking—Plato has actually left us nothing in pure criticism but an often mischievous theory: while Coleridge is just so much the more barren in true criticism as he expatiates further in the regions of sheer "philosophy."

Nor should I, if I chose to take up the quarrel, in the least lack other arms or armour of offence and defence, sufficiently proofmarked by Philosophy herself. I hold that the province of Philosophy is occupied by matters of the pure intellect: and that literary criticism is busied with matters which, though not in the loosest meaning, are matters of sense. I do not know—and I do not believe that any one knows, however much he may juggle with terms—why certain words arranged in certain order stir one like the face of the sea, or like the face of a girl, while other arrangements leave one absolutely indifferent or excite boredom or dislike. I know that we may generalise a little, may "push our ignorance a little farther back"; may discover some accordances of sound, some rhythmical adjustments, some cunning and more or less constant appeals to eye and ear which, as we coolly say, "explain" emotion and at-

traction to some extent But *why* these general things delight man he knows no more than, in his more unsophisticated stage, why their individual cases and instances do so. I do not think that my own doctrine of the Poetic (or the literary) Moment—of the instant and mirific "kiss of the spouse"—is so utterly "unphilosophical"· but I do know that that doctrine, if it does not exactly laugh to scorn theories of æsthetic, makes them merely facultative indulgences. And just as physiology, and biology, and all the 'ologies that ever were 'ologied, leave you utterly uninformed as to the real reason of the rapture of the physical kiss, so I think that æsthetics do not teach the reason of the amorous peace of the Poetic Moment.

But I began this book with no intention of writing a treatise on *Momentary* (or *Monochronous*) *Apolaustics*, and except that it might have seemed discourteous to offer no explanation of (I can hardly call this any apology for) a feature, or the lack of one, which has disturbed well-willing readers, I should have preferred to keep such questions out altogether. Nor can I see that there is any "confusion of thought," any contradiction, or even any want of "architectonic" in the plan which I have actually pursued A man may surely write a *History of England* without including in it an abstract treatise on politics, and describe an interesting country without philosophising on the architecture of its buildings, the family story of its tribes, or the chemical constitution of its natural products I set before myself and my readers at the outset the promise of a simple survey of the actual critical opinions, actually expressed, in "judging of authors," by the actual critics of recorded literature. To the survey of these I have added another of the chief reasons which they alleged for their tastes when they alleged any: and when, as naturally happens, these opinions and tastes, and the attempted explanations of them, appeared in groups or schools, I have adapted my survey, by means of the Interchapters of the book, to the summary consideration of these also. I have not thought it incumbent on me either to express, or to refrain from expressing, agreement or disagreement with their views. but where (as

in the case of the Subject theory, of Boileau's Good-Sense-worship and other things) it seemed to me that certain views and theories could be actually demolished by argument, I have endeavoured to show how. Where it is a simple question of taste, my own *Haupt-theorie* forbids my attempting anything of the sort.

I am, I confess, unable to see that either Logic or Architectonic is outraged by this preannounced and methodical limitation of proceeding. I have given, or attempted to give, my 'Atlas" of the actual facts with what accuracy and clearness I could. The complement of Theory I do not pretend to supply, and I cannot see that anybody has a right to demand it. Whoso wants to take it let him make it my facts ought to help him in the making, and if they do not, he and not the facts must bear the blame. This book has attempted to provide, in an orderly arrangement, and, as far as might be in the space, exhaustively, what has called itself and has been called Criticism (certain varieties being, for reasons given, excluded or less fully treated) from the beginnings of Greek literature, as we have them, to the present day. Of these provisions I think I may say—without prejudice to any further use of them that any one may choose to make—*his utere mecum:* and I will just add that had anybody offered me the same provision thirty years ago, I should have been profoundly thankful, and have been spared many a weary hour of gleaning here and groping there

I shall even be so very bold as to say that what I have actually done, or attempted to do, seems to me in the true sense both *philosophoteron* and *spoudaioteron* than what my censors would have liked me to do. Any tolerably clever undergraduate, reading for Greats, could sketch (in after-life amusing himself, and perhaps impressing others, by accumulating arguments in support, or in destruction, of his undergraduate hypothesis) explanations of the distaste of the ancients for "appreciative" criticism, of the critical silence of the Middle Ages, of the French and English attitude of sixteenth-seventeenth century criticism and sixteenth-seventeenth century creation, of the time of bondage to Good Sense, of the avatars

and phases of Taste. I would undertake myself to make a complete set in a Long Vacation, with arguments *pro* and *con* in the "best and most orgilous" manner. But I should not believe one of them, and I should mutter *O vix sancta simplicitas!* if anybody were taken in by them. In what I have given there is no possibility of taking in, and no need to believe or disbelieve. Here are the simple facts, disengaged by a certain amount of hard labour from their more or less accessible sources and quarries, and ranged, whether ill or well, yet at any rate with some system, and in such a fashion that they must be reasonably easy to master. I may not be an architect, but think I may claim to be a tolerable quarryman and a purveyor of the stone in fairly convenient arrangement, workably rough-hewed. And your most gifted architect will find himself put to it to make his Beauvais or his Batalha, his Salisbury or his Strasburg, from stone unquarried or unshaped to his hand I have, in short, endeavoured to give a tolerably complete collection of facts which have never been collected before. If my facts are inconvenient to any philosophy, so much the worse for it: if they are convenient, let it take them and welcome.

At any rate—with what results of success or failure, of advantage or disadvantage to the work, the reader, not the writer, must judge,—my initial undertaking of abstinence has, I think, been fairly discharged. The point, however, at which we have arrived is one of those where the *force majeure* makes itself felt. In the Book where we aim at exhibiting the process of change which is so noticeable as between the general criticism of the eighteenth and the general criticism of the nineteenth centuries, and at examining to some extent the causes of that change, we could not possibly omit an influence so powerful for good or for evil as that of the constitution—as a regular branch of philosophy—of inquiries into the principles of Beauty, into the æsthetic sense, into the psychological aspects of the appeal of art generally. We shall still deal in the most economical and temperate fashion with these matters: but we cannot here abstain from them entirely. Indeed it might be open to anybody to urge that large

passages occurring elsewhere in this volume, and even to some extent in the last, properly belong to the present chapter—that Lessing, Diderot, Du Bos are strayed sheep of this fold. But one remarkable person in France, another in Italy, and two still more remarkable groups in Germany and England, will find better place here than anywhere for something like individual notice: and others must be at least the subject of reference and glance.

Modern Æsthetics: their fount in Descartes and its branches.

With the minor differences which, occurring in all matters of opinion, nowhere multiply so fast and subdivide themselves so minutely as in questions of philosophy, there has been of late a general agreement to trace the germ of the modern division of Æsthetics to Descartes.[1] To discuss this at any length would be quite improper here: but no one who has the least acquaintance with the Cartesian philosophy can fail to see how naturally—nay, how inevitably—both the general principle of that philosophy in its reduction and rallying of everything to conditions of abstract idea and thought, and its particular insistence on clearness of definition and the like in Method, should lead to a reconsideration and further exploration of the idea of Beauty, literary and other. There is also no doubt that, in the next generation or generations, the developments of Cartesianism and the revolts against it might, nay, must, affect powerfully these applications of abstract thought to the remoter principles of literature. We have seen that Locke in England, Philistine as he himself was in regard to letters, and especially to poetry, had a very strong influence upon Addison, —an influence which he continued to exercise, both through Addison and independently, almost throughout the English eighteenth century. There is no doubt that in France the Père André, whom we shall mention presently, was a direct descendant of Descartes through Malebranche. In Italy the singular and solitary figure of Vico, though it exercised at first no influence, has been claimed as having a new and powerful influence to exercise in this direction as in others

[1] The standard treatise on this is that of M. E. Krantz, *L'Esthétique de Descartes*: Paris, 1882.

And it is not disputable that Descartes begat Leibnitz or that Leibnitz begat Wolff, to whose philosophical system almost all competent judgment agrees in tracing the direct origin of German æsthetic, in Breitinger, in Baumgarten, and the rest.

In Germany: negative as well as positive inducements.

It is, I think, Herr von Antoniewicz, the very learned and able editor of J. E. Schlegel, who accounts[1] for the strong abstract and æsthetic tendency of German eighteenth-century criticism, both then and since, by the fact that the originators of it had nothing to look back upon, nothing to "tie themselves on to," and that they therefore struck out into the deep, *ripæ ulteriorıs amore*, as we may say, to tag his saying. This is ingenious, and it becomes more illuminative when we compare the facts with the corresponding facts in English criticism. We, too, though we had in Dryden and Jonson a good deal more than the Germans had, possessed little critical starting-point. But we had, what the Germans had not, abundance of really great writers upon whom to fix practical and real critical examinations. It is half pathetic and half ludicrous to see the efforts that Bodmer and Gottsched and their contemporaries make to provide themselves with subjects of the kind out of people like Besser and Neukirch and Amthor, like Lohenstein and Hofmanswaldau, even like the excellent Opitz. and we cannot wonder that they, or at least others, dropped off these unsuculent subjects into the pure inane. But the fairer Callipolis of English criticism could feed and grow fat on Chaucer, and Spenser, and Shakespeare, and Milton, and Dryden always, and by degrees on all the recovered wealth of older English literature. The Germans had nothing (save Luther and a few more not of the absolutely first class or even a very high second) but that mediæval literature and those ballads which naturally they did not reach at once. And even these, much good as they did them, had not the inestimable *alterative* value of older as compared with newer English literature.

On the other hand, they had, as we have said, an unconquerable desire and a dogged determination to learn and to

[1] *Op. cit. sup.*, Introduction.

improve themselves· the very poverty of their own literature drove them to compare and abstract others; and they possessed, in the Wolffian philosophy, a strong and serviceable instrument of method. Breitinger, with whom we have dealt sufficiently in his general critical aspect, may perhaps have the credit of the first distinct and extensive attempt to busy himself with the theory of art and letters: to Baumgarten is always attributed that of having put the name "Æsthetic" into currency, and of having got the thing —if it may be called a thing—into formal and regular shape. He used the word in a thesis, *De Nonnullis ad Poema Pertinentibus*,[1] as early as 1735, about midway between the time when the Zurich men turned their attention seriously to poetry and imagination in the abstract, and the issue of their main body of work in 1740-41. But it was not till fifteen years later, at the exact middle of the century, that he began to publish his *Æsthetica*,[2] redacted from lectures delivered in the interval.

Baumgarten

The thesis itself is to the expert a sufficient announcement of the new departure, which of course is only an old one refashioned. Baumgarten takes us right back to the most abstract criticism of the Italian Renaissance —the "idea of a poem," the skeleton of poetic thought, method, expression, strung together by a new science of the sense of beauty. A poem is *oratio sensitiva perfecta*. What is poetical is that which contributes to this perfection.

De Nonnullis ad Poema Pertinentibus,

The most fatal, and I am sure the most unintentionally fatal, criticism of Baumgarten, and incidentally of the entire division of critical or quasi-critical literature to which his work belongs, is contained in a remark of Herr Braitmaier's (ii. 9) that part of the thesis "is written with very little understanding of poetry." The question is whether the whole is not — whether this and other things like it might not have been said by a man who could not distinguish between Tupper and Tennyson, between Hugo and

and its definition of poetry.

[1] Halle, in the year named. [2] Frankfort-on-the-Oder, 1750 58.

Delille. Look at this *oratio sensitiva perfecta*—which sent the good Herder into ecstasies as a new poetic spell, germ, and what not. Like other abstract definitions, including that of Coleridge himself, to which we shall come later, it omits or misses the *differentia* of Poetry altogether. It lets in the prose-poetry or the prose-better-than-poetry heretics by a wide and unclosable door:[1] it excludes the very quality which some of those who love poetry most love in it. What is "perfection" but the attainment, in the highest degree, of that which is elsewhere attained in degrees high, less high, low, or lowest? There are therefore *orationes sensitivæ* which have the qualities of poetry but are not poetry. This is hard to admit. Poetry should be itself: not a "bestment" of something else.

The Alethe-philus

In the *Alethophilus*, which followed (1741), Baumgarten expanded and, at the same time, condescended a little. A poem is now a "lively" oration instead of "sensitive" words, and so lively that it demands metrical expression. Herein he seems to his severer critics to have derogated. "Liveliness," they say, was in *sensitiva*, only better "metre" was in *perfecta* by implication. One can only say that *we* prefer to take it explicitly. And Baumgarten, like all other theorists with hardly an exception, grudges the admission of metre after all. He calculates that it gives only a very small proportion of the charm of poetry. True, the admission of it at all—with the further prescription of "thoughts that burn," "brilliant order," "regular," that is to say, pure, neatly adjusted, adequate, and charming "expression," does something to dress up the bare skeleton of the *perfecta sensitiva oratio*. But it does more to show what a bodiless skeleton it is. The *Æsthetica* itself,[2] which had been preceded by a sort of pilot-engine in the shape of a redaction of Baumgarten's professorial lectures by his pupil, G. F. Meier,[3]

The Æsthetica.

[1] Later, Baumgarten did formally, while admitting metre as a sort of adjunct of "perfection," provide that a prose work such as *Télémaque* may be a poem, while verse compositions may not,—the old notion back again.

[2] Frankfort: 1750 1st vol., 1758 2nd. It was never finished.

[3] *Anfangsgründe aller schönen Wissenschaften*, 3 vols., Halle, 1748-50.

expands, after a rather Vossian pattern, the principles of the two earlier books, dwelling much on "perfection," on the innate disposition of the soul towards beautiful thoughts, and the like He is perhaps most justly thanked for his insistence on *sensitiva*—on the sensual as well as intellectual appeal of poetry. But his illustration from actual ancient poetry is not rich: and that from modern almost non-existent.[1]

To Baumgarten we have given some place as to a pioneer even in a branch of criticism which we do not intend to pursue. His followers, Sulzer and Eberhard, must have less room, and Moses Mendelssohn, between them, is elsewhere treated.

Sulzer.

The well-known *Allgemeine Theorie der Schönen Künste*[2] of Sulzer, to which the often quoted *Zusätze* of Blankenberg belong as supplement, is in reality a painful compound of Dictionary and Bibliography, wherein you go from *Copiren* to *Corinthische Ordnung*, and from *Menuet* to *Metalepsis*. Such things, invaluable for their time, are almost necessarily thrown into the wallet at his back by Time himself. But they serve as a text for a repetition of the sober truth that the immense reputation and the really solid achievement of Germany since have been not a little due to the provision of them by her eighteenth-century writers Mere knowledge will not do everything: and it is peculiarly liable to degenerate into a simple rag-bag and marine-store accumulation of things that are *not* knowledge. But the average man can do very little without it; he can sometimes do quite surprising things with it. And while the less than average man is without it mainly negligible, it would be wofully easy to provide examples in which persons, certainly or possibly much above the average in ability, have made shipwreck by neglecting it.

[1] He is thought to have derived something from Arnold, *Versuch und Anleitung zur Poesie der Deutschen* (2nd ed., 1741), a book of which I am still in search, while I should like to have rather fuller opportunities than I have yet had of studying Baumgarten himself and some others of the earlier Germans.

[2] Leipzig, 1771-74, but mostly written much earlier It was greatly enlarged twenty years later. Blankenberg's *Zusätze* came after this in 1796-98, and there are extensive *Appendices* by others, making 8 vols. (1792-1808).

Eberhard.

The *Handbuch der Æsthetik*[1] of Eberhard may deserve a line here, because, though beginning in the orthodox æsthetic manner with general Principles of Beauty, it works them down to specific Rhetoric and Poetry with rather more condescension, and a great deal more ingenuity, than usual.

France: the Père André, his Essai sur le Beau.

To pass to France, the *Essai sur le Beau* of the Père André[2] is almost a famous book, and undoubtedly exercised a great deal of influence over the time; nor must we deny that that influence had literary effects. But even a not hasty reader might be excused—if he came across the book having never previously heard of it—for saying that its connection with Literature is almost non-existent. The very word does not occur in the Index, which is rather fuller than in most French books of the time: and though "Eloquence" and "Poetry" do, the remarks in reference to them are of the most meagre character. There must be Unity: and the poet must please the imagination (Addison had at least taught them to use the word) as well as the intellect. Even "pleasure" is to be used with jealous care as a criterion of Beauty—the love of this is to be "disinterested." But beyond these vague, as one might have thought barren, and in the last case theoretical generalities, André has next to nothing for the student of Literary Criticism, who may make what he can of the table of the Beautiful, as—

Arbitrary,	Moral,	National,	Spiritual,
Essential,	Musical,	Sensible,	Visible.

And it is well if this student has the grace to refrain from amplifying this table after the pattern and in the spirit of the twenty-eighth chapter of the Third Book of Rabelais.

[1] This book actually belongs to the nineteenth century, having been published at Berlin in 1803-5 (4 vols.) But Eberhard was then a man over sixty; he had published a *Theorie der schonen Künste und Wissenschaften* twenty years earlier, and his general position is that of the third quarter of the eighteenth.

[2] *V. sup.*, ii. 513, note. First published in 1741, it was constantly reprinted. André was a Jesuit, and his full name was Yves Marc *de L'Isle* André, whence the rigid virtue of the British Museum insists that he shall be looked for under L.

Italy: Vico.

In Italy, the illustrious author[1] of the *Scienza Nuova*[2] had, before Baumgarten, before even Breitinger, and long before André, turned the powers of his profound and original thought to the question of *sapienza poetica*. He lays at least as much stress as Baumgarten himself upon the *sensitiva*: discerns natural and diametrical opposition between Metaphysics and Poetry; but still admits a Science, "new" in this as in other respects, of Poetry, or at least a *logica poetica* which compares curiously with Breitinger's "Logic of Imagination" and other things. There does not appear to be any suspicion or any likelihood of indebtedness. it is only one of the innumerable instances of things being "in the air" and of the birds of the air carrying them to different places and persons. With him, poetry, like everything else, is an item or factor in human *history*, though, following his strong metaphysical turn, he deals largely with the relations to soul and sense, &c.

His literary places.

In arranging, according to our usual fashion, the actual deliverances of Vico as actually presented, we find them in four successive places presenting as many stages of his thought—the *De Studiorum Ratione* (1708), the *Constantia Jurisprudentis* (1721), the first *Scienza* (1725), and the second (1730).

[1] For Vico's æsthetic, see, in addition to Professor Flint's admirable *Vico* (Edinburgh, 1882), the very interesting *Estetica* of Signor Benedetto Croce (Part II. chap. v. pp 228-243 Milan, Palermo, and Naples, 1902). This chapter, with some earlier ones, had been printed separately as a specimen the year before. I owe copies of both, with one of a still earlier series on *La Critica Letteraria* (Rome, 1896), to Signor Croce's kindness; and the drift of the last named, which condemns the *inesattezza* of the term "literary criticism," had itself prepared me for the disapproval (not unmixed) which he expresses of the first volume of this work as "deprived of method and determinate object." But as I still see, or seem to see, my own object quite clearly defined before me, as I have found no fault in the compass which I use, and feel the helm of my method quite solid and obedient in my hand, I fear I must hold my course all the same I shall only say that the sketch of criticism or æsthetic before Vico which precedes the chapter above referred to, shows remarkable knowledge and faculty of statement.

[2] The *Scienza* first appeared in 1725, but was practically transformed in its second ed., 1730 Its ideas on poetry were further developed later; but anticipations of them appear even earlier in the *De Constantia Jurisprudentis* of 1721, if not even in the still earlier Lectures—most of them but recently published—of 1699-1708.

The first named is early, and it presents the author's thought in a somewhat embryonic condition, but as true to the future development as an embryo ought to be. Its importance for us consists first in the starting[1] from Bacon, which of itself will give us something of an inkling of Vico's attitude to literature, though the Italian fortunately discarded whatever was contemptuous or hostile in the Englishman's position. More important still is the erection[2] of a "Nova Critica" which is opposed and preferred to "Topica" in relation to literature itself. "Critica est ars veræ orationis, Topica [here evidently used in one of the full senses of 'Rhetoric'] autem copiosæ"[3] And most, the paragraph[4] on Poetry itself, where Vico, deserting Bacon, proclaims it not a *vinum dæmonum* but a "gift of the Most Highest," declares the great characteristic of the Poet to be Imagination, but (true to his own line) insists on Truth being still most necessary to him. That the new Physic will be very convenient to Poetry by supplying it with fresh and accurate images may raise a smile: but after all it has not proved quite vain.

The De Studiorum Ratione.

De Constantia Jurisprudentis may seem a surprising title; but Vico was thoroughly of the opinion of a later jurist, Mr Counsellor Paulus Pleydell, about the necessity of "history and literature" to his profession, and the sub-title *De Constantia Philologiæ* takes away even the titular shock. Philology is here no mere charwoman, with the charwoman's too frequent habit of doing even the mean work she does badly, but a mighty goddess of knowledge, presiding over not merely the history of words but the history of things. History was Vico's real darling: and that view of poetry as the earliest attainable history, which, true enough in a way, was to lead him into heresy afterwards, distinctly appears here. It is only at the twelfth

The De Constantia Jurisprudentis.

[1] *Franciscus Baco in aureo de Aug. Sci. libello, &c*, vol ii p 5 of Ferrari's *Opere di G. Vico* (6 vols, Milan, 1852). I owe the use of the copy of this, with which I have worked, to the kindness of Professor Flint.

[2] *Omnium scientiarum artiumque commune instrumentum est nova Critica.* Ibid, p 7.

[3] P 11.

[4] Pp. 26-28.

chapter of this section[1] that he comes to talk "De Linguæ Heroicæ sive de Poeseos Origine," and handles his subject very much as we should expect from his text, that "Poetry is the first language of men." Still, he goes into a good deal of detail, and his description[2] of the iamb as the "middleman" (*tradux*) between heroic verse and prose, though not likely to be historically correct, has a certain truth logically. And he appends to this, in a very long note, a discussion of Homer himself, which is not yet polytheist.

The first Scienza Nuova.

These earlier treatises take away almost all oddity from the appearance in the first *Scienza* of an entire Book,[3] the Third, occupied with New Principles of Poetry. Hotch-potch as this book may seem—ranging as it does from theogony to chronology, and from both to heraldry and the science of medals, from elaborate discussions of "fables" generally to a discovery of the Laws of War and Peace in poetry itself, from the greatness of Homer to the truth of the Christian Religion,—all these apparent oddities are waxed if not welded together by Vico's general idea of the Poet as the earliest and truest historian, philosopher, and authority for the New Science of Humanity. Indeed he often reminds us of Shelley in the *Defence of Poetry*, and I daresay Shelley really knew him[4]

The Second.

It is not, however, till the second *Scienza* that these sketches and studies take the form of an elaborate treatise, *Della Sapienza Poetica*, filling one whole book on the general subject, and another, *Della Discoverta del Vero Omero*, no less than three hundred pages.[5] Here Vico becomes more than ever "Thorough." After preliminaries on

[1] Ed cit., iii. 265 *sq.*

[2] P 275, note.

[3] Ed. cit., iv. 161-245 The earlier books are not superfluous for our purpose.

[4] I may observe that Vico, though an extremely consistent thinker in reality, is apt to lay such stress on the particular side of his thought prominent at the moment, that it may deceive the unwary and must furnish the unscrupulous with handles. Compare, as one example of many, the attack on the notion of poets being "*natural* Theologians," at *De Const. Jurisp* iii. 277, with the argument for their being "*political* Theologians" a few pages later (pp 295, 296), comparing also with both his later passage on "Teologia Poetica" in the second *Scienza* (v. 155).

[5] Ed. cit., v. 1, 151-421, 422-461.

science generally, on poetical science, and on the Deluge, we have a Metaphysic of Poetry, a Logic of Poetry, an Ethic, Economic, Politic, Physic (specified down as Cosmography, Astronomy, Chronology, and Geography)—all of Poetry!

In these bold speculations many striking and really critical sayings occur. That it is the first principle of poetry to give life, and its own life, to everything[1] nobody need deny; nor that poetry is at once "impossible and credible,"[2] a near coasting of the Coleridgean Land of Promise, the explorer starting of course, as Coleridge did, from the Aristotelian doctrine of the "plausible impossible" and the absurdity rendered imperceptible by poetic speech. That "too much reflection hurts poetry"[3] is less unmixedly true, though most certainly not unmixedly false.

Rationale of all this

All this is extremely interesting, but with an interest so different from that of purely literary criticism that I can quite understand how a man like Signor Croce, taking his start from it, ostracises purely literary criticism itself. Of this last indeed[4] there is little or nothing in Vico. He does not conduct—I am not aware of any one who ever *has* conducted—the argument for Homeric disintegration on literary grounds: his occasional comparisons of Dante with Homer are equally unliterary. I have not yet found a place where he deals with any author in a purely literary spirit. The zeal of his New Science of Humanity has eaten him up. A poem is a historical document, a poet is not merely an early historian but an early theologian, philosopher, jurist, moralist, panto-pragmatist, *panepistemon*, *panhistor*. Very like; but for most of these purposes a Tupper would be quite as valuable as a Tennyson, and we see that a cloud of unsubstantial Homerids were quite as valuable to Vico as the One Poet of Helen and Nausicaa, of Achilles and Odysseus.

For us, therefore, the main importance of Vico, though undoubtedly great, is of a dubious not to say a sinister character.

[1] v. 168.

[2] P. 168. Vico had anticipated this earlier.

[3] iv. 200. (See the *First* draft.)

[4] No reasonable person will object to this the praise of Italian writers in the *De Stud. Rat.*, p. 125.

A very great man and thinker, but in pure Criticism an influence malign or null.

It establishes him in a position by no means dissimilar to that of Plato,—a position of enormous influence, epoch-making and original, which influence has chiefly spent itself in ways outside of, or counter to, that which we are pursuing. If Vico had contented himself with developing, in the direction of literature, the theory of cyclical progression which he in common with other great thinkers held, and if he had had literary knowledge enough to apply it, the results might have been wholly good. But it does not appear that he had this knowledge, and, whether he had it or not, he used what he had in very different lines. I think that Professor Flint has established beyond all doubt Vico's claim to the anticipation of the so-called "Wolfian" method with Homer.[1] But, as I have explained from the very outset, this so-called criticism also is not the species of criticism with which we here busy ourselves at all: and its methods are entirely separate and partly hostile. Yet there is no question about the importance which this so-called criticism has assumed in the last two centuries, and in this, as in other matters, Vico is an origin.

So is he, I think, likewise in the extension of literary criticism by including in it investigations into psychology, not merely individual but national, into manners, religion, and what not. This extension, continued by the Germans of the later eighteenth century and immensely popularised and developed during the nineteenth, of course now seems to some the orthodox and only legitimate process of the kind. To me, as my readers by this time must be well aware, it does not seem so. I therefore deplore the exercise of Vico's genius in this direction, and I do not purpose to admit its results into these pages more than I can help. But once more I recognise his greatness, if in some respects as that of a great heresiarch. And it would be really "unphilosophical" to leave him without pointing out, what has not, so far as I know, been pointed out

[1] To do Vico full justice, we must admit that his object was less to break up Homer, as they break up Cædmon and Isaiah, than to attribute the whole work to the whole early Greek people.

before, how noteworthy he is as exemplifying the corruption of a thing accompanying quite early stages of its growth. We have throughout maintained that the Historical method is the salvation of Criticism, and in this very period we are witnessing its late application to that purpose. Vico is the very apostle, nay, more, the prophet, of the Historical method itself. Yet here, as elsewhere, the postern to Hell is hard by the gateway of the Celestial City.

England.

We may give a somewhat full account of some English writers whose criticism trembles on the verge of æsthetic or oversteps it, partly on the general principles announced in the preface to the last volume, partly because some of them at least do touch actual criticism rather more nearly than, say, Baumgarten and Vico; but also because, in the great *prepollence* of English literature during the eighteenth century, some of them likewise—notably Shaftesbury and Burke—exercised a very considerable influence upon foreign countries. As for Hume, he is a particularly interesting example of a man pushing freedom of thought to the utmost limit in certain directions, but apparently content to dwell in the most hide-bound orthodoxy of his time as to others.[1]

Shaftesbury.

There are few writers of whom more different opinions have been held, in regard to their philosophical and literary value, than is the case with Shaftesbury. His criticism has been less discussed, except from the purely philosophical or at any rate the technically æsthetic side, but difference is scarcely less certain here when discussion does take place. It is difficult to put the dependence of that

[1] On Adam Smith and Gibbon a note must suffice. The former has actually left us nothing important in print concerning the subject, though he is known to have lectured on it, and though to the partisans of "psychological" criticism the *Moral Sentiments* may seem pertinent His line seems to have been pretty identical with those of Hume and of Blair, who knew and used Smith's Lectures in preparing his own As for Gibbon, his great work did not give very much opportunity for touching our subject, and he availed himself little of what it did give though on Byzantine literature generally, and on some individuals —Photius, Sidonius, and others—he acquits himself well enough. His early *Essay on the Study of Literature* is extremely general and quite unimportant.

difference in an uncontentious and non-question-begging manner, because it concerns a fundamental antinomy of the fashion in which this curious author strikes opposite temperaments. To some, every utterance of his seems to carry with it in an undertone something of this sort: "I am not merely a Person of Quality, and a very fine gentleman, but also, look you, a philosopher of the greatest depth, though of the most elegant exterior, and a writer of consummate originality and *agudeza*. If you are sensible people you will pay me the utmost respect; but alas! there are so many vulgar and insensible people about, that very likely you will not." Now this kind of "air" abundantly fascinates some readers, and intrigues others; while, to yet others again, it seems the affectation, most probably of a charlatan, certainly of an intellectual coxcomb, and they are offended accordingly. It is probably unjust (though there is weighty authority for it) to regard Shaftesbury as a charlatan; but he will hardly, except by the fascination aforesaid or by some illegitimate partisanship of religious or philosophical view, escape the charge of being a coxcomb; and his coxcombry appears nowhere more than in his dealings with criticism[1] From the strictest point of view of our own definition of the art, he would have very little right to entrance here at all, and would have to be pretty unceremoniously treated if he were allowed to take his trial. His concrete critical utterances—his actual appreciations—are almost Rymerical; with a modish supercilliousness substituted for pedantic scurrility. "The British Muses," quoth my lord, in his *Advice to an Author*,[2] "may well lie abject and obscure, especially being as yet in their mere infant state. They have scarce hitherto arrived to anything of stateliness or person," and he continues in the usual style with "wretched pun and quibble," "false sublime," "Gothick mode of poetry," "horrid discord of jingling rhyme," &c. He speaks of "that noble satirist Boileau" as "raised from the plain model of the

[1] These are to be found almost *passim* in the *Characteristics* (my copy of which is the small 3 vol. ed., *s.l.*, 1749), but chiefly in his *Advice to an Author* (vol i., ed. cit., p. 105-end) and in the *Third Miscellany* (iii. 92-129).

[2] i. 147.

ancients." Neither family affection, nor even family pride, could have induced him to speak as he speaks of Dryden,[1] if he had had any real literary taste. His sneers at Universities,[2] at "pedantick learning," at "the mean fellowship of bearded boys," deprive him of the one saving grace which Neo-classicism could generally claim. "Had I been a Spanish Cervantes, and with success equal to that comick author had destroyed the reigning taste of Gothick or Moorish Chivalry, I could afterwards contentedly have seen my burlesque itself despised and set aside."[3] Perhaps there is not a more unhappily selected single epithet in the whole range of criticism than "the *cold* Lucretius."[4]

On the other hand, both in the more speciously literary parts of his desultory discourses *de quodam Ashleio*, and outside of them, he has frequent remarks on the Kinds,[5] he is quite copious on Correctness;[6] and there can be no doubt that he deserves his place in this chapter by the fashion in which he endeavours to utilise his favourite *pulchrum* and *honestum* in reference to Criticism, of which he is a declared and (as far as his inveterate affectation and mannerism will let him) an ingenious defender. The main *locus* for this is the Third Miscellany, and its central, or rather culminating, passage[7] occurs in the second chapter thereof. The Beautiful is the principle of Literature as well as of Virtue, the sense whereby it is apprehended is Good Taste; the manner of attaining this taste is by a gradual rejection of the excessive, the extravagant, the vulgar[8] A vague enough gospel, and not over well justified by the fruits of actual appreciation quoted above,[9] but not perhaps much vaguer, or possessing less justification, than most "metacritic."

Hume.

The position of Hume in regard to literary criticism has an interest which would be almost peculiar if it were not for something of a parallel in Voltaire. If the literary opinions of the author of the *Enquiry into Human Nature* stood alone they would be almost negligible;

[1] iii. 187 *sq.*
[2] iii. 173.
[3] i. 147 *sq.*
[4] i. 125.
[5] i. 224, &c.
[6] i. 35.
[7] i. 157 *sq.*
[8] i. 163 *sq.*
[9] The lively fashion in which Dr George Campbell in his *Philosophy of Rhetoric* (*v. sup.*, ii 470) beats up his lordship's quarters, on the score of precious and rococo style, is too much forgotten nowadays.

and if he had worked them into an elaborate treatise, like that of his clansman Kames, this would probably, if remembered at all, be remembered as a kind of "awful example." In their context and from their author, however, we cannot quite "regard and pass" Hume's critical observations as their intrinsic merit may seem to suggest that we should do: nay, in that context and from that author, they constitute a really valuable document in more than one relation.

Examples of his critical opinions.

It cannot be said that Hume does not invite notice as a critic; on the contrary, his title of "*Essays. Moral, Political,*[1] and Literary" seems positively to challenge it. Yet his actual literary utterances are rather few, and would be almost unimportant but for the considerations just put. He tells us that criticism is difficult;[2] he applies[2] (as Johnson did, though differently) Fontenelle's remark about "telling the hours"; he illustrates from Holland the difference of excellence in commerce and in literature.[3] He condemns—beforehand, and with the vigour and acuteness which we should expect from him—the idea of Taine, the attempt to account for the existence of a particular poet at a particular time and in a particular place.[4] He is shocked at the vanity, at the rudeness, and at the loose language of the ancients.[5] He approaches, as Tassoni[6] and Perrault[7] had approached, one of the grand *cruces* of the whole matter by making his Sceptic urge that "*beauty* and worth are merely of a relative nature, and consist of an agreeable sentiment produced by an object on a particular mind";[8] but he makes no detailed use or application whatever of this as regards literature. His Essay on *Simplicity and Refinement in Writing*[9] is psychology rather than criticism, and he uses his terms in a rather curious manner. At least, I myself find it difficult

[1] The literary essays occur almost wholly in the First part (published in 1742. my copy is the "new edition" of the *Essays and Treatises*, 2 vols: London and Edinburgh, 1764).

[2] *Essay on Delicacy of Taste*, pp 5, 7, ed cit

[3] *On the Rise and Progress of the Arts and Sciences*, ibid, p 125.

[4] Ibid, p. 126.

[5] P. 141 *sq.*

[6] V *Hist Crit*, II 327, 417.

[7] V *Hist Crit*, II 418.

[8] *The Sceptic*, p. 186.

[9] Pp. 217-222.

to draw up any definitions of these qualities which will make Pope the *ne plus ultra* of justifiable Refinement, and Lucretius that of Simplicity; Virgil and Racine the examples of the happy mean in both, Corneille and Congreve excessive in Refinement, and Sophocles and Terence excessive in Simplicity.[1] The whole is, however, a good rationalising of the "classical" principle; and is especially interesting as noticing, with slight reproof, a tendency to too great "affectation and conceit" both in France and England — faults for which *we* certainly should not indict the mid-eighteenth century. The Essay *On Tragedy* is more purely psychological still. And though *On the Standard of Taste* is less open to this objection, one cannot but see that it is Human Nature, and not Humane Letters, in which Hume is really interesting himself. The vulgar censure on the reference to Bunyan[2] is probably excessive; for it is at least not improbable that Hume had never read a line of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, and was merely using the tinker's name as a kind of type-counter. But this very acceptance of a conventional judgment — acceptance constantly repeated throughout the Essay—is almost startling in context with the *alleszermalmend* tendency of some of its principles. A critic who says[3] that "It is evident that none of the rules of composition are fixed by reasonings *a priori*," is in fact saying "Take away that bauble!" in regard to Neo-classicism altogether; and though in the very same page Hume repeats the orthodox cavils at Ariosto, while admitting his charm on the next, having thus set up the idol again, he proceeds once more to lop it of hands and feet and tumble it off its throne by saying that "if things are found to please, they cannot be faults; let the pleasure which they produce be ever so unexpected and unaccountable" The most dishevelled of Romantics, in the reddest of waistcoats, could say no more.

[1] "Refinement" seems here to mean "conceit," "elaborate diction" But the "simplicity" of Lucretius, in any sense in which the quality can be said to be pushed to excess by Sophocles, is very hard to grasp.

[2] P. 257 "Whoever would assert an equality of genius and elegance between Ogilby and Milton, or Bunyan and Addison, would be thought to defend no less an extravagance," &c.

[3] P. 258.

In his remarks upon the qualifications and functions of the critic, Hume's anthropological and psychological mastery is evident enough: but it is at least equally evident that his actual taste in literature was in no sense spontaneous, original, or energetic. In comparing him, say, with Johnson, it is not a little amusing to find his much greater acquiescence in the conventional and traditional judgments. Indeed, towards the end of his Essay[1] Hume anticipates a later expression[2] of a perennial attitude of mind by declaring, "However I may excuse the poet on account of the manners of his age, I never can relish the composition," and by complaining of the want of "humanity and decency so conspicuous" even sometimes in Homer and the Greek tragedies That David, of all persons, should fail to realise—he did *not* fail to perceive—that the humanity of Homer *was* human and the decency of Sophocles *was* decent, is indeed surprising.

His inconsistency.

Such things might at first sight not quite dispose one to regret that, as he himself remarks,[3] "the critics who have had some tincture of philosophy" have been "few," for certainly those who have had more tincture of philosophy than Hume himself have been far fewer. But, as is usually the case,[4] it is not the fault of philosophy at all. For some reason, natural disposition, or want of disposition, or even that necessity of clinging to *some* convention which has been remarked in Voltaire himself, evidently made Hume a mere "church-going bell"—pulled by the established vergers, and summoning the faithful to orthodox worship—in most of his literary utterances. Yet, as we have seen, he could not help turning quite a different tune at times, though he himself hardly knew it.

At the close of Burke's *Essay*[5] he expressly declines "to

[1] P. 274.

[2] "I must take pleasure in the thing represented before I can take pleasure in the representation," *v sup*, vol. i. p 381, *infra* on Peacock himself.

[3] *Essay on Tragedy*, p. 243.

[4] I may be excused for referring to the parabasis at the beginning of the chapter, all the more that the text above was written considerably earlier than that digression.

[5] *A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful, with an Introductory Discourse concerning Taste* 1756 I use the Bohn edition of the *Works*, vol. i. pp 49-181.

consider poetry as it regards the Sublime and Beautiful more at large"; but this "more" refers to the fact that his Fifth Part had been given to the Power of Words in exciting ideas of the kind. Most of what he says on this head is Lockian discussion of simple and compound, abstract and concrete, &c., and of the connection of words with images, as illustrated by the cases—so interesting in one instance to the English, and in the other to the whole, eighteenth century—of Blacklock the blind poet, and Saunderson the blind mathematician. There is, however, a not unacute contention[1] (against the small critics of that and other times) that the exact analytical composition necessary in a picture is not necessary in a poetic image But one may doubt whether this notion was not connected in his own mind with the heresy of the "streaks of the tulip."[2] It serves him, however, as a safeguard against the mere "imitation" theory: and it brings (or helps to bring) him very near to a just appreciation of the marvellous power of words as words. His remarks on the grandeur of the phrase "the Angel of the Lord" are as the shadow of a great rock in the weary glare of the *Aufklärung*, and so are those which follow on Milton's "universe of Death" Nor is it a trifling thing that he should have discovered the fact that "very polished languages are generally deficient in Strength."

Burke on the Sublime and Beautiful.

In the earlier part there are interesting touches, such as that of "*degrading*" the style of the *Æneid* into that of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, which, curiously enough, occurs actually in a defence of a taste for romances of chivalry[3] and of the sea-coast of Bohemia. Part I sect. xv, on the effects of tragedy, is almost purely ethical. In the parts—the best of the book—which deal directly with the title subjects (Parts II. and III.), an excellent demonstration[4] is made of the utter absurdity of that scheme of physical proportion which we formerly laughed at:[5] but the application, which might seem so

[1] *Op cit*, p. 175 *sq.* But Burke does not seem to have reached the larger and deeper views of Lessing on this subject.

[2] See vol. ii. p. 485 *sq.*

[3] Of this in turn Blair was perhaps thinking when he wrote the unlucky passage quoted above.

[4] Part III § iv.

[5] Vol. ii p. 417 *sq.*

tempting, to similar arbitrariness in judging of literature, is not made. Still more remarkable is the scantiness of the section on "The Beautiful in Sounds"[1] which should have brought the writer to our proper subject. Yet we can hardly regret that he says so little of it when we read that astonishing passage[2] in which the great Mr Burke has "observed" the affections of the body by Love, and has come to the conclusion that "the head reclines something on one side; the eyelids are more closed than usual, and the eyes roll gently with an inclination towards the object, the mouth is a little opened and the breath drawn slowly with now and then a low sigh, the whole body is composed, and the hands fall idly to the sides"—a sketch which I have always wished to have seen carried into line by the ingenious pencil of Charles Kirkpatrick Sharpe.[3] A companion portrait of the human frame under the influence of poetic afflatus, in writer or in reader, would indeed have been funny, but scarcely profitable. In fact, the most that can be said for Burke, as for the generality of these æsthetic writers, is that the speculations recommended and encouraged could not but break up the mere ice of Neo-classic rule-judgment. They almost always go directly to the effect, the result, the event, the pleasure, the trouble, the thrill. That way perhaps lies the possibility of new error: but that way certainly lies also the escape from old.

The Scottish æsthetic-empirics: Alison.

The trinitarian succession of Scottish æsthetic-empirics—Gerard, Alison, Jeffrey—could not with propriety be omitted here, but the same propriety would be violated if great space were given to them. They connect with, or at least touch, Burke and Smith on the one hand, Kames on the other: but they are, if rather

[1] III § xxv

[2] IV § xix. i 160, ed cit.

[3] In the mood in which he did that eccentric frontispiece to the Maitland Club *Sir Bevis of Hampton* (Edinburgh, 1838) at the *abgeschmackt*-ness of which the late excellent Prof. Kolbing shuddered when he edited *Arthur and Merlin* (Leipzig, 1890, p. ix). A picture of *La Belle Dame sans Merci* in the Royal Academy for 1902 seems to have been actually constructed on Mr Burke's suggestions. For a very witty and crushing jest of Schlegel's on *The Sublime and Beautiful*, *v. inf.*, Bk. VIII. ch 3.

more literary than the first two, very much less so than the third. All, in degrees modified perhaps chiefly by the natural tendency to "improve upon" predecessors, are associationists: and all display (though in somewhat decreasing measure as a result of the Time-spirit) that, sometimes amusing but in the end rather tedious, tendency to substitute for actual reasoning long chains of only plausibly connected propositions, varied by more or less ingenious substitutions of definition and equivalence, which is characteristic of the eighteenth century. Gerard, the earliest, is the least important:[1] and such notice of Jeffrey as is necessary will come best in connection with his other critical work. Alison, as the central and most important of the three, and as representing a prevailing party for a considerable time, may have some substantive notice here.

The Essay on Taste.

The *Essay on Taste*, which was originally published in 1790, and which was sped on its way by Jeffrey's Review (the original form of the reviewer's own essay) in 1811, had reached its sixth edition in 1825, and was still an authority, though it must by that time have begun to seem not a little old-fashioned, to readers of Coleridge and Hazlitt. It is rather unfortunately "dated" by its style, which—even at

[1] This was not the opinion of some person who has annotated the copy of the *Essay on Taste* (3rd ed., Edinburgh, 1780. the first appeared in 1758) which belongs to the University of Edinburgh, as "wonderfully profound." Other annotators, however, both of this and the *Essay on Genius* (1774)—for the University authorities of the past appear to have been somewhat indifferent to the fashion in which students used books—do not agree with him. In plain truth both pieces are rather trying examples of that "saying an infinite deal of nothing" which is so common in philosophical inquiries. "Facility in the conception of an object, if it be moderate, gives us pleasure" (*Taste*, p. 29); "The rudest rocks and mountains . . . acquire beauty when skilfully imitated in painting," "Where refinement is wanting, taste must be coarse and vulgar" (p 115). "Perfect criticism requires therefore" (p. 174) "the greatest philosophical acuteness united with the most exquisite perfection of taste." "The different works of men of genius sometimes differ very much in the degree of their perfection" (*Genius*, p 236). "Both in genius for the arts and in genius for science Imagination is assisted by Memory." Certainly "here be truths," but a continued course of reading things like them begins before long to inspire a considerable longing for falsehoods. Gerard, however, though habitually dull, is less absurd than Alison, whom he undoubtedly supplied with his principle of Association.

its original date something of a survival—is of the old "elegant" but distinctly artificial type of Blair: and, as has been hinted already, it abuses the eighteenth-century weakness for substituting a "combined and permuted" paraphrase of the proposition for an argument in favour of the fact. There is a very fair amount of force in its associationist considerations, though, as with all the devotees of the Association principle down to Mill, the turning round of the key is too often taken as equivalent to the opening of the lock. But its main faults, in more special connection with our subject, are two. The first is a constant confusion of Beauty or Sublimity with Interest. Alison exhausts himself in proving that the associations of youth, affection, &c, &c, cause *love* of the object—a truth no doubt too often neglected by the Neo-classic tribe, but accepted and expressed by men of intelligence, from the Lucretian *usus concinnat* down to Maginn's excellent "Don't let any fool tell you that you will get tired of your wife, you are much more likely to get quite unreasonably fond of her." But love and admiration, though closely connected, are not the same thing, and love and interest are still farther apart. Another confusion of Alison's, very germane indeed to our subject, is that he constantly mixes up the beauty of a thing with the beauty of the description of it.

Its confusions

The most interesting point, however, about Alison is his halting between two opinions as to certain Neo-classic idols. His individual criticisms of literature are constantly vitiated by faults of the old arbitrariness, especially as to what is "low." There is an astonishing lack of critical imagination in his objections to two Virgilian lines—

> "Adde tot egregias urbes, operumque laborem
> . . . . . .
> Septemque una sibi muro circumdedit arces"—

as "cold," "prosaic," "tame," "vulgar," and "spiritless." As if the image of the busy town after the country beauty were not the most poetic of contrasts in the first: and as if the City of the Seven Hills did not justly fire every Roman mind![1]

[1] Ed. cit. See a little farther for a similarly uncritical criticism on the *trahuntque siccas machinæ carinas* of Horace.

These, however, might be due to "the act of God,"—to sheer want of the quality on which the essay is written. A large part of the second volume exhibits the perils of that Castle Dangerous, the "half-way house," unmistakably and inexcusably. Alison is dealing with the interesting but ticklish subject of human beauty, and, like Burke, is justly sarcastic on the "four noses from chin to breast," "arm and a half from this to that" style of measurement. But he is himself still an abject victim of the type-theory. Beauty must suit the type; and its characteristics must have a fixed qualitative value—blue eyes being expressive of softness, dark complexions of melancholy, and so on. But here he is comparatively sober.[1] Later he indulges in the following: "The form of the Grecian nose is said to be originally beautiful, . . . and in many cases it is undoubtedly so. Apply, however, this beautiful form to the countenance of the Warrior, the Bandit, the Martyr, or to any which is meant to express deep or powerful passion, and the most vulgar spectator would be sensible of dissatisfaction, if not of disgust" Let us at least be thankful that Alison has freed us from being "the most vulgar spectator." Why the Warrior, why the Martyr, why the deep and powerful man, should not have a Grecian nose I fail to conceive: but the incompatibility of a Bandit and a straight profile lands me in profounder abysses of perplexity. The artillery and the blue horse must yield their pride of place: the reason in that instance is, if not exquisite, instantly discernible. But nothing in all Neoclassic arbitrariness from Scaliger to La Harpe seems to me to excel or equal the Censure of the Bandit with the Grecian Nose as a monstrous Bandit, a disgustful object, hateful not merely to the elect but to the very vulgar.[2]

and arbitrary absurdities.

Let us hear the conclusion of this whole æsthetic matter. Any man of rather more than ordinary intelligence—perhaps any man of ordinary intelligence merely—who has been properly educated from his youth up (as all men who show even

[1] Ibid.

[2] The mother of Gwendolen Harleth was wiser. "Oh! my dear, any nose," said she, "will do to be miserable with!" and if so, why not to be predatory? The only possible answer of course caps the absurdity. The conventional Bandit is an Italian; the conventional Italian has an aquiline nose. therefore, &c.

a promise of ordinary intelligence should have been) in ancient and modern philosophy, who knows his Plato, his Aristotle, and his neo-Platonists, his Scholastics, his moderns from Bacon and Hobbes and Descartes downwards, can, if he has the will and the opportunity, compose a theory of æsthetics. That is to say, he can, out of the natural appetite towards poetry and literary delight which exists in all but the lowest and most unhappy souls, and out of that knowledge of concrete examples thereof which exists more or less in all, excogitate general principles and hypotheses, and connect them with immediate and particular examples, to such an extent as the Upper Powers permit or the Lower Powers prompt. If he has at the same time—a happy case of which the most eminent example up to the present time is Coleridge—a concurrent impulse towards actual "literary criticism," towards the actual judgment of the actual concrete examples themselves, this theory *may* more or less help him, need at any rate do him no great harm *Mais cela n'est pas nécessaire*, as was said of another matter, and there are cases, many of them in fact, where the attention to such things has done harm.

An interim conclusion on the æsthetic matter.

For after all, once more Beyle, as he not seldom did, reached the *flammantia mœnia mundi* when he said, in the character of his "Tourist" *eidolon*, "En fait de beau chaque homme a sa demi-aune." Truth is not what each man troweth: but beauty is to each man what to him seems beautiful. You may better the seeming:—the fact is at the bottom of all that is valuable in the endlessly not-valuable chatter about education generally, and it excuses, to a certain extent, the regularity of Classicism, the selfish "culture" of the Goethean ideal, the extravagances of the ultra-Romantics. But yet

"A God, a God, the severance ruled,"

and you cannot bridge the gulfs that a God has set by any philosophastering theory.[1]

[1] Had all æstheticians approached their subject in the spirit of our English historian of it, much of what I have said would be quite inapplicable "The æsthetic theorist," says Mr Bosanquet in his *Prefaces* (*History*

Yet although all this is, according to my opinion at least, absolutely true; although literary criticism has not much more to do with æsthetics than architecture has to do with physics and geology—than the art of the wine-taster or the tea-taster has to do with the study of the papillæ of the tongue and the theory of the nervous system generally, or with the botany of the vine and the geology of the vineyard; although, finally, as we have seen and shall see, the most painful and earnest attention to the science of the beautiful appears to be compatible with an almost total indifference to concrete judgment and enjoyment of the beautiful itself, and even with egregious misjudgment and failure to enjoy,—yet we cannot extrude this other *scienza nuova* altogether, if only because of the almost inextricable entanglement of its results with those of criticism proper. And it is more specially to be dealt with in this particular place because, beyond all question, the direction of study to these abstract inquiries did contribute to the freeing of criticism from the shackles in which it had lain so long. Any new way of attention to any subject is likely to lead to the detection of errors in the old: and as the errors of Neo-classicism were peculiarly arbitrary and irrational, the "high *priori* way" did certainly give an opportunity of discovering them from its superior height—the most superfluous groping among preliminaries and foundations gave a chance of unearthing the roots of falsehood. As in the old comparison Saul found a kingdom when he sought for his father's asses,

of Æsthetic: London, 1892), "desires to understand the artist, not in order to interfere with the latter, but in order to satisfy an intellectual interest of his own." With such an attitude I have no quarrel: nor, I should think, need those who take it have any quarrel with mine. I may add that from this point onwards I shall take the liberty of a perpetual silent reference to Mr Bosanquet's treatment of subjects and parts of subjects which seem to me to lie outside of my own plan. I purposely abstained from reading his book until two-thirds of my own were published, and more than two-thirds more of the remainder were written. And I have been amused and pleased, though not surprised, to find that if we had planned the two books together from the first, we could hardly have covered the ground more completely and with less confusion. I cannot, however, help observing that Mr Bosanquet, like almost all æstheticians I know, except Signor Croce, though he does not neglect literature, at least devotes most attention to the plastic arts. This is perhaps a little significant.

so it was at least possible for a man, while he was considering æsthetic abstractions and theories, to have his eyes suddenly opened to the fact that Milton was not merely a fanatic and fantastic, with a tendency to the disgusting, and that Shakespeare was something more than an "abominable" mountebank.

CHAPTER VI.

THE STUDY OF LITERATURE.

BEARINGS OF THE CHAPTER—ENGLAND—THE STUDY OF SHAKESPEARE—OF SPENSER—CHAUCER—ELIZABETHAN MINORS—MIDDLE AND OLD ENGLISH—INFLUENCE OF ENGLISH ABROAD—THE STUDY OF FRENCH AT HOME AND ABROAD—OF ITALIAN—ESPECIALLY DANTE—OF SPANISH—ESPECIALLY CERVANTES—OF GERMAN.

Bearings of the chapter.

BOTH in the last volume and in the present Book, repeated notice has been taken of the importance, as it seems to the present writer, of the widened and catholicised study of literature during the earlier eighteenth century. Not a few of the persons who have had places of more or less honour in the foregoing chapters—the twin Swiss schoolmasters, Lessing and the Germans almost without exception, almost all the English precursors, and some, though fewer, in other countries—have owed part of their position here to their share in this literary "Voyage round the World." Some further exposition and criticism of the way in which the exploration itself worked may be looked for in the following Interchapter. Here we may give a little space to some such explorers who, though scarcely worthy of a place among critics proper, did good work in this direction, and to the main lines and subjects on and in regard to which the explorations were conducted.

England.

The most interesting and directly important of the great literary countries in regard to this matter is undoubtedly England. Curiosity in Germany was much more widespread and much more industrious;[1] but in

[1] The Germans, I believe, have definitely ticketed these explorers as "The Antiquariana."

the first place the notable German explorers have already had their turn, and in the second, the width too often with them turned to indiscriminateness, and the industry to an intelligent hodman's work. France, by providing such pioneers as Sainte Palaye, and by starting the great *Histoire Littéraire*, contributed immensely to the stimulation and equipment of foreign students; but it was some time before this work reacted directly on her own literature. There was less done in Spain, where for a time the adherents of the older literature were, like their ancestors in the Asturias, but a handful driven to bay, instead of as in other countries an insurrectionary multitude gaining more and more ground; and the traditional Dante-and-Petrarch worship of Italy did at this time little real good. Both directly and indirectly — at home and, chiefly in the Shakespeare direction, abroad — England here occupies the chief place.

Her exercises on the subject may be advantageously considered under certain subject-headings: Shakespeare himself, Spenser, Chaucer, minor writers between the Renaissance and the Restoration, Middle English, and Anglo-Saxon. It is not necessary here to bestow special attention on Milton-study,[1] despite its immense influence both at home and abroad, because it was continuous. From Dryden to the present day, Milton has always been with the guests at any feast of English literature, sometimes, it is true, as a sort of skeleton, but much more often as one whom all delight more or less intelligently to honour.

The study of Shakespeare.

It is not mere fancy which has discerned a certain turning-point of importance to literature, in the fact that between the Fourth Folio and the first critical or quasi-critical edition (Rowe's) there intervened (1685-1709) not quite a full quarter of a century. The successive editions of Rowe himself, Pope, Theobald, Hanmer, Warburton, and Johnson not merely have a certain critical interest in themselves, not merely illustrate the progress of criticism in a useful

[1] For this see in the last vol. under Dryden, Addison, Johnson, L Racine, Voltaire, La Harpe, &c. · in the present the Zürichers and Chateaubriand.

manner, but bring before us, as nothing else could do, the way in which Shakespeare himself was kept before the minds of the three generations of the eighteenth century.[1]

Spenser.

Spenser's fortunes in this way coincided with Shakespeare's to a degree which cannot be quite accidental. The third folio of the *Faerie Queene* appeared in 1679, and the first critical edition—that of Hughes—in 1715. But the study-stage—not the theatrical, considering a list of adapters which runs from Ravenscroft through Shadwell up to Dryden—had spared Shakespeare the attentions of the Person of Quality.[2] Before Hughes, Spenser had received those of Prior, a person of quality[3] much greater; but Prior had spoilt the stanza, and had travestied the diction almost worse than he did in the case of the *Nut Browne Maid*. He would not really count in this story at all if his real services in other respects did not show that it was a case of "time and the hour," and if his remarks in the Preface to *Solomon* did not show, very remarkably, a genuine admiration of Spenser himself, and a strong dissatisfaction with the end-stopped couplet And so of Hughes' edition: yet perhaps the import of the saying may escape careless readers At first one wonders why a man like Prior should have taken the trouble even to spoil the Spenserian stanza, why an editor like Hughes should have taken the much greater trouble to edit a voluminous poet whose most ordinary words he had to explain, whose stanza he also thought "defective," and whose general composition he denounced as "monstrous" and so forth, why all the imitators[4] should have imitated what most of them at any rate seem to have regarded as chiefly parodiable. Yet one soon perceives that

[1] I may once more refer the reader to Mr Nichol Smith's valuable edition of the Prefaces to these Mrs Montagu's famous *Essay on the Writings and Genius of Shakespeare* (London, 1769, and often reprinted) may expect a separate mention. It is well intentioned but rather feeble, much of it being pure *tu quoque* to Voltaire, and sometimes extremely unjust on Corneille, and even on Æschylus. It is not quite ignorant; but once more *non tali auxilio!*

[2] See vol ii. p. 416

[3] See the *Ode to the Queen*, 1706. Prior inserts a tenth line, and makes the seamless coat an awkwardly cobbled thing of quatrain, quatrain, couplet

[4] See vol. ii. p. 481.

mens agitat molem, that the lump was leavened, that, as in one case at any rate (Shenstone's), is known to be the fact, "those who came to scoff remained to pray." They were dying of thirst, though they did not know how near the fountain was; and though they at first mistook that fountain and even profaned it, the healing virtues conquered them at last.

Chaucer.

The same coincidence does not fail wholly even with Chaucer, of whom an edition, little altered from Speght's, appeared in 1687, while the very ill-inspired but still intentionally critical attempt of Urry came out in 1721, Dryden's wonderful modernisings again coming between. But Chaucer was to wait for Tyrwhitt, more than fifty years later (1775) before he met any full scholarly recognition, and this was natural enough. There had been no real change in English prosody since Spenser, any more than since Shakespeare: and the archaism of the former was after all an archaism not less deliberate, though much better guided by genius, than that of any of his eighteenth-century imitators. To the appreciation of Chaucer's prosody one simple but, till turned, almost insuperable obstacle existed in the valued final *e*, while his language, his subjects, and his thought were separated from modern readers by the great gulf of the Renaissance,—a gulf indeed not difficult to bridge after a fashion, but then unbridged.

Elizabethan manors.

Invaluable as the study of Shakespeare was in itself, its value was not limited to this direct gain. Partly to illustrate him and partly from a natural extension, his fellow-dramatists were resorted to,—indeed Ben Jonson and Beaumont and Fletcher had never lost hold of the acting stage. A few of the greatest, Marlowe especially, were somewhat long in coming to their own; but with others it was different, and the publication of Dodsley's *Old Plays*, at so early a date as 1744, shows with what force the tide was setting in this direction. Reference was made in the last chapter to the very remarkable *Muses' Library* which Oldys began even earlier, though he did not find encouragement enough to go on with

it,[1] and the more famous adventure of the *Reliques* was followed up in the latter part of the century by divers explorations of the treasures of the past, notably that of the short-lived Headley.[2]

Middle and Old English.

Nay, about the close of the seventeenth century and the beginning of the eighteenth it looked as if early Middle English and Anglo-Saxon themselves might come in for a share of attention, as a result of the labours of such men as Hearne and Hickes. But the Jacobite antiquary was interested mainly in the historical side of literature, and Hickes, Wanley, and the rest were a little before their time, though that time itself was sure to come. And before it came the all but certain forgeries of Macpherson, the certain forgeries of Chatterton, the sham ballads with which, after Percy's example, Evans and others loaded their productions of the true,

[1] To this context perhaps best belongs Thomas Hayward's *British Muse*,* an anthology on the lines of Poole and Bysshe, published in 1788 and dedicated to Lady Mary Wortley Montagu. The book has a preface of some length (which is said to be, like the dedication, the work not of the compiler but of Oldys† himself), criticising its predecessors (including Gildon) rather severely, and showing knowledge of English criticism generally; but the point of chief interest about the book is its own interest in, and extensive draughts from, Elizabethan Drama. Not merely "the divine and incomparable" Shakespeare, not merely the still popular sock and buskin of Ben Jonson and of Beaumont and Fletcher, but almost all the others, from Massinger and Middleton down to Goffe and Gomersall, receive attention, although, as he tells us, they were so hard to get that you had to give between three or four pounds for a volume containing some ten plays of Massinger. This is noteworthy, but that his zeal was not according to full knowledge is curiously shown by the contempt with which he speaks, not merely of Bodenham's *Belvedere*, but of Allot's *England's Parnassus*, alleging "the little merit of the obsolete poets from which they were extracted." Now it should be unnecessary to say that Allot drew, almost as largely as his early date permitted him, on "the divine and incomparable" himself, on Spenser, and on others only inferior to these. But this carping at forerunners is too common. If Oldys could write thus, what must have been the ignorance of others?

T. Hayward.

[2] Even before, at, or about the date of the *Reliques* themselves, a good deal was being done—*e.g.*, Capell's well-known *Prolusions*, which gave as early as 1760 the real *Nut-Browne Maid*, Sackville's *Induction*, *Edward III*, and Davies' *Nosce Teipsum*, and the *Miscellaneous Pieces* of 1764, supplying Marston's *Poems* and *The Troublesome Reign of King John*.

* 3 vols., London.

† It thus connects the book with *The Muses' Library*.

all worked (bad as some of the latter might be) for good in the direction of exciting and whetting the literary appetite for things not according to the Gospel of Neo-Classicism.

Influence of English abroad.

The study of English literature abroad was somewhat limited in range, but it had an almost incalculable effect. That German criticism would have been made anyhow is certain enough; but in actual fact it would be impossible to find any actual influences in its making more powerful than the influence of Milton upon the Zurichers, and the influence of Shakespeare upon Lessing, and all men of letters after him. These two great (if not exactly twin) brethren, from the date of their introduction by that strongest of ushers Voltaire, exercised, as we have seen, in France an influence constantly (at any rate in the case of Shakespeare) increasing, though rejected again and again with horror and contumely by those who seemed to be pillars. Of older English writers few except Bacon and Locke had much influence abroad—and what they exercised was not literary. But the writers of the eighteenth century were extremely powerful. Callières very nearly lived to see the time when France herself, forgetting all about the trinity of *nations polies*, respectfully read, and even sedulously imitated, the people to whom he had thoughtfully given permission to write in Latin in order that they might have some literary chance Nor was this a mere passing *engouement:* nor was it limited to the great Queen Anne men, Addison, Pope, and Swift, who were themselves (at least the first two) in many ways germane to French taste, and had borrowed much from France. Thomson, an innovator and sower of revolution in his own country, was warmly welcomed in France: about Richardson the whole Continent went mad. Sterne excited the strongest interest both in France and Germany. The odd French taste for the lugubrious sententiousness of Young was rather later, and so was the well-known and slightly ludicrous adoration of *Ossian.* But throughout the century, until the French Revolution, English literature was not merely the subject of respectful study and imitation in Germany but of quite lively interest in France, of an interest almost startling when it is contrasted

with the supercilious blindness (for a man who cannot use his eyes may use his eyebrows) of the age of Boileau.[1]

The study of French at home and abroad.

For the moment—and the fact connects itself sharply and decisively with the delay of their critical reconstruction—the French busied themselves less, at least in appearance, with the exhumation and investigation of their own literature. Nowhere was more solid work really done; nowhere were the foundations of mediæval study, in particular, laid once for all with such admirable thoroughness But for a long time the workers cast their bread upon the waters: and the waters in turn cast it mostly upon alien shores. The mighty industry of Ducange — in method and quality as well as time of the seventeenth century, in effect scarcely to bear full fruit till the nineteenth —had been entirely included within the seventeenth itself. That of Sainte-Palaye, which has been alluded to, dates from the third quarter of the eighteenth. The magnificent *Histoire Littéraire de La France*, not finished yet, but unresting as unhasting, was begun as early as 1733; of the Frères Parfait we have also spoken; Barbazan's invaluable collection of the *Fabliaux* appeared in 1756. But, except it may be here and there on a man of genius like Fontenelle, those publications had no general literary effect. How little they had may perhaps best be gauged by the fact that the travestied and rococo *Corps d'Extraits de Romans* of the Comte de Tressan, published long after all of them, *had* such an effect, and did rather more harm than good. Still, the two giants of the French Renaissance, earlier and later, Rabelais and Montaigne, always kept a hold, and did for France something, though less, of the good which the great quartette — Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare, and Milton — did for England. Ronsard, as we have seen, kept, in the worst of times, the respect and the appreciation of men so different in date and character as Fénelon and Marmontel: while, if the celebrated "worship of Lubricity" had something to do with the resuscitation of others by Prosper Marchand, &c., let this be

[1] The most remarkable recent authority on this matter is of course M. Texte, who has appeared already and will appear again in his own place.

counted for righteousness even to the slippery goddess who has so little!

With the eternal exception of Germany, French literature during this time was not much studied abroad in its older divisions, and had not much assistance to offer, in the direction of which we are now speaking, in its more modern. When a man like Sterne touched the former, it was probably for the reasons so handsomely palliated in the last sentence of the last paragraph: and few others touched it at all. The influence of the modern literature of France, exaggerated as it may have been, had yet been considerable enough to deprive it of all value as an *alterative* save in the cases of exceptional and outlying writers like La Fontaine and Fontenelle, and to some extant Marivaux, the last of whom had himself already derived much from England, if he was to give much back to her.[1] In other parts of Europe this influence was no doubt still very great: it conditioned, as we have seen, the powerful action of Lessing, both in the way of attraction and in that of repulsion. But of the persons who attracted and inspired Lessing, Diderot, however unlike Bentham, had something of the Benthamic fate of requiring transportation and transformation before he could be really operative; and the gospel of Marmontel was altogether too inconsistent and transitional to be very effective. Rousseau, of course, to mention him yet once more, is epoch-making enough in himself. But Rousseau is, on the purely literary side, rather an immense propelling force than an origin: and it is not to be forgotten, though it often has been, that the *Confessions* and the *Rêveries*, the most important of his works as literature, did not appear till after his death. As for *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, it is a question whether it is nearly so much a literary origin as *Manon Lescaut*, its elder by a generation.

The effect of Italian literature in Italy was, it has been said, not at the time great; the contrast between the study of Shakespeare at this time in England and the study of Dante

[1] I hold (though as probable rather than certain) that Richardson and Fielding knew *Marianne* and *Le Paysan Parvenu*, but Marivaux frankly wrote *Le Spectateur Français*.

in Italy has, I have no doubt, defrayed the expense of many a literary-historical comparison.[1] But Italian—though it had lost something of the prerogative importance which it had once, and justly, and for a long time held—retained a great, and, as regards the products of its best time, a wholly salutary, influence over the rest of Europe. That rather treacherous turning of French critics on their Italian masters, which Hurd so acutely noticed, had, like other things evil, its soul of goodness in it. Ariosto, and Tasso, and Petrarch, though not Dante, had entered so thoroughly into the *corpus* of European literature that they could not be driven out by any scoffs of Boileau or scorns of Voltaire. And when people began to examine them for themselves there was, with the different set of tide and wind which we have seen throughout this book, a very good chance, almost a certainty, of a healthy voyage back. There was all the more chance of this that the strong Renaissance admixture in the authors of the *Orlando* and the *Gerusalemme*, the at least not strongly mediæval character of Petrarch, made them more suitable for eighteenth-century consumption than the pure milk of the mediæval word. The argument which Hurd himself put about Spenser and Milton—"*These* were no barbarians, *these* were men of real learning, of polished and statesman-like society; and *they* liked romance"—was applicable with even greater force to the Captain of the Garfagnana and the friend of Leo X., to the familiar (if also victim) of princes and princesses at Ferrara, and the Laureate elect of Rome.

Of Italian.

There can indeed be no doubt that throughout the eighteenth century it was from these two poets that men drew most of their ideas of Romance itself. Dryden, on the eve of that century, betrays the fact in his own case by his designation of our own Guenevere under her Italian name of Ginevra. Scott, at its close and far beyond it, wide as was his knowledge of the true and real mediæval romance itself, is still haunted by the Italians. While as for Petrarch (to put out of question the fact that he is of all time, if not

Especially Dante.

[1] Vol. ii. p. 545. Once more Tiraboschi must be reserved as a great early example of the historical treatment of a national literature.

of the highest of all time), he means the sonnet; and the sonnet is anti-classical from centre to circumference. Even if Dante was somewhat neglected, the fact of Gray's attraction to Nicholls at their first meeting, because he found that the young man read that Florentine, is evidence for exception as well as for rule. At any rate, a man who studied Italian, whether he were Englishman or Frenchman, German or from Mesopotamy, might always, and must certainly not seldom, be brought into contact with the *Commedia*. And when that contact is established in a fitting soul, "A drear and dying sound, Affrights the Flamens" of Neo-classicism "at their service quaint." You read no more in Boileau that day, nor any day thereafter by preference and as a disciple.

Of Spanish.

So also in Spain the home study of the home literature—though as above noted its results were not by any means nugatory—was far inferior to the effect of the study of that literature abroad. The general and half-blind impulse towards collection and reproduction, however, was especially important,—hardly even in England, putting the works of the very greatest out of the question, did anything appear more precious than the *Poesias Anteriores:* and Spain had, in three different divisions and directions, inestimable and inexhaustible treasures for the foreign student, especially for the foreign student who felt the gall and the cramp of the classical strait-waistcoat and wished to cast it off. The first of these in order of time was the ballad matter provided by the *Cancioneros*. The second was the Spanish drama, and the reflections which it had drawn from native poets and critics. The third was the work of Cervantes and the picaresque novel.

The first of these were valuable not only as all the ballads of Europe were valuable, not merely because of the diametrical opposition of their tone and spirit to that of the "classical" poetry, but because of their remarkable *differentia* as ballads themselves. In the first place, they[1] are the only *Southern* ballads available,—for Italy, though not infertile in folk-song, does not appear to have had any ballads proper, and

[1] I include of course the Galician and Portuguese ballad-books.

those of Modern Greece are of very doubtful earliness, and were not known till long afterwards. In the second place, the part-Oriental part-African admixture, which makes *cosas de España* so interesting and so powerful, appears in them to the full. And, lastly, there is a certain *largeur* about them—a national quality, whether excited by conflict with Charlemagne or by conflict with the Moors, which is lacking in all other ballads known at least to the present writer. Even the split between North and South Britain is a case of mere family misunderstanding, compared with the secular stand of the great Peninsula, at bay against Christian invaders from the North and Paynim foes in the household. And it is not unnoteworthy that, with the exception of *Chevy Chase*, not one of the very best of ballads in English is inspired by the quarrel of Englishman and Scot.

The influence of the Spanish drama and of the more or less conscious fight waged in Spain itself over its principles had also, especially in Germany, great play, and should have had greater. It reached a climax no doubt in the somewhat capricious and ill-informed, the certainly intemperate, will-worship of the Schlegels, which we have not yet discussed: but as we have seen, Lessing was aware of it, and there is no doubt that it had great effect on at least the "Sturmers-and-Drangers." It ought, we say, probably to have had much more influence than it actually exercised; but with the decay of Spanish political power the study of the Spanish language had been steadily going out in Europe, never, as yet, to revive. The valuable and interesting Spanish critical discussions on the subject were almost unknown; and the theatre itself was never thoroughly studied, till the investigations of Schack, a German, and Ticknor, an American, in the middle of the nineteenth century. Yet it is not necessary to spend many words on showing the immense germinal and alterative power which this study had, and in particular the value which it possessed as seconding the influence of the English drama, with just sufficient difference to make the seconding a real reinforcement, and not a mere repetition of attack by the same troops. The obsession of the sealed pattern, the illusion of the undeviating

rule, might in a Frenchman (for strongest instance) survive the reading, or at least the hearing, of the "barbarian" Shakespeare: but it must have been seriously shaken by such writers of a "polished" nation as Tirso, and Lope, and Calderon, not to speak of minors like Alarcon and Rojas.

Especially Cervantes.

Yet there can be no doubt that the greatest debt owed by the eighteenth century, at least, to Spanish goes to the credit of one great man in the main, and of a compartment of literature to which that great man, though transcending it, belonged, in the second — in other words, to Cervantes and the Spanish novel. The "picaresque" variety of this novel had early affected both France and England: and it had virtue enough in it to affect successive generations, directly or indirectly, from that of Scarron and Head, through that of Le Sage, down to that of Smollett. Abundance of things may be said against the picaresque style: but of one credit nobody can possibly deprive it—that it was the first kind in Europe to combine the ordinary life of the *fabliau* (and in part the *novela*) with the length, the variety, the quasi-epic conformation and powers of the Romance. And while all the best of this quality appeared in *Don Quixote* itself, that mighty book left out almost all the bad and weak concomitants, and added merit and powers of which the *Lazarillos de Tormes* and the *Marcos de Obregon* had not a vestige. As we have seen, Cervantes was something of a Neo-classic himself in critical principles, and something (though not so much as has been thought) of an enemy of Romance in purpose. But his performance was fatal to his teaching in more ways than one or two: while he certainly gave Fielding the idea of the modern novel even as a matter of theory and schedule.

Of German.

If we say less here of Germany it is not because there is less to say, but because, in the first place, much of it has been and much more will be said, elsewhere; and because, in the second, we should have to give an abstract of the German literary history of the century. It was not till very late—till almost the eve of the nineteenth—that German literature had much effect abroad, or indeed that there was much German literature to have any effect. But quite early

the Germans began to study their own older writers; and early and late they, as we have seen, simply flung themselves on the literature of other countries. It is indeed open to any one to contend that from the first (some century and a half ago) to the present day they overdosed themselves with this as with other studies,—that, taking to it before Germany had really acquired a continuous and important literary idiosyncrasy of its own, they have always lacked the *pou sto*, and have wasted their labour in consequence. But this is another and for us an irrelevant question. That they form no exception to the rule illustrated in this chapter, and that they not only took the medicine in huge doses themselves, but prepared it and handed it on to others, as if they wished to be the literary apothecaries of Europe, this is undeniable.[1]

[1] It was explained, and in manner I think not open to any but wilful misunderstanding, that among the branches of so-called, and not unjustly so-called, Criticism which were excluded from this History was the greater part of merely commentatorial "scholarship" —the editing and interpretative part of the scholarship of the Renaissance and the succeeding centuries. We were able, now and then, to admit critics of the class when, like Politian in part of his work earlier, or Bentley later, they came actually within our range. But classical scholarship has lain more and more out of our path as the eighteenth century proceeded, and it was not till far into the nineteenth, and then but for a moment, that the two converged The greatest results of this convergence in England were given by Professors Sellar and Nettleship, the former in his admirable series of works on the Roman Poets, the latter in the essays referred to above, and by Mr Pater in his dealing with Plato and other Greeks. Professor Munro, the greatest light of the younger University, touched literature rather less than pure scholarship, and may perhaps be thought to have been least infallible when he touched the former nearest. I had fully perceived the necessity for this exclusion before the appearance of Dr Sandys' admirable *History of Classical Scholarship*, but that book, though it has not, at the time I write, reached our present period or even that of our last volume, will serve to do what I cannot do as much better than I could have done it on this count as Mr Bosanquet's on the other.

INTERCHAPTER VII.

It becomes somewhat more difficult to twist and twine the threads of our Interchapters as we come to the complexity and diversity of modern times; but, in the same proportion, each web or yarn becomes more important as link and guide-rope of the whole History.

The present period—or stage, for it has more logical than chronological unity—may seem at first sight extremely confused, composed as it is of constituents separated from their countrymen, their contemporaries, and in some cases even their fellow-workers, whom we have dealt with formerly. But these constituents have in reality the greatest of all unities, a unity (whether conscious or unconscious does not matter a jot) of *purpose*.

> "One port, methought, alike they sought,
> One purpose hold where'er they fare."

The port was the Fair Haven of Romanticism, and the purpose was to distinguish "that which is established because it is right, from that which is right because it is established," as Johnson himself formulates it. And now, of course, the horse-leeches of definition will ask me to define Romanticism, and now, also, I shall do nothing of the sort, and borrow from the unimpeachable authority of M. Brunetière[1] my reason for not doing it. What most of the personages of this book sought or helped (sometimes without at all seeking) to establish is Romanticism, and Romanticism is what they sought or helped to establish.

[1] *Les définitions ne se posent pas à priori, si ce n'est peut-être en mathématique. En histoire, c'est de l'étude patiente de la réalité qu'elles se dégagent insensiblement.* Compare Mme. de Staël, *sup.*, p. 108.

In negative and by contrast, as usual, there is, however, no difficulty in arriving at a sort of jury-definition, which is perhaps a good deal better to work to port with than the aspiring but rather untrustworthy mast-poles of "Renascence of Wonder" and the like. We have indeed seen, throughout the last volume, that the curse and the mischief of Neo-classicism lay in the tyranny of the Definition itself. You had no sooner satisfied yourself that Poetry was such and such a thing, that it consisted of such and such narrowly delimited Kinds, that its stamped instruments and sealed patterns were this and that, than you proceeded to apply these propositions inquisitorially, excommunicating or executing delinquents and nonconformists. The principal uniformity amid the wide diversities of the new criticism was that, without any direct concert, without any formulated anti-creed, they all tended to remove the bolts and the bars, to antiquate the stipulations, to make the great question of criticism not "What have you proposed to do, and how have you proposed to do it?" but "What is this that you have *done?* and is it good?" But they never, in any instance, formulated the abolition of restrictions, as, for instance, we shall find Hugo doing in the Preface to the *Orientales.* They had almost invariably some special mediate or immediate object in view—in Hurd's case to get rid of the disqualification of the "Gothic," in Lessing's to get rid of the domination of French. Even Diderot's Impressionism—the most important and pregnant phenomenon of the whole—is a matter of practice, not of theory, of infinite local explorations, not of a Pisgah-sight. The whole tendency, as we have indicated in the sub-title of the book, is rather to dissolve what exists than to put anything definite in its place.

The survey of their actual accomplishment,[1] therefore, may

[1] It may be barely necessary to remind the reader once more that the *period* of this accomplishment by no means synchronises in all cases. The "Dissolving of Neo-Classicism" takes in Germany scarcely more than fifty years at farthest—from 1725 to 1775 or thereabouts; in England about another quarter of a century, or till 1800 in round numbers; in France a good century—from 1730 to 1830. In Italy the solitary figure of Vico anticipates even the earliest of these dates, and originates vast alterations in what calls itself criticism, but they do not take effect for the time. The general state, both here and in Spain, is stationary.

be best executed, for the purpose of corresponding with and continuing those formerly given, by first considering more generally the main new critical engines—Æsthetic inquiry and the Study of Literature—which have formed in detail the subjects of the last two chapters; then by summarising, as usual, the most significant performances of national groups and individuals, and, lastly, by indicating, as best may be done, the point to which the stage has brought us.

The advantages and importance of the wider and more abstract æsthetic inquiry in reconstituting or reorganising criticism should be pretty obvious. The worst fault of the later Neo-classicism, in its corruption, was that it tended to become wholly *irrational*—a mere reference to classification; that even its appeal to Nature, and to Reason herself, had got utterly out of *rapport* with real nature, with true reason. Now the construction of a general theory of the Sublime and Beautiful—however partial or however chimerical the inquiry into the appeals of different arts and different divisions of the same art—could not but tend—however indirectly, however much in some cases against the very will of the inquiry—to unsettle, and sometimes to shatter, the conventional hypotheses and theories. "Why?" and "Why not?" must force themselves constantly on such an inquirer, and, as has been said more than once or twice, "Why?" and "Why not?" are battering-rams, predestined, automatic, irresistible, to conventional judgments of all sorts. It was, indeed, not impossible for a person sufficiently stupid, or sufficiently ingenious, to construct an æsthetic which, somehow or other, should fit in with the accepted ideas.[1] But what stupid people do does not count for much in the long-run, despite the proverbial invincibility of stupidity for the time. And the ingenious person, unless his perverseness were truly diabolical, must sometimes hit upon truth which would explode all his convention

At the same time Æsthetics have proved, and might by an observer of sufficient detachment have from the first been seen to be likely to prove, a very dangerous auxiliary

[1] Père André probably seemed, to himself or others, to do this.

to Criticism, if not even a Stork for a Log. In the first place, there was the danger—present in fact from the first, impending from before the very first—of fresh arbitrary rules being set up in the place of the old ones,—of the old infinitely mischievous question, "Does the poet please *as he ought to please?*" being juggled into the place of the simple "Does he please?" No form of abstract inquiry can escape this danger: and that is why, save in matter of the pure intellect, abstract inquiries should always be suspected. Form your theory and conduct your observations of the æsthetic sense, of "the Beautiful," of the mediate axioms of this or that literary kind, as carefully, as impartially, with as wide a range and view, as you may—these perilous generalisations and abstractions will always bring you sooner or later into contact and conflict with the royal irresponsibility, or (as some may hold it) the anarchic individualism of the human senses, and tastes, and artistic powers. You will hamper your feet with a network of axioms and definitions; you will burden your back with a whole Italian-image-man's rack-full of types. It is somewhat improbable that you will be a Lessing: yet even a Lessing loses himself in inquiries as to what "*a* jealous woman's" revenge will be, what "*an* ambitious woman's revenge will be." Shakespeare (for that Shakespeare had very much to do with the whole portraiture of Margaret, from the first gracious and playful scene with Suffolk to the sombre and splendid triumph over Elizabeth Woodville, I at least have no doubt) has shown us in Margaret of Anjou the revenge and the other passions of a woman who is at once ambitious, jealous, the victim perhaps not of actually adulterous but certainly of rather extra-conjugal love, yet loyal to her husband's position if not to himself, a tigress to her enemies and to her young alike, a rival in varying circumstance, an almost dispassionate sibyl reflecting and foretelling the woes of her rivals. You can no more disentangle all these threads, and get the passion of this type and the passion of that separate, than Psyche could have done her task without the ants. Yet, early and crude as is the work, it is all right, it is all there. And Æsthetics are not the ants.

A much more dangerous result of addiction to the æsthetic side of criticism, mainly or exclusively, is that you get by degrees away from the literary matter altogether, and resign yourself to the separation with all the philosophy of Marryat's captain, when he gave orders first that he should be called when the last ship of his convoy was out of sight behind, and then when the first hove in sight again. I remember once hearing a lecture, and a very interesting one, on Hegel's idea of tragedy as illustrated in Shakespeare, delivered by a most admirable scholar, then professor in one great University, and now professor in one than which there is no greater. It was very ingenious, very stimulating, but I remember thinking at the close of it that it might have been delivered just as well if we were in such an infinite state of misery as to have not a line of an actual tragedy of Shakespeare, but only abstracts and arguments, as with some of the ancients. In the attraction to the æsthetic, the moral, the dramaturgic side and the like, an absolute break of contact with the literary may come about We have seen that this is the case even with Lessing, and it is constantly the case with German critics and with their English followers. The "word," the "expression," sinks out of the plane of the critic's purview. His *Æsthetics* become Anæsthetics, and benumb his literary senses and sensibilities.

Recurrence to one example of this may suffice. When I see Lessing called "the King of Criticism" I always think, great as is my opinion of him, of that judgment of *Soliman the Second*. Here is a thing which, on its own lines and specification, is, and is practically allowed by the critic to be, a masterpiece. But he will not accept those lines. It is a satiric criticism of life, of the actual nature, morals, *mœurs, mores, ethe*, of men; he wants it to be a didactic exhortation to what those morals ought (according to him) to be. He does not find Soliman's butterfly veerings from the sentiment of Elvire to the mere courtesanship of Delia, and from this latter to the grisettish or soubrettish minxery of Roxelane, attractive or excusable. He does not like this minxishness; there are even signs that he has a private antipathy towards the *petit nez*

retroussé which plays so great a part in the story. His criticism is in consequence not a criticism at all; it is a mere explosion of unreasoning dislike—at best one of "nervous impression," as Flaubert said to Sainte-Beuve. And if, by a juggle of words, it be retorted that Lessing is a dogmatic not an æsthetic critic, this retort will fall blunted from the simple rectification that he is a dogmatist of æsthetics and an æsthetician in dogma.

The benefits, therefore, of the rise of Æsthetics as a special study were far from unmixed, though the influence of that rise was very great. It is otherwise with the Study of Literature, to which we have also given a short and summary chapter above. Here it was all but impossible that extension of consideration—from modern and classical to mediæval, from certain arbitrarily preferred modern languages to others—should fail to do good. Prejudice, the bane of Criticism, received, in the mere and necessary progress of this study, a notice to quit. This notice took various forms and was exhibited and attended to in various ways. England, France, and Germany exhibited these differences with a difference itself very interesting. But they can be reduced to a few heads with very little difficulty.

The first of these is the attempt to judge the work presented, not according to abstract rules, derived or supposed to be derived from ancient critical authority, nor according to its agreement or disagreement with the famous work of the past. To some extent this revolutionary proceeding was forced upon our students by the very nature of the case—it was one of the inevitable benefits of the extension of study, and especially of the return to mediæval literature. To attempt to justify that literature, as Addison, with more or less seriousness, had done, by showing that its methods were after all not so very different from those of Homer, or even Virgil, was in some cases flatly impossible, in most extremely difficult; while in almost all it carried with it a distinct suspicion of burlesque. There was no need of any *dislike* of the classics; but it must have been and it was felt that mediæval and later literature must be handled *differently*.[1] And so—insensibly no doubt

[1] This is where Hurd is so valuable.

at first—there came into Criticism the sovereign and epoch-making recognition of the "leaden rule"—of the fact that literature comes first and criticism after—that criticism must adjust itself to literature, and not *vice versa*. Very likely not one of the men we are here discussing would have accepted this doctrine *simpliciter*:[1] indeed it is the rarest thing to find it accepted even a century and a half after their time, except in eccentric and extravagant forms. But it lay at the root of all their practice.

Further, that practice, deprived of the crutches and go-carts of rule and precedent, was perforce obliged to follow the natural path and play of the feelings and faculties—to ask itself first, "Do I like this?" then, "How do I like it?" then, "What qualities are there in it which make me like it?" Again, these questions may not have formulated themselves quite clearly to any of our group. Again, it would be hard to name many critics since who have at once fearlessly and faithfully kept them before their eyes But, again also, these were the questions which, however blindly and stumblingly, they followed as their guiding stars, and these have been the real questions of criticism ever since.

Postponing the discussion of the relationship of this new criticism to the old, we may turn to another point of its *differentia*. This is that students of mediæval literature especially were—again perforce and whether they would or no—driven to make excursions into the region of Literary History, and, what is more, of Comparative Literary History. They found themselves face to face with forms—the ballad and the romance being the chief of them—which were either not represented at all or represented very scantily and obscurely in classical literature, while they had been entirely and almost pointedly neglected by classical criticism. They could not but see that, both in mediæval literature proper and in modern, there were other forms and subvarieties of

[1] It is doubtful whether Hurd would have accepted it; it is certain that Lessing would not: and Diderot never quite reached the point of view at which it presented itself.

literature, in drama,[1] in poetry, in prose, which differed extremely from anything in ancient letters. In examining these, with no help from Aristotle, or Longinus, or Horace, they could not but pursue the natural method of tracing or endeavouring to trace them to their origins, and in so doing they could not but become conscious, not merely of the history—so long interrupted by a mist like that of Mirza's vision—of English or French or whatsoever literature itself, but also more dimly of the greater map of European literature, as it spread and branched from the breaking up of the Roman Empire onwards. And this study of Literary History was in the main, this study of Comparative Literary History was almost absolutely, again a new thing.

Nor were the actual critical results which, either expressly or incidentally, came from the exercitations of these critics of less importance. The turn of the tide may nowhere be seen so strongly as in Joseph Warton's audacious question whether Pope, the god of the idolatry of the earlier part of the century in England, was a poet, or at least a great poet, at all, in Lessing's proposition to call the great Corneille, just rehabilitated as he had been by Voltaire himself, Corneille the Monstrous. These things indeed were, like all revolutionary manifestos, extravagances, yet the extravagance was not only symptomatic but to a great extent healthy. It was probably impossible as a matter of tactics—it would certainly have been unnatural as a matter of history and human nature—to refrain from carrying the war into the enemies' country, from laying siege to the enemies' stronghold. And this was invited by the ignorant and insulting depreciation which had long been, and long continued to be, thrown upon one of the most charming and precious divisions of the literature and thought of the world.

But there were more sober fruits of the revolt. Hurd might

[1] Lessing's attempt to confute the French *ex ore Aristotelis* is extraordinarily effective *ad homines*, and most valuable now and then intrinsically. But it has the drawback of ignoring the fact that, though much in Shakespeare is justified by Aristotle, much can only be justified without him, and some must be justified in his teeth.

indeed have developed further that doctrine of Romantic as independent of Classical Unity, which is one of the most important discoveries or at least pronouncements of any time, which practically established a *modus vivendi* between all rational Neo-classic and all rational Romantic criticism, and which has never yet been worked out as it deserves. Percy's *Essay on Alliterative Metre*, despite the comparative narrowness of its basis, is both acute and successful; and falls in interestingly with that more intelligent devotion to Prosody which has up to the present time given better results than any "meta-critic," and has plenty yet to give. Thomas Warton, though often a fanciful and sometimes an insufficiently equipped critic, was a critic both alert and sound. Diderot might with advantage have concentrated that "encyclopædic head" of his on fewer subjects, have been less anarchic, more subject to harmless convention. But there are few better examples in literature of the "strong young devil shut up in an iron box" and made to do work—as the Bulgarian peasant defined the locomotive to an English engineer who went to the Balkans after the war of 1878. We have not feared to speak of Lessing's shortcomings, but though it is possible to speak indiscreetly and unadvisedly of his merits in kind and point, who shall overpraise them in degree? And the bent of almost all of them turned, and turned most beneficially, especially in the case of Warton, to History.

The necessary retrospect of the achievement of groups and countries can be given at no excessive length. The Germans had begun criticism later than any other of the great nations; and they had hardly passed the mere "rhetoric" stage of it when France was leading Europe in the later Neo-classic phase; when England was already, under the half-unknowing leadership of Dryden, sighting the modern conditions; and when Italy and Spain were passing into a sort of temporary dotage or trance on the subject. But during the seventeenth century the influence of England had been exchanged for that of France, and this latter, itself originally recommended by Opitz with a view to the exhibition of Pléiade medicine, had got this prescription changed, by a sort of legerdemain of Time

the Conjurer, for the very different one of Correctness *à la* Boileau. Yet the doses of Ronsardism had had great effect already, and the strong romantic leaven in the Germans, their pupillary state, their philosophical leanings—above all, that restless, irresistible, unwearied craving for knowledge which characterised them—prevented them from abiding in the faith of Gottsched for any length of time. We have traced the gropings and tentatives, the successive stages of Bodmer and those about him, the arrested promise of J. E Schlegel, that Marcellus of German criticism, and we saw how *Enfin Lessing vint.*

There can, for once, be no harm in attributing part at least of the deserved prominence of this critic in German criticism to the fact that he not only exhibited eminently the two great characteristics of his countrymen in the department,—unwearied industry in study and philosophic disposition of his results,—but combined with this exhibition merits which they much more rarely possess—an intimate though irregular appreciation, a great intellectual alacrity, and, above all, a really good and pleasant style. He did not, unfortunately, help to propagate these latter qualities so much as he helped to establish and corroborate the former: but with the limitations noted above, he did a great deal in almost all ways. The opinion which assigns to him, everywhere in literature more or less, but in criticism most of all, the principal share in that enormous dead-lift of German letters which marks the middle of the eighteenth century, and which, *exceptis excipiendis*, may be said to have made Goethe and Schiller possible, is unquestionably right. And though he did not quite live to see the time when Germany had begun to repay the enormous debts which, before his lifetime and during its earlier part, she had accumulated towards the rest of Europe, he almost saw this: and he had almost more to do than any other with the counter-accumulation of the necessary funds.

Yet he himself was, as we have seen, a debtor: and to the old creditor, France. The critical history, during this period, of France herself is the most curious of the three divisions which here suffice. In Germany, Neo-classicism, which had

taken no deep root, was easily uprooted. In England, though various causes, and especially the immense influence of the "dead hand" of Addison and Pope, and the living one of Johnson, kept back the Romantic growth in a salutary fashion, that growth itself was as steady as it was slow. In the very year after Gray died, Coleridge was born: and the lives and work of these two men mark one unhasting, unresting line of Romantic progress. But in France (as the two parallel views given in the second chapter of the last book, and the fourth chapter of this, will have shown), although there is no real confusion, the strands are most puzzlingly twisted during the whole of this selfsame period, till those of the classical colour break and ravel away into almost nothing just before the close This is due, no doubt, in part to the extreme strength of what we may call the Neo-classic *establishment* in France—to the fact that the strong places of literature are held by classical garrisons, who take good care to let no unorthodox recruit set foot in them if it can possibly be helped. But it is due also to that essential classicality which has been noticed, and fully acknowledged, in the French literary temper It certainly exists· and it accounts not merely for the stubborn resistance, until its sudden *débâcle*, of Classicism itself, but also for the peculiarities of the various greater critics whom we have noticed.

Of the three greatest of these (for Madame de Stael cannot, I think, really make out her right to cut in) Joubert excels in aphoristic and perennial quality, somewhat (not wholly) independent of time, and Chateaubriand expresses more fully than any one the tendencies (even in him much chequered by others) which he was to live to see triumphant without being quite glad thereat. But Diderot is, in principle and motive force, however eccentrically working, if not in actual expressed example, the most considerable of the three, and perhaps the most considerable single figure included in this Book. For in him, as was said above, we first see as a pervading and guiding, if not explicitly asserted, principle that Impressionism which (though the word has been variously used[1]) is, in its simplest and most natural meaning, perhaps more

[1] See Index to vol. I.

appropriate to "Modern" criticism than any other single term. As we have seen and put from many different sides, the general tendency of ancient and of Neo-classic critics was always to separate the work as much as possible from the worker, and (except as regarded oratory and partly drama) still more from the hearer and reader—this being done for the freedom of considering it, not so much in and by itself, as in relation to ideal and *a priori* schedules of its kind, quality, and appurtenant rules. There had been partial and half-conscious revolts or declensions from this in individuals, from Longinus to Castelvetro, and from Castelvetro to Fontenelle. But Diderot is almost the first person who habitually, naturally, as a matter of course, isolates the work *with himself*, considers it in its form and pressure as printed on *him*. And this is almost, or altogether, a new Covenant of Criticism.

The performance of England here was not so fruitful of great critical personalities—for her greatest, Johnson, was in intention, though by no means wholly in performance, on the other side. Nor, though the English Æsthetics were influential abroad as well as at home, can they be ranked very high. In the other chief branch, however, of that practical operation which has been noticed, the rediscovery and revaluation of the capital of the literature for critical purposes, England takes the most important position of all—less by the excellence of the workers (though this was not inconsiderable) than in consequence of the richness of their material. The French, except from the antiquarian side, were still neglecting, and even for the most part despising, their own old treasures, which were themselves scarcely so great as those of England: and the Germans, though not neglectful of what they had, had less, and dealt with it in a less thoroughly literary spirit. But Gray, Percy, Hurd, the Wartons (especially Thomas), and all the painful and meritorious editors from Theobald to Tyrwhitt, were engaged, independently in intention, but in fact systematically enough, not merely in clearing away rubbish and bringing treasures to light, but in combating the prejudices and doing away with the delusions and ignorances which had led to the neglect and contempt of those treasures themselves.

Even those other nations which directly contributed little or nothing[1] to criticism during the time, contributed, as we have seen, something also under this head by examination of their own literatures, and something more by their adoption and following of English, or of French, or (towards the end) of German also. Towards any wide comparative study of literature, indeed, this period made but a far-off approach: that could not come till later, though it is the glory of Germany, in the second division of the time, with which we shall deal presently, to have begun the attack itself, and made it something more. But the study of the individual literature at different periods has very much the same kind of widening and altering power as the study of different literatures, and this at least was vigorously pursued.

For after all it is History which is at the root of the critical —as of almost every other—matter. To judge you must know,—must know not merely the so-called best that has been thought and done and written (for how are you to know the best till you know the rest?), but to know all, or something of all, that has been written, and done, and thought by the undulating and diverse animal called Man. His undulation and his diversity will play you tricks still, know you never so widely; but the margin of error will be narrower, the more widely you know. The most perfect critical work that we have —that of Aristotle and that of Longinus—is due in its goodness to the thoroughness of the writers' knowledge of what was open to them, in its occasional badness and lack of perfection to the fact that everything was not open to them to know. "The goodness of *our* goodness when we're good" is due to our knowing a little more, and the more frequent badness of our badness when we are bad to our not taking the trouble to know it thoroughly.

[1] With, once more, the great exception and anticipation of Vico.

BOOK VIII

THE RECONSTRUCTION OF CRITICISM

"*To the young I would remark that it is always unwise to judge of anything by its defects, the first attempt ought to be to discover its excellences.*"—COLERIDGE.

"*Il ne savait pas de quoi étaient faites les* limites de l'art."—VICTOR HUGO.

"*Savoir bien lire un livre en le jugeant chemin faisant, et sans cesser de le goûter, c'est presque tout l'art du critique.*"—SAINTE-BEUVE.

CHAPTER I.

WORDSWORTH AND COLERIDGE: THEIR COMPANIONS AND ADVERSARIES.

WORDSWORTH AND COLERIDGE — THE FORMER'S PREFACES — THAT TO 'LYRICAL BALLADS,' 1800 — ITS HISTORY — THE ARGUMENT AGAINST POETIC DICTION, AND EVEN AGAINST METRE — THE APPENDIX POETIC DICTION AGAIN — THE MINOR CRITICAL PAPERS — COLERIDGE'S EXAMINATION OF WORDSWORTH'S VIEWS — HIS CRITICAL QUALIFICATIONS — UNUSUAL INTEGRITY OF HIS CRITIQUE — ANALYSIS OF IT — THE "SUSPENSION OF DISBELIEF" — ATTITUDE TO METRE — EXCURSUS ON SHAKESPEARE'S 'POEMS' — CHALLENGES WORDSWORTH ON "REAL" AND "RUSTIC" LIFE — "PROSE" DICTION AND METRE AGAIN — CONDEMNATION IN FORM OF WORDSWORTH'S THEORY — THE 'ARGUMENTUM AD GULIELMUM' — THE STUDY OF HIS POETRY — HIGH MERITS OF THE EXAMINATION — WORDSWORTH A REBEL TO LONGINUS AND DANTE — THE 'PREFACE' COMPARED MORE SPECIALLY WITH THE 'DE VULGARI,' AND DANTE'S PRACTICE WITH WORDSWORTH'S — THE COMPARISON FATAL TO WORDSWORTH AS A CRITIC — OTHER CRITICAL PLACES IN COLERIDGE — THE REST OF THE 'BIOGRAPHIA' — 'THE FRIEND' — 'AIDS TO REFLECTION,' ETC — THE 'LECTURES ON SHAKESPEARE,' ETC — THEIR CHAOTIC CHARACTER AND PRECIOUSNESS — SOME NOTEWORTHY THINGS IN THEM, GENERAL AND PARTICULAR — COLERIDGE ON OTHER DRAMATISTS — THE 'TABLE TALK' — THE 'MISCELLANIES' — THE LECTURE 'ON STYLE' — THE 'ANIMA POETÆ' — THE 'LETTERS' — THE COLERIDGEAN POSITION AND QUALITY — HE INTRODUCES ONCE FOR ALL THE CRITERION OF IMAGINATION, REALISING AND DISREALISING — THE "COMPANIONS" — SOUTHEY — GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF HIS CRITICISM — REVIEWS — 'THE DOCTOR' — ALTOGETHER SOMEWHAT "IMPAR SIBI" — LAMB — HIS "OCCULTISM" AND ALLEGED INCONSTANCY — THE EARLY 'LETTERS' — THE 'SPECIMENS' — THE GARRICK PLAY NOTES — MISCELLANEOUS ESSAYS — 'ELIA' — THE LATER 'LETTERS' — UNIQUENESS OF LAMB'S CRITICAL STYLE AND THOUGHT — LEIGH HUNT. HIS SOMEWHAT INFERIOR POSITION — REASONS FOR IT — HIS ATTITUDE TO DANTE — EXAMPLES FROM 'IMAGINATION AND FANCY' — HAZLITT —

METHOD OF DEALING WITH HIM—HIS SURFACE AND OCCASIONAL FAULTS: IMPERFECT KNOWLEDGE AND METHOD — EXTRA-LITERARY PREJUDICE—HIS RADICAL AND USUAL EXCELLENCE—'THE ENGLISH POETS'—THE 'COMIC WRITERS'—'THE AGE OF ELIZABETH'—'CHARACTERS OF SHAKESPEARE'—'THE PLAIN SPEAKER'—'THE ROUND TABLE,' ETC—'THE SPIRIT OF THE AGE'—'SKETCHES AND ESSAYS'—'WINTERSLOW'—HAZLITT'S CRITICAL VIRTUE, IN SET PIECES, AND UNIVERSALLY—BLAKE—HIS CRITICAL POSITION AND DICTA—THE "NOTES ON REYNOLDS" AND WORDSWORTH—COMMANDING POSITION OF THESE—SIR WALTER SCOTT COMMONLY UNDERVALUED AS A CRITIC—INJUSTICE OF THIS—CAMPBELL HIS 'LECTURES ON POETRY'—HIS 'SPECIMENS'—SHELLEY: HIS 'DEFENCE OF POETRY'—LANDOR—HIS LACK OF JUDICIAL QUALITY—IN REGULAR CRITICISM—THE CONVERSATIONS—'LOCULUS AUREOLUS'—BUT AGAIN DISAPPOINTING—THE REVIVAL OF THE POPE QUARRELS—BOWLES—BYRON—THE 'LETTER TO MURRAY,' ETC—OTHERS. ISAAC DISRAELI—SIR EGERTON BRYDGES—'THE RETROSPECTIVE REVIEW'—THE 'BAVIAD' AND 'ANTI-JACOBIN,' WITH WOLCOT AND MATHIAS—THE INFLUENCE OF THE NEW 'REVIEWS,' ETC—JEFFREY—HIS LOSS OF PLACE AND ITS CAUSE—HIS INCONSISTENCY—HIS CRITICISM ON MADAME DE STAËL—ITS LESSON—HALLAM—HIS ACHIEVEMENT—ITS MERITS AND DEFECTS—IN GENERAL DISTRIBUTION AND TREATMENT—IN SOME PARTICULAR INSTANCES—HIS CENTRAL WEAKNESS, AND THE VALUE LEFT BY IT.

THERE are many differences, real and imaginary, partial and general, parallel and cross, between ancient, and mediæval, and modern poetry; but there is one, very striking, of a kind which specially differentiates ancient and mediæval (except Dante) from modern. In the former class of poets the "critic whom every poet must contain" was almost entirely silent, or conveyed his criticism through his verse only. It would have been of the very first interest to have an Essay from the hand of Euripides justifying his decadent and sentimental fashion of drama, or from that of Lucretius on the theory and practice of didactic verse: but the lips of neither were unsealed in this direction. Dante, on the other hand, as we have seen, was prepared and ready to put the rationale of his own verse, his own beliefs about poetry, into prose: so at the Renaissance were the poets of Italy and France; so was Dryden, so was Pope.

Wordsworth and Coleridge.

In no instance, however, save perhaps that of the Pléiade and Du Bellay's *Défense et Illustration*, did a protagonist of

the new poetry take the field in prose so early and so aggressively as did Wordsworth in his Preface to the second edition of *Lyrical Ballads*. In none, without exception, was such an attack so searchingly criticised and so powerfully seconded, with corrections of its mistakes, as in the case of the well-known chapters of the *Biographia Literaria* in which Coleridge examined Wordsworth's examination. These, it is true, came later in time, but when the campaign, whereof the first sword had been drawn in the *Lyrical Ballads*, and the first horn blown in the Preface of their second edition, though far gone was not finished, when the final blows, by the hands of Keats and Shelley, had still to be struck.

The former's Prefaces.

The *Preface*, with the little group of other prefaces and observations which supplements it,[1] provides a bundle of documents unequalled in interest except by the *De Vulgari Eloquio* in the special class, while, as it happens, it goes directly against the tenor of that precious booklet. Wordsworth, there can be no doubt, had been deeply annoyed by the neglect or the contemptuous reception of the *Lyrical Ballads*, to which hardly any one had done justice except the future Archdeacon Wrangham, while his own poems in simple language had offended even more than *The Ancient Mariner* had puzzled. To some extent I do not question that—his part of the scheme being to make the familiar poetical, just as it was Coleridge's to make the unfamiliar acceptable, the uncommon common—the refusal of "poetic diction" which he here advances and defends was a *vera causa*, a true actuating motive. But there is also, I think, no doubt that, as so often happens, resentment, and a dogged determination to "spite the fools," made him here represent the principle as much more deliberately carried out than it actually was. And the same doggedness was no doubt at the root of his repetition of this principle in all his subsequent prose

[1] It is wisely usual in editions of Wordsworth to print these together and consecutively. They are so short, and accessible in so many different shapes, that it seems superfluous to give page-references to any particular edition. The *Letter to a Friend of Robert Burns* (1816) (which Mr Rhys has included in the *Literary Pamphlets* noticed elsewhere) is less purely literary, but has important passages, especially that on *Tam o' Shanter*.

observations, though, as has been clear from the first to almost all impartial observers,[1] he never, from *Tintern Abbey* onwards, achieves his highest poetry, and very rarely achieves high poetry at all, without putting that principle in his pocket.

That to Lyrical Ballads, 1800.

That the actual preface begins with a declaration that he was rather more than satisfied with the reception of his poems, and that the appearance of a systematic defence is set down to "request of friends," is of course not in the least surprising, and will only confirm any student of human nature in the certainty that pique was really at the bottom of the matter. As a matter of fact, there is no more typical example of an aggressive-defensive *plaidoyer* in the whole history of literature.

Its history.

It begins with sufficient boldness and originality (indeed "W. W." was never deficient in either) admitting fully that "by writing in verse, an author is supposed to make a formal engagement that he will gratify certain habits of association," and merely urging that these habits have varied remarkably. The principle here is sound enough; it is in effect the same which we have traced in previous "romantic" criticism from Shenstone onwards, but the historical illustrations are unfortunate. They are "the age of Catullus, Terence, and Lucretius" contrasted with that of Statius and Claudian, and "the age of Shakespeare and Beaumont and Fletcher" with that of Donne and Cowley or Dryden and Pope. The *nisus* of the school towards the historic argument, and, at the same time, its imperfect education in literary history, could hardly be better illustrated. For, not to quibble about the linking of Statius and Claudian, the age of Catullus and Lucretius was most certainly *not* the age of Terence; and the English pairs are still more luckless. Donne *and* Cowley, Shakespeare *and* Beaumont and

[1] Since this was originally written, there has been a tendency to take up the cudgels for "W. W." I do not think it necessary to add more in consequence: *for nothing* that has been said has weakened my own opinion in the least, highly as I esteem Professors Raleigh and Bradley, and perhaps others of those who differ with me. Indeed the best of them, I think, are disposed to admit that W. W. said more than he meant, and even to some extent what he did *not* mean.

Fletcher, are bad enough in themselves: but the postponement of Donne to the twin dramatists, when he was the elder of Fletcher probably by six or seven years, of Beaumont by ten or twelve, is rather sad. However, it is not on history that Wordsworth bases his attack.

The argument against poetic diction, and even against metre.

His object, he tells us, was to choose incidents and illustrations from common life; to relate and describe them, as far as was possible, in a selection of language really used by men; and at the same time to throw over them a certain colouring of imagination, whereby ordinary things should be presented to the mind in an unusual aspect—a long but much less forcible appendix examining why the life so chosen was not merely "ordinary," but "rustic and humble." The kernel of his next paragraph is the famous statement that all good poetry is "the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings," and then, after a little divagation, he sets to work to show how such a style as he was using was adapted to be the channel of such an overflow. He utterly refuses Personification: he "has taken as much pains to avoid what is called Poetic Diction as is ordinarily taken to produce it"; he "has at all times endeavoured to look steadily at the subject with little falsehood of description"; and he has not only denied himself false poetic diction, but many expressions in themselves proper and beautiful, which have been foolishly repeated by bad poets till they became disgusting. A selected sonnet from Gray[1] is then rather captiously attacked for the sake of showing (what certainly few will admit) that, in its only part of value, the language differs in no respect from that of prose: whence the heretic goes farther and, first asserting that there is *no* essential difference between the language of Prose and that of Poetry, proceeds in a note to object to the opposition of Poetry and Prose at all, and to the regarding of the former as synonymous with metrical composition. Then he asks what a poet *is*: and answers himself at great length, dwelling on the poet's philosophical mission, but admitting that it is his business to give pleasure. He anticipates the objection, "Why, then, do

[1] That on the death of West.

you not write in Prose?" with the rather weak retort, "Why should I not add the charm of metrical language to what I have to say?" A little later comes the other famous definition of poetry as "emotion recollected in tranquillity," with a long and exceedingly unsuccessful attempt to vindicate some work of his own from the charge of being ludicrous. And the Preface ends with two candid but singularly damaging admissions, that there *is* a pleasure confessedly produced by metrical compositions very different from his own, and that, in order entirely to enjoy the poetry which he is undertaking, it would be necessary to give up much of what is ordinarily enjoyed.

The appendix: Poetic Diction again.

There is an appendix specially devoted to "Poetic Diction" in which Wordsworth develops his objection to this. His argument is curious, and from his own point of view rather risky. Early poets wrote from passion, yet naturally, and so used figurative language: later ones, without feeling passion, imitated them in the use of Figures, and so a purely artificial diction was formed. So also metre was early added, and came to be regarded as a symbol or promise of poetic diction itself. To which of course it is only necessary to register the almost fatal demurrer, "Why, if the early poets used figurative language different from ordinary, may not later ones do so? or do you mean that Greek shoemakers of Homer's time said *koruthaiolos* and *dolichoskion*?" Again, "How about this curious early 'superadding' of metre? Where is your evidence? and supposing you could produce any, what have you to say to the further query, 'If the metre was superadded, what could have been the reason, except that some superaddition was felt to be wanted?'"

The Minor Critical Papers.

It is proof of the rather prejudiced frame of mind in which Wordsworth wrote that, in some subsequent criticisms of particulars, he objects to Cowper's "church-going bell" as "a strange abuse"—from which we must suppose that he himself never talked of a "dining-room," for it is certain that the room no more dines than the bell goes to church. The later papers on "Poetry as a Study," and

"Poetry as Observation and Description," are also full of interesting matter, though here, as before, their literary history leaves much to desire, and though they are full of examples of the characteristic stubbornness with which Wordsworth clings to his theory. The most remarkable example probably of this stubbornness is the astonishing note to the letter on the last-named subject (addressed to Sir George Beaumont), in which, after attributing to the poet Observation, Sensibility, Reflection, Information, Invention, and Judgment, he adds, with a glance at his enemy, Metre—"As sensibility to harmony of numbers *and the power of producing it* are *invariably* attendants on the faculties above specified, nothing has been said upon those requisites." Perhaps there is no more colossal *petitio principii*, and at the same time no more sublime ignoring of facts, to be found in all literature, than that "invariably."

Coleridge's examination of Wordsworth's views.

Interesting, however, as the Preface and its satellites are in themselves, they are far more interesting as the occasion of the much longer examination of the main document which forms the centre, and as criticism the most valuable part, of the *Biographia Literaria*[1] of Coleridge, Wordsworth's fellow-worker in these same *Lyrical Ballads*. That Wordsworth was himself not wholly pleased with this criticism of his criticism, we know: and it would have been strange if he had been—nay, if a much less arrogant and egotistical spirit than his had taken it quite kindly. But Coleridge was on this occasion entirely within his right. The examination, though in some parts unsparing enough, was conducted throughout in the most courteous, indeed in the most eulogistic, tone; the critic, especially after the lapse of so many years,[2] could not be denied the right of pointing out the limits of his agreement with a manifesto which, referring as it did to joint work of his and another's, might excusably be supposed to represent his conclusions as well as those of his fellow-worker.

As to his competence for the task, there could even then be little, and can now be no, dispute. Wordsworth himself,

[1] I have used, and refer to, the Bohn edition of Coleridge's Prose Works

[2] 1800 1817. (Recent Wordsworthians, *v. sup*, prefer rather to belittle Coleridge.)

though he has left some valuable critical dicta, had by no means all, or even very many, of the qualifications of a critic. His intellect, save at his rare moments of highest poetical inspiration, was rather strong than fine or subtle; and it could not, even at those moments, be described as in any degree flexible or wide-ranging. He carried into literature the temperament of the narrowest theological partisan; and would rather that a man were not poetically saved at all, than that he were saved while not following "W. W's" own way. His reading, moreover, was far from wide, and his intense self-centredness made him indifferent about extending it: while he judged everything that he did read with reference to himself and his own poetry.

His critical qualifications.

In all these respects, except poetical intensity, Coleridge was his exact opposite. But for a certain uncertainty, a sort of Will-o'-the-Wispishness which displays itself in some of his individual critical estimates—and for the too well-known inability to carry out his designs, which is not perhaps identical, or even closely connected, with this uncertainty,—he might be called, he may perhaps even in spite of them be called, one of the very greatest critics of the world. He had read immensely, and much of his reading had been in the philosophy of æsthetics, more in pure literature itself. The play of his intellect—when opium and natural tendency to digression did not drive it devious and muddle it—was marvellously subtle, flexible, and fine. He could take positions not his own with remarkable alacrity; was nothing if not logical, and few things more than historical-literary. Further, such egotisms as came into play in this particular quarrel all made for righteousness in his case, while they were snares to Wordsworth. It may be ungracious, but is not unfair, to say that Wordsworth's contempt for poetic diction, and his belittling of metre, arose very mainly from the fact that, in his case, intense meaning was absolutely required to save his diction from stiffness on the one hand and triviality on the other, while he had no very special metrical gifts. Coleridge, though he certainly had no lack of meaning, and could also write simply enough when he

chose, was a metrist[1] such as we have not more than five or six even in English poetry, and could colour and harmonise language in such a way that, at his best, not Shakespeare himself is his superior, and hardly any one else his equal. The old, the true, sense of *Cui bono?* comes in here victoriously. It was certainly to Wordsworth's interest that diction and metre should be relegated to a low place. Coleridge, though he had personal reasons for taking their part, could do well without them, and was not obliged to be their champion.

Unusual integrity of his critique.

However all this may be, there is no doubt about the importance of the discussion of Wordsworth's literary theories, in chaps. xiv. to xxii. of the *Biographia*. Some have held that Coleridge could not write a book; more have laid it down that he never did write one. Certainly the title is to be allowed to the *Biographia* as a whole only by the most elastic allowance, while large parts of it are at best episodes, and at worst sheer divagations. But, if books were not sacred things, it would be possible, and of no inconsiderable advantage, to sub-title this part of the book *A Critical Enquiry into the Principles which guided the Lyrical Ballads, and Mr Wordsworth's Account of Them*, to print this alone as substantive text,[2] and to arrange what more is wanted as notes and appendices.

Analysis of it

The examination begins with an interesting, and (whether Epimethean or not) quite probable and very illuminative account of the actual plan of the *Ballads*, and the principle on which the shares were allotted. He and his friend, he tells us, had, during their neighbourly intercourse in Somerset, often talked of the two cardinal points of poetry, the power of exciting the sympathy of the reader by a faithful adherence to the truth of nature, and the power of giving the interest of novelty by the modifying colours of imagination. And he illustrates this finely, by instancing

[1] In practice, though not always in theory · for his famous explanation of his *Christabel* metre is admitted, even by an authority who takes such different views of prosody from mine as Mr Robert Bridges, to be quite wrong.

[2] I have, since this was written, endeavoured to do something of the kind for a practical purpose (to which nothing is sacred) in my *Loci Critici* (London and Boston, Mass., 1903), pp. 303-365.

the sudden charm which accidents of light and shade, of moonshine or sunset, communicate to familiar objects.

The *Ballads* were to illustrate both kinds: and the poets were to divide the parts generally on the principle of Coleridge endeavouring to make the unfamiliar credible,[1] and Wordsworth the familiar charming. And with a charity which, I fear, the *Preface* will not bear, he proceeds to represent its contentions as applying *only* to the practical poetical attempt which Wordsworth, in accordance with the plan, was on this occasion making. He admits however, that Wordsworth's expressions are at any rate sometimes equivocal, and indicates his own standpoint pretty early and pretty decisively by calling the phrase "language of real life" *unfortunate*. And then he proceeds to state his own view with very frequent glances—and more than glances—at his companion's.

The "suspension of disbelief."

From the first, however, it is obvious that on one of the two cardinal points—the necessity or non-necessity of metre in poetry—he is, though hardly to be called in two minds, for some reason or other reluctant to speak out his one mind. The revival of this old heresy among such men as Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, is the more to be wondered at, in that their predecessors of the eighteenth century had by no means pronounced on the other side in theory, and that therefore they themselves had no excuse of reaction. No one who, at however many removes, followed or professed to follow the authority of Aristotle, could deny that the subject, not the form, made poetry and poems. But just as the tyranny of a certain poetic diction led Wordsworth and others to strike at all poetic diction, so the tyranny of certain metres seems to have induced them to question the necessity of metre in general. At any rate Coleridge's language, though not his real drift, is hesitating and sometimes almost self-contradictory. He will on the same page grant that "all

Attitude to metre.

[1] Or, as he puts it in one of the great critical phrases of the world, "to produce that willing *suspension of disbelief for the moment* which constitutes poetic faith." It derives of course from Aristotle, but the advance on the original is immense.

compositions to which this charm of metre is superadded, whatever their contents, may be called poems," and yet lay down that a poem is "that species of composition which is opposed to works of science by proposing for its immediate object pleasure, not truth," and (after adding to this a limitation, doubtless intended to take in metre, but nebulous enough to justify Peacock himself,[1]) will once more clear off his own mist by saying that if any one "chooses to call every composition a poem which is rhyme or measure or both, I must leave his opinion uncontroverted."

That he himself saw the muddle is beyond doubt, and the opposite page contains a curious series of *aporiæ* which show the difficulty of applying his own definition.[2] The first (*i.e.*, fourteenth) chapter ends with a soft shower of words, rhetorically pleasing rather than logically cogent, about the poet "bringing the whole soul of man into activity", "fusing the faculties, each into each, by the synthetic and magical power of imagination," reconciling differences and opposites. "Finally good sense is the body of poetic genius, fancy its drapery, emotion its life, and imagination the soul." In the fifteenth and sixteenth the author turns with evident relief from the definition of the perhaps indefinable to an illustration of it by discussing *Venus and Adonis*. Here, though it would be pleasant, it would be truancy to follow him.

This study, however, is by no means otiose. It leads him to make a comparison between the poetry of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and that of "the present age," a

[1] "And from all other species having this object in common with it, it is discriminated by proposing to itself such delight from the whole as is compatible with a distinct gratification from each component part." This is the dialect of "Cimmerian Lodge" with a vengeance! An attempt to expound it will be found in the abstract of the *Lectures* of 1811 given by J. P. Collier: but it sheds little light. And simpler Estesian definitions elsewhere—"Prose is words in good order: poetry the best words in the best order," &c.—labour likewise under the common curse that *Poetry* escapes them. What better words in what better order than the Lord's Prayer? Is that poetry?

[2] The extraordinary critical genius of Coleridge can hardly be better shown than by his gloss here on the Petronian enigma, *Præcipitandus est liber spiritus*, to which we have referred so often. The poet—the image is not Coleridge's, but I think it very fairly illustrates his view—*rides* the reader's own genius, and both together attain the goal.

comparison of which not the least notable point is a reference to the *De Vulgari Eloquio*.[1] Coleridge seems only to have known it in the Italian translation; but it is much that he should have known it at all: and though he does not try to bring out its diametrical opposition to Wordsworth, that opposition must have been, consciously or unconsciously, in his mind. And then he comes back to Wordsworth himself.

Excursus on Shakespeare's Poems.

He now (chap. xvii.) strikes into a line less complimentary and more corrective than his earlier remarks. It is true, he says, that much of modern poetic style is false, and that some of the pleasure given by it is false likewise. It is true, further, that W. W. has done good by his sticklings for simplicity. But Coleridge cannot follow him in asserting that "the proper diction for poetry in general consists altogether in language taken from the mouths of men in real life." And he proceeds to show, by arguments so obvious and so convincing that it is unnecessary to recapitulate them, that a doctrine of this kind is neither adequate nor accurate—that Wordsworth's own poems do not bear it out, and (pushing farther) that poetry must be "*dis*realised" (he does not use the word) as much as possible. He proceeds, cautiously and politely, but very decidedly, to set the puerilities and anilities[2] of *The Idiot Boy* and *The Thorn* in a clear light, which must have been extremely disagreeable to the particular author, and goes on to pull W. W.'s arguments, as well as his examples, to shreds and thrums. If you eliminate, he says (and most truly), a rustic's poverty of thought and his "provincialism and grossness," you get nothing different from "the language of any other man of common-sense," so that he will not help you in the least; his speech does not in any degree represent the result of special and direct communing with nature. Nay, "real" in the phrase "real life" is itself a wholly treacherous and

Challenges Wordsworth on "real" and "rustic" life.

[1] This (chap. xvi., not long after the beginning (p. 157, ed. Bohn)) is more important indirectly than directly. It is, in itself, very slight, and merely concerns Dante's jealousy for his mother tongue. But it shows knowledge

[2] These terms are used with no offensive intention, but in strict reference to the matter of the poems.

equivocal adjective. Nor will you do any good by adding "in a state of excitement."

In the next chapter, the eighteenth, Coleridge carries the fray farther still into the enemy's country, hitting the blot that though W. W.'s *words* may be quite ordinary, their arrangement is not. And after wheeling about in this way, he comes at last to the main attack which he has so often feinted, on Wordsworth's astounding dictum that "there neither is nor can be any essential difference between the language of prose and metrical composition." After clearing his friend (and patient) from an insinuation of paradox, he becomes a little "metaphysical"—perhaps because he cannot help it, perhaps to give himself courage for the subsequent accusation of "sophistry" which he ventures to bring. Of course, he says, there are phrases which, beautiful in poetry, are quite inappropriate in prose. The question is, "Are there no others which, proper in prose, would be out of place in metrical poetry and *vice versâ*?" And he has no doubt about answering this question in the affirmative, arging the origin of metre (for which, as we saw, Wordsworth did not attempt to account), and its effects of use and pleasure. He will not admit the appeal to nursery rhymes; and he confesses (a confession which must have given W. W. dire offence) that he should have liked *Alice Fell* and the others much better in prose.

"Prose" diction and in metre aga

On the whole, Coleridge still shows too great timidity. He is obviously and incomprehensibly afraid of acknowledging pleasure from the metre itself. But—in this differing more signally from Wordsworth than from Wordsworth's uncompromising opponents—he says, "I write in metre, *because* I am about to use a language different from that of prose." And, though on grounds lower than the highest, he finally plucks up courage to declare that "Metre is the proper form of poetry: and poetry [is] imperfect and defective without metre." 'Twill serve, especially when he brings up in support, triarian fashion, "the instinct of seeking unity by harmonious adjustment," and "the practice of the best poets of all countries and of all ages."

It is perhaps an anti-climax, though a very C[oleridgean] one, when he proceeds to criticise (very justly) Wo[rdsworth's] criticism of Gray, and some passages bo[th] of his own and others: but we can have no qua[rrel] with him when he ends the chapter, too verbosel[y] indeed, but unanswerably, with the following co[nclusion] of the whole matter: "When a poem, or part of a poe[m] be adduced, which is evidently vicious in the figure[s] and contexture of its style, yet for the condemnation of [which] no reason can be assigned, except that it differs from [the] style in which men actually converse,—then and not till t[hen] can I hold this theory to be either plausible or practicable [or] capable of furnishing either such guidance, or precaution, t[hat] might not, more easily and more safely, as well as more nat[ur]ally, have been deduced in the author's own mind from co[n]siderations of grammar, logic, and the truth and nature o[f] things, confirmed by the authority of works whose fame is not of one country and of one age."

Condemnation in form of Wordsworth's theory.

He has now (chaps. XIX., XX.) argued himself into more confidence than he had shown earlier, and seems disposed to retract his concession that W. W.'s limitation[s] were *not* intended to apply to all poetry. He see[s] indeed, from the criticism on Gray, and from Word[s]worth's references to Milton, that this concession was exces[s]ive, but still he thinks the general notion too monstrou[s] for Wordsworth to have held. And he swerves, once m[ore], to point out the especial beauty of beautiful diction and [a] beautiful metre *added to* fine or just thought, and introduces [an] interesting but rather superfluous examples of this from all [manner of] poets down to Wordsworth himself. These last [lead him] to the very just conclusion, "Were there exclu[ded] from Mr W.'s poetic compositions all that a literal adh[erence] to the theory of his Preface would exclude, two-thirds [at least] of the marked beauties of his poetry must be erased."[1] Which indeed is once more a conclusion of the whole matter.[2]

The Argumentum ad Gulielmum.

After an odd, a distinctly amusing, but despit[e its title a, for

[1] Chap. XX. *sub fin.*, p. 201, ed. cit.

[2] Except, once more, to my friends, Professors Raleigh, [Herford, and Brad]ley, and some more [negligible folk.]

our purpose, somewhat irrelevant, excursus on "the present mode of conducting critical journals,"[1] Coleridge concludes with a pretty long[2] and a very interesting examination of Wordsworth's poetry. He brings out his defects, his extraordinary declension from the felicitous to the undistinguished, his matter-of-factness of various kinds (this part includes a merciless though most polite censure of *The Excursion*), his undue preference for dramatic [perhaps we should say dialogic] form, his prolixity, and his introduction of thoughts and images too great as well as too low for the subject. The excellences are high purity and appropriateness of language; weight and sanity of thoughts and sentiments; strength; originality and *curiosa felicitas* in single lines and paragraphs; truth of nature in imagery; meditative pathos; and, lastly, imagination in the highest and strictest sense of the word.

The study of his poetry.

In fact this chapter, which forms in itself an essay of the major scale, is one of the patterns, in English, of a critical study of poetry. None, I think, had previously exhibited the new criticism so thoroughly, and very few, if any, have surpassed or equalled it since, although it may be a little injured on the one hand by its limitation to a particular text, and by the restrictions which the personal relations of the critic with his author imposed on Coleridge, on the other, by his own tendencies to digression, verbosity,

High merits of the examination.

[1] Chap xxi. Personality, partisanship, haphazard, gambling, caricature in selection of instances, are the chief faults that Coleridge finds with both *Edinburgh* and *Quarterly*. The reply is dignified in tone and not unjust; but, like other things of the same kind, it illustrates certain permanent weaknesses of human nature. All the faults, I think, which Coleridge finds with "Blue and Yellow" and "Buff" reviewing might be found with his own critique of Maturin's *Bertram*, printed in this very volume. All these faults are certainly found by every generation of authors with their critics, even when these authors happen to have been copious and constant writers of criticism themselves. Always is the author tempted, like Mr Baxter, to cry, "Ah, but *I* was in the right, and these men are dreadfully in the wrong"; always does he think, like the Archbishop of Granada, that the incriminated part of his sermon is exactly the best part; always, when he bewails the absence of the just and impartial critics of other times, does he forget the wise ejaculation of Mr Rigmarole, "Pretty much like our own, I fancy!" (There is no mental reservation in these remarks.)

[2] Four-and-thirty closely printed pages in the Bohn ed.

and intrusion of philosophical "heads of Charles I." In fact, there is no other critical document known to me which attacks the chief and principal things of poetry proper—poetic language and poetic numbers—in so satisfactory a manner, despite the economy which Coleridge displays on the latter head. Some of the ancient and most of the Renaissance discussions shoot too far and too high, and though the arrows may catch fire and give a brilliant and striking illumination, they hit no visible mark. The discussions of Lessing in the *Laocoon* concern an interesting but after all quite subordinate point of the relation of poetry to other arts; nearly all of those in the *Dramaturgie* deal with a part of literature only, and with one which is not, in absolute necessity or theory, a part of literature at all. But here we have the very *differentia* of poetry, handled as in the Περὶ Ὕψους or the *De Vulgari* itself, but handled in a more full, generally applicable, and philosophically based manner than Dante's prose admitted of, and in a wider range than is allowed by the special purpose of Longinus.

Wordsworth a rebel to Longinus and Dante.

With both these great lights of criticism Coleridge agrees almost as thoroughly as Wordsworth disagrees with them: and it is proper here to fulfil the promise which was made[1] of a consideration of Wordsworth's work in reference to Dante specially, but with extension to Longinus as well.

The collision of Wordsworth with Longinus appears in the very title of the famous little treatise. Fight as we may about the exact meaning of ὕψος, it must be evident, to poets and pedlars alike, that it never can apply to the "ordinary language of real life"; struggle as Wordsworthians may, they never can establish a *concordat* between the doctrine of the *Preface* and the doctrine of the "beautiful word." But as Longinus was not specifically writing of Poetry, and as in reference to Poetry he was writing from his own point of view only, on a special function or aspect of Poetry and Rhetoric alike, he does not meet the Apostle of the Ordinary full tilt and weapon to weapon. I have said that I do not know whether, when

[1] Vol. i. p. 436.

Wordsworth wrote the *Preface*, he knew the *De Vulgari* or not. If Coleridge had known it at the time, he probably would have imparted his knowledge in the celebrated Nether Stowey talks: but his own reference, itself not suggestive of a very thorough appreciation, is twenty years later. And as Wordsworth was a perfectly fearless person, and had not a vestige of an idea that any created thing had authority sufficient to overcrow W. W, he would pretty certainly have rebuked this Florentine, and withstood him to his face, if he had known his utterances.

The Preface compared more specially with the De Vulgari,

But, on the other hand, Dante himself might almost have been writing with the *Preface* before him (except that had he done so Wordsworth would probably have been at least in Purgatory), considering the directness, the almost rude lie-circumstantial of the antidote. "Take the ordinary language, especially of rustic men," says Wordsworth. "Avoid rustic ["silvan"] language altogether," says Dante, "and even of 'urban' words let only the noblest remain in your sieve." "If you have Invention, Judgment, and half a dozen other things," every one of which has been possessed in more or less perfection by most of the great writers of the world whether in prose or poetry, "metrical expertness will follow as a matter of course," says Wordsworth. "You must, after painfully selecting the noblest words and arranging them in the noblest style, further arrange them in the best line that experience and genius combined can give you, and yet further build these lines into the artfullest structure that art has devised," says Dante. "Poetry is spontaneous utterance," says he of Cockermouth. "Poetry, and the language proper for it, is a regular 'panther-quest,' an elaborate and painful toil," says the Florentine.

and Dante's practice

And their practice is no less opposed than their theory; or rather the relation of the two, to theory and practice taken together, is the most astonishing contrast to be found in Poetry. Dante never falsifies his theory for a moment. You cannot find a line, in *Commedia* or *Vita Nuova* or anywhere else, where the "panther-quest" of word,

and phrase, and line-formation, and stanza-grouping is not evident; you will be put to it to find one where this quest is not consummately successful. And, in following word and phrase and form, Dante never forgets or starves his meaning. He may be sometimes obscure, but never because there is no meaning to discern through the gloom. He may be sometimes technical; but the technicality is never otherwise than the separable garb of a "strange and high" thought and intention. Matter and form with him admit no divorce: their marriage is not the marriage of two independent entities, but the marriage of soul and body He has no need of the alternation of emotion and tranquillity, of the paroxysm succeeded by the notebook (or interrupted by it and succeeded by the fair copy), because his emotion and his tranquillity are identical, because the tide of his poetry is the tide "too full for sound or foam," at least for splash or spoondrift. He is methodical down to the counting of syllables in poetic words: and yet who has more poetic madness than he?

with Wordsworth's.

The difference in Wordsworth is almost startling; it looks as if it had been "done on purpose." He does obey his theory, does accept the language of ordinary life.[1] But when he does so, as (almost) everybody admits, he is too often not poetical at all—never in touch with the highest poetry.[2] And (which is extremely remarkable and has not, I think, been remarked by Coleridge or by many other critics) even in these poems he has not the full courage of his opinions. In no single instance does he venture on the experiment of discarding the merely "superadded charm" of metre, of which he has such a low opinion. He never in one single instance relies on the sheer power of "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" on the impetus of "emotion

[1] Yet there are curious lapses even here Take the extreme example, *Alice Fell*, of whom even her author was half-ashamed as mean and homely. How about "fierce career," and "smitten with a starting sound," and the inversion of "Proud creature was she"?

[2] My friend Prof. Raleigh, in his brilliant and (for that word hath something derogated) really critical study of Wordsworth (London, 1903), is of a different opinion: but I hold my own And I do not enter into controversy on the point, because I have nothing to add to the text, written before Prof. Raleigh's book appeared.

recollected in tranquillity," *without* metre. In the form of poetry, which he affects to despise, he is even as these publicans.

These are two sufficiently striking points; but they are not so striking as the third. Wordsworth *is* a great poet, he *has* moments of all but the sublimest—for this argument we need certainly not grudge to say of the sublimest—poetry. He can bathe us in the light of setting suns, and introduce us even to that which never was on sea and land;[1] he can give us the full contact, the full ecstasy, the very "kiss of the spouse." But in no single instance, again, does he achieve these moments, except—as Coleridge has pointed out to some extent, and as can be pointed out without shirking or blenching at one "place" of poetry—at the price of utterly forgetting his theory, of flinging it to the tides and the winds, of plunging and exulting in poetic diction and poetic arrangement.

The comparison fatal to Wordsworth as a critic.

So we can only save Wordsworth the poet—in which salvage there is fortunately not the slightest difficulty—at the expense of Wordsworth the critic. Even in these curious documents of critical suicide there are excellent critical utterances *obiter*, and some even of the propositions in the very argument itself are separately, if not in their context, justifiable. He might, if he could have controlled himself, have made a very valuable exposure, not merely of false poetic diction, but of that extremely and monotonously *mannerised* poetic diction which, though not always bad in its inception and to a certain extent, becomes so by misusage and overusage. He might have developed his polemic against the personification of Gray and others with real advantage. He might have arranged a conspectus of the sins of eighteenth-century poetic diction, which would have been a most valuable pendant to Johnson's array of the extravagances of the Metaphysicals. He might—if he had carried out and corrected that theory of his of the necessity of antecedent "powerful feelings" in the poet—have produced a "Paradox of the Poet" which would have been as true as Diderot's on the Actor, and have had far greater value.

[1] I am well acquainted with the glosses on this famous phrase.

But he did none of these things; and what he did do is itself not even a paradox—it is a paralogism.

Other critical places in Coleridge.

How much better Coleridge comes out of this affair has already been partly said. But these concluding chapters[1] of the *Biographia*, though certainly his capital critical achievement, are very far from being his only one. Indeed, next to his poetical, his critical work is Coleridge's greatest: and with all his everlasting faults of incompleteness, digression, cumbrousness of style,[2] and what not, it gives him a position inferior to no critic, ancient or modern, English or foreign. But it is scattered all over his books, and it would not be ill done if some one would extract it from the mass and set it together. In surveying such examples of it as are here most important, we shall take the convenient Bohn edition of Coleridge's Prose, following the contents of its volumes, but supplementing them to no small extent with the very interesting and only recently printed notes which Mr Ernest Coleridge published as *Anima Poetæ*, and with a glance at the *Letters*.

The rest of the Biographia.

Coleridge himself, at the very beginning of the *Biographia*, has indicated the discussion of the question of Poetic Diction as the main point which he had in view; but, with all its gaps and all its lapses, the whole book is among the few which constitute the very Bible of Criticism. The opening, with its famous description of the author's education in the art under the merciless and yet so merciful ferule of Boyer or Bowyer; the reference to Bowles—so little important in himself and on Arnoldian principles, so infinitely important to "*them*," and so to history and to us, the "us" of every subsequent time; the personal digressions on himself and on Wordsworth and on Southey—are among

[1] "Concluding" in strictness they are not, for Coleridge, in one of his whims, chose to transfer *Satyrane's Letters* from *The Friend* to be a sort of coda to the *Biographia*, tipped it with the rather brutish sting of the *Critique on Bertram*, and attempted *Verschnung* with a mystical peroration. But the thing really and logically ends with the words "Betty Foy," *sub fin.*, chap xxi.

[2] He somewhere sighs for Southey's command of terse crisp sentences, and compares his own to "Surinam toads with young ones sprouting and hanging about them as they go."

"the topmost towers of Ilion," the best illustrations of that "English fashion of criticism" of which, as has been said, Dryden laid the foundations nearly a century and a half earlier by uniting theory with elaborate, and plentiful, and apparently indiscriminate, examples from practice.

One seldom feels inclined to be more angry[1] with Coleridge's habit of "Prommy pas Payy"[2] than in reference to that introduction to the *Ancient Mariner*—dealing with the supernatural, and with the difference between Imagination and Fancy—to which he coolly refers the reader as if it existed,[3] just before the actual examination of Wordsworth's theories in the *Biographia*, and after the long digressions, Hartleian, biographical proper, and what not, which fill the second division of the book. But that one does well to be angry is not quite so certain. The discussion would probably have been the reverse of methodical, and it is very far from unlikely that everything good in it is actually cast up here, or there, on the "Rich Strand" of his actual work. To return to that work,[4] there is little criticism in the extraordinary mingle-mangle of religion, politics, and philosophy, of "Bell and Ball: Ball and Bell," Maria Schoening and Dr Price, called *The Friend*, whichever of its two forms[5] be taken. At the beginning there are one or two remarks which seem

The Friend.

[1] An agreeable American critic, Miss Agnes Repplier, once remarked that Coleridge must have been "a very beatable child" This beatability continued till his death. you can only worship him in the spirit of the Portuguese sailor towards his saints.

[2] Mrs General Baynes of the Honourable Mrs Loldero in *The Adventures of Philip* chap xx.

[3] Mr Dykes Campbell (whose threading of the maze and piecing of the ends of Coleridgiana is a standing marvel) thought, or seemed to think, that the Introduction grew into the *Biographia* itself.

[4] *Satyrane's Letters* themselves contain a good deal of criticism in and out of the interview with Klopstock (p. 270 *sq*, ed cit), where the credit is claimed by some for Wordsworth. The *Critique on Bertram* opens well on the "Don Juan" story, but the rest of it is not *muy hermosa cosa*, combining, as it does, that snarling and carping tone, against which Coleridge is always and justly protesting, with more than a suspicion of personal spite For *Bertram* had been preferred to *Zapolya*.

[5] The usually known reprint of the 2nd ed. of 1818 is very different from the original, published in the extraordinary fashion described by Coleridge himself in the *Biographia*, during 1809-10, and collected in volume form thereafter. This latter is perhaps the better worth reading. It is at any rate

to promise matter of our kind, and there is some good Shakespeare comment at p. 299: but that is about all.

Aids to Reflection, &c.

Neither should we expect (save on the principle that in Coleridge the unexpected very generally happens) anything in the *Aids to Reflection* or the *Confessions of an Enquiring Spirit*, though in the first there are some of the usual girds at anonymous reviewing, and the second is important enough for that equivocal if not bastard variety of our kind which has "Biblical" or "Higher" tacked before it. But the three remaining volumes[1] are almost compact of our matter, while there is not a little of it, and of the very best quality, in the *Anima Poetæ*.

The Lectures on Shakespeare, &c.

The great storehouse next to the *Biographia* is, of course, the *Lectures on Shakespeare* with their satellite fragments, unsatisfactory as are the conditions under which we have all these things. There is perhaps no more astounding example of the tricks of self-deception than Coleridge's statement to Allsop that he had "*written*" three volumes of five hundred pages each, containing a complete critical history of the English drama, and "requiring neither addition, omission, nor correction—nothing but mere arrangement." What we actually have of his whole critical work, outside the *Biographia*, consists of perhaps one-third that amount of his own and other people's notes of Lectures, very rarely consecutive at all, requiring constant omission because of repetition, and defying the art of the most ingenious *diaskeuast* to get them into anything like order, and of a smaller but still considerable mass of *Marginalia*, pocket-book entries, and fragments of the most nondescript kinds. And we know from indisputable testimony by persons

a confirmation of the at first sight immoral maxim that you should always buy a book you want, whether you can afford it or not. Thirty years ago it was not common but comparatively cheap, now, alas! it is both uncommon and very dear.

[1] The editor of these, the late Mr Thomas Ashe (author of a poem far too little read—*The Sorrows of Hypsypyle*), took much pains with them; and if he could have kept back a few flings, would have deserved unqualified thanks. "Never mind God's will" may be a noble counsel, or an unlucky advice to run worse than your head against worse than a stone wall. But it is certainly out of place in very brief and rare notes on a classical author.

who actually heard the *Lectures* which these notes represent, that if we possessed reports *in extenso* by the most accurate and intelligent of reporters, things would be not so very much better, because of Coleridge's incurable habit of apology, digression, anticipation, and repetition. That he found a written lecture an intolerable trammel, and even notes irksome, if he stuck close to them, we can readily believe. Many, if not most, lecturers would agree with him. But it is given to few people, and certainly was not given to him, to speak *extempore* on such subjects in a fashion which will bear printing. And his lectures have, as we have said, only very rarely had even the chance of standing this.

Their chaotic character

Nevertheless, we are perhaps not in reality so very much worse off. Extreme method in criticism is something of a superstition, and, as we have seen, the greatest critical book of the world, that of Longinus, has, as we possess it, very little of this, and does not appear ever to have had very much. The critic does his best work, not in elaborating theories which will constantly break down or lead him wrong when they come into contact with the myriad-sided elusiveness of Art and Humanity, but in examining individual works or groups of work, and in letting his critical steel strike the fire of mediate axioms and *aperçus* from the flint of these. It does the recipient rather good than harm to have to take the trouble of selecting, co-ordinating, and adjusting such things for himself; at any rate, he escapes entirely the danger of that deadly bondage to a cut-and-dried scheme which was the curse of the Neo-classic system. And there is no critic who provides these examinations and *aperçus* and *axiomata media* more lavishly than Coleridge.[1]

[1] The question—a puzzle like other *Quæstiones Estesianæ*—about the exact numbers and dates of Coleridge's Shakespearian courses is not for us. It is enough to say that our extant materials (consisting, in regard to some lectures, of notes and reports from several different sources) chiefly, if not wholly, concern two courses delivered in London (1811-12 and 1818), and one at Bristol, 1813-14. Of the Royal Institution Lectures of 1806-7, on which he relied (throwing them even farther back) to prove his priority to Schlegel, nothing at all, unluckily, is preserved. Indeed Mr Dykes Campbell insisted, and seems to have almost proved, that none at all were delivered till Jan 1808. And of these we have only Crabb Robinson's brief references.

I remember still, with amusement after many years, the words of, I suppose, a youthful reviewer who, admitting that an author whom he was reviewing had applied the method of Coleridge as to Shakespeare, &c., with some skill and even some originality, hinted that this method was quite *vieux jeu*, and that modern criticism was taking and to take an entirely different line. And I have been grateful to that reviewer ever since for giving me a mental smile whenever I think of him. That his new critical Evangel —it was the "scientific" gospel of the late M. Hennequin, if "amid the memories long outworn Of many-*volumed eve and* morn" I do not mistake—has itself gone to the dustbin meanwhile does not matter, and is not the cause of the smile. The risibility is in the notion that any great criticism can ever be obsolete. We may, we must, we ought sometimes to differ with Aristotle and Longinus, with Quintilian and Scaliger, with Patrizzi and Castelvetro, with Dryden and Johnson, with Sainte-Beuve and Arnold. But what is good in them —and even what, though not so intrinsically good, is injured only by system and point of view, by time and chance and fatality—remains a possession for ever. "The eternal substance of their greatness" is of the same kind (although it be less generally recognised or relished) as the greatness of creation. *La Mort n'y mord.*

and preciousness.

Of such matter Coleridge provides us with abundance everywhere, and perhaps most on Shakespeare. He acknowledges his debts to Lessing, and was perhaps unduly anxious to deny any to the Schlegels; but he has made everything that he may have borrowed his own, and he has wealth untold that is not borrowed at all. He can go wrong like other people. His favourite and constantly repeated denunciation of Johnson's couplet—

> "Let Observation with extensive view
> Survey mankind from China to Peru"—

as "bombast and tautology," as equivalent to "let observation with extensive observation survey mankind extensively," is

not only unjust but *actually unintelligent*,[1] and probably due only to the horror of eighteenth-century personification, intensified in Coleridge by the fact that in his own early poems he had freely indulged therein.

Some noteworthy things in them: general,

But on the very opposite page[2]—in the very corresponding lines which shut up on this carping when the book is closed—we read, "To the young I would remark that it is always unwise to judge of anything by its defects: the first attempt ought to be to discover its excellences." I could find nothing better for the motto of this book, I cannot imagine anything better as a corrective of the faults of Neo-classic critics—as a "Take away that bauble!" the stop-watch. Again, observe the admirable separation of poet and dramatist in Lecture vii. of the 1811 course;[3] the remarks (suggested perhaps by Lessing, but in no respect an echo of him) on poetry and painting in the Ninth;[4] and the altogether miraculous "character" of Ariel which follows.[5] The defences of Shakespeare's puns are always consummate[6]—in fact, "Love me, love my pun," should be one of the chief articles of a Shakespearian Proverb-book. In the notes referring (or supposed to refer) to the course of 1818, variations of the *Biographia* (published the year before) were sure to occur and do; one of the most noteworthy being the expansion and application of the idea of "suspension of disbelief."[7] Note, too, the acuteness in the censure[8] (with half-apologies) of the absurd stage-directions which characterised German, and have since characterised Scandinavian, drama.

[1] This perhaps should, and can very shortly, be demonstrated.—Observation may be either broad and sweeping, or minute and concentrated; Johnson specifies the former kind in the last half of the first line. Observation may be directed to men, to things, &c; it is to mankind that he wishes it directed, and he says so in the first half of the second. Further, as this is too abstract, he gives the poetic and imaginative touch by filling in the waste atlas, with "China" and "Peru," with the porcelain and the pigtails, the llamas and the gold associated with mankind in these countries. And in the name of Logic, and Rhetoric and Poetry into the bargain, "Why should he not?"

[2] P. 73, ed cit. Goethe, of course, was of the same opinion.

[3] P. 89

[4] P. 133.

[5] P. 139 *sq.*

[6] *Fg*, p. 152 *sq.*

[7] P. 207.

[8] P. 213.

Of the separate notes on Shakespeare's Plays it is impossible to say much here: and indeed it is not necessary. They are to be read—if possible in conjunction with the plays themselves—by everybody: to digest them into a formal treatise would be perhaps impossible, and, as hinted above, would not be a testimonial to their value if it were possible. But their great merit, next to their individual felicity, is the constant cropping up of those *aperçus* of a more general, though not too general, cast which have been noticed.

and particular.

Coleridge never admires Shakespeare too much; but the Devil's Advocate may perhaps make something of a count against him that he is often apt to depress others by a comparison, which is not in the least necessary On Ben Jonson he is rather inadequate than unjust; but he is certainly unjust to Beaumont and Fletcher, and I almost fear that his injustice, like his more than justice to Massinger, may be set down to extra-literary causes. It is extraordinary that such a critic should have used the language that he uses of Florimel in *The Maid of the Mill*[1] Her devices to preserve her honour are extravagant: this extravagance, as compared with the perfect *naturalness* of Shakespeare, is the constant note of "the twins", and if Coleridge had confined himself to bringing it out, there would have been no more to be said. But his remarks are here not merely unjust, they are silly. And yet here, too, we could find the priceless *obiter dicta*, that on words that have made their way despite precisian objection,[2] those on metre[3] almost always, and others.

Coleridge on other dramatists.

The motes fly thick for us in the *Table Talk*; and as they are clearly headed and indexed in the edition referred to, there is the less need of additional specification, while there is, here as everywhere, a good deal of repetition.[4] But one must point in passing to the striking contrast

The Table Talk.

[1] P. 441.

[2] P. 412

[3] *Eg*, pp 426, 427.

[4] All men who write for the periodical press must almost necessarily repeat themselves, and Hazlitt (whose work often comes to us directly from the press itself) is not so very much less peccant in this kind than Coleridge Coleridge's own method exposes the peccadillo ruthlessly. The "Let Observation" criticism occurs several times the story about the Falls of Lanark and the man who, beginning with "majestic," spoilt it by "very

of Schiller's "material sublime"[1] (and Coleridge was not inclined to undervalue Schiller[2]) with Shakespeare's economy of means; the pertinent, though by no means final, question, "If you take from Virgil his diction and metre, what do you leave him?"[3] the remarks on Spenser's "swan-like movement",[4] a remarkable cluster of literary dicta in the entry for Midsummer-Day 1827 (when H. N. says that his uncle talked "a volume"), to be supplemented by another sheaf on July 12; the contrast of Milton and Shakespeare,[5] the remarks on Rabelais,[6] the wonderfully pregnant one as to the "three silent revolutions in England",[7] those on Latin Literature,[8] on the evolutionary quality of genius;[9] another great *obiter dictum*,[10] that "Great minds are never in the wrong, but in consequence *of being in the right imperfectly*," which is truest of all in criticism itself, yet another,[11] "To please me, a poem must be either music or sense: if it is neither, I confess I cannot interest myself in it"; and, above all, that on Tennyson[12]—one of the *loci classici* of warning to the greatest critics to distrust themselves when they are judging the poetry of the "younger generations" And if we cannot help reproachfully ejaculating "Æschylus!" when he denies[13] sublimity to the Greeks, let us again remember that Æschylus was strangely *occulted* to the whole Neo-classic age, and that it is very much Coleridge's own doing that we of the last two or three generations have re-discovered him.

The few contributions, shortly supplemented from MS, to Southey's *Omniana* give little, but the volume now entitled *Miscellanies, Æsthetic and Literary*, is very nearly all ours. Much of it, however, is repetition in apparent title, and a good deal of the rest does not quite answer expectations. The general *Essays on the Fine Arts* with which

The Miscellanies.

pretty," over and over again. Nor is this repetition merely due to the chaotic state of his publications. It seems to have been a congenital bias, as testified to in his conversation quite early

[1] P. 15, *ed. cit*
[2] *V. infra* on *Letters*.
[3] P. 38. [4] P. 45.
[5] P 74. [6] P 97
[7] P 158 These were, "When the professions fell off from the Church; when literature fell off from the professions, and when the press fell off from literature."
[8] P 164 *sq.* [9] P. 177.
[10] P 183 [11] P 201
[12] P. 214. [13] P 174, *v. sup*

it opens (and of which the author, who had lost them, entertained that perhaps rather exaggerated idea which we usually entertain of lost loves, books, fishes, &c.) possess in abundance Coleridge's uniquely stimulating quality, but, perhaps in not much less abundance, his extreme desultoriness and want of definition, save of the most indefinite character. The essay on the *Prometheus* which follows excites (though hardly in the wary mind, Estesianly "alphabeted," as he would himself say) great expectations. But it is scarcely too much to say that on this—the most purely poetical of all extant Greek dramas, a miracle of sublimity and humanity mingled, and the twin pillar, with the *Agamemnon*, of its author's claim to be one of the greatest poets of the world—Coleridge has not a word to say that even touches the poetry. He is philosophico-mythological from the egg to the apple; and one is bound to add that he here shows one of his gravest drawbacks as a critic. The new fragments, however, of the 1818 lectures are full of good matter, on Cervantes especially, perhaps a little less specially on Dante, on Robinson Crusoe very particularly indeed, on Rabelais and Sterne and Donne: while these are taken up and multiplied in interest by the "Marginalia," with which the literary part of the book concludes, and which contain, on Daniel and Chapman and Selden, Browne and Fuller, Fielding and Junius, some of the best known and nearly of the best of their author's critical work. Here also, and here only, do we find much on Milton, Coleridge's rather numerous lectures on him having left surprisingly little trace. He is, though a fervent admirer, not quite at his happiest.

The Lecture On Style.

But the most interesting piece that the book contains is the Lecture on Style, with its satellite note (a small but sparkling star) on the "Wonderfulness of Prose"[1] The author's definition of his most elusive subject is indeed not only not satisfying, but (unless you remember his own dictum about being "right incompletely") demonstrably and almost astoundingly *un*satisfactory. "Style is of course nothing but the art of conveying the meaning appropriately and with perspicuity." One feels inclined in one's haste to

[1] Miscellanies, pp. 175-187 *ed. cit.*

say, "That is just what it is *not*"; one must cool down a little before one can modify this to "Style begins exactly where" the art, &c., "leaves off," and one can perhaps never come nearer to an accommodation than "The necessary preliminary to Style, and one essential ingredient of it," is "the art," and so forth.[1] It was no doubt this side of the matter that Coleridge was looking at, and at this he stopped, as far as his general way of looking at the thing went. But the main interest of the piece does not lie here. He bases his definition on, and tries to adjust it to, a survey of English style, which is probably one of the first of the kind ever attempted, after the notion of the Queen Anne men being the crown and flower of English had been given up. And though his history, as was natural, is sometimes shaky, and his conclusions are often to be disputed and even overthrown, the whole is of the highest value, not merely as a *point de repère* historically, but as an introduction to the consideration of Style itself.

The Anima Poetæ.

But the book of Coleridge which, next to the *Biographia*, is of most importance to the student of his criticism, is perhaps the long-posthumous *Anima Poetæ*. Mr Ernest Coleridge, in his preface to the *Anima* itself, says that the *Biographia* is now little read. I hope he is wrong: but if he is right it would explain many things.

This volume—a collection of extracts from Coleridge's pocket-books—appeared[2] more than sixty years after the poet's death, and the notice taken of it was comparatively small. That it contains passages of ornate prose superior to anything in the previously published writings is interesting, but for our purpose almost irrelevant: it is not so that it gives the fullest and clearest side-lights on Coleridge's criticism that we have. The earliest years (and pages) are not very fertile, though I subjoin some references[3] which will assist the reader in looking them up. But from p. 119 for some fifty pages onward (it is significant that the time of writing, 1805-8, corresponds

[1] It is odd, but useful, to remember Coleridge's fancy for stating propositions algebraically. If his definition were true, $a = b$ or even $(a+b)^2 = a^2 + 2ab + b^2$ would be style at its very acme (cf. Addison in *Spec* 62 on Euclid and Wit).

[2] London, 1895.

[3] Pp. 4, 5, 30, 35, 59, 82, 88.

with Coleridge's absence in Malta, &c., from which we have little or no published work) the entries are "diamondiferous." On French poetry (mistaken but so informingly!);[1] on Cowper;[2] on the absurdity of calling etymology (how much more philology!) a "science";[3] on the attitude to poetry and to books;[4] on Leibnitz's "profound sentence" that "men's intellectual errors consist chiefly in *denying*";[5] on the "instinctive passion in the mind for one word to express one act of feeling" (Flaubert fifty years before date); on pseudo-originality,—Coleridge is at his very acme. The *yeast* of criticism—the reagent which, itself created by the contact of the critical with the creative, re-creates itself in all fit media—has never been more remarkably represented than here.

And great as are these passages, there are many others (though not so many in close context) to match them. See the entry (which I venture to think has been wrongly side-headed as "A plea for poetic license") at the foot of p 165 as to the desire of carrying things to a greater height of pleasure and admiration than they are susceptible of—the old "wish to write better than you can," the "loss of sight between this and the other style."[6] See the astonishing anticipation of the best side of Ruskinism in the note on architecture and climate,[7] and that on poetry and prose and on the "esenoplastic" power;[8] and that on somebody (Byron?) who was "splendid" everywhere, but nowhere poetical,[9] and that on scholastic terms,[10] and that on the slow comprehension of certain (in this case Dantean) poetry.[11] They are all *apices criticismi*—not easy reading, not for the running man, but for him who reads them fitly, certain to bear fruit if he reads them early, to coincide with his own painful and struggling attainments if he reads them late.

[1] P 118 *sq.* [2] P 121.
[3] P 123 [4] Pp 127 130.
[5] P 147 Cf *sup.*, p. 223
[6] Coleridge quotes neither Quintilian nor Dante, and was probably not thinking of either. But *we* think of them.
[7] P. 194.
[8] *I.e.*, "The faculty which makes many into one"—the creative imagination. This form is much better than "esemplastic," which Coleridge adopts in the *Biographia*, for there one stumbles over the second syllable, and supposes it to be the preposition *in*.
[9] P 258. [10] Pp. 274, 275.
[11] P 293.

Nor must the *Letters*[1] be omitted in any sufficient survey of Coleridge's criticism. That at one early period[2] he apparently thought Schiller more sublime than Milton is not in the least to his discredit. He was twenty-two; he was, I think, demonstrably in love with *three* ladies[3] at once, and extremely uncertain which of two of them he should marry—a state of mind neither impossible nor unnatural, but likely to lead to considerable practical difficulties, and to upset the judgment very decidedly. His minor critical remarks at this very time on Southey's poems are excellent. That Bowles should be "divine" and Burke "sad stuff"[4] does not matter—we can explain both statements well enough. But how many men of three- or four-and-twenty (or for that matter of three- or four-and-seventy) were there, are there, have there ever been, who could ask, "Why pass an *Act of Uniformity* against poets?"[5] one of the great critical questions of the world, and never, so far as I remember, formulated so pertinently before. It is odd that he should have forgotten (if he knew) Sidney, in his singular and pedantic complaint that to give the name Stella to a woman is "unsexing" it, and his supposition that "Swift is the authority."[6] But another astonishing critical truth is that "Poetry ought not always to have its *highest* relish",[7] and yet another in the contrast[8] of himself with Southey, "I think too much to be a poet; he too little to be a great poet," unjust as the application is in the first half, and yet again on metre itself "*implying* a passion,"[9] a passage worth comparing with, and in some points better than, the *Biographia* (with which compare also pp 386, 387) Nor these alone, but many others later—the criticism on Wordsworth's

The Letters.

[1] Ed E H. Coleridge, 2 vols., London, 1895.

[2] i. 97, *ed cit*

[3] Miss Mary Evans, Miss Sarah Fricker, and an uncertainly Christian-named Miss Brunton. *More in excelsis Coleridgeano* he, being engaged to No. 2 and desiring to marry No 1, "hoped that he might be cured" by the "exquisite beauty and uncommon accomplishments" of No. 3. See a page or two (89) earlier.

[4] P 157.

[5] P 163.

[6] P. 181.

[7] P 196.

[8] P 210. This was just after the as yet hollow healing of the first great quarrel in 1796

[9] P 384. These passages are most important as showing how *early* Coleridge dissented from Wordsworth.

"Cintra" pamphlet;[1] that on the inadequacy of one style for all purposes,[2] the remarks on stage illusion,[3]—might be cited.

The Coleridgean position and quality

When the first volume of this history was published, an excellent scholar said to me, "How will you ever finish that book? Why, Coleridge himself would take a volume!" There is something to be said for the hyperbole. In this and that critic, of these many ages which we have essayed to survey, we may find critical graces which are not in him; but in all, save two, we shall find corresponding deficiencies. In all the ancient critics, save these two, the limitation of the point of view, the hamper of the scheme, are disastrously felt, nor is either Aristotle or Longinus quite free from them. In the greatest of the sixteenth-century Italians these limitations recur, and are repeated in most of those of the seventeenth and eighteenth. Dante is of the greatest, but he touches the subject very briefly and from a special side. Dryden is great, but he is not fully informed, and comes too early for his own point of view. Fontenelle is very nearly great, but he has the same drawbacks, and adds to them those of an almost, perhaps a quite, wilful eccentricity and capriciousness. Lessing is great, but he has fixed his main attention on the least literary parts of literature; while Goethe later is great but a great pedant.[4] Hazlitt is great; but Coleridge was Hazlitt's master, and beside the master the pupil is insular and parochial in range and reading if not in spirit. In Sainte-Beuve himself we want a little more theory; some more enthusiasm; a higher and more inspiriting choice of subjects. And in Mr Arnold the defects of Fontenelle reappear without Fontenelle's excuse of chronology.

So, then, there abide these three, Aristotle, Longinus, and Coleridge. The defects of the modern, as contrasted with the ancient, man of letters are prominent in Coleridge when we compare him with these his fellows: and so we cannot quite say that he is the greatest of the three. But his range is necessarily wider: he takes in, as their date forbade them to take, all literature in a way which must for centuries to come give

[1] P. 549. [2] P. 557. [3] P. 663. [4] *V. infra*, chap. iii.

him the prerogative. It is astonishing how often, when you have discovered in others of all dates, or (as you may fondly hope) found out for yourself, some critical truth, you will remember that after all Coleridge in his wanderings has found it before, and set it by the wayside for the benefit of those who come after. For all, I believe, of these later days—certainly for all whose mother-tongue is English—Coleridge is the critical author to be turned over by day and by night. Never take him on trust: it is blasphemy to the Spirit of Criticism to do that with any critic. Disagree with him as often as you like, and as you can stand to the guns of your disagreement. But begin with him, continue with him, come back to him after excursions, with a certainty of suggestion, stimulation, correction, edification. *C'est mon métier à moi d'être professeur de littérature*, and I am not going to *parvify* my office But if anybody disestablished us all (with decent pensions, of course), and applied the proceeds of our Chairs to furnishing the boxes of every one who goes up to the University with a copy of the *Biographia Literaria*, I should decline to be the person chosen to be heard against this revolution, though I should plead for the addition of the *Poetics* and of Longinus.

He introduces once for all the criterion of Imagination, realising and disrealising.

And if any one is still dissatisfied with particular critical utterances, and even with the middle axioms interspersed among them, let him remember that Coleridge—not Addison, not the Germans, not any other—is the real introducer into the criticism of poetry of the realising and disrealising Imagination as a criterion. Even a hundred years more after his earliest day as a critic, the doctrine, though much talked of, is apparently little understood. Even such a critic as the late Mr Traill, while elsewhere[1] admitting that "on poetic *expression*" Coleridge "has spoken the absolutely last word," almost apologised[2] for his putting on a level "lending the charm of imagination to the real" and "lending the force of reality to the imaginary." He confessed that, "from the point

[1] *Coleridge* ("English Men of Letters," London, 1884), p. 156.

[2] Ibid., pp. 46, 47.

of view of the highest conception of the poet's office there can be no comparison"—where indeed I might also "say ditto to Mr Burke," but in a sense opposite to his. And if, on such a mind and such an appreciation as Mr Traill's, this one-sided interpretation of "the *esenoplastic* faculty" had hold, how much more on others in increasing measure to the present day? The fallacy is due, first, to the hydra-like vivacity of the false idea of *mimesis*, the notion that it is not re-presentation, re-creation *adding* to Nature, but copying her; and, secondly, to the Baconian conception of poetry as a *vinum dæmonum*, a poison with some virtue as a medicine. What power these errors have all our history has shown,—all Histories of Criticism that ever can be written will show if they are written faithfully. But Coleridge has provided—once for all, if it be not neglected—the safeguard against this in his definitions of the two, the co-equal, the co-eternal functions of the exercise of the poetic Imagination.

The "Companions"

In the title of the present chapter I have used the word "companions" in a double sense—the first and special application of it being that in which it is technically applied to the Companions of the Prophet—to the early coadjutors of Mahomet in his struggle with the Koreish. Of these the chief are Southey, Lamb, Leigh Hunt, and Hazlitt, with perhaps as an even closer ally—though unknowing and unknown—William Blake. Then follow companions in the wider sense—associates in the work, who varied from nearly complete alliance, as with Scott, to very distant and lukewarm participation, as in Campbell, and (in literary position) from the captaincy of Scott again and of Shelley to the more than respectable full-privateship of the contributors to the *Retrospective Review*. As for the "Adversaries," they can be more briefly dealt with, for their work was mostly "wood, hay, stubble"; but Gifford and Jeffrey at least could not be excluded here, and a few more may deserve notice. So let the inquiry proceed in this order.

It may seem at first sight curious, and will perhaps always

remain a little so, that we have no collected examples, nor many uncollected but singly substantive pieces, of strictly critical work, from the most widely read and the most industrious of the whole literary group of 1800-1830 in England—from a man who, for eleven years at least, wrote reviews almost wherever he could place them without hurting his conscience, and who for another five-and-twenty was a pillar of one of the greatest of critical periodicals. But Southey's earlier reviewing is for the most part not merely whelmed in the dust-bins of old magazines, but, as his son and biographer complains, extremely difficult to trace even there; and his later was, by choice or by chance (more I think by the former than by the latter), mainly devoted to subjects not purely literary. If that great *Bibliotheca Britannica*[1] (which so nearly existed, and which is a thing lacking in English to this present day, a hundred years later) had come actually into existence, it would hardly have been necessary to look beyond that: as it is, one has the pleasing but rather laborious and lengthy duty of fishing out and piecing together critical expressions from *The Doctor* and other books to some extent, and from the two parallel collections of the *Life and Correspondence*[2] and the *Letters*[3] to a still greater. The process is necessary for a historian of criticism, and the results, if hardly new to him, are interesting enough, but they cannot claim any exhibition at all correspondent to the time taken in arriving at them. Nor will any such historian, if he be wise, complain, for Southey is always delightful, except when he is in his most desperately didactic moods and the Goddess of Dulness only knows how even the most egregious of her children, unless from pure ignorance, has managed to fix on him the title of "dull."

Southey.

That "a man's criticism is the man himself" is almost truer

[1] See *Life and Correspondence*, ii. 316 sq. especially, for Coleridge's magnificent "Spanish Castlery" in connection.

[2] 6 vols., London 1850.

[3] 4 vols., London, 1856. *The Letters to Caroline Bowles* (London, 1881) are even fuller proportionately: and *Omniana*, the *Wesley*, the *Cowper*, *Lyrica*, the *Colloquies*, with almost everything, contribute.

than the original bestowal of the phrase; and it is nowhere truer than with Southey. That astonishing and almost godlike *sanity* which distinguished him, in almost all cases save as regards the *Anti-Jacobin*, Mr Pitt, the Roman Catholic Church, and my Lord Byron (who, by the way, lacked it quite as conspicuously in regard to Southey), is the constant mark of his critical views. Except his over-valuation of Kirke White,[1] which was undoubtedly due to his amiable and lifelong habit of helping lame dogs, I cannot, at the moment or on reflection, think of any critical estimate of his (for that of himself as a poet is clearly out of the question) which is flagrantly and utterly wrong; and I can think of hundreds which are triumphantly right. In respect of older literature, in particular,[2] his catholicity is free from the promiscuousness of Leigh Hunt, and his eclecticism from the caprice of Charles Lamb: while, prejudiced as he can be, I do not remember an instance in which prejudice blinds or blunts his critical faculty as it does Hazlitt's. On all formal points of English poetry he is very nearly impeccable. He may have learnt his belief in substitution and equivalence from Coleridge; but it is remarkable that his defences of it to Wynn[3] are quite early, quite original, and quite sound, while Coleridge's own account long after, in the preface to *Christabel*, is vague and rather wofully incorrect. He knew, of course, far more literary history than any one of his contemporaries — an incalculable advantage — and he could, sometimes at least, formulate general critical maxims well worth the registering.

General characteristics of his Criticism.

[1] But see a very curious glimpse of resipiscence in *Letters*, ii. 171 *sq.*

[2] The projected *Rhadamanthus*, a periodical on something like the lines of the later *Retrospective Review*, was a real loss.

[3] *Letters*, i. 69, and elsewhere, also, I think—*e.g.*, *Life and Corr.*, iv 106. Wynn was evidently a precisian of Byssbism. For other noteworthy critical things in this collection, see i. 173 (Suggestion of Hist. Novels); ii. 91) (Crabbe); 214 (Engl. Hexameters); iii. (the various letters about English Hexameters); iv 47, Sayers' Poems. I give but few here, because the *Letters* have an index. I wish these and my other references may prompt and help some one to examine, at greater length than would be possible or proper here, the literary opinions of the best-read man in England for some fifty years —1790-1840.

Of his regular critical work, however, which can be traced in the *Annual* and *Quarterly Reviews* from the list given by his son at the end of the *Life*, some notice must be taken, though the very list itself is a tell-tale in the large predominance of Travels, Histories, and the like, over pure literature. That he should have made a rule for himself after he became Laureate not to review poetry (save in what may be called an eleemosynary manner) is merely what one would have expected from his unvarying sense of propriety; but there were large ranges of *belles lettres* to which this did not apply. The articles which will best repay the looking up are, in the *Annual*, those on *Gebir*, Godwin's *Chaucer*, Ritson's *Romances*, Hayley, Froissart, *Sir Tristram*, Ellis's *Specimens*, Todd's *Spenser*, and *Ossian;* in the *Quarterly*, those on Chalmers's *Poets*, Sayers, Hayley again, Camoens, and Lope de Vega, with some earlier ones on Montgomery (James, not Robert)[1]

Reviews.

The Doctor also must have its special animadversion, for this strangely neglected and most delightful book is full of critical matter. Its showers of mottoes—star-showers from the central glowing mass of Southey's enormous and never "dead" reading—amount almost in themselves to a critical education for any mind which is fortunate enough to be exposed to them when young, while the saturation of the whole book with literature can hardly fail to produce the same effect. It is lamentable, astonishing, and (the word is not too strong) rather disgraceful that, except the "Three Bears" story, the appendix on the Cats, and perhaps the beautiful early passages on the Doctor's birthplace and family, the book should be practically unknown. But it by no means owes its whole critical value to these borrowed and reset

The Doctor

[1] It is unlucky that Guest's *English Rhythms* came too late in the evening of his day for him to carry out his expressed purpose of reviewing it. He evidently recognised its extraordinary value as a *Thesaurus* and his summary of the earlier part as "worthless" is of course not deliberate or final, though it is a very natural expression in reference to Guest's astonishing heresies on Shakespearian and Miltonic prosody. I know no one—not even Gray—who seems to have had, before the whole range of English verse was known, juster notions on the whole of English prosody. Even his wanderings after hexameters are not fatal.

jewels. The passages of original criticism—direct or slightly "applied"—which it contains are numerous and important. The early accounts of the elder Daniel's library[1] and of Textor's dialogues[2] are valuable; the passage on "Taste and Pantagruelism"[3] much more so. On Sermons,[4] on Drayton,[5] on the Principles of Criticism,[6] on the famous verse-tournament of the Poitiers Flea,[7] on the Reasons for Anonymity,[8] on Mason[9] (for whom Southey manages to say a good word), on Bowdlerising and Modernising, and (by an easy transition) Spenser[10]—the reader will find nuggets, and sometimes whole pockets, of critical gold, the last-mentioned being one of the richest of all. It is to Southey's immortal honour (an honour not sufficiently paid him by some Blakites) that he recognised and quoted at length[11] the magnificent "Mad Song," which is perhaps Blake's most sustained and unbroken piece of pure poetry. His discussion on Styles[12] is of great value while the long account[13] of the plays of Langeveldt (Macropedius), and of our kindred English Morality *Everyman*, shows how admirably his more than once projected Literary Histories would have been executed.

Altogether somewhat impar sibi.

Still, I am bound to say that he conveys to my mind the impression of not quite having his soul bound up in the exercise of his critical function. He was a little too fond of extending his love of books to those which, as Lamb would say, are no books—of giving the children's bread unto dogs. Occasionally, moreover, that want of the highest enthusiasm and sympathy, the highest inspiration, which—after the rather ungracious and ungrateful suggestion of Coleridge—it has been usual to urge against him, and which cannot be wholly disproved, does appear. Some would say that this was due to his enormous reading, and to

[1] *The Doctor* (1 vol., London, 1848), p. 18

[2] P. 34. [3] P. 42.

[4] P. 65. [5] P. 86

[6] P. 99. [7] P. 194.

[8] P. 245. It is curious, by the way, that Southey bewails the absence in English of any synonym for the Spanish *desengaño*. That shows that "disillusionment," one of those strictly analogous and justifiable neologisms which he rightly defends, had not then come into use.

[9] P. 315. [10] P. 379

[11] P. 476. [12] P. 536.

[13] P. 610.

the penal servitude for life to what was mostly hack-work, which fate and his own matchless sense of duty imposed upon him. I do not think so; but of course if it be said that no one with the more translunary fancies, the nobler gusts, could have so enslaved himself, an authority[1] who takes so high a ground must be allowed his splendid say. Anyhow, and on the whole, we must return to the position that Southey does not hold a very high position among English critics, and that it is easier to give plausible reasons for the fact than entirely to understand it[2]

Lamb.

In criticising the criticism of Charles Lamb[3] one has to walk warily; for is he not one of the most justly beloved of English writers, and are not lovers apt to love more well than wisely? I shall only say that if any be an "Agnist," I more. Ever since I can remember reading anything (the circumstance would not have seemed trivial to himself), I have read and revelled in, and for nearly fifty years I have possessed in fee, a copy of the original *Elia* of 1823, in the black morocco coat which it put on, at least seven years before Lamb's death, in 1827. I have also read its contents, and all other attainable *Agnalia*, in every edition in which I have come across them, with introductions by "Thaunson and Jaunson," in and on all sorts of shapes and types and papers and bindings. I have never wearied of read-

[1] Such an authority, for instance, as one of the reviewers of this poor book, who decided that "no man of critical genius" would have attempted to write it.

[2] Some readers may like a few out of hundreds of possible references to *Life and Corr.*, which has no Index: i. 85 (Ariosto and Spenser), 122 (Construction), 316-318 (Chapelain, before and after reading), ii 197 (Greek and Latin taste in poetry), 211, 212 (Modern Ballads), iii 9 (Archaisms and Neologisms); 140 (the Epistles in *Marmion*), 145 *sq.* (Rhyme, &c.), 205 (the purple patch in *Kehama*), 213, 265 (Advice to E Elliott), 277 (blank verse), 295 (Spenser), iv. 301, 338 (very interesting, on a prophesied return of "preciousness" and "metaphysical" style in poetry), v 245 (a never carried out plan of continuing Warton); v 99 (his own method of writing), vi 93 (To Bowles—reasons for not reviewing poetry)

[3] The editions of Lamb in parts are now fortunately very numerous, and there are even several of the whole, some of which have been begun since the text was written It is therefore superfluous to give pages, especially as the individual articles are almost always short. But I generally use the late R. H Shepherd's 1 vol. ed of the *Works* (London, 1875), and Canon Ainger's of the *Letters* (London, 1888).

ing them; I am sure I never shall weary as long as eye and brain last. That Lamb is one of the most exquisite and delightful of critics, as of writers, is a proposition for which I will go to the stake; but I am not prepared to confess him as one of the very greatest in his critical capacity.

His "occultism"

The reasons for this limitation are to be found in two passages of his friend Hazlitt—a ruthless friend enough, but one who seldom goes wrong in speaking of friend or foe, unless under the plain influence of a prejudice which here had not the slightest reason for existing The passages (referred to again elsewhere) are that on "the Occult School" in the "Criticism"[1] and one in the "Farewell"[2] The first speaks of those "who discern no beauties but what are concealed from superficial eyes, and overlook all that are obvious to the vulgar part of mankind" "If an author is utterly unreadable they can read him for ever." "They will no more share a book than a mistress with a friend" "Nothing goes down with them but what is caviare to the multitude," &c. The other, in which Lamb is actually named, contrasts his "surfeit of admiration," the antiquation of his favourites after some ten years, with the "continuity of impression" on which Hazlitt prided himself.

and alleged inconstancy.

I am inclined to think that both these charges—made with what is (for the author) perfect good-humour, and only in the first case slightly exaggerated, as was almost permissible when he was dealing ostensibly with a type not a person—are quite true. One would not indeed have them false; it would be most "miserably wise" economy to exchange Lamb, as he is, for a wilderness of consistent, equitable, catholic mediocrities. As Hazlitt himself admits, *this* "Occult Criticism" does not or need not come from any affectation or love of singularity: indeed, some occult critics "smack of genius and are worth any money." The Lothario part of the indictment, the desertion after enjoyment, is perhaps less easy to authenticate as well as to defend but I think it existed, and was indeed a necessary consequence of the other tendency. If you love merely or mainly as a

[1] *Table Talk*, pp 313, 314, *ed. cit. inf.* [2] *Winterslow*, p. 463, *ed. cit. inf.*

collector, and for rarity,—if not only thus but because others do *not*,—the multiplication of the object or of the taste must necessarily have a disgusting effect. "The bloom is *off* the rye." And I should say that, beyond all reasonable question, there is a distinct character of *eccentricity* in the strict sense, of whim, of will-worship, about many, if not most, of Lamb's preferences. There is no affectation about him, but there is what might be affectation in another man, and has been affectation in many and many another. Take the most famous instances of his criticism—the defence of Congreve and Wycherley, the exaltation of Ford, the saying (productive of endless tribulation to the matter-of-fact) that Heywood is "a prose Shakespeare," the enthusiasm shown towards that rather dull-fantastic play *A Fair Quarrel*, while the magnificence of the same author's *Changeling* was left to Leigh Hunt to find out—these and other things distinctly show the *capriccio*. Lamb, not Hunt, is really the "Ariel of Criticism," and he sometimes pushes tricksiness to a point which would, we fear, have made his testy Highness of Milan rather angry It was probably in conversation rather than in writing that his fickleness showed itself: we can never conceive Lamb *writing* down anything that he had ever written up. But something of disillusionment must, as has been said, almost necessarily have resulted from the peculiarly whimsical character of his inamoration. Canon Ainger has noted, as the distinguishing features of Lamb's critical power, "width and versatility." One differs with the Master[1] of the Temple unwillingly and *suo periculo* but neither term seems to me quite appropriate. "Width" implies continuity, and there is little of this in Lamb: "versatility" implies a power of turning to what you will, and Lamb, I think, loved, not as he would but as he could not help it at the time.

The early Letters.

But he wants nothing save method and certainty (in response —not even this in touch), and he has critical graces of his own which make him all but as great as Coleridge or Hazlitt, and perhaps more delightful than either. In his very earliest critical utterances, in the Letters to Coleridge and Southey especially, much of this delightfulness

[1] Now, as he, alas! became, between pen and press, the *late* Master.

displays itself as well as its two parents—Lamb's unconquerable originality of thought and feeling, and his unsurpassable quaintness and piquancy of phrase The critic is, as is inevitable from his youth, and from the as yet very imperfect reading which he frankly confesses, a little uncertain and inadequate. His comparative estimates of Coleridge and Southey, Southey and Milton, Southey and Cowper, and of all or most of these poets and others in themselves, exhibit an obviously unregulated compass—a tendency to correct impression rather overmuch, because the first striking off of it has been hasty. But this soon disappears: and though the eccentricity above noted rather increases than lessens with years, the critic's real virtues—those just indicated—appear ever and ever more distinctly and more delightfully.

In a certain sense they never appear to greater advantage than in the brief notes included in the *Specimens of Dramatic Poets* (1808) Everything necessary to excite Lamb's critical excellence united here,—actual merit, private interest (for, though the study of the minor as well as of the major Elizabethans had been progressing steadily, and "Dodsley" had gone through several editions, yet the authors were caviare to the general still); presence of the highest excellence; and, as we see from the *Letters*, years of familiarity and fondness on the part of the critic.

The Specimens

The *Notes* themselves pretend to no method, and fulfil their pretence very strictly. Lamb is distinctly inferior to both his great friends and rivals in *grasp* His appreciation is tangential—though in a different sense from that in which Hazlitt applies the word to Coleridge. Lamb is not so much desultory or divagatory as apt to touch his subject only at one (sometimes one very small) point. The impact results in a spark of the most ardent heat and glowing light, but neither heat nor light *spreads* much. Sometimes, as is inevitable in this style of criticism, he can be only disappointing. one is inclined to be pettish with him for seeing nothing to notice in the vast and shadowy sweep of *Tamburlaine* save an interesting evidence that Pistol was not merely jesting. Nor is perhaps Barabas "a mere monster brought in with a large painted

nose to please the rabble." But you must get out of this mood if you are to enjoy Lamb. How he makes it all up, and more than up, on *Faustus*, and (when he comes to Dekker) on *Old Fortunatus!* "Beware! beware!" is the cry here also, lest we steal too much of his honeydew. Fortunately it has been so widely used, even for the vulgar purpose of sweetening school-editions, that it has become generally accessible. The famous passage on the Witches, which Hazlitt loved to quote, is perhaps as characteristic as any: the Webster and Chapman notices are perhaps critically the best.

Next in order of time come the articles contributed to the *Reflector*, especially the magnificent paper on "The Tragedies of Shakespeare" and their actableness. I may be prejudiced in favour of this, by caring myself infinitely to read the drama, and not caring at all to see it acted, but this objection could not be made to Lamb, who was notoriously a playgoer, and an eager though unfortunate aspirant to the honours of the boards. The piece, of course, shows some traces of the *capriccio*,—especially in the confession of being utterly unable to appreciate "To be or not to be," because of its being "spouted." Shakespeare himself might have taught Lamb better, in a certain passage about age and custom. To learn, to hear, nay, direst curse of all! to *teach* "To be or not to be" leaves it perfect Cleopatra. But Lamb must be Lamb and keep his Lambish mind: and he keeps it here to great purpose. The *Lear* passage, the best known and the most generally admitted as forcible, is not more so than those on the *Tempest* and on *Macbeth*. They all come to that position of the true critic (as I believe it to be), which has been indicated elsewhere, that drama *may* be literature but is not bound to be—that they are different things, and that the points which drama need not have, and perhaps to which it cannot do full justice, are in literature of the greatest importance.

The Garrick Play Notes.

It is natural, though they were written so long afterwards, to take the "Notes on the Garrick Plays" with these other forerunners and suggesters, nor do I think that so much of the "first sprightly running" is lost as has sometimes been thought. How Lamb-like and how pleasant is

the phrase on Day's quaint *Parliament of Bees*—"the very air seems replete with humming and buzzing melodies." (Most obvious, of course: only that nobody had *met* it before!) And the imploration to Novello to set the song from Peele's *Arraignment;* and the fine and forcible plea for the minor Elizabethans in the note to *The Two Angry Women of Abingdon* (a play, by the way, every fresh reading of which makes one more thoroughly agree with Lamb). The fewness and slightness of these notes should not be allowed to obscure their quality.

Miscellaneous Essays.

It was seldom that the bee-like nature of Lamb's own genius could settle long on a single flower; and his regular "studies" are few, and not always of his very best. The actual state of the paper on *The Excursion,* after its mangling by Gifford, illustrates the wisdom of that editorial counsel, "Always keep a copy," which the contributor (alas! we are all guilty) doth so unwisely neglect; and the two best that we have among the miscellaneous essays are those on Wither and on Defoe's secondary novels. It is difficult to say which is the better: but the singular unlikeness of the two subjects (except that both Wither and Defoe are eminently *homely*) shows what I presume Canon Ainger meant by the "versatility" of the critic's genius. Both are admirable, but most characteristically "promiscuous." The Defoe piece avowedly gives stray notes; but the "Wither," though it has a beginning, has very little middle, and no end at all.

Elia.

As for *Elia* itself, it is fortunately too well known to need any analysis or much detailed survey. In the first and more famous collection the literary element is rather a saturation than a separable contingent. Except the "Artificial Comedy" paper, there is none with a definitely literary title or ostensible subject: while this itself starts in the closest connection with the preceding paper on Actors, and is dramatic rather than literary. But the "saturation" is unmistakable. As one turns the beloved and hundred-times-read pages, the constant undercurrent of allusion to books and reading strikes one none the less—perhaps indeed the more—for familiarity, whether it is at some depth, as in places, or whether it bubbles up to and over the surface, as in

"Oxford in the Vacation," and the book-borrowing close of "The Two Races of Men," and that other close of that "New Year's Eve" which so unnecessarily fluttered Southey's orthodoxy, and not a little of "All Fool's Day"; and in quotations everywhere. But in the *Last Essays* Lamb exhibits the master-passion much more openly. The "Detached Thoughts on Books and Reading" of course lays all concealment aside,—it is a regular *affiche*, as are also "The Genteel Style in Writing" and (most of all) "On Some Sonnets of Sir Philip Sidney—the valiant and triumphant sally against Hazlitt—with not a little of "Old China" itself. Everywhere there is evident the abiding, unfailing love of "the book"

The later Letters.

And if we recur to the *Letters* we shall find the most abundant proof of this quality. How admirable are those criticisms[1] of the second edition of *Lyrical Ballads* which, because they are not "neat" praise, roused the poetic irritability, not merely of Wordsworth, whose views respecting the reception of his own verse were always Athanasian, but of Coleridge, who had, at any rate, intervals of self-perception! How sound the judgment of Mrs Barbauld and of Chapman (a pleasing pair) to Coleridge himself on Oct. 23, 1802![2] How sure the touch of the finger on that absurdity in Godwin's *Chaucer* which has been so frequently copied since, "the fondness for filling out the picture by supposing what Chaucer did and how he felt"![3] The choicest of his observations are naturally those to Coleridge, almost *passim*: but the vein is so irrepressible that he indulges it even in writing to Wordsworth, though he knew perfectly well that the most favourable reception could only be a mild wonder that people could think or talk of any literature, and especially any poetry, other than "W. W's" own. Even his experiences in 1800 could not prevent him from handling[4] the Poems of 1815 with the same "irreverent *parrhesia*" which he uses immediately after[5] also to Southey on *Roderick* as compared with *Kehama*

[1] *Letters*, ed Ainger, i 162 *sq*, with the most amusing additional letter in the Appendix, p. 328 *sq*, on the wrath of Wordsworth and Coleridge.

[2] Ibid., i. 189, 190.

[3] P 207.

[4] P 286 *sq*.

[5] P. 290.

and *Madoc*. His famous appreciation of Blake[1] (of whom 'tis pity that he knew no more) is one of the capital examples of pre-established harmony between subject and critic. That he could not, on the other hand, like Shelley, is not unsusceptible of explanations by no means wholly identical, though partly, with those which account for Hazlitt's error. Lamb did not like the word "unearthly" (he somewhere objects to its use) and he did not like the thing unearthliness. The regions where, as Mr Arnold has it, "thin, thin, the pleasant human noises sound," were not his haunt. Now Blake always has a homely domestic everyday side close to his wildest prophetisings,[2] and Shelley has not. On the other hand, how completely does he grasp even Cervantes in the few *obiter dicta* to Southey on Aug 19, 1825,[3] and how instantly he seizes the "charm one cannot explain" in *Rose Aylmer*.[4] And his very last letter concerns a book, and a book on poetry, Phillips's *Theatrum Poetarum*.

Uniqueness of Lamb's critical style

His love was, as we said, "of the book," perhaps, rather than, as in Hazlitt's case, "of literature." The Advocatus Diaboli may once more suggest that to Lamb the book was a very little too much on a level with the tea-pot and the engraving—that he had a shade in excess of the collector's feeling about him. But the Court will not call upon the learned gentleman to say anything more on that head. It is time to acknowledge, without reservations or provisos, the unique quality of "Elia's" critical appreciation. Very much of this quality—if a quality be separable into parts—arises from his extraordinary command of phrase,—the phrase elaborate without affectation, borrowed yet absolutely individual and idiosyncratic, mannered to the *n*th, but never mannerised, in which, though he might not have attained to it without his great seventeenth-century masters, he stands original and alone. In no critic perhaps—not even in Mr Pater—does style count for so much as in Lamb, in none certainly is it more distinctive, and, while never monotonous, more homogeneous, uniform, instantly recognisable and self-

[1] Ibid., ii. 105.

[2] Even as the exquisite figure of Mrs Blake, sitting on the bedside, faces the sketches of gnashing fiends.

[3] P. 138. [4] P. 278.

bewrayed. The simulative power—almost as of the leaf-insect and suchlike creatures—with which he could imitate styles, is of course most obvious in the *tour de force* of the Burton counterfeits. But in his best and most characteristic work it is not this which we see, but something much nobler, though closely allied to it. It is not Browne, or Fuller, or Burton, or Glanvill, but something like them, yet different. And though it has more *outré* presentation in some of his miscellaneous writing than in his criticism, yet it is never absent in the most striking pieces of this, and gives them much of their hold on us.

and thought.

Still, those who, however unnecessarily (for no one surely is going to deny it save in a mood of paradox or of monomania), insist that style must be the body of thought—nay, that this body itself must think (in Donne's phrase), and not merely live, will find no difficulty in claiming Lamb as theirs. Nothing of the kind is more curious than the fact that, strongly marked as are his peculiarities and much as he may himself have imitated, he is not imitable; nobody has ever, except in the minutest shreds—rather actually torn off from his motley than reproducing it—written in Lamb's style save Lamb. And accordingly no one (though not a few have tried) has ever criticised like Lamb. It is very easy to be capricious, fantastic, fastidious—as easy as to wear yellow stockings and go cross-gartered, and as effective. To Lamb's critical attitude there go in the first place that love for the book which has been spoken of; then that faculty of sound, almost common-sense, "taste" which is shown in the early letters to Coleridge and Southey, then the reading of years and decades; and, lastly, the *je ne sais quoi* that "fondoos" the other things, as the old Oxford story has it—a story to be constantly borne in mind by the critic and the historian of criticism.[1] Even the

[1] There may be people who do not know this, and those who know it already need not read it. A college cook (I think of Brasenose) was particularly famous for that most excellent dish the *fondue*, but would never tell his recipe. At last some Arthur Pendennis (of the other shop) got round him to this extent. "Why, sir," said he, "you see I takes the eggs, and the butter, and the cheese, you know, and the other things; *and then I just fondoos em.*"

other ingredients are not too common, especially in conjunction: the *je ne sais quoi* itself is here, and nowhere else.

Leigh Hunt: his somewhat inferior position.

Leigh Hunt[1] claims less space from us than either of his friends, Hazlitt and Lamb. This is not because he is an inconsiderable critic, for he is by no means this. As has been said, he has the immense and surprising credit of having first discovered the greatness of the tragic part of Middleton's *Changeling*, as an individual exploit, and in more general ways he has that, which Macaulay duly recognised in a well-known passage,[2] of being perhaps more *catholic* in his tastes as regards English Literature than any critic up to his time. He has left a very large range of critical performance, which is very rarely without taste, acuteness, and felicity of expression; and he has, as against both the greater critics just named, the very great advantage of possessing a competent knowledge of at least one modern literature[3] besides his own, and some glimmerings of others. He has the further deserts of being almost always readable, of diffusing a pleasant sunny atmosphere, and of doing very much to keep up the literary side of that periodical production which, for good or for evil, was, with the novel, the great literary feature of the nineteenth century. These are not small merits: and while they might seem greater if they were not thrown somewhat into the shade by the superior eminence of Coleridge and Hazlitt, and the superior attractiveness of Lamb, they retain, even in the vicinity of these, claims to full acknowledgment.

Reasons for it

A severely critical estimate, however, will discover in Leigh Hunt—perhaps in very close juxtaposition and in a sort of causal relation to these merits themselves—something which is not quite so good. Even his catholicity may be set down in part, by the Enemy, to a certain loose facility of liking, an absence of fastidiousness and selection If Lamb goes too far towards the ends of the Eng-

[1] There is no complete ed. of Hunt, and there could not well be one I shall refer here to the 7 vols of Messrs Smith & Elder's cheap and uniform reprint of a good deal, and to the pretty American pocket issue of the *Italian Poets*

[2] At the beginning of the Essay on Restoration Drama.

[3] Italian.

lish literary earth for the objects of his affection, Hunt is rather too content to find them *in trivis et angiportis*. He does not exactly "like grossly," but he likes a little promiscuously. The fault is no very bad one, and it becomes exceedingly venial—nay, a positive virtue in time and circumstance—when we compare it with the unreasonable exclusiveness of the Neo-classic period But it is a kind of criticism which inclines rather too much to the uncritical.

His attitude to Dante

A further objection may be taken by applying that most dangerous of all tests, the question "What does he *dis*like?" For the twentieth time (probably) let us repeat that in criticism likes and dislikes are free; and that the man who, however unfortunately, still honestly dislikes what the consensus of good criticism approves, is entitled to say so, and had much better say so. But he gives his reasons, descends upon particulars, at his peril. Leigh Hunt, to do him justice, is not like Mr Rymer—it is not his habit "no wise to allow." But it is certainly a pity that one of his exceptions should be Dante, and it is certainly a much greater pity that among the reasons given for unfavourable criticism[1] should be because Dante "puts fabulous people with real among the damned," because Purgatory is such a very disagreeable idea, and because the whole poem contains "absurdities too obvious nowadays to need remark"

This, however, was merely an exceptional outburst of that "Liberal" Philistinism and blundering which, it is only fair to say, had been provoked by plentiful exhibition of the same qualities on the other side, and which was more particularly excusable in Leigh Hunt (humanly, if not critically, speaking), because nobody, not even Hazlitt, had received worse treatment from that side than himself. But it does something affect his critical position, for even Hazlitt managed, in some queer fashion, to distinguish between the prostitute baronet, Sir Walter Scott, and "the Author of *Waverley*," between that

[1] Of course it is not all unfavourable. Leigh Hunt is far too much of a critic and a lover of poetry for that. But he is constantly put off and put out by Dante's "bigotry," his "uncharitableness," the "barbarous pedantries" of his age, and the like.

wicked Mr Burke and the author of the great speeches and treatises But the main reasons why Hunt must go with shorter measure than others, is the combination of abundance in quantity with a certain want of distinction in quality, which mars his writings Not even the largest space here possible would enable us to go through them all, and we should be able to select but a few that are of unquestionably distinctive and characteristic *race*. It is, indeed, rather in his favour that you may dip almost anywhere into him with the certainty of a wholesome, pleasant, and refreshing critical bath or draught. He is very rarely untrustworthy, and when he is, as in the *Dante* case, he tells the fact and its secret more frankly even than Hazlitt himself. But it would be unjust to refer to no samples of him, and a few of the most characteristic shall therefore be given.

Examples from Imagination and Fancy.

Fortunately there is an extremely favourable example of his criticism which fills a whole book to itself, and is written under something like a general scheme. This is the volume—modestly sub-titled "Selections," but containing a very large proportion of comment and original matter—which he called *Imagination and Fancy*,[1] and intended to follow up with four others, though only one, *Wit and Humour*,[2] was ever written. The plan was begun late (1844); but as we have seen in almost every instance, a man's critical work very rarely declines with years, unless he actually approaches dotage. and the book is, on the whole, not merely the most favourable but the most representatively favourable example of Leigh Hunt's criticism. It opens by a set Essay on the question "What is Poetry?" from which, perhaps, any one who knew the author's other work, but not this, might not expect very much, for Hunt had not an abstract or philosophical head. He acquits himself, however, remarkably well. His general definition that Poetry is "the utterance of a passion for truth, beauty, and power,

[1] New ed., *ut sup.* London, 1883.

[2] This is good, but not so good and elsewhere—though critical matter will be found in all Hunt's collected books and in all his uncollected periodical work, from the *Examiner*, "whose very name is Hunt," and the *Indicator*, and the *Reflector*, to the *Tatler*, and the *London Journal*—we shall never find him better and seldom so good.

embodying and illustrating its conceptions by imagination and fancy, and modulating its language on the principle of variety in uniformity," is not bad; but these things are never very satisfactory. It will be seen that Hunt, like Coleridge, though with a less "Cimmerian" obscurity of verbiage, "dodges" the frank mention of "metre" or "verse"; but this is not because he is in any way inclined to compromise. On the contrary, he says[1] (taking, and perhaps designedly, the very opposite line to Wordsworth) that he "knows of no very fine versification unaccompanied with fine poetry." But the strength of the "Essay," as of the whole book, is in the abundant and felicitous illustration of the various points of this definition by commented selections from the poets themselves.

That catholicity which has been said to be his main critical virtue will be found (without any of the vice which has been hinted as sometimes accompanying it) in the very list of the authors selected from—Spenser, Marlowe, Shakespeare, Jonson, Beaumont and Fletcher, Middleton, Dekker, and Webster, Milton, Coleridge, Shelley, and Keats· while the less "imaginative" poets are by no means neglected, and in particular Leigh Hunt brings out, often as no one had ever done before, that sheer poetical quality of Dryden to which the critics of 1800-1830 had been as a rule unjust. But the comment (and one cannot say more) is usually worthy of the selection. The fullest division of all is that on Spenser—indeed Leigh Hunt's appreciation of this at once exquisite and magnificent poet is one of the very best we have, and would be the best of all if it had been a little more sensitive to Spenser's "bravest translunary things," to the pervading exaltation and sublimation of thought and feeling which purifies the most luscious details, and unites the most straggling divagations in a higher unity. But, short of this, it would be difficult to have a better detailed eulogium, *pièces en main*, of the subject; nor does Hunt fail to make out something of a case against, at least, the exaggeration of Lessing's attack on the *ut pictura poesis* view. But his limitations appear in his complete misunderstanding of Coleridge's exact and pro-

[1] P. 51, *ed. cit.*

found observation that Spenser's descriptions are "not in the true sense of the word *picturesque*, but composed of a wondrous series of images as in dreams." What Coleridge meant, of course, is that sequence rather than strict "composition" is Spenser's secret—that his pageants *dissolve into* one another. But in these finesses Hunt is seldom at his ease. So, again, he blasphemes one of the most beautiful lines of *The Tempest*—

"The fringed curtains of thine eye advance"—

as "elaborate nothingness, not to say nonsense" [how nothingness can in any case be sense he shall tell us], "pompous," "declamatory," and disapproved of by—Pope!

One really blushes for him. Could he possibly be unaware that when a person is about to look at anything, the natural gesture is to lower the head and thrust it a little forward, raising or depressing the eyelids at the same time? or be insensible to the exquisite profile image of Miranda with the long eyelashes projected against the air? And he was the author of *A Criticism of Female Beauty!* But if he sometimes misunderstands, he seldom misses good things such as (it is true Warton put him on this) the Medea passage of Gower[1] Ben Jonson made him uncomfortable, which is again a pity, and on Beaumont and Fletcher he is at almost his very worst: but he is sounder than some greater ones on Ford and Massinger, and his great "catch" of De Flores deserves yet a third mention. He is at his very best and pleasantest, too, where most men fail—where they are even often very *un*pleasant—on his contemporaries, Coleridge, and Shelley, and Keats. When you have said such a thing as this[2] of Coleridge, "Of pure poetry, . . . consisting of nothing but its essential self, . . . he was the greatest master of his time," you had better "stand down." Your critical claim is made out: you may damage but can hardly increase it. Yet it is only in the severe court of critical history that one would wish to silence Hunt. for, in truth, nine-tenths of his criticism

[1] It is curious what power that dead poet-sorceress has had on almost all her

[2] P. 250, *ed. cit.*

is admirable, and most admirably suited to instruct and encourage the average man. Impressionism and Rulelessness are almost as fairly justified of him, their child, as of any other that I can think of. They scarcely ever lead him wrong in liking; and he mentions what he dislikes so seldom that he has only occasional chances of being wrong there.

Hazlitt.

But the greatest of the "Cockney critics" (*quelle Cocaigne!*) has yet to come. There is "a company of warm young men," as Dryden has it, who would doubtless disdain the inquiry whether Coleridge or Hazlitt is the greatest of English critics; and it is quite certain that this inquiry might be conducted in a sufficiently futile sense and manner. There are others, less disdainful, who might perhaps be staggered by the acknowledgment *in limine* that it is possible to answer the question either way—nay, for the same person to give both answers, and yet be "not unwelcome back again" as a reasonable disputant. I have myself in my time, I think, committed myself to both propositions; and I am not at all disposed to give up either—for reasons which it will be more proper to give at the end than at the beginning of an examination of Hazlitt himself. That he was a great critic there will probably now be little dispute, though Goethe is said not to have found much good in him, though persons of worship, including Mr Stevenson, have thought him greater as a miscellaneous essayist, and though you may read writings of considerable length upon him in which no attempt is made to bring out his critical character at all.

Method of dealing with him.

His critical deliverances are so numerous and so voluminous that the "brick of the house" process, which we have frequently found applicable, has in his case to be given up, or at least considerably modified—for it is too much the principle of the present History to be given up altogether. Fortunately there is no difficulty in the modification. Hazlitt is not, like Coleridge, remarkable for the discovery and enunciation of any one great critical principle, or for the emission (*obiter* or otherwise) of remarkable mediate *dicta*, or for *marginalia* on individual passages or lines, though sometimes he can do the last and sometimes

also the second of these things. What he is remarkable for is his extraordinary fertility and felicity, as regards English literature, in judgments, more or less "grasped," of individual authors, books, or pieces. As, by preference, he stops at the passage, and does not descend to the individual line or phrase, so, by preference also,[1] he stops at the individual example of the Kind, and does not ascend to the Kind itself, or at least is not usually very happy in his ascension. But within these limits (and they are wide enough), the fertility and the felicity of his criticism are things which strike one almost dumb with admiration; and this in spite of certain obvious and in their way extremely grave faults.

The most obvious, though by far the least, of these,—indeed one which is displayed with such frankness and in a way so little delusive as to be hardly a fault at all, though it is certainly a drawback,—is a sort of audacious sciolism—acquiescence in ignorance, indifference about "satisfying the examiners"—for half a dozen different names would be required to bring out all the sides of it.

His surface and occasional faults: Imperfect knowledge and method.

His almost entire ignorance of all literatures but his own gives him no trouble, though it cannot be said that it does him no harm. In treating of comic writers, not in English only but generally, he says[2] (with perfect truth) that Aristophanes and Lucian are two of the four chief names for comic humour, but that he shall say little of them, for he knows little. Would all men were as honest! but one cannot say, "Would all critics were as ignorant!" In his *Lectures on the English Poets* he is transparently, and again quite honestly, ignorant of mostly all the earlier minorities, with some not so minor. He almost prided himself upon not reading anything in the writing period of his life; and he seems to have carried out his principles so conscientiously that, if anything occurred in

[1] Preference only, of course: the exceptions are numerous, but not enough to destroy the rule.

[2] References will be made here throughout to the reprints of Hazlitt's literary work in the Bohn Library, 7 vols. This is to *The English Comic Writers*, p. 33. The newer and completer edition of Messrs Waller & Glover had but begun when the text was originally written.

the course of a lecture which was unknown to him, he never made the slightest effort to supply the gap. His insouciance in method was equal to that in regard to material; and when we find[1] Godwin and Mrs Radcliffe included, with no satiric purpose, among "The English Comic Writers," they are introduced so naturally that the absurdity hardly strikes us till some accident wakes us up to it. If inaccuracies in matters of fact are not very common in him, it is because, like a true critic, he pays very little attention to such matters, and is wholly in opinion and appreciation and judgment, and other things where the free spirit is kept straight, if at all, by its own instinct. But he does commit such inaccuracies, and would evidently commit many more if he ran the risk of them oftener.

Extra-literary prejudice.

The last and gravest of his drawbacks has to be mentioned, and though it may be slurred over by political partisanship, those who admire and exalt him in spite of and not because of his politics, are well entitled to call attention to it. To the unpleasantness of Hazlitt's personal temper we have the unchallengeable testimony of his friends Lamb, who was the most charitable, and Hunt, who with all his faults was one of the most good-natured, of mortals. But what we may call his political temper, especially when it was further exasperated by his personal, is something of the equal of which no time leaves record. Whenever this east wind blows, the true but reasonable Hazlittian had better, speaking figuratively, "go to bed till it is over," as John Hall Stevenson is said to have done literally in the case of the literal Eurus. Not only does Hazlitt then cease to be a critic, —he ceases to be a rational being Sidney and Scott are the main instances of its effect, because Sidney could not have annoyed, and Scott we know did not in any way annoy, Hazlitt personally Gifford is not in this case, and he was himself so fond of playing at the roughest of bowls that nobody need pity him for the rubbers he met. But Hazlitt's famous *Letter* to him, which some admire, always, I confess, makes me think of the Doll's-dressmaker's father's last fit of the horrors in

[1] Ibid., p. 170 *sq*, and p. 176 *sq*.

Our Mutual Friend, and of the way in which the luckless "man talent" fought with the police and "laid about him hopelessly, fiercely, staringly, convulsively, foamingly." Fortunately the effect was not so fatal, and I know no other instance in which Hazlitt actually required the strait waistcoat.[1] But he certainly did here: and in a considerable number of instances his prejudices have made him, if not exactly *non compos mentis*, yet certainly *non compos judicii*.

His radical and usual excellence.

Fortunately, however, the wind does not always blow from this quarter with him, and when it does the symptoms are so unmistakable that nobody can be deceived unless he chooses to be, or is so stupid that it really does not matter whether he is deceived or not. Far more usually it is set in a bracing North or fertilising West, not seldom even in the "summer South" itself. And then you get such appreciations, in the best, the most thorough, the most delightful, the most *valuable* sense, as had been seldom seen since Dryden, never before, and in him not frequently. I do not know in what language to look for a parallel wealth. Systematic Hazlitt's criticism very seldom is, and, as hinted above, still seldomer at its best when it attempts system. But then system was not wanted; it had been overdone; the patient required a copious alterative. He received it from Hazlitt as he has—virtue and quantity combined—received it from no one else since: it is a "patent medicine" in everything but the presence of quackery. Roughly speaking, Hazlitt's criticism is of two kinds. The first is very stimulating, very interesting, but, I venture to think, the less valuable of the two. In it Hazlitt at least endeavours to be general, and takes a lesson from Burke in "prodigious variation" on his subject. The most famous, the most laboured, and perhaps the best example is the exordium of the *Lectures on the English Poets*, with its astonishing "amplification" on what poetry in general is and what it is not. A good deal of this is directly Coleridgean. I forget whether this is the lecture which Cole-

[1] He is, however, dangerously near requiring it with regard to Scott (see the end of the article on him in *The Spirit of his Age*), and whenever he speaks of the Duke of Wellington.

ridge himself, when he read it, thought that he remembered "talking at Lamb's", but we may be quite sure that he had talked things very like it. Much in the "Shakespeare and Milton" has the same quality, and may have been partly derived from the same source: the critical character of Pope[1] is another instance, and probably more original. For Hazlitt had not merely learnt the trick from his master but had himself a genius for it; and he adorned these disquisitions with more *phrase* than Coleridge's recalcitrant pen usually allowed him, though there seems to have been plenty in his speech.

The Pope passage is specially interesting, because it leads us to the second and, as it seems to me, the chief and principal class of Hazlitt's critical deliverances—those in which, without *epideictic* intention, without, or with but a moderate portion of, rhetoric and amplification and phrasemaking, he handles separate authors and works and pieces. I have said that I think him here unsurpassed, and perhaps unrivalled, in the quantity and number of his deliverances, and only surpassed, *if so*, in their quality, by the greatest things of the greatest persons. These deliverances are to be found everywhere in his extensive critical work, and it is of a survey of some of them, conditioned in the manner outlined above, that the main body of any useful historical account of his criticism must consist. The four main places are the Lectures on *The English Poets* (1818), on *The English Comic Writers* (1819), on *Elizabethan Literature* (1820), and the book on *Characters of Shakespeare* (1817). We may take them in the order mentioned, though it is not quite chronological, because the chronological dislocation, in the case of the second pair, is logically and methodically unavoidable.

How thoroughly this examination of the greater particulars (as we may call it) was the work which he was born to do is illustrated by the sketches (at the end of the first Lecture on *The English Poets*[2]) of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, *Robinson Crusoe*, the *Decameron*, Homer, the Bible, Dante, and (O Groves of Blarney!) *Ossian*. Hazlitt's faults (except prejudice, which is here fortunately silent) are by no means

The English Poets.

[1] *English Poets*, ed. cit., pp. 92 95.

[2] Pp. 18-25.

hidden in them—irrelevance, defect of knowledge, "casualness," and other not so good things. But the *gusto*,[1] the spirit, the inspiriting quality, are present in tenfold measure. Here is a man to whom literature is a real and live thing, and who can make it real and alive to his readers—a man who does not love it or its individual examples "by allowance," but who loves it "with personal love." Even his Richardsonian digression[2]—horrible to the stop-watch man—is alive and real and stimulating with the rest. The Dante passage is a little false perhaps in parts, inadequate, prejudiced, what you will in others. But it is criticism—an act of literary faith and hope and charity too—a substance, something added to, and new-born in, the literary cosmos He is better (indeed he is here almost at his very best) on Spenser than on Chaucer, but why? Because he *knew* more about Spenser, because he was plentifully read in sixteenth- and hardly read at all in fourteenth-century literature. And so always: the very plethora of one's notes for comment warning the commentator that he is lost if he indulges rashly. Where Hazlitt is inadequate (as for instance on Dryden) he is more instructive than many men's adequacy could be, and where he is not—on Collins, on the Ballads, and elsewhere—he prepares us for that ineffable and half-reluctant outburst—a very Balaam's blessing—on Coleridge,[3] which stands not higher than this, not lower than that, but as an *A-per-se*, consummate and unique.

The Comic Writers.

In a sense the *Comic Writers* are even better. The general exordium on Wit and Humour belongs to the first class of Hazlitt's critical performances as defined above, and is one of the cleverest of them; though it may perhaps have the faults of its class, and some of those of its author. That on Comedy—the general part of it—incurs this sentence in a heavier degree, for Aristotle or somebody else seems to have impressed Hazlitt too strongly with the necessary *shadiness* of Comedy, and it is quite clear that of the Romantic variety (which to be sure hardly anybody but Shakespeare

[1] This favourite word of his has been adopted by all competent critics as best describing his own manner.

[2] Pp. 19, 20

[3] The last page of *The English Poets*.

has ever hit off) he had an insufficient idea. He is again inadequate on Jonson; it is indeed in his criticism, because of its very excellence, that we see—more than anywhere else, though we see it everywhere—the truth of his master's denunciation of the "criticism which denies." But his lecture or essay on the capital examples of the comedy which he really liked—that of the Restoration—is again an apex: and, as it happens, it is grouped for English students with others—the morally excellent and intellectually vigorous but rather purblind onslaught of Collier, the again vigorous but somewhat Philistine following thereof by Macaulay, the practical confession of Lamb's fantastic and delightful apology, Leigh Hunt's rather feeble compromise—after a fashion which shows it off to a marvel. While as to the chapter on the Eighteenth-century Novel it has, with a worthier subject, an equal supremacy of treatment. You may differ with much of it, but always agree to differ: except in that estimate of Lovelace which unfortunately shows us Hazlitt's inability to recognise a *cad* in the dress and with the manners of a fine gentleman.[1]

The *Lectures on the Age of Elizabeth* (which succeeded the *Comic Writers*, as these had succeeded the *Poets*) maintain, if they do not even raise, the standard. Perhaps there is nothing so fine as the Coleridge passage in individual and concentrated expression; nor any piece of connected criticism so masterly as the chapter on the Novel. But the level is higher. and nowhere do we find better expression of that *gusto*—that amorous quest of literary beauty and rapturous enjoyment of it—which has been noted as Hazlitt's great merit. His faults are here, as always, with him and with us. Even the faithful Lamb was driven to expostulate[2] with the wanton and, as it happens, most uncritical belittlement of Sidney,[3] and (though he himself was probably less influenced by political partisanship or political feeling of any kind than almost any great writer of whom we know) to

The Age of Elizabeth.

[1] It is curious that the critic's blunder had been anticipated, though not excused, by the author's. Richardson of course *meant* to make Lovelace what Hazlitt sees in him. only he failed.

[2] In the paper on Sir Philip's *Sonnets*, noted above.

[3] Lect. VI., p. 201 *sq.*

assign this to its true cause. It is odd[1] that a critic, and a great critic, should contrive to be inadequate both on Browne and on Dryden: and again one cannot but suspect the combination to be due to the fact that both were Royalists. But the King's Head does not always come in: and it is only fair to Hazlitt to say that he is less biassed than Coleridge by the ultra-royalism of Beaumont and Fletcher, and the supposed republicanism of Massinger. And in by far the greater part of the book—nearly the whole of that part of it which deals with the dramatists—there is no disturbance of this kind. The opening, if somewhat discursive, is masterly, and with very few exceptions the lecturer or essayist carries out the admirable motto—in fact and in deed the motto of all real critics—"I have endeavoured to feel what was good, and to give a reason for the faith that was in me when necessary and when in my power."[2] Two of his sentences, in dealing with Beaumont and Fletcher, not merely set the key-note of all good criticism but should open the stop thereof in all fit readers. "It is something worth living for to write or even read such poetry as this, or to know that it has been written." Again, "And so it is something, as our poets themselves wrote, 'far above singing'"[3]

Characters of Shakespeare.

The *Characters of Shakespeare's Plays* is perhaps not as good as any of these three courses of Lectures, but it should be remembered that it came earlier in time, and that the critic had not "got his hand in." The notes are as a rule nearly as desultory as Coleridge's, with less suggestiveness; there is at least one outburst, in the case of *Henry V.*, of the usual disturbing influence; there is very much more quotation than there need be from Schlegel; and there are other signs of the novitiate. Yet the book contains admirable things, as in the early comparison of Chaucer and Shakespeare, where, though Hazlitt's defective knowledge of Chaucer again appears, there is much else good. Among the *apices* of Shakespearian criticism is the statement that the

[1] But not as unique as odd.

[2] P. 181.

[3] Pp. 115, 126. The elaborate characters of Bacon, &c., in this course should be compared with those of Pope, and others earlier.

poet "has no prejudice for or against his characters,"[1] that he makes "no attempt to force an interest: everything is left for time and circumstance to unfold."[2] There is perhaps something inconsistent with this as well as with truth in the observation on *Lear*,[3] that "He is here fairly caught in the web of his own imagination", but, like most of the greater critics, Hazlitt cares very little for superficial consistency. The characters of Falstaff and Shylock are masterpieces in his *bravura* style, and one need perhaps nowhere seriously quarrel with any critical statement of his except the astonishing one, that *All's Well that Ends Well* is "one of the most *pleasing*" of the plays.

In the remaining volumes the literary articles or passages are only occasional, and are often considerably adulterated with non-literary matter. In *The Plain Speaker*, for instance, the opening paper on "The Prose Style of Poets" holds out almost the highest promise, and gives almost the lowest performance. Hazlitt, as is not so very uncommon with him, seems to have deliberately set himself to take the other side from Coleridge's. That it happens also to be the wrong side matters very little. But even his attack on Coleridge's own prose style (open enough to objection) has nothing very happy in it except the comparison, "To read one of his disquisitions is like hearing the variations to a piece of music without the score." So, too, "On the Conversation of Authors," though intensely interesting, has no critical interest or very little—the chief exception being the passage on Burke's style. Far more important is the glance at the theory of the single word in "On Application to Study,"[4] and in that in "On Envy"[5] on the taste of the Lake School.

Much of *The Plain Speaker* is injured as a treasury of criticism, though improved as a provision of amusement, by Hazlitt's personal revelations, complaints, agonies; but the critical *ethos* of the man was so irrepressible that it will not be refused. There is a curious little piece[6] of critical blasphemy, or at least "dis-*gusto*" (the word is

The Plain Speaker.

[1] P. 61, ed. cit. [2] P. 75. [3] P. 108. [4] P. 77. [5] P. 139 [6] P. 185.

wanted and is fairly choice Italian), in "On the Pleasure of Hating," and, almost throughout the series, the sharp flux and reflux of literary admiration and political rage in respect of Scott is most noteworthy. "On the Qualifications necessary to Success in Life" contains yet another[1] of those passages on Coleridge which are like nothing so much as the half-fond, half-furious, retrospects of a discarded lover on his mistress—which are certainly like nothing else in literature. But "On Reading Old Books" does not belie the promise of its title, and is a complete and satisfactory palinode to the fit of critical headache noted just now One must not venture to cite from it, it is to be read and re-read, and hardly any single piece, except the immortal "Farewell to Essay-Writing," gives us so much insight into Hazlitt's critical temperament as this. "On People of Sense" contains many critical glances, and, unfortunately, one[2] of those on Shelley which show Hazlitt at his worst. One might think that he who found others so "far above singing" could not miss the similar altitude of the author of *Prometheus Unbound*. But Shelley was a contemporary, something of an acquaintance, a man of some means, a gentleman—so Hazlitt must snarl[3] at him. Let us sigh and pass.

"Antiquity," though on one side only, is almost throughout ours, and therefore not ours: and there is not a little for us in "On Novelty and Familiarity," while "Old English Writers and Speakers" speaks for itself, and is specially interesting for its glances on matters French and its characteristically Hazlittian fling—one I confess with which I have for once no quarrel—that "*'Tis pity She's a Whore* will no more act than Lord Byron and Goethe together could have written it."[4] It puts one in charity for the absurd description,[5] contradicted by

[1] P 278. These passages may remind some of the story of one of George Sand's old lovers pausing before a photograph of her in a shop-window, and saying to his companion, "Et je l'ai connue *belle!*"

[2] P. 344

[3] The usual dog-metaphors are no triviality in regard to Hazlitt when he is in this mood. Every one who knows dogs must have noticed the way in which they often snarl, as if they could not help it, the growl and gnash are forced from them.

[4] P. 441. [5] P. 449.

his own remarks, of *Redgauntlet* as "the last and almost worst" of Scott's novels, and the prediction (alas! to be falsified) that "Old Sir Walter will last long enough"—in the flesh, not in fame.[1] "Scott, Racine, and Shakespeare" is not unworthy of its title, though it is really on the first and last only. Racine is brought in perfunctorily, and justice is done to him in neither sense.

Table-Talk, one of the greenest pastures of the Hazlittian champaign generally, is among the least literary of the books, and yet so literary enough. "On Genius and Common Sense" contributes its Character of Wordsworth,[2] on whom Hazlitt is always interesting, because of the extraordinary opposition between the men's temperaments. The companion on Shelley,[3] which is supplied by "On Paradox and Commonplace," is hardly less interesting, though, for the reasons above indicated, much less valuable. "On Milton's Sonnets," however, is, as it ought to be, a pure study and an admirable one.[4] "The Aristocracy of Letters" carries its hay high on the horn, yet it is not negligible: and "On Criticism," which follows, really deserves the title, despite its frequent and inevitable flings and runnings-amuck. The good-humoured, though rather "home" description of "the Occult School"[5] (*v. supra* on Lamb) is perfectly just. "On Familiar" Style is also no false promiser, and yet another passage on Coleridge meets us in the paper "On Effeminacy of Character."

The Round Table, &c.

Nor is the interesting "omnibus" volume, which takes its general title from *The Round Table*, of the most fertile. The collection of short papers, properly so called, was written earlier (1817) than most of the books hitherto discussed, and therefore has some first drafts or variants of not a little that is in them. In a note of it[6] occurs the

[1] The end-note of this piece coincides curiously with a remark once made to me by a person unusually well acquainted with France but, I feel sure, quite unaware that he was echoing Hazlitt. "The Frenchman has a certain routine of phrases into which his ideas run habitually as into a mould; and you cannot get him out of them."

[2] P. 56 [3] P. 203.

[4] Yet Hazlitt cannot resist a renewed fling at Sidney.

[5] P. 351.

[6] P. 150, ed cit. I wish that some one, in these excerpting days, would extract and print together *all* Hazlitt's passages on Burke, Scott, and Coleridge.

passage on Burke, which, with that on Scott in the *Spirit of the Age*, is Hazlitt's nearest approach to the sheer *delirium tremens* of the Gifford Letter: but he is not often thus. "The Character of Milton's Eve" is a fine critical paper of its kind, and "takes the taste out" well after the passage on Burke. The long handling of *The Excursion* is very interesting to compare with that in the *English Poets*, as is the earlier "Midsummer Night's Dream" with similar things elsewhere. "Pedantry" and others give something: and though no human being (especially no human being who knows both books) has ever discovered what made Hazlitt call *John Buncle* "the English Rabelais," the paper on Amory's queer novel is a very charming one. "On the Literary Character" does somewhat deceive us: "Commonplace Critics" less so: but to "Poetical Versatility" we must return. Of the remaining contents of the volume, the well-known *Conversations with Northcote* (where the painter plays Hazlitt's idea of an Advocatus Diaboli on Hazlitt) gives less still. But there is a striking passage on Wordsworth,[1] a paradox (surely?) on Tom Paine[2] as "a fine writer" (you might as well call a good getter of coal at the face "a fine sculptor"), an interesting episode[3] on early American nineteenth-century literature; and not a few others, especially the profound self-criticism (for no doubt Northcote had nothing to do with it) on Hazlitt's abstinence from society.[4] In *Characteristics*, one of the few notable collections of the kind in English, CCXC, a most curious and pretty certainly unconscious echo of Aristotle,[5] is our best gleaning, while the 52d "Commonplace," on Byron and Wordsworth, and the 12th and 11th "Trifles light as air," on Fielding and on "modern" critics, play the same part there.

The Spirit of the Age.

On the other hand, *The Spirit of the Age* (with the exception of some political and philosophical matter) is wholly literary; and may rank with the three sets of *Lectures* and the *Characters of Shakespeare* as the main storehouse

[1] P. 246.
[2] P. 317.
[3] P. 248.
[4] P. 431.
[5] "We have more faith in a well-written romance than in common history."

of Hazlitt's criticism. Here, too, there is much repetition, and here, at the end of the Scott article, is the almost insane outburst more than once referred to. But the bulk of the book is at Hazlitt's very best pitch of appreciative grasp. If he is anywhere out of focus, it is in reference to Godwin's novels—the setting of which in any kind of comparison with Scott's (though Hazlitt was critic enough from the first to see that Godwin could by no possibility be the "Author of *Waverley*") is a remarkable instance of the disadvantage of the contemporary, and, to some extent, the sympathiser. But the book certainly goes far to bear out the magnificent eulogy of Hazlitt for which Thackeray[1] took it as text, quite early in his career.

The *Sketches and Essays* are again very rich, where they are rich; and advertise the absence of riches most frankly where they are not. "On Reading New Books"; not a little of "Merry England", the whole of "On Taste" and "Why the Heroes of Romances are insipid" speak for themselves, and do not bewray their claim. "Taste," especially, contains[2] one of Hazlitt's own titles to critical supremacy in his fixing on Perdita's primrose description as itself supreme, when "the scale of fancy, passion, and observation of nature is raised" high enough. And as for *Winterslow*, its first and its last papers are "things enskied" in criticism, for the one is "My First Acquaintance with Poets," and the last "The Farewell to Essay Writing."

Sketches and Essays.

Winterslow.

These two last, the sentence on

> "That come before the swallow dares, and take
> The winds of March with beauty";

and (say) the paper referred to a little above on "Poetical Versatility," will serve as texts for some more general remarks on Hazlitt's critical character. We have said at the beginning of this notice everything that need be said by way of deduction or allowance; we have only hinted at the clear critical "balance to credit" which

Hazlitt's critical virtue.

[1] In 1845, reviewing Horne's very rashly entitled *New Spirit of the Age*. The review will be found in the 13th vol. (1886) of the ordinary ed. of Thackeray's *Works*.

[2] P. 173.

remains; and these essays and passages will help to bring this out.

To take the "Poetic Versatility" first, it is an interesting paper, and with the aid of those "characters" of poets, &c., which have been indicated in the survey just completed, gives the best possible idea of one (and perhaps the most popular) of Hazlitt's forms of critical achievement and influence. In it he eddies round his subject—completing his picture of it by strokes apparently promiscuous in selection, but always tending to body forth the image that presents itself to him, and that he wishes to present to his readers. "Poetry dwells in a perpetual Utopia of its own." It "does not create difficulties where they do not exist, but contrives to get rid of them whether they exist or not." "Its strength is in its wings, its element the air." We "may leave it to Time to take out the stains, seeing it is a thing immortal as itself." Poets "either find things delightful or make them so," &c. &c, some of the etceteras drawing away from the everlasting, and condescending rather lamentably to the particular.

Now there is no need to tell the reader—even the reader of this book, I hope—that this, of these utterances, is a reproduction of Longinus (whom Hazlitt most probably had not read), or that of Coleridge, whom most certainly he had both read and heard.[1] "The man who plants cabbages imitates too": and it is only the foolishest folk of rather foolish times who endeavour to be original, though the wisest of all times always succeed in being so. The point with Hazlitt is that in these circlings round his subject—these puttings of every possible way in which, with or without the help of others, it strikes him—he gives the greatest possible help to others in being struck. One of the blows will almost certainly hit the nail on the head and drive it home into any tolerably susceptible mind: many may, and the others after the first will help to fix it. Of method there may not be very

in set pieces,

[1] "Its strength is in its wings" is, in idea, of course, as old as Plato. But the nearest expression of it, the "la lyre est un instrument *ailé*" of Joubert, though by a man more than thirty years Hazlitt's senior, was never, I think, published till ten years after Hazlitt's death.

much—there is rather more here than in most cases; but whether there is method or not, "everything," in the old military phrase, "goes in"; the subject and the reader are carried by assault, mass, variety, repetition of argument, imagery, phrase. Hazlitt will not be refused, he takes towns at a hand-gallop, like Condé at Lerida—and he does not often lose them afterwards.

and universally

In this phase of his genius, however, there is perhaps, for some tastes at any rate, a little too much of what has been called *bravura*—too much of the merely epideictic. It is not so in the other. Appreciate the appreciation of the *Winter's Tale* passage; still more take to heart (they will go to it without much taking where there is one) the "First Acquaintance with Poets," or still better the marvellous critical swan-song of the "Farewell," and there can be no more doubt about Hazlitt. *Quia multum amavit* is at once his best description and his greatest glory. In all the range of criticism which I have read I can hardly think of any one except Longinus who displays the same faculty of not unreasonable or unreasoned passion for literature; and Longinus, alas! has, as an opportunity for showing this to us, scarcely more than the bulk of one of Hazlitt's longest Essays, of which, long and short, Hazlitt himself has given us, I suppose, a hundred. Nor, as in some others (many, if not most of whom, if I named them, I should name for the sake of honour), is a genuine passion made the mere theme of elaborate and deliberate literary variations. As we have seen, Hazlitt will often leave it expressed in one sentence of ejaculatory and convincing fervour, it seldom appears at greater length than that of a passage, while a whole lecture or essay in the key of rapture is exceedingly rare. Hazlitt is desultory, irrelevant, splenetic, moody, self-contradictory, but he is never merely pleonastic,—there is no mere verbiage, no mere virtuosity, in him

And the consequence is that this enthusiastic appreciation of letters, which I have, however heretically, taken throughout this book to be really the highest function of criticism, *catches*: that the critical yeast (to plagiarise from ourselves)

never fails to work. The order of history, as always, should probably be repeated, and the influence of Coleridge should be felt, as Hazlitt himself felt it, first: it is well to fortify also with Longinus himself, and with Aristotle, and with as many others of the great ones as the student can manage to master. But there is at least a danger, with some perhaps of not the worst minds, of all this remaining cold as the bonfire before the torch is applied. The *silex scintillans* of Hazlitt's rugged heart will seldom fail to give the vivifying spark from its own inward and immortal fire.[1]

Blake.

There have been times — perhaps they are not quite over —when the admission of William Blake[2] into the category of critics would have been regarded as an absurdity, or a bad jest. Nothing is more certain, however, than that the poet-painter expresses, with a force and directness rather improved by that lack of complete technical sanity which some of his admirers most unwisely and needlessly deny, the opinions of the "Extreme Right," the high-fliers of the Army of Romanticism. He may often be thinking of painting rather than of poetry; but this is sometimes expressedly not the case, and many of his most pointed sayings apply to the one art just as well as to the other— if indeed it would not be still more correct to say that, except

[1] Below Hazlitt (who as well as Lamb praised him, though the former *more suo fell foul of him as well*) may be best placed, in the note which is as much as he deserves, that much-written-of "curiosity of literature," the poisoner, connoisseur, and coxcomb, Wainewright. "Janus," however, was too much occupied with pictures, plays, bric-a-brac, Montepulciano, veal-pies in red earthenware dishes, the prize-ring, and other fancies or fopperies, to busy himself directly with literature, save, perhaps, in the curious paper "Janus Weatherbound," which seems to have been *his* "farewell to essay-writing." It is, however, fair to say that, odious as he was in ways not merely moral, he had something of "a taste" here also His quotations, which are numerous, are singularly well selected, he admired not merely Fouqué but Shelley long before it was the fashion to do so; and you may pick out of the works, rather probably than certainly his (*Essays and Criticisms*, by T. G. Wainewright, ed. W. C. Hazlitt· London, 1880), stray literary notes not without value.

[2] I use for Blake Gilchrist's *Life and Works* (2nd ed., 2 vols., London, 1880), Mr Swinburne's *William Blake* (London, 1868), Mr Rossetti's Aldine *Poetical Works* (London, 1874), and Messrs Ellis and Yeats's great Blakian Thesaurus (3 vols., London, 1893).

when they concern mere technique, they always apply to both. His work, despite the attention which it has received from hands, sometimes of the most eminent, during the last forty years, has never yet been edited in a fashion making its chaos cosmic or the threading of its labyrinths easy: and it may be well to bring together some of the most noteworthy critical expressions in it. That which has been referred to in a former passage,[1] "Every man is a judge of pictures who has not been connoisseured out of his senses,"[2] is in itself almost a miniature manifesto of the new school of criticism. For "connoisseurship"—the regular training in the orthodox system of judgment by rule and line and pattern—is substituted the impression of the natural man, unconditioned except by the requirement that it *shall* be impression, and not prejudice.

His critical position and dicta.

So, again, that remarkable expression of the Prophet Isaiah[3] when, as Blake casually mentions, he and Ezekiel "dined with me"—an occasion on which surely any one of taste would like to have completed the quartette. The poet-host tells us that he asked, "Does a firm persuasion that a thing is so make it so?" and that the prophet-guest answered, "All poets believe that it does"—a position from which Neo-Classicism and the reluctance to "surrender disbelief" are at once crushed, concluded, and quelled.

In the remarkable engraved page on Homer and Virgil,[4] Blake adventures himself (not with such rashness as may at first seem) against Aristotle (or what he takes for Aristotle), by laying it down that Unity and Morality belong to philosophy, not poetry, or at least are secondary in the latter; that goodness and badness are not distinctions of "character" (a saying in which there is some quibbling but much depth as well);

[1] *V. sup.*, ii. 391 note.

[2] Letter to the *Monthly Magazine* of July 1, 1806. "O Englishmen! know that every man ought to be a judge of pictures, and every man is so who has not been connoisseured out of his senses." The whole letter is given by Mr Swinburne, pp. 62, 63, *op. cit.*

[3] In *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell.* Compare with this Vico's famous doctrine that "the criterion of truth is to have *made* it."

[4] Facsimiled in Ellis and Yeats, vol. iii. Printed as *Sibylline Leaves* in Gilchrist, ii. 178, 180.

that the Classics, not Goths or Monks, "desolate Europe with wars" (a great enough dictum at the junction of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries); and that "Grecian [wit] is mathematical form," which is only "eternal in the reasoning memory," while Gothic is "living form, that is to say, eternal existence" —perhaps the deepest saying of the whole, though it wants large allowance and intelligent taking.

The "Notes on Reynolds"

The "Notes on Reynolds" are naturally full of our stuff.

"Enthusiastic admiration is the first principle of knowledge." [Sir Joshua had stated just the contrary.] "What has reasoning to do with the art of painting [or, we may safely add, of poetry]?"

"Knowledge of ideal beauty is not to be acquired, it is born in us."

"One central form . . . being granted, it does not follow that all other forms are deformity. All forms are perfect in the poet's mind, . . . they are from imagination."

"To generalise is to be an idiot. To particularise is the great distinction of merit." [The "streak of the tulip" rehabilitated, and with a vengeance!]

"Invention depends altogether upon execution."

"Passion and expression are beauty itself."

"Ages are all equal: but genius is always above its age"

and Wordsworth.

It is worth while to add to these the very remarkable annotations upon Wordsworth's Prefaces: "I don't know who wrote these: they are very mischievous, and direct contrary to Wordsworth's own practice" [where if Blake had added the words "when he is a poet," he would simply have given the conclusion of the whole matter], with the very shrewd comment that Wordsworth is not so much attacking poetic diction, or defending his own, as "vindicating unpopular poets."

Commanding position of these.

Scanty as this critical budget may seem, its individual items are of extraordinary weight, when we remember that some of them were written before the *Lyrical Ballads* themselves appeared, and all of them by a man of hardly any reading in contemporary literature, and quite out of the circle of Coleridgean influence. It

is scarcely, if at all, too much to say that they are almost enough to start, in a fit mind, the whole system of Romantic criticism in its more abstract form, and sometimes even in its particular and concrete applications. All the eighteenth-century Dagons — the beliefs in official connoisseurship, in the unapproachable supremacy of the ancients, in the barbarism and foolishness of Gothic art and literature, in the superiority of the general to the particular, in the necessity of extracting central forms and holding to them, in the supremacy of reason, in the teachableness of poetry, in the virtues of copying, in the superiority of design to execution,— all are tumbled off their pedestals with the most irreverent violence. That the critic's applications in the sister art to Rubens, to Titian, to Reynolds himself, are generally unjust, and not infrequently the result of pure ignorance, does not matter; his own formulas would often correct him quite as thoroughly as those of the classical school. What is important is his discovery and enunciation of these formulas themselves.

For by them, in place of these battered gods of the classical or neo-classical Philistia, are set up Imagination for Reason, Enthusiasm for Good Sense, the Result for the Rule; the execution for the mere conception or even the mere selection of subject; impression for calculation; the heart and the eyes and the pulses and the fancy for the stop-watch and the boxwood measure and the table of specifications. It is not necessary to argue the question whether Blake's own poetical work (we are not concerned with his pictorial) justifies or disconcerts the theories under which it was composed, it may be very strongly suspected, from utterances new as well as old, that approval of the theory and approval of the practice, as well as disapproval in each case, are too intimately bound up with each other to make appeal to either much of an argument. But for our main purpose, which is purely historical, the importance of Blake should, even in these few pages, have been put out of doubt. In no contemporary — not in Coleridge himself — is the counter-creed to that of the Neo-classics formulated with a sharper precision, and withal a greater width of inclusion and sweep.

Sir Walter Scott commonly undervalued as a critic.

There are more senses than one (or for the matter of that two) in the famous proverb, "The better is the enemy of the good." And in one of them, though not the commonest, it is eminently true of the criticism of Sir Walter Scott. No one, of course, would give to Scott any such relative rank as a critic as that which is his due either as poet or as novelist; but the extent to which his fame as poet and novelist has obscured his reputation as critic is altogether disproportionate and unfair. It is even doubtful whether some tolerably educated persons ever think of him as a critic at all For his so-called "Prose Works" (except *Tales of a Grandfather*) are very little read, and as usual the criticism is the least read part of them. Yet it is a very large part—extending, what with the Lives of *Swift* and *Dryden*, the shorter "*Biographies*," the *Chivalry, Romance, and Drama*, and the collection or selection of *Periodical Criticism*, to ten pretty solid volumes, while even this excludes a great amount of critical matter in the notes and Introductions to the *Poems*, the Novels, the *Dryden* and *Swift* themselves, and other by-works of Sir Walter's gigantic industry.

Mere bulk, however, it may be said, is nothing—indeed it is too often, in work of which posterity is so shy as it is of criticism, a positive misfortune and drawback. What makes the small account taken of Scott as a critic surprising and regrettable is the goodness as well as the bulk of his critical production. Perhaps it may be urged with some justice, in defence of this popular neglect, that his want of attention to style is particularly unfortunate here. He is notoriously a rather "incorrect" writer; and he does not, as many so-called incorrect writers have known how to do, supply the want of academic propriety by irregular brilliances of any kind.

Another charge sometimes brought against him—that he is too good-natured and too indiscriminate in praise—will less hold water;[1] and indeed is much too closely connected with the

[1] See in particular his admirable review of Godwin's *Chaucer*, and his just condemnation of the absurd practice—simply wallowed in since by biographers and historians—of bolstering out a book with what the subject *might have* seen, done, thought, or suffered.

popular notion of the critic as a sort of "nigger"-overseer, whose business is to walk about and distribute lashes —a notion which cannot be too often reprobated. As a private critic Scott *was* sometimes too easy-going, but by no means always or often in his professional utterances. And he had what are certainly two of the greatest requirements of the critic, reading and sanity. Sometimes some amiable prepossession (such as the narrower patriotism in his relative estimate of Fielding and Smollett) leads him a little astray; but this is very seldom—far seldomer than is the rule with critics of anything like his range. Here, as elsewhere, he does not much affect the larger and deeper and higher generalisations; but here, as elsewhere, his power of reaching these has been considerably underrated. And the distaste itself saves him—and his readers—from the hasty and floundering failures of those who aim more ambitiously at width, depth, and height. In the methodic grasp and orderly exposition of large and complicated subjects (as in the *Romance*[1] and *Drama* examples) he leaves nothing to desire. Sometimes, in his regular reviews, he condescends too much to the practice of making the review a mere abstract of the book; but I have known readers who complain bitterly of any other mode of proceeding.

Injustice of this.

Moreover, in two most important divisions of the critic's art Scott has very few superiors. These are the appreciation of particular passages, books, and authors, and the writing of those critical biographies which Dryden first essayed in English, and of which Johnson is the acknowledged master. The Prefaces to the Ballantyne Novels[2] are the best among Scott's good things in this kind on the small scale, as the *Dryden* and the *Swift* are on the great: for evidences of the former excellence the reader has only to open any one of the half-score volumes referred to above. And those golden

[1] The two qualities lauded above—knowledge and judgment—are specially noteworthy here, when we compare the article, not merely with the less fully informed work of Hurd, Percy, and Warton (not to say Ritson), but with more recent compositions by persons who had the originals easily at disposal

[2] They will also be found printed together in the two vols. of *Biographies*, as well as, more recently, and alone, in a vol. of *Everyman's Library* (London, 1910).

qualities of heart which accompanied his genius are illustrated, as well as that genius itself, in his frequent critical writing on other novelists. The criticism of creators on their fellows is not always pleasant reading, except for those who delight to study the weaknesses of the *verdammte Race*. Scott criticises great and small among the folk of whom he is the king, from the commonest romancer up to Jane Austen, with equal generosity, acuteness, and technical mastery. Nor ought we, in this necessarily inadequate sketch, to omit putting in his cap the feather so often to be refused to critics—the feather of catholicity. Macaulay could not praise the delightful lady, whom both he and Scott did their utmost to celebrate, without throwing out a fling at *Sintram*, as if there were no room for good things of different kinds in the great region of Romance. In Scott's works you may find,[1] literally side by side, and characterised by equal critical sense, the eulogy of *Persuasion* and the eulogy of *Frankenstein*.[2]

Campbell: his Lectures on Poetry.

Campbell's critical work is chiefly concentrated in two places, one of them accessible with some difficulty, the other only too accessible after a fashion. The first is the *Lectures on Poetry*, which, after delivering them at the Royal Institution during the great vogue of such things in 1820, he refashioned later for the *New Monthly Magazine* when he was its editor, so that they are only to be had by one of the least agreeable of all processes, the rummaging *for a purpose* in an old periodical.

His Specimens.

The accessibility of the other place—the critical matter contributed to the well-known *Specimens of the British Poets*, and to some extent the actual selections themselves—is greater because they are in nearly all the second-hand book-shops, where from sixpence to a shilling a

[1] *Periodical Criticism*, vol. ii.

[2] In connection with Sir Walter, one may pay a note of tribute to the extreme and now too little known critical ability of his "discoverer," J. L. Adolphus, whose *Letters to Heber on the Authorship of Waverley* would come in well as an excursus-subject. Examining, as he did, certain known works of an at least hypothetically unknown writer, he was bound to give that attention to the *work itself*, which was the great thing necessary; and he gave it with remarkable ability, craftsmanship, and knowledge of literature.

volume will buy—well bound often and in perfectly good condition—matter which, at any proper ratio of exchange, is worth a dozen times the money. This worth consists of course mainly in the matter selected: but the taste which selected it must figure for no small increment, and the purely critical framework is, to say the least, remarkably worthy of both. Campbell, a very puzzling person in his poetry, is by no means a very easily comprehensible or appraisable one in his critical attitude. In the general arrangement of this he is distinctly of the older fashion, as the fashions of his time went. Like his style, though this is a very fair specimen of the "last Georgian," still in a manner the standard and staple of the plainer English prose, his opinions are a thought periwigged and buckrammed. He demurs to the "Romantic Unity" of Hurd earlier and Schlegel later; and when in his swashing blow (and a good swashing blow it is of its kind) on the side of Pope in the weary quarrel, he tries to put treatment of artificial on a poetical level with treatment of natural objects, we must demur pretty steadily ourselves. But, on the other hand, he distinctly champions (and was, I believe, the first actually so to formulate) the principle that "in poetry there are many mansions," and, what is more, he lives up to it. He really and almost adequately appreciates Chaucer: it is only his prejudice about Unity and the Fable that prevents him from being a thorough-going Spenserian; and when we come to the seventeenth century he is quite surprising. Again, it is true, his *general* creed makes him declare that the metaphysicians "thought like madmen." But he is juster to some of them than Hazlitt is; he has the great credit of having (after a note of Southey's, it is true) reintroduced readers to the mazy but magical charms of *Pharonnida;* and he admits Godolphin and Stanley, Flatman and Ayres. If the history of the earlier part of his Introductory Essay is shaky, it could not have been otherwise in his time; and it shows that the indolence with which he is so often charged did not prevent him from making a very good use of what Warton and Percy, Tyrwhitt and Ritson and Ellis, had provided.

This indolence, however, is perhaps more evident in the distribution of the criticism, which, if not careless, is exceedingly capricious. Campbell seems at first to have intended to concentrate this criticism proper in the Introduction (to which nearly the whole of the first volume is allotted), and to make the separate prefaces to the selections mainly biographical. But he does not at all keep to this rule; the main *Introduction* itself is, if anything, rather too copious at the beginning, while it is compressed and hurried at the end: not a few of the minor pieces and less prominent poets have no criticism at all; while, in the case of those that have it, it is often extremely difficult to discover the principle of its allotment. Yet, on the whole, Campbell ought never to be neglected by the serious student; for even if his criticism were solely directed from an obsolete standpoint, it would be well to go back to it now and then as a half-way house between those about Johnson and those about Coleridge, while as a matter of fact it has really a very fair dose of universal quality.[1]

Shelley his Defence of Poetry.

There are several critical passages in Shelley's *Letters*, but, as formally preserved, his criticism is limited to the *Defence of Poetry*, which, despite its small bulk, is of extreme interest.[2] It is almost the only return of its times to that extremely abstract consideration of the matter which we found prevalent in the Renaissance, and which in Shelley's case, as in the cases of Fracastoro or of Sidney, is undoubtedly inspired by Plato. It seems to have been immediately prompted by some heresies of Peacock's: but, as was always its author's habit, in prose as well as in verse, he drifts "away, afar" from what apparently was his starting-point, over a measureless ocean of abstract thinking. He endeavours indeed, at first, to echo the old saws about men "imitating natural objects in the youth of the world" and the

[1] Those who will not take the trouble to search the *Specimens* themselves will find copious and admirably selected examples in Jeffrey's article on the book (*Essays*, 1 vol. ed., p. 359 *sq.*), one of the best reviews he ever wrote, but for context (*v.* above), specially ungenerous flings at Southey.

[2] This may be found not merely in the edd. of the *Works*, but in Prof. Vaughan's interesting selection of *Literary Criticism* (London, 1896).

like, but he does not in any way keep up the arrangement, and we are almost from the outset in contact with his own ardent imagination—of which quality he at once defines poetry as the expression. Again, the poetic faculty is "the faculty of approximation to the beautiful." Once more we have the proud claim for poetry that poets are not merely the authors of arts, but the inventors of laws, the teachers of religion. They "participate in the eternal, the infinite, and the one." They are not necessarily confined to verse, but they will be wise to use it. A poem is the very image of life, expressed in its eternal truth. "Poetry is something divine," the "centre and circumference of knowledge," the "perfect and consummate surface and bloom of all things," the "record of the best and happiest moments of the happiest and best minds." All which (or all except the crotchet about verse) I for one do most powerfully and potently believe: though if any one says that, as generally with Shelley, one is left stranded, or rather floating, in the vague, denial is not easy. One can only wish oneself, as Poins wished his sister, "no worse fortune."[1]

[1] It is with some misgiving, and after more than one change of mind, that I place Shelley's great poetical twin (or rather tally) in a note only here. The early *Sleep and Poetry* belongs to us as giving Keats's perhaps one-sided but very vigorous and remarkable verse-formulation of the protest against Neo-classicism; the two prefaces (especially the final one) to *Endymion* have been generally recognised by the competent as perhaps the most astonishingly just judgments which any poet has ever passed on himself: and the *Letters* are full of critical or quasi-critical passages of the highest interest. I myself have a sheaf of them duly noted; and some persons of distinction whom I know would admit them to the very Golden Book of Criticism. I hope, however, that my own judgment is not too much sicklied o'er with crotchet in holding that Keats's criticism of himself and others is somewhat too spontaneous and automatic, somewhat too much of a mere other phase of his creation, to deserve the name of criticism properly so called. He speaks of Shakespeare admirably, because he has the same quintessentially English cast of poetry that Shakespeare had. When he speaks of poetry in the abstract, as he does admirably and often, it is this poetry speaking of *herself*, and *therefore* speaking truly but not critically. Even in the wonderful remark (vol. v. p. 111., ed. Forman, Glasgow, 1901) on himself and Byron, "He describes what he sees. I describe what I imagine" (where he repeats Philostratus without in the least knowing it), the thing is not criticism: it is self-speaking. And beyond this he seldom goes, and is seldomer happy in his rare excursions. He might have become a critic, as he might have become almost anything good, but I do not think he was one.

In the course of this History we have seen not infrequent examples of Criticism divorced from Taste—a severance to which the peculiarities of classical and neo-classical censorship lent but too much encouragement. It must be obvious that the general tendency of the criticism which we are calling Modern inclines towards the divorce of Taste from Criticism—to the admission of the monstrous regiment of mere arbitrary enjoyment and liking, not to say mere caprice. But it is curious that our first very distinguished example of this should be found in a person who, both by practice and in theory, had very distinct "classical" tendencies—who, in fact, with the possible exception of Mr Arnold, was the most classical of at least the English writers of the nineteenth century.

Landor.

Landor's[1] critical shortcomings, however, are the obvious and practically inevitable result of certain well-known peculiarities of temperament, moral rather than intellectual, and principles of life rather than of literature. With him, as with King Lear (whom in more ways and points than one he resembled, though, luckily, with the tragedy infinitely softened and almost smoothed away), the dominant is *impotentia*—the increasing and at last absolute incapacity of the intellect and will to govern the emotions and impulses. Now, as criticism is itself an endless process of correcting impressions—or at least of checking and auditing them till we are sure that they are genuine, co-ordinated, and (with the real if not the apparent consistency) consistent—a man who suffers from this *impotentia* simply cannot be a real critic, though he may occasionally make observations critically sound.

His lack of judicial quality.

The rule and the exceptions hold good with Landor unfailingly. He was an excellent scholar; his acquaintance with modern literatures, though much smaller and extremely arbitrary, was not positively small, and his taste, in some directions at least, was delicate and exquisite. But of judicial quality or qualities he had not one single

In regular Criticism.

[1] My copy is the eight-volume ed. of 1874-76: but the titles of the various pieces will enable them to be found in others.

trace, and, even putting them out of the question, his intelligence was streaked and flawed by strange veins of positive silliness. We need not dwell too much on his orthographical and other whims, which have been shared by some great ones —the judgments are the things. In the very first paragraph of his very first regular criticism we find the statement that the Poems of Bion and Moschus are not only "very different" from those of Theocritus but "very inferior." Inferior in what? in bulk certainly: but in what else are the *Adonis* and the *Bion* itself inferior to anything Theocritean? A critic should have been warned by his own "different" not to rush on the "inferior," which is so often fallaciously consequent. I shall not be accused of excessive Virgil-worship, but what criticism is there in the objection to *me ceperat annus* as "scarcely Latin" (really! really! Mr Landor, you were not quite a Pollio!), and in the flat emendation of *mihi coeperat*, or in the contemptuous treatment of that exquisite piece containing

ὁ θὴρ δ' ἔβαινε δειλῶς,
φοβεῖτο γὰρ Κυθήρην,

a phrase which, for simplicity, pictorial effect, and suggestion, is almost worthy of Sappho? Such a sentence as that of Politian's poems, "one only has any merit," is simply disabling: mere schoolboy prejudice has evidently blinded the speaker. Yet it occurs in his best critique, that on Catullus.

The Conversations.

These set criticisms, however, are few, and Landor was evidently not at ease in them. The literary "Conversations," it may be said, are the true test. And it is at least certain that these conversations supply not a few of those more excellent critical observations which have been acknowledged and saluted. Especially must we acknowledge and salute one[1] which, though of considerable length, must be made an exception to the rule of "not quoting." Nowhere, in ancient or modern place, is the education of the

[1] See the opening of "Southey and Porson." It is, of course, not improved by the presence of the Landorian irony, which is an uncertain quality, too often inclining either to horse-play or to peevishness: but this is not fatal.

critic outlined with greater firmness and accuracy; and those who, by this or that good fortune, have been put through some such a process, may congratulate themselves on having learnt no vulgar art in no vulgar way.

Loculus aureolus.

I would seriously recommend to the employer of our critics, young and old, that he oblige them to pursue a course of study such as this; that, under the superintendence of some respectable student from the University, they first read and examine the contents of the book—a thing greatly more useful in criticism than is generally thought; secondly, that they carefully write them down, number them, and range them under their several heads; thirdly, that they mark every beautiful, every faulty, every ambiguous, every uncommon expression. Which being completed, that they inquire what author, ancient or modern, has treated the same subject; that they compare them, first in smaller, afterwards in larger portions, noting every defect in precision and its causes, every excellence and its nature; that they graduate these, fixing *plus* and *minus*, and designating them more accurately and discriminately by means of colours stronger or paler. For instance purple might express grandeur and majesty of thought; scarlet, vigour of expression; pink, liveliness; green, elegant and equable composition; these, however, and others as might best attract their notice and serve their memory. The same process may be used where authors have not written on the same subject, when those who have are wanting or have touched on it but incidentally. Thus Addison and Fontenelle, not very like, may be compared in the graces of style, in the number and degree of just thoughts and lively fancies; thus the dialogues of Cicero with those of Plato, his ethics with those of Aristotle, his orations with those of Demosthenes. It matters not if one be found superior to the other in this thing and inferior in that: the qualities of two authors are explored and understood and their distances laid down, as geographers speak, from accurate survey. The *plus* and *minus* of good and bad and ordinary will have something of a scale to rest upon: and after a time the degrees of the higher parts in intellectual dynamics may be more nearly attained, though never quite exactly.

But again disappointing.

Yet in close context with this very passage comes an idle "splurt" (evidently half-due to *odium anti-theologicum*) at Coleridge — a thing exactly of the kind which such discipline as has been just recommended should check. And everywhere, especially in the long

Miltonic examen between "Southey and Landor," the effects of Landor's character appear side by side with a sort of peddling and niggling censorship which one might have thought not natural to that character at all, and which perhaps is a *damnosa hereditas* from the worse kind of classical scholarship. Even on Boileau[1] he manages to be unfair; and at his objection to one of Milton's most exquisite and characteristic lines—

"Lancelot and Pelleas and Pellinore"—

one can but cover the face. Caprice, arbitrary legislation, sometimes positive blindness and deafness,—these are Landor's critical marks when he quits pure theory, and sometimes when *he does not quit it.*

With him we leave the "majorities"—those who, whether greater or lesser critics, were great either as such or in other paths of letters. Some smaller, but in some cases not so small, persons remain, with one or two examples—one specially famous—of what we have called "the Adversaries." And first we must touch (if only in order to deal with yet another of the majorities themselves, who has seemed to some to be a critic) on the "Pope a Poet" quarrel.

The revival of the Pope quarrels.

We have seen[2] that this quarrel, originally raised by Joseph Warton, was even by him latterly waged as by one *cauponans bellum;* but a lazily and gingerly waged war is generally a long one, and this instance did not discredit the rule. Johnson's intervention[3] in it, in his *Life* of Pope, was sensible and moderate — indeed, with certain necessary allowances, it is fairly decisive. But Pope, among his other peculiarities, has had the fate of making foes of his editors, and this was the case with the Reverend William Lisle Bowles, who revived the fainting battle,[4] not to any one's advantage or particular credit, and to his own dire tribulation. Bowles is one of those not uninteresting people, in all divisions

Bowles

[1] See "Landor and Delille."

[2] *V. sup.*, p 66 *sq.*

[3] *V. sup.*, II 491.

[4] From 1801, when his edition appeared, till well into the 'Twenties. Mr Rhys (*op. cit. sup.*) has given some of Bowles's rejoinders to Byron, with Byron's own *Letter*, mentioned below, and some references to the battle in his *Introduction.*

of history, who, absolutely rather null, have not inconsiderable relative importance. The influence of his early sonnets on Coleridge, and through Coleridge on the whole Romantic revival in England, is well known, and not really surprising. In the remainder of his long and on the whole blameless life, he committed a great deal of verse which, though not exactly bad, is utterly undistinguished and unimportant. His theory of poetry, however, though somewhat one-sided, was better than his practice: and it was rather as a result of that dangerous thing Reaction, and from a lack of alertness and catholicity, than from positive heresy, that he fell foul of Pope. In his edition he laid down, and in the controversy following he defended,[1] certain "invariable principles of Poetry," of which the first and foremost was that images, thoughts, &c., derived from Nature and Passion, are always more sublime and pathetic than those drawn from Art and Manners. And it was chiefly on this ground that he, of course following his leader Warton, but using newer material and tactics, disabled, partially or wholly, the claims of Pope. Hereupon arose a hubbub Campbell in the *Specimens*[2] took a hand; Byron wrote a *Letter to John Murray*[3] in defence of his favourite, and in ridicule of Bowles; auxiliaries and adversaries ran up on both sides Whether Bowles was most happy or unhappy in the turmoil I am unable to say, but he was certainly put in a great state of agitation, and showered Pamphlets with elaborate titles, which one may duly find, with their occasions and rejoinders, in the library of the British Museum. At last dust settled on the conflict, which, however, is itself not quite settled to the present day, and in fact never can be, because it depends on one of the root-differences of poetical taste. However, it probably helped the wiser sort to take the *via media*, even such a Romantic as Hazlitt vindicating Pope's possession of "the poetical point of view," and did, for the same sort, a service to the general history of criticism by emphasising the

[1] They will be found usefully rearranged by himself in the extract of his answer to Byron given by Mr Rhys (Appendix to vol. II., *op. cit.*)

[2] I 262 *sq.*

[3] 1821 To be found, outside the odd of the author, in Mr Rhys' book, ii. 162 *sq.*

above-mentioned difference. Bowles himself, if he had been less fussy, less verbose, less given to "duply and quadruply" on small controversial points, and more a man of the world and of humour, might not have made by any means a bad critic. As it was, he was right in the main.

Byron.

We must, however, I suppose, say something, if only in this connection, of Byron as a critic. I do not think it necessary to say very much; and I shall not, as I could most easily do, concatenate here the innumerable contradictions of critical opinion in his *Letters*, which show that they were mere flashes of the moment, connected not merely by no critical theory but by no critical taste of any consistency, flings, "half-bricks" directed at dog or devil or divinity, according to the mood in which the "noble poet" chose to find himself.

The Letter to Murray, &c.

Let us confine ourselves to that unquestionably remarkable *Letter to John Murray* on Bowles and Pope, which is admittedly his critical diploma-piece. There are of course very good things in it. Byron was a genius; and your genius will say genial things now and then, whatsoever subject he happens to be treating. But he cannot in the very least maintain himself at the critical point: he is like the ball in the fountain, mounting now and then gloriously on the summit of the column and catching the rays that it attracts and reflects, much more often lying wallowing in the basin. Never was such critical floundering. He blasphemes at one moment the "invariable principles of poetry," about which the amiable but somewhat ineffectual Bowles prated; he affirms them at the next, by finding in his way, and blindly picking up, the secret of secrets, that the poet who *executes* best is the highest, whatsoever his department; and he makes his affirmation valueless, by saying, almost before we have turned the page, that Lucretius is ruined by his ethics, and Pope saved by them. Even setting ethic against ethic, the proposition is at least disputable: but what on earth has Ethic to do with Execution, except that they both occur in the dictionary under E? There are other excellent things in the letter, and yet others the reverse of excellent; but I have not the least intention here of setting up a balance-sheet

after the manner of Robinson Crusoe, of ranging Byron's undoubtedly true, though not novel, vindication of the human element as invariably necessary to poetry, against his opinion of Shelley, and of Keats, and of the English poetry of his greatest contemporaries generally, as "all Claudian," and against the implied estimate of Claudian himself. This would be a confusion like his own, a parallel *ignoratio elenchi*, a *fallacia a fallacioribus*. Suffice it to say, that to take him seriously as a critic is impossible.[1]

Others: Isaac Disraeli.

Of the work which—sometimes of the inner citizenship of the critical Rome and at the worst of its "utmost last provincial band"—was done by a great number of individuals and in no small number of periodicals, dictionaries, and what not, we cannot speak here as fully as would be pleasant,—the historian must become a "reasoned cataloguer" merely, and that by selection. Two contemporary and characteristic figures are those of Isaac Disraeli and of Sir Egerton Brydges. Both had the defects of the antiquarian quality. Rogers, though unamiable, was probably not unjust when, in acknowledging the likelihood of Isaac Disraeli's collections enduring, he described him as "a man with half an intellect." In formation and expression of opinion, Lord Beaconsfield's father too often wandered from the silly to the self-evident and back again, like Addison between his two bottles at the ends of the Holland House gallery: and his numerous *collectanea* would certainly be more useful if they were more accurate. But the *Curiosities*, the *Amenities*, the *Quarrels*, and all the rest show an ardent love for literature itself, and a singularly wide knowledge of it: they are well calculated to inoculate readers, especially young readers, with both.

Brydges's work, less popular, is of a higher quality. His extensive editing labours were beyond price at his date, in books like the *Censura Literaria* much knowledge is still readily ac-

[1] It has been suggested to me that Byron ought to have the benefit, as well as the disadvantage, of my description of Keats's critical utterances on the other side, as a phase of his creation. There is something in this: but Byron seems to me less *genuine* even on this showing.

cessible, which can only be picked up elsewhere by enormous excursions of reading at large; and his original critical power was much higher than is generally allowed. Such enthusiastic admiration of Shelley as is displayed in the notes to his Geneva reprint of the English part of Phillips' *Theatrum Poetarum* in 1824,[1] is not often shown by a man of sixty-two for a style of poetry entirely different from that to which he has been accustomed. And it shows, not merely how true a training the study of older literature is for the appreciation of newer, but that there must have been something to train.

Sir Egerton Brydges.

Moreover, this first period of enthusiastic exploration did not merely produce the lectures of Coleridge and Hazlitt, and the unsurpassed essays of Lamb, the hardly surpassed ones of Leigh Hunt. It produced also, by the combined efforts of a band of somewhat less distinguished persons, a periodical publication of very considerable bulk and of almost unique value and interest. It is not for nothing that while old magazines and reviews are usually sold for less than the cost of their binding, and not much more than their value as waste-paper, *The Retrospective Review*[2] still has respectable, though of course not fantastic, prices affixed to it in the catalogues. It was started in 1820, under the editorship of Henry Southern,[3] a diplomatist from the Cantabrigian Trinity, and of the antiquary afterwards so well known as Sir Harris Nicolas. Opening with a first volume of extraordinary excellence, it kept up for seven years and fourteen volumes, on a uniform principle The second series, however, which was started after I know not what breach of continuity,[4] was less for-

The Retrospective Review.

[1] The *Censura*, extending to 10 vols., but oftenest found incomplete, appeared in 1805-9. The *British Bibliographer*, *Restituta*, &c., came later.

[2] First Series, 14 vols., 1820 26; Second, 2 vols., 1827 28. Its contributors included Hartley Coleridge, Talfourd, and others, while Thomas Wright wrote largely in a Third, much later (1854).

[3] Southern afterwards came in contact with Borrow at Madrid See *The Bible in Spain* and Dr Knapp's *Life*.

[4] There is none in the dates, but the title-page is different, the former vignette of a gateway (Trinity? "I cannot tell, I am an Oxford man") disappearing, and being replaced by the editors' names.

tunate, and extends to two volumes only, though these contain much more matter apiece than the earlier ones. It is not uncommon to find these two volumes, and even some of the first series, wanting in library sets, which librarians should do their best to complete; for though, toward the end, the purely antiquarian matter encroached a very little upon the literary, there is not a volume from first to last which does not contain literary matter of the highest interest and value.[1]

The proud-looked and high-stomached persons who pronounce the best in this kind but shadows, and regard old criticism as being—far more than history in its despised days—"an old almanack," will of course look prouder and exalt their stomachs higher at the use of such terms. So be it. Some day people will perhaps begin to understand generally what criticism is, and what is its importance. Then more—as some do already—will appreciate the interest and the value of this work of Nicolas, Palgrave, Talfourd, Hartley Coleridge, and other good men. It would be perfectly easy to make fun of it. The style may be to modern tastes a little stilted when it is ambitious, and a little jejune when it is not—in both cases after the way of the last Georgian standard prose. Although there is much and real learning, our philologers might doubtless exalt *their* stomachs over the neglect of their favourite study: and the fetichists of biography might discover that many a Jane is called Anne, and many a March made into February. These drawbacks and defects are more than compensated by the general character of the treatment. While not despising bibliography, the writers as a rule do not put it first, like Sir Egerton Brydges: nor do they indulge in the egotistical *pot-pourri* of "Chandos of Sudeley." They have the enormous advantage, in most cases, of coming quite fresh to their work,—of being able to give a real "squeeze" direct from the original brass, with the aid of their own appreciation, unmarred and unmingled by reminiscences of this essay and that treatise, by the necessity of combating this or

[1] The so-called "*Third* Series" (in 2 vols., 1854) can hardly be considered as really forming part of the original, from which it is separated by a thirty years' interval. But it has (*v. sup.*) some good work in it.

that authority on their subject. They look at that subject itself, and even when they show traces of a little prejudice—as in the opposite cases of the man who is rather hard on Dryden and the man who is, for the nineteenth century, astonishingly "soft" on Glover—the impression is obviously genuine and free from forgery.

What is more, these Reviewers give themselves, as a rule, plenty of room, and supply abundant extracts—things of the first importance in the case of books, then as a rule to be found only in the old editions, and in many cases by no means common now. The scope is wide. The first volume gives, *inter alia*, articles on Chamberlayne (one for *Pharonnida* and one for *Love's Victory*), on Crashaw and Dryden, on Rymer and Dennis and Heinsius, on Ben Jonson and Cyrano de Bergerac, on the *Urn Burial*, and on such mere curiosities as *The Voyage of the Wandering Knight*. The papers throughout on Drama, from the Mysteries onward, and including separate articles on the great Elizabethan minors, were, till Pearson's reprints thirty years ago, the most accessible source of information on their subjects, and are still specially notable; as are also the constituents of another interesting series on Spanish Literature. The *Arcadia* balances Butler's *Remains* in vol. ii. Vaughan and Defoe, *Imitations of Hudibras*, and that luckless dramatist and mad but true poet, Lee,[1] have their places in the Third, where also some one (though he came a little too early to know the *Chansons de gestes*, and so did not put "things of Charlemagne" in their right order) has an interesting article on the Italian compilation *La Spagna* I should like to continue this sampling throughout the sixteen volumes, but space commands only a note on the rest in detail.[2]

[1] It is the only adequate thing on him that I know.

[2] Specially good are, in vol. iv., the dramatic papers; in v., one on *Witchcraft*, in vi., those on Coryat and Sir T Urquhart, in vii., on Donne and Ariosto, in ix., on Chaucer (continued later); in x., on *Mimo French Poetry* (Dorat); in xii., on *Latin Plays at Cambridge*, and one of singular and wide reaching merit on the *Roman Comique*, in xv, an interesting tracing of Scott's quotations in the novels; in xvi, an admirable paper on Shadwell. But there is practically nothing negligible and good taste, good manners, good temper, and good learning abound throughout.

Nor are they afraid of more general discussion. In the above-mentioned article on John Dennis there is a long passage which I do not remember to have seen anywhere extracted, dealing in a singularly temperate and reasonable fashion with the "off-with-his-head" style of criticism put in fashion by the *Edinburgh;* and others will be easily found. But they do not as a rule lay themselves out much for "preceptist" criticism. It is the *other* new style of intelligent and well-willing interpretation to which they incline, and they carry it out with extraordinary ability and success. To supply those who may not have time, opportunity, or perhaps even inclination to read more or less out-of-the way originals with some intelligible and enjoyable knowledge of them at second-hand; to prepare, initiate, and guide those who are able and willing to undertake such reading; to supply those who have actually gone through it with estimates and judgments for comparison and appreciation—these may be said to be their three objects. Some people may, of course, think them trivial objects or unimportant; to me, I confess, they seem to be objects extremely well worth attaining, and here very well attained. The papers in the *Retrospective Review*, be it remembered, anticipated Sainte-Beuve himself (much more such later English and American practitioners as Mr Arnold, who was not born, and Mr Lowell, who was but a yearling when it first appeared) in the production of the full literary *causerie*, the applied and illustrative complement, in regard to individual books, authors, or small subjects, of the literary history proper. When people at last begin to appreciate what literary history means, there will probably be, in every country, a collection of the best essays of this kind arranged from their authors' works conveniently for the use of the student. And when such a collection is made in England, no small part in it will be played by articles taken from the *Retrospective Review*.

The Baviad and Anti-Jacobin,

For the last subdivision of this chapter we must go a little backwards. The phenomena of English criticism in the last decade of the eighteenth century are curious: and they might be used to support such very different theories of the relations of Criticism and Creation,

that their most judicious use, perhaps, is to point the moral of the riskiness of *any* such theories. During this decade one great generation was dying off and another even greater was but coming on. Except Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, and Burke's last and best work (which were both entirely of the past, and in the former case, at least, presented a purely personal product), and the *Lyrical Ballads* (which were wholly of the future), with the shadowy work of Blake (hardly of any time or even any place), nothing of extraordinary goodness appeared. But a great deal appeared of a most ordinary and typical badness, and this seems to have excited a peculiar kind of irregular or Cossack criticism to carry on a guerilla war against the hosts of dreary or fantastic dulness. Criticism had at this time little of a standing army: the old *Critical* and *Monthly* Reviews were sinking into dotage (though such a man as Southey wrote in the former), and the new class of comparatively independent censorship, which put money in its purse and carried its head high, was to wait for the *Edinburgh* and the next century. But Hayley and Sir James Bland Burges and the Della Cruscans; but Darwin even, and even Godwin; nay, the very early antics of such men as Coleridge and Southey themselves, with some things in them not so antic perhaps, but seeming to their contemporaries of an antic disposition—were more than critical flesh and blood could stand. The spirit which had animated Rivarol[1] on the other side of the Channel came to animate Wolcot (who had indeed showed it for some time[2]) and his enemy Gifford, and the greater wits of the *Anti-Jacobin*, and even the pedantic and prosaic Mathias.

with Wolcot and Mathias.

Now the result of dwelling upon the works of that Pindar who was born not in Bœotia but in Devonshire, and on the ever-beloved and delightful *Poetry of the Anti-Jacobin*, if not also on its prose, would no doubt be far more agreeable to the reader than much of what he actually finds here: and to dwell on them would fall in with some of the writer's oldest and most cherished tastes. Nay, even the *Baviad* and *Mæviad*, out

[1] *Hist. Crit.*, ii. 534.

[2] His best literary skit, "Bozzy and Piozzi," deals with the *Tour*, not the *Life*.

of proportion and keeping as is much of their satire, and the *Pursuits of Literature* itself,—despite its tedious ostentation of learning, its endless irrelevance of political and other note-divagation, and its disgusting donnishness without the dignity of the better don,—give, especially in the three first cases, much marrowy matter in the texts, and an abundance of the most exquisite unintentional fooling in the passages cited by the copious notes. Unfortunately so to dwell would be itself out of keeping and proportion here The things[1] are among the lightest and best examples of the critical *soufflé*, well cheesed and peppered. Or (if the severer muses and their worshippers disdain a metaphor from Cookery, that Cinderella of the Fine Arts) let us say that they exemplify most agreeably the substitution of a sort of critical *banderilla*, sometimes fatal enough in its way, for the Thor's hammer of Dryden and the stiletto of Pope. But they are only symptoms—we have seen things of their kind before, from Aristophanes downwards—and we must merely signal and register them as we pass in this adventure, keeping and recommending them nevertheless for quiet and frequent reading *delectationis causa*. The infallibility and vitality of the *Anti-Jacobin*, in particular, for this purpose, is something really prodigious. The *Rovers* and the *New Morality* and the *Loves of the Triangles* seem to lose none of their virtue during a whole lifetime of the reader, and after a century of their own existence.

The influence of the new Reviews, &c.

There is, however, one point on which we not only may but must draw special attention to them. There can be little doubt that these light velitations of theirs prepared the way and sharpened the taste for a very considerable refashioning and new-modelling of the regular critical-Periodical army which followed so soon. In this new-modelling some of them—Gifford, Canning, Ellis—were most important officers, and there can be no doubt at all that many others transferred, consciously or unconsciously,

[1] The earlier *Rolliad* is partly, but less, literary. For more on most of these I may refer to an essay of mine, *Twenty Years of Political Satire*, which originally appeared in *Macmillan's Magazine*, and is reprinted in *Essays in English Literature*, 2nd series, London, 1895.

this lighter way of criticising from verse to prose, or kept it up in verse itself such as *Rejected Addresses*, which in turn handed on the pattern to the *Bon Gaultier Ballads* in the middle, and to much else at the end, of the nineteenth century. Part of the style was of course itself but a resharpening of the weapons of the Scriblerus Club, but these weapons were refurbished brightly, and not a little repointed. The newer critic was at least supposed to remember that he was not to be dull. Unfortunately the personal impertinence which, though not pretty even in the verse-satirist, is by a sort of prescription excusable or at least excused in him, transferred itself to the prose: and the political intolerance became even greater.[1]

Jeffrey.

It is not the least curious freak of the whirligig of time, as shown working in this history, that not a century ago one of the chief places here would have seemed inevitably due to Francis Jeffrey, while at the present moment perhaps a large majority of readers would be disposed to grudge him more than a paragraph, and be somewhat inclined to skip that

His loss of place and its cause

We cannot "stint his sizings" to that extent. Yet it is also impossible to give him much space, more particularly because his interest has shrunk to, and is very unlikely ever greatly to swell from, that of a kind of representative position. Jeffrey is no mere English La Harpe, as some think: he does not exemplify the Neo-classical "Thorough," the rigour of the Rule, after the fashion which makes that remarkable person so interesting On the contrary, he is only the last and most noteworthy instance of that mainly Neo-classic inconsistency which we pointed out and on which we dwelt in the last volume. Except that he

[1] I do not think it necessary to give Gifford's prose or periodical criticism a separate place. It is by no means easily separable as such; and if separated I fancy there would be very little to say for it, and that what would have to be said against it is better summed up in the words of no less a political sympathiser and personal friend than Scott. A "cankered carle" cannot be a good critic, any more than a mildewed grape can give good wine But Gifford was not quite so bad as he has seemed to some; and his editorial work, especially on Jonson, deserves almost the highest praise

looks more backward than forward, Jeffrey often reminds us rather of Marmontel. He has inherited to the fullest extent the by this time ingrained English belief that canons of criticism which exclude or depreciate Shakespeare and Milton "will never do," as he might have said himself: but he has not merely inherited, he has expanded and supplemented it. He has not the least objection to the new school of students and praisers of those other Elizabethan writers, compared with whom Shakespeare would have seemed to La Harpe almost a regular dramatist, and quite a sane and orderly person. He has a strong admiration for Ford. He will follow a safe fellow-Whig like Campbell in admiring such an extremely anti-"classical" thing as Chamberlayne's *Pharonnida*. He uses about Dryden and Pope language not very different from Mr Arnold's, and he is quite enthusiastic (though of course with some funny metrical qualms) about Cowper.

His inconsistency.

But here (except in reference to a man like Keats, who had been ill-treated by the Tories) he draws the line. There may have been something political in the attitude which the *Edinburgh* assumed towards the great new school of poetry which arose between 1798 and 1820. But politics cannot have had everything to do with the matter, and it cannot be an accident that Crabbe is about the only contemporary poet of mark, except Byron, Campbell, and Rogers, whom Jeffrey cordially praises. Above all, the reasons of his depreciation of poets so different as Scott and Wordsworth, and the things of theirs that he specially blames, are fatal. There is plenty to be said against Scott as a poet, and plenty to be said against Wordsworth. *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* is far from faultlessly perfect: but the beauty of its subject, its adaptation of antique matter and manner, and its new versification, are almost beyond praise from the poetical point of view. It is exactly these three things that Jeffrey most blames. There are scores and hundreds of things in Wordsworth which are helplessly exposed to the critical arrows: but a man who pronounces the *Daffodils* "stuff" puts himself down once for all, irrevocably, without hope of pardon or of atonement, a person insensible to poetry as such, though there may

be kinds and forms of poetry which, from this or that cause, he is able to appreciate.[1]

His criticism on Madame de Staël.

Once more, as in Leigh Hunt's case (though on the still smaller scale desirable), we can take a "brick of the house" with advantage and without absurdity. Indeed I hardly know anywhere a single Essay which exhibits a considerable critic so representatively as is done for Jeffrey by his article on Madame de Stael's *De La Littérature*, which appeared in the *Edinburgh* for November 1812 and stands after the Tractate on Beauty in the forefront of his Collected Works.[2] He was in the full maturity of his critical powers; as a woman (for Jeffrey was quite a chivalrous person), and as a kind of foreign and female Whig, his author was sure of favourable treatment; the "philosophic" atmosphere of the book appealed to his education, nationality, and personal sympathies; and he had practically most of the knowledge required.[3]

And the article is a very good article,—polite in its mild exposure of Madame de Stael's hasty generalisations, extremely clever and capable in its own survey of literature—Jeffrey was particularly good at these surveys and naturally inclined to them—sensible, competent, in the highest degree readable. It would not be easy, unless we took something of Southey's on the other side, better to illustrate the immense advance made by periodical criticism since the *Edinburgh* itself had shown the way.

Yet there are curious drawbacks and limitations which explain why Jeffrey has not kept, and why he is perhaps not

[1] I know, of course, that even Coleridge spoke unadvisedly about these immortal flowers But he had got a "philosophical" craze at the moment: and he did not call them "stuff"

[2] *Contributions to the Edinburgh Review*, London, pp 36-63 of this one vol. ed, 1853. The "Beauty" itself requires very little notice. It is an ingenious variation upon Alison, whose book it reviews, praises, and supports, with some unfairness to Gerard. Selections from Jeffrey will be found in Mr Gates's *Essays of Jeffrey* (Boston, 1894) and Mr Nichol Smith's *Jeffrey's Literary Criticism* (London, 1910).

[3] He makes indeed an awkward slip by linking Machiavel as a contemporary with Shakespeare, Bacon, Montaigne, and Galileo, but it is only recently, if even recently, that literary history has been carefully attended to, and Coleridge himself makes slips quite as bad.

very likely to recover, his pride of place. Part of his idiosyncrasy was a very odd kind of pessimism, which one would rather have expected from a High Tory than from a "blue and yellow," however symbolical these colours may be of fear. To Jeffrey—in the second decade of the new flourishing of English poetry, which had at least eighty good years to run; in the very year of the new birth of the novel; with Goethe still alive and Heine a boy in Germany; with the best men of the great French mid-nineteenth century already born—it seems that "the age of original genius is over." Now, when a man has once made up his mind to this, he is not likely to be very tolerant of attempts on the age's part to convince him that he is wrong. But even his judgments of the past exhibit a curious want of catholicity. The French vein, which is so strong in him, as well as the general eighteenth-century spirit, which is so much stronger, appears in a distinct tendency to set Latin above Greek. He commends the Greeks indeed for their wonderful "rationality and moderation in imaginative work," suggesting, with a mixture of simplicity and shrewdness, that the reason of this is the absence of any models. Having no originals, they did not try to be better than these. His criticism of the two literatures is taken from a very odd angle—or rather from a maze and web of odd angles. "The fate of the Tarquins," he says, "could never have been regarded at Rome as a worthy occasion either of pity or horror." And he does not in the least seem to see—probably he would have indignantly denied—that in saying this he is denying the Romans any *literary* sense at all. In Aristophanes he has nothing to remark but his "extreme coarseness and vulgarity"; and "the immense difference between Thucydides and Tacitus" is adjusted to the advantage of the Roman. He actually seems to prefer Augustan to Greek poetry, and makes the astonishing remark that "there is nothing at all in the whole range of Greek literature like . . . the fourth book of Virgil," having apparently never so much as heard of Apollonius Rhodius.[1]

[1] How much of this was got from his author herself I leave to others to decide. "She was very capable of having it happen to her," as Marlborough said of his beaten Dutch general.

That of mediæval literature he says practically nothing is not surprising, but it must be taken into account: and his defence of English Literature against his author, though perfectly good against *her*, is necessarily rather limited by its actual purpose, and suggests somehow that other limitations would have appeared if it had been freed from this.

Its lesson.

In short, though we cannot support the conclusion further, the very word "limitation" suggests the name of Jeffrey, in the sphere of criticism. He seems to be constantly "pulled up" by some mysterious check-rein, turned back by some half-invisible obstacle. Sometimes — by no means quite always—we can concatenate the limiting causes,—deduce them from something known and anterior, but they are almost always present or impending. As Leigh Hunt is the most catholic of critics, so Jeffrey is almost the most sectarian: the very shibboleths of his sectarianism being arbitrarily combined, and to a great extent peculiar to himself.[1]

Hallam.

Let us conclude the chapter with a figure scarcely less representative of the anti-enthusiast school of critics, and much more agreeable than either Gifford or Jeffrey. To the English student of literary history and of literary criticism, Henry Hallam must always be a name *clarum et venerabile;* nor—as has been so often pointed out in these pages, and as unfortunately it seems still so often necessary [2] to point out—need disagreement with a great many

[1] A fuller development of view about Jeffrey as a critic may be found in the present writer's *Essays in English Literature*, First Series, pp. 100 134. Articles of his own specially worth examining are, besides the "Stael," "Cowper," "Ford," "Keats," and "Campbell's *Specimens*," those on *W Meister* (very curious and interesting), Richardson, Scott, and Byron (very numerous and full of piquancies), Crabbe, Wordsworth of course (though with as much wisdom as good feeling he kept much of the most offensive matter, both on Wordsworth and Southey, out), and Burns In regard to the latter I cannot help thinking that he played the *Advocatus Diaboli* better than either Mr Arnold, Mr Sharp, or my late friend Mr Henley.

[2] The popularity, in late years, of the singularly uncritical words "sympathetic" and "unsympathetic" in describing Criticism, would of itself point to this necessity. It would seem impossible for a large number of persons to "like" otherwise than "grossly" in Dryden's sense, or to imagine that any one else can like delicately, with discrimination, in the old sense "nicely." A "sympathetic" notice or criticism is one which pours unmixed cataracts of what the cooks call oiled butter all over the patient:

of his own critical judgments and belief that—for those who merely swallow such judgments whole—he is not the safest of critical teachers, interfere with such due homage. For Hallam was our first master in English of the true comparative-historical study of literature—the study without which, as one main result of this volume should be to show, all criticism is now unsatisfactory, and the special variety of criticism which has been cultivated for the last century most dangerously delusive. His Introduction to the *Literature of Europe*, with its sketch of mediæval and its fuller treatment of Renaissance and seventeenth-century Literature, is the earliest book of the kind in our language: it is not far from being, to this day, the best book of the kind in any.

His achievement.

A first attempt of its sort (it cannot be said here with too much frankness and conviction) can even less than any other book be faultless: and it is almost a sufficient proof of Hallam's greatness that his faults are not greater. Some things, indeed, that seem to me faults may not even seem to be so at all to others. He was aware that he must "pass over or partially touch" some departments of at any rate so-called literature; but his preference or rejection may seem somewhat remarkable. Few will quarrel, at least from my point of view, with the very large space given to mere "scholars," but it is surely strange that a historian should have thought History of secondary importance, while according ample space not only to Philosophy and Theology, but even to Anatomy and Mathematics. A more serious and a more indisputable blemish is the scanty and second-hand character of his account of mediæval literature, which he might almost as well have omitted altogether. It cannot be too peremptorily laid down that second-hand

Its merits

a notice that questions this part of him, rejects that, but gives due value to the gold and the silver and the precious stones, while discarding the hay and the stubble, is "unsympathetic" Many years (many lustres even, alas!) ago, an old friend and colleague of mine, since distinguished in his own country as a critic, M. Paul Stapfer, complained that Englishmen, and still more Englishwomen, had only two critical categories—the "dry" and the "pretty" These were unsatisfactory enough, but I think they were better than "sympathetic" and "unsympathetic" as now often used.

accounts of literature are absolutely devoid of any value whatever:—the best and latest authorities become equally "not evidence" with the stalest and worst. Hallam was aware of this principle to some extent, and he almost states it, though of course in his own more measured way, and with reference to quotation mainly, in his preface. But his first chapter is really nothing but a tissue of references to Herder and Eichhorn, Meiners and Fleury, with original remarks which do not console us. The account of Boethius at the very beginning is a pretty piece of rhetoric, but, as the Germans would say, not in the least "ingoing." It is a horrible heresy to say[1] that "It is sufficient to look at any extracts" from the Dark Ages "to see the justice of this censure," for no collection of extracts will justify the *formation* of any critical opinion whatsoever, though it may support, or at least illustrate, one formed from reading whole works.

and defects.

Further, in a note of Hallam's[2] I think may be found the origin of Mr Arnold's too exclusive preference for "the best and principal" things and his disparagement of the historic estimate, though I trust that Mr Arnold[3] would not have shared Hallam's contempt, equally superfine and superficial, for the "barbarous Latin" of the Dark Ages. Finally, it is difficult to conceive a more inadequate reference to one of the most epoch-making of European poems (which is at the same time in its earlier part one of not the least charming) than the words "A very celebrated poem, the *Roman de la Rose*, had introduced an unfortunate taste for allegory in verse, from which France did not extricate herself for several generations." It is all the worse because nothing in it is positively untrue.

In general distribution and treatment.

It may be said to be unjust to dwell on what is avowedly a mere overture: but unluckily, when Hallam comes to his subject proper, all trace of second-hand treatment does not disappear. The part played by direct examination becomes

[1] P. 5, in the convenient 1-vol reprint of Messrs Ward and Lock (London: n. d.)

[2] On the same page, ed cit.

[3] Who loved the Vulgate.

very much larger; and the writer's reading is a matter of just admiration, nor does he ever for one moment pretend to have read what he has not. But he has no scruple in supplementing his reading at second-hand, or even in doubling his own frequently excellent judgments with long quoted passages from writers like Bouterwek. Further, the surprise which has been hinted above as to his admissions and exclusions, and at his relative admissions in point of departments, may perhaps after a time change into a disappointed conviction that his first interest did not lie in literature, as literature, at all; but in politics ecclesiastical and civil, juristics, moral and other philosophy, and the like. I am inclined to think that Bacon, Descartes, Hobbes, and Grotius have, between them, more space than is devoted to all Hallam's figures in *belles lettres* from Rabelais to Dryden.

I could support this with a very large number of *pièces* if it were necessary; but a few must suffice, and in those few we shall find a further count against Hallam arising. Note, for instance, his indorsement of Meiners' complaint that Politian "did not scruple to take words from such writers as Apuleius and Tertullian," an indorsement which in principle runs to the full folly of Ciceronianism, and with which it is well to couple and perpend the round assertion elsewhere that Italian is—even it would seem for Italians—an inferior literary instrument to Latin. Secondly, take the astounding suggestion that the *Epistolæ Obscurorum Virorum* "surely" have "not much intrinsic merit," and the apparent dismissal of them as "a mass of vapid nonsense and bad grammar." As if the very vapidity of the nonsense did not give the savour, and the badness of the grammar were not the charm! Here again another judgment (on the *Satire Menippée*) clinches the inference that Hallam's taste for humour was small. If he is not uncomplimentary, he is strikingly inadequate, on Marot: and in regard to the Pléiade he simply follows the French to do evil, and as elsewhere puts himself under the guidance of—La Harpe! Few "heroic enthusiasts" will read his longer and more appreciative notice of Spenser without perceiving "some want, some cold-

In some particular instances.

ness" in it; fewer will even expect not to find these privations in that of Donne. But the shortest of his shortcomings are reached in his article on Browne, and in part of that on Shakespeare. In the latter the famous sentence on the Sonnets is not, I think, so unforgivable as the slander on Juliet;[1] in the former one can simply quote in silence of comment. "His style is not flowing, but vigorous; his choice of words not elegant, and even approaching to barbarism in English phrase: yet there is an impressiveness, an air of reflection and serenity, in Browne's writings which redeem many of his faults."[2] The sentence that "*Gondibert* is better worth reading than *The Purple Island*, though it may have less of that which distinguishes a poet from another man"—in other words, that an unpoetical poem is better worth reading than a poetical one—is sufficiently tell-tale. It is not surprising, after it, that Hallam speaks respectfully of Rymer—a point where Macaulay, so often his disciple, fortunately left him.

His central weakness.

Something, it has been said, will inevitably emerge from these utterances on a tolerably intelligent consideration. Hallam has abundant erudition, much judicial quality, a shrewdness which generally guides him more or less right in points of fact, sense, fairness; freedom from caprice—even (except as regards the Middle Ages, and especially mediæval Latin and its ancestors back to the late Silver Age) a certain power of regarding literature impartially. But he has, as is so often done (he alludes to the fact himself somewhere), spoken his own doom in words which he applies (with remarkable injustice as it happens) to Fontenelle. He has

[1] I decline to sully these pages with it. let it go to its own place, buckled neck and heels with Rapin's on Nausicaa.

[2] We could abandon Owen Fellltham to him with more equanimity if he did not describe, as "vile English, or properly no English," such words as "nested," "parallel" as a verb, and "uncurtain," all excellent English of the best brand and vintage, formed on the strictest and most idiomatic patents of analogy. There is still far too much criticastry and pedanticulism (here's for them!) of this kind about, and men like Hallam are very mainly responsible for it. Even "obnubilate," to which he also objects, is a perfectly good word, on all-fours with "compensate," which he himself uses in the same context, though less usual. A sovereign of just weight, fineness, and stamp is none the worse for having been little circulated: nor is a word.

"cool good sense, and an incapacity, by natural privation, of feeling the highest excellence in works of taste."

In short, "The Act of God": and for such acts it is as unreasonable as it is indecent to blame their victims. But at the same time we may carry our forbearance to natural privations too far by accepting blind men as guides in precipitous countries, or using as a bloodhound a dog who has no scent. And therefore it is impossible to assign to Hallam a high place as a critic. He may be—he is—useful even in this respect as a check and a reminder of the views which once were taken by men of wide information, excellent discipline, literary disposition, and (where it was not seared or paralysed) positive taste; but he will not soon recover any other value. Even thus he is to a critic that always critically estimable thing a *point de repère*, and in the kindred but not identical function of literary historian, the praise which was given to him at the opening of this notice may be maintained in spite of, and not inconsistently with, anything that has been said meanwhile.[1]

and the value left by it.

Nay, more, Specialism has made such inroads upon us—has bondaged the land to such hordes of robber-barons—that we may not soon expect again, and may even regard with a tender *desiderium*, the width, the justice, the far-reaching and self-sufficing survey and sovereignty of Hallam.

[1] I can only think of one important blunder that he makes *as a historian*—the statement that Opitz "took Holland for his Parnassus" Now Ronsard (*Hist Crit*, ii. 362) was not exactly a Dutchman.

CHAPTER II.

MIL-HUIT-CENT-TRENTE.

THE 'GLOBE'—CHARLES DE RÉMUSAT, VITET, J. J. AMPÈRE—SAINTE-BEUVE HIS TOPOGRAPHY—THE EARLIER ARTICLES—'PORTRAITS LITTÉRAIRES' AND 'PORTRAITS DE FEMMES'—THE 'PORTRAITS CONTEMPORAINS'—HE "ARRIVES"—PORT-ROYAL, ITS LITERARY EPISODES—ON RACINE—'CHATEAUBRIAND ET SON GROUPE LITTÉRAIRE'—FAULTS FOUND WITH IT—ITS EXTRAORDINARY MERITS, AND FINAL "DICTA"—THE 'CAUSERIES' AT LAST—THEIR LENGTH, ETC—BRICKS OF THE HOUSE—HIS OCCASIONAL POLEMIC—THE 'NOUVEAUX LUNDIS'—THE CONCLUSION OF THIS MATTER—MICHELET AND QUINET—HUGO—'WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE'—'LITTÉRATURE ET PHILOSOPHIE'—THE 'CROMWELL' PREFACE, AND THAT TO THE 'ORIENTALES'—CAPITAL POSITION OF THIS LATTER—THE "WORK"—NISARD: HIS 'ÆGRI SOMNIA'—HIS 'ESSAIS SUR LE ROMANTISME'—THEIR "CULPA MAXIMA"—GAUTIER—HIS THEORY, "ART FOR ART'S SAKE," ETC—HIS PRACTICE 'LES GROTESQUES'—'HISTOIRE DU ROMANTISME,' ETC.—UBIQUITY OF FELICITY IN HIS CRITICISM—SAINT-MARC GIRARDIN—PLANCHE—WEIGHT OF HIS CRITICISM—MAGNIN—MÉRIMÉE.

IT is well known, even to not very careful students of French literature, that the famous term which has been taken as the title of this chapter is something of a misnomer, —that the still more famous "representation of *Hernani*" was in effect the shouting after the battle, not the battle itself. The pains which have been spent above on the Empire Critics, greater and smaller, must have been most ill-bestowed if they have not shown that the working of the world-spirit had done already much of what had to be done —that the *i*'s only had to be dotted and the *t*'s crossed, by the end of the third decade of the nineteenth century. The crossing and dotting was done, as usual, with some violence,

The Globe.

and it attracted corresponding attention; but the letters had been shaped long before. Dubois and Pierre Leroux had founded the famous *Globe*—object of the admiration of Goethe and cradle of the talent of Sainte-Beuve and others—in 1824. It furnishes comfort and support to those who believe that criticism is nothing if not philosophical, by the very strong philosophical colour which it took on. Jouffroy was one of its chief pillars; and attention has often been drawn to his tractate in it, *Comment les dogmes finissent* (as to which it can only be remarked that no dogma has ever died yet, and that every dogma, as a natural product of something in human nature, is immortal till human nature perishes), as a symptom and symbol of its literary as of its other doctrines. We are here, however, only concerned with its strictly (if not merely) literary contributors, Sainte-Beuve himself, Charles de Remusat, J. J. Ampère, Vitet, and the rest. Of Sainte-Beuve we shall have plenty to say presently; the rest need not delay us long. The extraordinarily brilliant talents of Charles de Rémusat[1] were always touching literature, but philosophy and politics constantly drew him away from the Muses proper, though whether he talks of Abelard or of Anselm, of Bacon or of Channing, he is never negligible. Vitet became a politician and an antiquary chiefly, but has left at least one remarkable literary document in his well-known essay on the *Chanson de Roland*.[2] As for J. J. Ampère, he supplemented and furthered the study of foreign literatures, which Villemain had made almost obligatory, by an unusual frequentation of foreign countries; and besides some excellent work on the literary history (especially in mediæval times) of his own language, wrote many books of literary travel.

Charles de Rémusat, Vitet, J. J. Ampère.

[1] His *Critiques et Études Littéraires* (2 vols., Paris, 1857) contain many things upon which I should like to dwell, especially his discussion, in the *Globe*, of the *État de la Poésie Française* in 1825. It is as good an expression of the views of the earlier, cooler, and more erudite Eclectic-Romantics as could be wished.

[2] To be found in his *Essais Historiques et Littéraires* Paris, 1862. The *Essais Philosophiques et Littéraires* (Paris, 1875) may also be consulted: but, as the double titles may warn the wary, there is not much pure literature in either.

On the whole, however (for Sainte-Beuve grew out of and far above his *Globe* stage), the *general* interest of the reviewing in this paper is superior to that of its component parts as criticisms and its individual authors as critics. Those who now read Goethe's remarks on it to Eckermann[1] may, if they neglect the historic estimate, be a little puzzled at the great German's enthusiasm. He was right, however, as, in a general way, he usually was. These young men took literature with a wider knowledge and purview of it than the old critics had brought to bear, and with very much less subservience to particular theory as to what the book *ought to be*, and a more obliging though quite independent attention to what it *was*. Their "eclecticism" (which was philosophically the tone or ticket of their paper) adapted itself especially well to these literary exercitations: indeed Eclecticism is never so well justified of any of her necessarily mixed family as in literature. But their greatest is their greatest by so far, that we may well turn to him.

Sainte-Beuve his topography.

Sainte-Beuve was not infrequently seized with an amiable and very convenient fancy for constructing small retrospective guides and clues to the mighty maze of his fifty or sixty volumes of critical essays. The most definite and important, written in September 1861, just at the beginning of the *Nouveaux Lundis*, and appended to the second volume of the Garnier edition of *Portraits Littéraires*, distributes his whole career under heads. First comes his novitiate in the *Globe* up to 1827, then the Romantic campaign of the *Ronsard*, the *Tableau du Seizième Siècle*, and the articles of 1828-29, then the nearly twenty years' stretch of his contributions (preserved in the *Portraits Littéraires* themselves and the *Portraits Contemporains*) to the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, with *Port-Royal* as a solid cut-and-come-again accompaniment; then *Chateaubriand et son Groupe*; then the *Causeries du Lundi* properly so called, and, lastly, the series which he was beginning as he wrote. The work of the first period of which he speaks with some disdain—*ce ne sont que des essais sans importance*—he never actually republished; but towards the end of his

[1] See the later *Conversations*, *passim*.

life he repented and intended to do so, and such part of it as could be recovered appeared posthumously, with a good many waifs and strays of other kinds, as *Premiers Lundis*. If to these we add the *Étude sur Virgile*[1] and perhaps the *P. J. Proudhon*,[2] we shall nearly have exhausted his available stores, and quite, I think, those of critical interest.[3]

The earlier articles.

The earliest detachment of this great army, as presented in that *régiment de marche* the *Premiers Lundis* (made up of all sort of things from these raw recruits to the poor old veterans of Senate-speech more than forty years later), might deserve their author's modest or merciless sentence from the severe point of view of his greatest pupil. They are certainly not "chief and principal things" in themselves. Sainte-Beuve was very young (barely twenty) when he began to write them, and, as we have said, it is nearly impossible for a very young critic to be a very good critic, though it is deplorably possible for a rather old one to be more than rather bad. Some of them are so short as to give no room for much display of individual and original talent. Sometimes they deal with things ephemeral, and now forgotten, in a merely journalist fashion. Sometimes, as in the dealing

[1] This, with Quintus Smyrnæus as make-weight, is a sort of wreckage or recovery from the lectures which were howled down at the Collége de France by anti-Imperialist students. It is the largest of its author's classical studies: not perhaps the most interesting. The French professorial method, possibly in direct tradition from the time when authors were really (and in some cases almost merely) *read* to students, seems to include a very large amount of simple abstract and "argument." ("Priam conducts the young princess to the Palace: he honours her," &c.) This is, from our point of view, rather surplusage, and at any rate more important on Quintus Smyrnæus than on Virgil. But we may note a reference (p. 73) to Mr Arnold's *Preface*, then pretty new, which is an interesting thing.

[2] There is naturally not much criticism here except the remark—in itself involving one of the few great commandments of criticism and one of the most frequently neglected—"il n'avait pas assez lu."

[3] In the case of a man who wrote so much and so often on the same things as Sainte Beuve, an exhaustive general index would be a great assistance. There is a whole volume of *Table* to the *Causeries*, properly so called, the *Portraits de Femmes*, and the *Portraits Littéraires*; while the *Premiers Lundis* contains a succinct but very useful synopsis-index of all the works and substantive pieces, and *Port-Royal* has an elaborate index of its own. But my copies of the *Portraits Contemporains* (5 vols.) and the *Chateaubriand* (2), as well as the 13 of the *Nouveaux Lundis*, are indexless.

with Scott's *Napoleon*, inevitable and insuperable prejudices and preoccupations come in. One may even admit frankly that, *nonnunquam*, there are symptoms which lead one to understand, after a fashion, the charges of dulness[1] and of *galimatias* which were brought against Sainte-Beuve by persons from Balzac[2] downwards, and which have sometimes seemed mere spiteful lunacy to readers of the *Causeries* at their most brilliant period only. But to the expert there is unmistakable and not merely fancied *quality* even here. There is already the indefinable, but in previous critics so unfortunately rare, desire to appreciate, to understand. There is almost always a sober judgment; not seldom a delicate if rather tentative subtlety. Above all, there are signs of something very different from the sham omniscience which is such a temptation to the young reviewer,—of a range and width of reading, classical, modern, foreign, most surprising and most unusual at the time.

The *Tableau*,[3] with its associated selection of Ronsard, and some other matter appended to its later editions, is quite a landmark in French literary history. It turned (or rather marked the turning of) the tide in regard to sixteenth-century literature, interested the youth of the day in the *Pléiade*, stimulated the new prosodical movements, did much else. But its author's powers were immature: and there is not a great deal of the highest critical importance in its individual utterances and judgments. Perhaps the most noteworthy is the statement in the *Preface* that "L'Art consacre et purifie tout ce qu'il touche"—a companion axiom to the Preface of the *Orientales*, which neither critic nor poet would have fully indorsed in their later days, though many of their followers would.

The *Portraits Littéraires*, with its satellite or tow-boat the

[1] Sainte-Beuve *could* be dull, and his Senate speeches are most painful proofs of it. We know that the Senators who talked him inaudible had other reasons for their rudeness: but he almost provoked it apart from those reasons.

[2] I know Balzac's criticism, which is extensive, pretty well, but I shall do no such despite to his genius as to allow him to appear here in a character where he showed no genius at all.

[3] Paris, 1828, and since.

Portraits de Femmes, appears to have been a sort of favourite with Sainte-Beuve. He rearranged it early from the original *Critiques et Portraits Littéraires*;[1] he sifted out the *Portraits de Femmes*, as if to concentrate special attention on them, he added from time to time appetising and really important bonuses and *primes* of appendices, *Pensées*, personal confidences, and the like. A good deal of his best-known work is in the four volumes (including the *Femmes*) as they are now[2] current: and probably the collection meets the taste, of the general reader at least, as well as any other of his numerous collections, if not better. This, I venture to think,—using a phrase of an author who would probably not have agreed with me in this particular instance,—is because the general reader "does not want criticism," or does not want it first of all. Sainte-Beuve, who knew everything, and cared not to conceal it, knew, as the general reader does not know, that the *causerie*, whether in volume- or essay-form, of mingled biography and criticism, was of English, not French invention, and he confesses that he longed to imitate it He did so, and carried it even beyond Johnson: but he was frequently tempted to let the biography and the personality rather swamp the criticism, and I think he has done so here. In the *Portraits de Femmes* especially, be it gallantry, gossip-loving, or God knows what, though there may be much interest, there is uncommonly little criticism, even on La Rochefoucauld, who presents himself in the middle of the galaxy with a singular and sultanesque intrusion. On some of the subjects, such as Mme de Longueville, there could be none, even on Mme. de Sévigné and Mme. de Stael, where the opportunities were infinite, there is little; and where there is most, as in the case of Pauline de Meulan (Mme. Guizot), it is where we care least about it. Of history and life plenty, and therefore of amusement much; of criticism very little.

Portraits Littéraires *and* Portraits de Femmes.

Life and its farrago — of which I desire not to speak dis-

[1] This, however (5 vols, 1832 39), was probably the first collection that definitely announced its author to the world at large.

[2] The first reissue (1844 1) was only in two.

respectfully more than of any other equator, but which are not my subject — have rather less exclusive hold in the *Portraits Littéraires* proper and segregated, but still a greater hold than literature. In those days Sainte-Beuve, as he himself more than once confesses, was even more of a philosopher than of a *littérateur* There are of course exceptions, where the past greatness of the author takes the future greatness of the critic by storm beforehand, and forces acquaintance and recognition from its destined brother. Even in these cases one often feels that the critic "is not ready"—that the hour has not fully come. The early and strongly "Romantic" articles on the great classics of the seventeenth century, which open the first volume, are not merely wrong with the crudity of early partisanship, as he himself represents them. Indeed in this respect they are hardly wrong at all But they are not right in the right way. Except the very remarkable piece, "Du Génie Critique et de Bayle," where the vocation asserted itself, there is hardly one of them (if even this is) worthy of Sainte-Beuve. The "Diderot," to make a move forward, is capital on the man, a little short of capital on the writer The best critical thing in the volume is the "Nodier"—much later in date (1840) than the rest of its contents. The second volume, which has something of this advantage, in point of time, contains much better things:—the well-known "Molière," the long (some would say the disproportionately long) "Fontanes," the "Joseph de Maistre,"[1] the "Naudé," and a delightful paper on Aloysius Bertrand of *Gaspard de la Nuit*,[2] which combines the old Romantic enthusiasm with the acquired craftsmanship The third, better still in this latter respect, has less interesting subjects, except in the case of the "Theocritus" and the "Mlle. Aissé," which is

[1] This is a crucial example Sainte-Beuve had a just reverence for the powers of this Abdiel-Michael of aristocracy He even seems a little daunted and dazzled by their sombre splendour. But he does not bring out their literary *quality* as he would have done later.

[2] I believe this charming book—made accessible for a time by the Brussels reprint of 1868—is again very rare I once had the pleasure of introducing it to the late Lord Houghton, who told me afterwards that he had bought it "and dressed it up all in moons and stars."

again a "Portrait de Femme," hardly at all literary. A sacred shame invades me at even appearing to speak disrespectfully of this book. Compared with anything not of its author's, and not of that author's at a future time, it would be very great: but its greater younger brothers are its enemies.

The Portraits Contemporains.

Still not of these is the *Portraits Contemporains*. One feels inclined to say at the beginning, and perhaps not disinclined to repeat the saying at the end, that the title announces an attempt foredoomed to failure.[1] It is almost inevitable that a contemporary portrait in literature should fail to be a likeness, should be at best a *charge*, from one point of view or another. Sainte-Beuve himself in one place (with a naïveté more characteristic of him than those who have not read him very long and very carefully may think, but seldom so openly expressed) admits that his sitters had an awkward trick of falsifying his presentations. He had traced out for them, more or less early in their career, that career as they *ought* to pursue it; but lo! they would follow their own stars, and not his tracings and indications. This is one danger, and a common, if not universal one, with its result,—not often realised in Sainte-Beuve's own case, but constantly in that of smaller critics,—that the prophet loses his temper with these disobedient ducklings, and rates them, not because they behave badly, but because they behave in a way different from that which he expected and wished. But more dangerous still, and less to be avoided even by the staunchest and most vigilant censors, are those insidious, innumerable, ineluctable personal or partisan differences and prejudices which dazzle and trouble the contemporary's eyes: and, worst perhaps of all, that incurable "too-nearness," that hopeless lack of the firm perspective of the past, which clings to him, and will not let him attain to clearness and the Whole. Accordingly the *Portraits Contemporains* are, with

[1] Vigny (in a passage which Sainte-Beuve himself quotes with singular blindness or singular boldness) puts the thing finally: *Il ne faut disséquer que les morts: cette manière de chercher à ouvrir le cerveau d'un vivant est fausse et mauvaise* (A. de V.'s *Journal*, quoted in *Port. Contemp.*, final ed., ii. 79).

the *Portraits Littéraires*, the most unequal of Sainte-Beuve's work, and all the more often disappointing because of the contemporaneity.

That reserve, indeed, which was made at the end of the notice of the *Portraits Littéraires* is even more imperatively called for here, and it is most important that while recognising that the real Sainte-Beuve — the plenilune — is as yet but crescent, we should recognise his brightness and his crescency. It is, for instance, not merely hasty, but fundamentally uncritical, to exclaim at the length, the fulness, the cordiality, with which figures like Fontanes, Fauriel, Daunou are treated; and to contrast, with abomination, the hesitancy, the grudging, the reserves, in the case not merely of Hugo,[1] but of Vigny, Lamartine, even Musset, the roughness on Balzac, the comparative respect paid to Sue, and the comparatively cavalier treatment long accorded to Gautier. Even in regard to the great stone of stumbling, it is necessary, for us who were born later, to remember that however ardent in the *chevelu* and *gilet rouge* and *hierro!* manner we may think we should have been if we had been born earlier, the Hugo of the time before the *Châtiments*, and the *Contemplations*, and the *Legénde*, great as he is, is not the Hugo of that glorious trinity. As for the Empire Critics, no impatience at their disproportionate allowance ought to prevent acknowledgment of Sainte-Beuve's rare equity and true critical spirit towards the immediate predecessors with whom he did *not* agree—a thing as we have seen, deplorably rare in criticism.

Indeed, save in that Supreme Court of Critical History where the dignity of the place excuses the personal insignificance of the judge, and puts the greatest author on his defence, apology for these five volumes would be needless, and almost impertinent. They certainly need not fear assay either of pieces or of passages. In the First, where most of the dubious places occur, where the judgment is most immature, and the

[1] And, after all, let us remember that, on the testimony of the Goncourts (*Journal*, ii. 123), who have left some of the most offensive things against Sainte-Beuve, the critic, as late as 1863, rebuked Taine for belittling Hugo, in these memorable words, "Ne parlez pas d'Hugo. Vous ne le connaissez pas. Mais l'œuvre d'Hugo est magnifique!"

style most inclined to the jargonish,[1] the "Senancour," and in part the "Lamennais," demand special notice, while the opening of the "Béranger," with its sketch of the *causerie* method, is of extreme interest, and the frequent references to English writers[2] show us already the largeness of the critic's equipment. The Second is perhaps to be more cordially welcomed for the miscellanies at its end (including the striking critical imaginations put into the mouths of Diderot and Hazlitt) than for any of its more imposing constituents. The "Balzac" article, though it is in the main just, has a harshness and a touch of personal rudeness about it which are very unusual in Sainte-Beuve, and not quite explicable. The novelist might certainly be excused for thinking it wantonly uncivil. It is a little distressing, too, to read the hostile appendix which Sainte-Beuve ill-advisedly put to his "Montalembert" paper. But "*Misères que tout cela!*" The "Ballenche" and the "Villemain," the "Mme. Desbordes-Valmore" and the "Ulric Guttinguer,"[3] nearly, if not quite, take the taste out. In vol. iii., an extremely interesting opening on Vinet, and a good close on Mérimée, hold between them things even better and sometimes well known—the "Topffer," the "Xavier de Mestre," the "Jasmin," the "J. J. Ampère"—and show, in the "Magnin" and elsewhere, that admirably *horizontal* view of all periods of French literature which Sainte-Beuve was almost the first to take, and in which he has had far too few followers, whether in regard to French literature or others.

This reappears in the "Fauriel,"[4] which takes up nearly a third of vol. iv., and is there accompanied by an excellent paper on Barante, a longer but much less capital one on

[1] See for instance the opening (1832) of the "Lamartine" (i. 276).

[2] *E.g.*, to Crabbe, pp 328-330; to Wordsworth and Coleridge, pp. 337-345. Sainte-Beuve, it is hardly necessary to say, was English of the quarter-blood.

[3] The not quite "single-speech" Ulric of that unforgettable piece, "Ils ont dit, L'amour passe et sa flamme est rapide."

[4] This contains the admirable, if in more than one sense generous, judgment of Schlegel (Wilhelm), that he *a eu l'œil à toutes les grandes choses littéraires, s'il n'a pas toujours rendu justice aux moyennes.* Omit *grandes* in the first clause; substitute it for *moyennes* and prefix *pleine* to *justice* in the second, and the thing becomes a fair verdict on Sainte-Beuve himself.

Thiers, two of Sainte-Beuve's best known pieces on Leopardi and Parny, and one—for us—of peculiar interest on Daunou, containing perhaps the most vivid, and at the same time delicate, sketch in existence of the latest type of Neo-classic critic in France, before M. Brunetière's revival sixty years later,—a type without La Harpe's exaggeration and caricature, with a certain mildness and toleration towards the newer things, but secretly and *saturatedly* convinced that Reason is the Goddess of Literature, that fine verse *is* "almost as good as fine prose," and that fineness in both consists of absolute good sense, logical connection, grammatical impeccability, and a horror of the *verbum inusitatum*. In this, too, the later and more perfect manner is increasingly present throughout, and, naturally, still more so in the Fifth, where the dates bring us to the very eve of the great period itself, and the essays are sometimes hardly distinguishable from the work thereof. The very best of these, perhaps, are the three classical pieces (for Sainte-Beuve was never prudish about titles, and not more than half of the Portraits in this volume deal with contemporaries in any sense) on Homer, Apollonius Rhodius, and Meleager, in which, not for the first time, but for the first time in nearly or quite his full force, he once more makes a new departure in criticism by handling antiquity in true *causerie* style. But the "Desaugiers," the "Louise Labé," and the "Casimir Delavigne" are also noteworthy, while the paper on Gautier's *Les Grotesques*, a little meticulous and pedagogic in parts, and written in avowed protest of a mild kind, is still more so.[1]

In fact, by about 1845[2] he had very nearly developed his full powers, and he was shaking off the awkward transition state when he had ceased to be *romantique à plusieurs* (he never was *à tous*) *crins*, and not yet become himself, and himself only. He had almost accom-

He "arrives."

[1] One of Sainte-Beuve's defects ("for the man was mortal") was an insufficient appreciation of the grotesque and the out-of-the-way.

[2] He himself put it earlier—at 1840 or thereabouts. No doubt, as I have said above, the essays of the 'Forties as a whole do show a great advance. But I hardly recognise the full Sainte-Beuve before, say, the "Daunou" and the "Leopardi" of 1844.

plished the *causerie*, the mixture of biography, and criticism, and "talk about it," which Dryden, I maintain, is the first to have actually hit upon, which Johnson had strengthened but a little stiffened in the *Lives*, and which he himself refashioned by taking hints of depth and insight from Coleridge and the English Companions, touches of grace and *engouement* out of a score of French eighteenth-century critics, from Fontenelle and Diderot down to Fontanes and Daunou, adding knowledge of literary history, and a not too peremptory theory of time and *milieu*, from the Germans and the ambient air, enthusiasm from the still smouldering hearth of the deserted *cénacle*, and that magic and indefinable dose, that "little of my own sauce," as Mrs Tibbs has it, which genius provides, and of which it keeps the secret. His ability to concoct this mixture, or rather to produce this new organism, had been by this time almost fully shown; but the final proof was given, and the new kind was definitely named and sent abroad, only after the composition of the most substantive work (except *Port-Royal*) which he had yet attempted, and the best—itself displaying the gifts he had now acquired in the fullest measure. Probably the critical moment was hastened, as so often happens, by an external catastrophe, the upset of the July Monarchy, and by that transplantation into Belgium for a time which, though he has put the best face on it, was certainly an exile, and by no means wholly a voluntary one.

Port-Royal,

We must, however, first take some notice of *Port-Royal*, which, either by cause or coincidence, was also the product of a journey, if not an exile, being originally delivered in the form of lectures at Lausanne. It[1] is, of course, the most important and substantive single work of its author—the only one, in fact, to which the older and more exacting definition of a *book* would have shown itself complaisant. It occupied, with completions and revisions, twenty years of his life; it contains perhaps the most

[1] The definitive edition was published in 1867-71 (the author died midway in 1869), in 7 vols.—6 of text, the first 5 of which average 600 pp each, 1 of elaborate index, by that admirable student of the older French literature, M de Montaiglon. The original dates of publication were 1840-60.

elaborate and masterly exposition of that system of combined literary, historical, and social inquiry into the life of a period which he did so much to introduce, and so much more to establish as a literary Kind; and it expresses and registers notably those changes of opinion which made him, in the last two decades of his life, an exponent of an almost entirely *irreligious* view of life itself. With this aspect of it we do not here concern ourselves; but the book has far too much which does directly concern us, in the strictest construction of our own plan, not to receive detailed attention.

Its literary episodes.

I do not know that those "older and more exacting definitions," which have been just referred to, would pass, without demur, the features which make it of this importance to us. It is true that many, if not most, of the more distinguished men of letters of that century which, in the general judgment, has been regarded as the greatest century of letters in France, had more or less connection with Port Royal: nay, more, that not a few of the Port Royalists of the outer and even inner circles were great men of letters themselves. But whether this entirely justifies (to take examples from the first two volumes only) the inclusion in the book of analyses of *Polyeucte* and *Saint-Genest*, which would be ample for extensive monographs on Corneille and Rotrou respectively, — of an elaborate study of the elder Balzac of which the same may be said,—is a very arguable point. Still, the inclusion gives us the book, and, even if it did not, I am not inclined to be strait-laced on these points, or to chicane about the relation of the episodes to the epic.

Let us then be as kind to Sainte-Beuve as he was to himself, and admit what (feeling, I suppose, uneasy) he pleads at vol. ii. p. 107, "Nous voici, ce semble, bien loin de Port Royal; pas si loin que l'on croit"—that the spirit of the two plays is quite Port-Royalist, that Balzac wrote letters to M. de Saint-Cyran (so he did to most people, but no matter), that Pascal, Nicole, Racine come in of course; that even the *Mémoires de Grammont* are not quite extraneous, for was not *la belle* Hamilton herself (despite her *nez retroussé* and her Cupid's-bow mouth) educated

there? We are, in short, to take our literary goods as we find them, and as fate and the author provide: and they certainly provide them in plenty. No detailed examinations of Sainte-Beuve's are more careful than those of the two plays. If he is a little hard, in the text, on that Christian (and semi-Gascon) Socrates, and writer of most handsome letters, who dwelt on the banks of the Charente, he repairs it in an appendix. The references to minor Louis XIII. literature (though injured by Sainte-Beuve's dislike to quaintness) are never to be missed: and it is needless to say the same of the whole dealing with Pascal, and of the chapters devoted to the famous labours of the Port-Royalists themselves, in literary and philosophical education. Tillemont, if not exactly a lion in literature, is one of the greatest of lion's providers therein, and Nicole cannot be denied the title of man of letters. Malebranche comes in as an opponent, Racine as a pupil, though as an ungrateful pupil: and on all these and others Sainte-Beuve indulges in literary excursus of all but his best kind.

On Racine.

The Racine passage is the best worth dwelling on of these, because what Frenchmen say on Racine is always interesting. We know, of course, beforehand that Sainte-Beuve will be, to a certain extent, *juste-milieu*,—that he will neither be of those who denounce with rage, nor deplore with pity or contempt, the poor foreigners who cannot hear the celestial music of the great *doucereux*, nor of those who approach more or less nearly to the view of the poor foreigners themselves. But the piece is specially interesting because it is perhaps the most distinct general retractation of the critic's ultra-Romantic creed, and because it expresses much the same views as those (very probably derived from it) of Mr Arnold. You must not, says Sainte-Beuve, attempt to judge Racine by *passages*; there Hugo, Lamartine, even much lesser moderns will beat him. You must judge the whole, and take into consideration the support which each part gives to, and in turn derives from, the others. Nay, more, Racine is "moins imprévu, moins éclatant, moins héroïque, moins transportant" than Corneille, but more "equal," &c. "L'unité, l'ensemble

chez Racine se subordonne tout." Sainte-Beuve even thinks that he could have done the many poetic things that he did not do as well as those which he did, and that in them (here we may all agree) "on aurait le même Racine." But did he not lose something under the desperate hook of Boileau? Perhaps. "Il n'avait pas un démon déterminé." You can understand him at once as you cannot Shakespeare or Molière. He presents the perfection of poetic style, *même pour ceux qui n'aiment pas essentiellement la poésie.* And the critic, with what some, I suppose, would call a touch of his "perfidy," adds, "Là, c'est le point faible, s'il en est un." Let us rather say that, while all reasonable praise of Racine may be read in the lines of this criticism, all reasonable dispraise of him may be read between those lines.

Chateaubriand et son Groupe Littéraire.

The great critical truth, that not merely is the tongue of the critic loosed but his eyes are opened by the death of his subject, has seldom been better illustrated than by the volumes entitled *Chateaubriand et son Groupe Littéraire*, originally delivered as lectures at Liége when Sainte-Beuve had left France to the Marchharedom of the Second Republic. Of course we must remember that he had had more than twenty years of critical practice wherein to grow in critical wisdom and stature; that in the last sixteen or seventeen, especially, since he had shed his Saint-Simonian and Lamennaisian crotchets, he had (losing some fancy and enthusiasm with them) acquired immensely greater knowledge, critical delicacy, critical insight in most ways; and that, accordingly, the *Portraits* and other pieces of the 'Forties are, in almost every respect except romantic and poetic *furia*, superior to those of the 'Thirties. But this will not entirely account for the excellence of the *Chateaubriand*, which is a sort of central "broad" in the stream of Sainte-Beuve's criticism, from which it flows thereafter ever deeper, wider, and clearer. The book indeed is not—what book, and especially what critical book, is?—to be praised unreservedly or with very slight reserves. The common accusations of "envy," "treachery," "malignity," "intolerance of greatness," and the like, brought against Sainte-Beuve, are exaggerated

at the best, and at the worst simply silly. They come partly from the general dislike and suspicion of the critic, who is a critic wholly or mainly, partly from unintelligent, if not quite ungenerous partisanship, partly from the most polluted of all sources, personal and spiteful gossip. But, as nearly always happens, there is some shred of justification for them, and the matter is important enough to be dealt with once for all here.

Faults found with it

Rarely—so rarely that it is an almost unknown event—shall a man practise, as Sainte-Beuve had for years and decades been practising, criticism of his contemporaries and in many cases friends, without exciting ill-feeling. But that ill-feeling becomes still more certain, and its complexion is likely to be darker, when the criticism is of the peculiar character which it is Sainte-Beuve's greatest claim in the general view (not quite in mine) to have perfected, if not actually invented. It is true that, in the case of his living subjects, he moves about, among the extra-literary personal traits, which it is his delight to assemble and to group beside the literary details in heightening or contrasting light, with a cat-like dexterity. But even cats sometimes upset things. and the things among which Sainte-Beuve moved were much more ticklish and unstable than the objects of the cat's legerde*pied*. Moreover, he actually had, as some, though by no means all other great critics have had, a certain predilection for the secondary. He never quite attains to the Longinian soundness of view on the faults-and-beauties question; and it is particularly unfortunate that the two greatest men of letters of his own time and country, Chateaubriand and Victor Hugo, were men who specially require a Longinian judgment. Nor am I disposed to deny that his attitude towards the great *Belle*nebroso of French Literature "doth something smack; doth a little grow to." Sainte-Beuve's strange Bonapartism—the strangest instance[1] of that most incomprehensible of political faiths—may have had a little to do with this: but one suspects, putting gossip aside, something more. There was, no doubt,

[1] Unless we group with it Hazlitt's, which is, in this instance, for thoughts. Your pure man of letters often has a morbid love of mere *force*.

much injustice in the too famous "Mérimée était gentilhomme: Sainte-Beuve ne l'était pas," but there was an infinitesimal something in it.[1]

Again, to pass to a less "scabrous" subject, the scheme of the book leaves a very little to desire: it may be argued, with some justice, that Sainte-Beuve might better have proceeded entirely by the planet-and-satellite method which he has partly adopted, instead of sometimes mixing planet and satellite up, and sometimes keeping them separate.

Its extraordinary merits,

But the critical merits of the book are quite extraordinary. I know nothing earlier even approaching it as a comprehensive review of a great writer; and the details are even more admirable than the admirable *ensemble* As for the latter, whatever may be Sainte-Beuve's insinuations, whatever his want of cordiality for Chateaubriand the man and the politician,[2] it is impossible to charge him with the least inadequacy as regards Chateaubriand the writer. Like others, he dwells a little too much on the obligatory "images"; but unlike others, he does not limit Chateaubriand's powers to them; and he is more likely to be thought by foreign critics excessive than grudging in his assignment and recognition of those powers. He does the amplest justice to the immense advance, in intensity and range, of "René" over Bernardin and Jean Jacques. He sees perfectly well that the best and most characteristic part of Byron is only Chateaubriand in English, in verse, with a few more yataghans, and with no crucifixes. He has here gone nearer, I think, to a real "grasp" of the writer, and the whole writer (alas! not of nothing but the writer) than in any other instance.

As for the details, one simply punctuates the book with

[1] The touch of we do not quite know what personal soreness breaks in whenever "René" is mentioned, even much later than this.

[2] I fear that terrible charge, "il n'était pas gentilhomme," is a little borne out by his intromitting with Chateaubriand's annotated copy of the *Essai sur les Révolutions*, which he uses to fix anti-religious and anti-monarchical opinions on the writer. You have no business, at any rate till centuries have passed, with a man's private comment on his published writings. It is merely eavesdropping once removed.

bravo! is, if reading merely for enjoyment, and the note-book is never out of one's hand if one is reading for reference. It "enfists" you, as the French say, at once, and it never lets the grasp go, but tightens it ever again and again. Take the admirable conclusion of the second Lecture,[1] with its indication of the way in which Chateaubriand combines the appeal of ancient poetry, of mediæval romance, and of the new fancy for nature, and turn, or rather come (for there should be no turning or skipping in this book) to the justification of the last point in the Fourth.[2]

and final dicta.

But it is at the end of the Seventh lecture, in the special critique of *Atala*, that Sainte-Beuve first, I think, shows the wonderful critical mastery which was to distinguish him for the remaining twenty years of his life, and the proofs multiply as we turn the pages. In whom elsewhere —even in Coleridge—shall we find two such sentences, on the *verso* and *recto* of the same leaf,[3] showing such different kinds not merely of mastery but of supremacy as those that follow—the last of the Eighth lecture, and, save for a mere bow to the audience, the first of the Ninth? He has, in the first, been contrasting *Paul et Virginie* (for which he, like almost all Frenchmen, has an affection incomprehensible to us), and he has to admit the transcendence of its successor. "Elle [Atala] gardait," he says, "son ascendant troublant: au milieu de toutes les reserves qu'une saine critique oppose, la flamme divine y a passé. . . . On y sent le philtre—le poison qui, une fois connu, ne se guérit pas, on emporte avec soi la flèche empoisonnée du désert." *Dixit!* There are critics who feel the philtre and who carry the arrow with them, and there are those who do not.

The other passage is, "Savoir bien lire un livre en le jugeant chemin faisant, et sans cesser de le goûter, c'est presque tout l'art du critique. Cet art consiste encore à comparer . . . Faites cela, et laissez-vous faire." How different this cool prescription from the enthusiasm of the last, and yet how equal in its finality!

I could bestow much more of my tediousness on the reader

[1] i. 91. [2] i. 132. [3] *Ch. et s. G.*, i. 283, 284.

in regard to this wonderful book: but its allotted space is nearly filled. Once only do I find a pettiness, in fact a falsity, where[1] he carps at the phrase, "A combien de rivages n'ai-je pas vu depuis se briser les mêmes flots que je contemple ici," in the truly Rymerian note, "Tout les flots se ressemblent: mais ce ne sont pas les *mêmes* flots, les *mêmes* vagues qu'il voyait se briser en des lieux si divers." The *poète mort jeune* in Sainte-Beuve (to use his own famous words) was *bien mort* when he wrote this: and the critic had *not* "felt the philtre." Does not the greater part of the power of the Angel of the Sea arise from this very mysterious sense of the unity of wave from Pole to Equator, and from coral to iceberg? The lands are broken, separated, isolated: the "unplumbed, salt, estranging sea" is one and indivisible, an unbroken link between the live self that sees it here and the dead self that saw it far away and long ago.

But he seldom slips or nods thus. For happier things, note his sketch[2] of the three manners in Chateaubriand, where he compares Fontenelle's notice of Corneille's,[3] and might have compared Milton's; the confession that French is not "une langue qui aurait eu l'accent et qui se souvenait d'avoir étée scandée"; the profound remarks on the Kinds of Criticism;[4] the almost profounder on the different kinds of description.[5] I could multiply these instances almost endlessly, but it is enough to say, or repeat, that if we had nothing else of Sainte-Beuve's it would place him in the first rank of the critics of the world, and that it is perhaps the earliest book that definitely does so.

The Causeries at last.

Although the rest of Sainte-Beuve's life certainly did not fail to justify the immortal and invariable law that the gods never yet gave all things to man at once, yet in the main it was exceptionally fortunate, and the fortune was of the kind most important to our purpose. For once, a man who could do a thing supremely was allowed to do it, under conditions, if not absolutely ideal, yet exceptionally favourable. Had he resisted the temptations of professorships and senatorships, he would have been

[1] ii. 87. [2] ii. 91. [3] Ibid., 97. [4] Ibid., 114. [5] Ibid., 340.

able, without any interruption, to devote himself entirely to literary work of his own choosing, in his own house, without let or hindrance, publicity or disturbance, without even the pressure (so galling to some temperaments) of any fixed time and place of duty, except the easily adjustable necessities of having his "copy" and his proofs duly ready. Even of the avocations which he permitted himself, the actual interference with his vocation was trifling. The reward in mere money, though of course ludicrous in comparison with the rewards of other professions or even arts, was a competence; and it freed him completely from one of the most disagreeable penances of the working man of letters, the necessity of stepping out of his proper sphere in order to keep himself within it

With this amiability of the Destinies, and with the man himself so perfectly prepared as we have seen him to be, it is scarcely surprising that the work should be altogether exceptional. It would require a really "encyclopædic head" either to affirm or deny, with competence, the proposition that it is the most complete and four-square batch of work ever done by any craftsman: but I do not know where to look for its rival, in any branch at least of literature. Criticism may or may not be the lowest of such branches; it may or may not be unworthy even to be called a branch. But of it, and barring the previous question, we shall certainly look in vain anywhere for such an example, in quality and quantity combined, as is presented by the *Causeries du Lundi* and the *Nouveaux Lundis*.

Their length, &c.

I do not know whether the length of the average *causerie* was directly conditioned by the fact of its appearance in a daily newspaper[1] instead of a Review, or whether Sainte-Beuve's experience and instinct combined, induced him to make it rather shorter, but much more uniform in length, than his *Deux Mondes* articles. This length is pretty exactly twenty pages—a few articles being a little longer and a few a little shorter, but the greater number coming very close to the score of, say, 350 words each. It may be a

[1] The *Constitutionnel* first, then the *Moniteur*. Here, as elsewhere, I do not burden the text with details which are in all the biographical dictionaries.

superstition based on this great practitioner's practice, but I think the majority of his successors have found that this length—say, from six to eight thousand words—is singularly normal for the treatment of an average subject of the larger literary kind. It ought not to weary the reader; it does not cramp the writer; and it does not tempt him to undue expatiation. Occasionally Sainte-Beuve, of course, doubled or trebled or even further multiplied *causeries* where the subject demanded it; but at first he did this very seldom, and he never made it the rule. In selecting his subjects he naturally preferred a new book when he could get it, if only as a "peg": and he had plenty of choice. His rejections, however, were sometimes disappointing, particularly so in the case of M Egger's *History of Greek Criticism*, which he had intended to take. He neither specially chose nor specially rejected themes that he had already treated: and sometimes, though not often, he reproduced parts of his old work. As to the treatment, enough has been said of that above, or will be said below. It was almost unique: it is still almost unmatched. As far as any general scheme is extricable, it is the obvious one of a few general remarks—not very seldom expanding into precious tractatules—of more or less abstract criticism; a biographical sketch, anecdoted with special view to literary influences; remarks, with more or less quotation, on books and passages; and sometimes a sketch, usually rather shy and suggestive than peremptory, of comparative "placing"—the comparison, however, having been subtly presented throughout. But the method is never stereotyped: and the variations are of the essence.

Bricks of the house.

The hundreds of articles and the thousands of passages which these eight-and-twenty volumes present are naturally difficult to deal with after the method which has been here adopted; but a few pages may be fairly devoted to a selection from the *notabilia* with which "the sweet compulsion" of reading them through again for the purpose has provided me freshly. At the very beginning, and in the first volume, though it is one of the most brilliant of all, Sainte-Beuve is rather militant: he never became quite

Olympian. The opening article on Saint-Marc Girardin[1] (between whom and our critic there was always a little friction) has a good deal of "malice" in the French, if not exactly in the English, sense: and that which follows on Lamartine's *Confidences*, with a later one on *Raphael*, though just enough, is distinctly cruel, and savours of political vengeance on the fallen dictator. But these ticklish and disgustful contemporaneities give way to those perfect studies of the Sévignés (if it be not profane to speak of that person in the plural), the Hamiltons, the Jouberts, the Commes, the Firdousis, which we associate most happily and most characteristically with Sainte-Beuve. There is less, though there is some, of the wholly welcome dealing with technically "ancient" literature: but there are two consummate articles of "criticism in the second intention"—the papers on "Villemain and Cousin as Men of Letters," and on "Feletz, and Empire Criticism."

The second volume or semester of this Annus Mirabilis—for the two cover the whole twelvemonth from October 1 to September 30, 1849-1850, with exactly fifty-two articles told down for the fifty-two weeks[2]—contains the famous and generous "Mlle. de Lespinasse"; the "Huet," which is perhaps as good an example as one can find of the whole in some ways; the admirable "Chesterfield"; a wonderfully just "Mazarin", the "Gil Blas," which will be reprinted with *Gil Blas* for centuries; and that magnanimous and yet not uncritical adjustment of coals of fire which Sainte-Beuve set alight in honour of the death of Balzac,—all of them varied, picked out, and set off by a profusion of studies of the eighteenth century, less literary in substance but literary enough in connection, and prefaced in one case, that of the "Madame du

[1] I wonder whether Mr Arnold got "Stagirius" from Sainte-Beuve, or direct from Saint-Marc Girardin, who seems to have extracted him originally from the Golden-mouth? So, too, did *Sohrab and Rustum* come from the "Firdousi" article? These interesting suggestions of suggestion—as interesting as the ordinary plagiarism and parallel-passage inquiries of bad and dull critics, are dull and bad—occur with Sainte Beuve more often than with almost any man.

[2] The adventure was kept up, so far as I remember, for four subsequent years with equal punctuality. The Chapel, in Criticism, of Our Lady of the Broken Lances has never seen such a paladin.

Châtelet," with a most ingenious link, conduit, or what shall we call it? of explanatory connection between the purely literary and the merely gossiping. If there is to be found, also, an extremely bitter-sweet appendix on M. de Pontmartin, and an article on Chateaubriand, which is a superfluity and a blunder after the great book, we can pardon them. No other man has ever done such another year's *darg* in criticism.

We must not follow the rest of the twenty years or thereabouts with equal precision, though few of them were less substantially filled. An indication to those who do not know, a reminder to those who do, of certain *sommités* among the articles; and a small sheaf of specially important passages, may lead us to the final summary of Sainte-Beuve's critical position and achievement.

A whole cluster of remarkable things opens the Third volume. The "Rabelais" is practically the first piece of absolutely sane and appreciative criticism on the subject, the starting-point and foundation of what is now the accepted opinion of the competent. The "*Qu'est ce qu'un classique?*" is one of those more general pieces of criticism in which Sainte-Beuve does not go out of his way to indulge, but which he does, when he does them, in a manner showing the superiority which practice in actual "judging of authors" confers on its practitioners when they "go up higher." The "Rousseau" is almost equal to the "Rabelais," and it is not the first comer in criticism who can be just to both. His social-historic studies of the seventeenth and the eighteenth century serve as foils, and as intrinsically delightful reading, though they are often on the fringes of literature itself. The article on Latouche is a little ungenerous, and that on Fontenelle more than a little inadequate; while I wish that Sainte-Beuve had not indulged in a singularly vain and violent contrast between Camille Desmoulins and Vauvenargues. But the "Pasquier," the "Saint-Simon," the new "Diderot," make amends.

And it is always so. There were squalls occasionally, as there were especially certain to be, at the ticklish time, when the Second Consulate or Presidency was passing, not quite ideally, into the Second Empire. He need not have

poured broadsides into popgunners like the Staël-Hetzels and the Laurent-Pichats.[1] The first was a very useful publisher and a respectable author of children's books; I think I remember some tolerable critical work of the second, apart from his politics. But what is either to-day? what, much more, will either be a hundred years hence, beside Sainte-Beuve? He knew Wordsworth: surely he might have remembered that "our noisy *curs* are" not even "moments in the being of the Eternal Silence." "They yap; what yap they? let them yap" For in some cases they can do nothing else: and in all the Silence itself catches them very soon, if we do not lend them an echo.

His occasional polemic.

In the Fourth volume, though the "Mirabeau" articles and the "Chamfort," the "Saint-Evremond et Ninon" and the "Marmontel" are charming in the mixed kind, I think, for literature, the palm is due to that sentence—so autobiographical and so much more than merely autobiographical—which opens the "Moreau and Dupont" piece, "Je cause rarement ici de poésie, precisément parceque je l'ai beaucoup aimée et que je l'aime encore plus que toute chose" *Quia multum amavi!* And he does not derogate from this attitude in the Fifth, where he welcomes Victor de Laprade and Leconte de Lisle, while this also contains delightful things on Raynouard, Rivarol, Retz, Patru, Gourville, and even the remarkable person once called Le-Brun-*Pindare*. In the Sixth we go from Rollin to La Reine Margot, from Bernardin and Courier to Saint Anselm backwards and the Abbé Gerbet forwards, with, at the close, one article of special interest here, Sainte-Beuve's revised and in some ways *palinodic* opinions on Boileau. The Seventh is mainly eighteenth century—Montesquieu and the Président de Brosses, Franklin and Barthélemy, Grimm (for whom, here as elsewhere, Sainte-Beuve makes strong fight against the general, and, I am bound to say, in my judgment, the well-grounded, distrust of him), Necker and Volney, with, to give us change from a better time, Regnard and La Fontaine at front and close,

[1] The same applies to the protest, interesting as a *cri du cœur* and a statement of life-purpose, but mistaken, against Taxile Delord (xi 400-403). The punishment too much dignifies the offence—and the offender.

Richelieu and Saint François de Sales, Mérimée and Arnault, and the elder Marguerite. On the last he is a little disappointing: and perhaps we might have expected that he would be.

The Eighth, with many excellent examples of the usual seventeenth-eighteenth century *causeries*, and with a most welcome batch of mediæval studies on Joinville, on the *Roman de Renart*, on the *Histoire Littéraire*—good to read even now, and priceless then—contains an article, written with great care, to which an Englishman naturally turns, and with which most Englishmen will be disappointed, that on Gibbon. None of the usual causes could have blunted Sainte-Beuve's judgment here: yet it is blunted. Missing, in the one sense, what he calls the *javelot*, the *coup de foudre*, the *cri haletant*—in other words, the somewhat theatrical and rhetorical[1] touch of French, he misses also, in the other, Gibbon's *magnificence*, that sense of the vast procession of events and that power of reproducing it, which gives an almost poetic self-transcendence to an otherwise prosaic and *philosophe* nature. We all miss things, of course. but such a man as Sainte-Beuve should not have missed such a thing as this. The "Joinville," however, which immediately follows, makes once more those familiar amends; and the next volume (the Ninth) contains admirable companions to it in the "Froissart" and the "Villehardouin," this last one of the author's best. He had now started (to some though not to all extents with advantage) dealing with one subject in several essays: and most of this volume is so occupied. "Stendhal," "Marivaux," "Madame Dacier," with others, show his admirable flexibility. The Tenth is perhaps less attractive, for except Agrippa d'Aubigné and one or two others, its subjects are not as a rule of the first interest, and in one Sainte-Beuve returns to Chateaubriand—not happily. But the Eleventh, with a certain amount of "filling,"—the first collection stopped here, and Sainte-Beuve had to plug the gap made by the removal of the index when it was extended,—has at least two articles, or batches of articles, of the first interest—those on Montluc and Cowper. *Ne fait pas ce tour qui veut*—to ap-

[1] There is rhetoric enough in Gibbon, that the French love, of course; but it is not the rhetoric

preciate equally, and almost at the same moment, the greater d'Artagnan of Sienna and the patron of Puss.

As a matter of fact, the original enterprise of the weekly *Causerie* did in a manner finish with this first issue. For five years Sainte-Beuve had kept neck and neck with the enemy. His work afterwards was more intermittent, and even underwent a cessation of some years when he was lecturer at the École Normale, between 1857 and 1861. The last four volumes of the actual *Causeries* are made up from different sources: though the bulk of the constituents are of the true breed. Among them are some of Sainte-Beuve's most interesting studies of the past—"Ronsard" (revisited), "Saint Amant," "Voiture," "Vauvenargues," "Villon"—and some of his most famous papers on contemporaries, such as those on Musset and the Guérins. The last volume of all contains two of the most valuable of those invaluable papers on criticism in general, to which we have drawn attention already, that on Nisard's *History* and that on *La Tradition en Littérature*. But perhaps the special appeal of these appendix-volumes is the appearance of articles on books and authors that are still in a manner modern—on *Madame Bovary*, on *Fanny*,[1] on M. de Banville, on M. Scherer.

And when the series began again regularly, after this interruption, with the *Nouveaux Lundis* in 1861, he formally promised or threatened a recrudescence into criticism "truer" and "franker" and more regardless of contemporary protest.

The Nouveaux Lundis.

One may be sorry for this, even though the particular ashes are long cooled. Although Sainte-Beuve's "malignity" was, as has been said, absurdly, and is still sometimes inexcusably, exaggerated, he was far from free from those *iræ* from which the something less than celestial spirit of the critic so seldom escapes[2] There is a sort of "rankle," a kind of distant growl

[1] Sainte-Beuve's fancy for Feydeau was a subject of wonder to friends of his who were not in the least prudish. It waned, however, and the signs of the waning are the subject of an anecdote, slightly too Rabelaisian to quote here, but very amusing.

[2] He himself has said truly and nobly of one of the few who *did* escape them—Gautier: "Jamais un sentiment mauvais, soit de hauteur soit de jalousie mesquine, n'est entré dans

of "That's *my* thunder," in his review at the time of M. Rigault's *Querelle*, in his later obituary of the author, and even elsewhere: the first paper of the *Nouveaux Lundis* on Laprade is openly and almost rudely hostile: while the critic proceeds later to exchange fresh broadsides with M. de Pontmartin.

Still, where the element of hostility or personality does not put flies in the ointment, it is of course of the first interest to have such a paper as, say, the "*Madame Bovary*" article, or the later one on "Salammbô," introductions to such rising "imps of fame" as Taine, Renan, the Goncourts, Saint-Victor, Fromentin, Feuillet,—even such fair and well-weighed, though antagonistic, examinations as that of Veuillot. In regard to Taine and others, especially, Sainte-Beuve is particularly interesting, because they present a crop of his seed, a development of his own method, with the substitution, for that rather *ondoyant et divers* conclusion or no-conclusion of his to which we shall return, of hard-and-fast theories of ruling ideas, and *milieux*, and the rest. All this, however, would not make up to those of us who love the modern *qua* modern little and the contemporary *qua* contemporary not at all, if it had induced Sainte-Beuve to give up those inestimable studies of the past, or those well-reasoned considerations of criticism in general, which are his main titles to fame. But it did not. One of the very best of the latter kind is the famous review of M. Taine's own *Histoire de la Littérature Anglaise*. And in the former, the "La Bruyère," the "Sévigné," the "Perrault" in the first volume, the "Bossuet" in the second, the article (independent of his "Introduction," which is itself a masterpiece) to Crepet's *Poètes Français*, and the batch on the *Mystère d'Orleans* (that is to say, the Early French Drama) in the third are more than reassuring. Soon, moreover, *Daphnis and Chloe* promises a renewal[1] of those articles on the classics which are perhaps the only ones ever written, since our re-

[son] âme." To be thus is to be one of ten thousand: even to kick the bad thoughts out when they present themselves is no common merit (*N. L.*, vi. 325).

[1] Rather tantalisingly as to the *number* of fulfilments. But the papers on the Greek Anthology in vol. vii. are exquisite in *quality*.

grettable specialisations in the nineteenth century, by a literary critic of the very first order in the modern sphere.[1]

Towards the last he turned a little too much to the political, and though at the very end the long batch on Talleyrand is succeeded by one equally long on his old favourite, Madame Desbordes-Valmore, the amiable Marceline is not quite a poetess of importance enough, nor is the part actually devoted to her poetry large enough, to make the swan-song quite literary. But there is plenty of genuine matter everywhere, and even the contemporary articles afford room for justice at last to Gautier, and for a long and attractive review of *La Poesie en* 1865, where M. Sully Prudhomme, and others not even yet quite out of fashion, appear. It may be that something of the irrational and superstitious *guignon* of continuations attaches to these *Nouveaux Lundis:* but surely very little.[2]

The conclusion of this matter.

Why more? Indeed, save to observe the proportion and method of the book (which are of the first importance), and to pay proper respect to a prince in the critical Israel (which is hardly of less), why so much? Except for the vast bulk of his work, and for the fact that it is not collected into definite "Works," but exists under a large number of separate headings, some of which may be overlooked, Sainte-Beuve's criticism offers itself with almost every advantage and facility to the reader. It has to the full those superficial attractions of "readableness" which have given to French criticism its popular position; and it lacks those superficialities in the other sense, which detract from the value of French criticism so often. The immense variety not merely provides something specially interesting for almost everybody who has any literary, historical, or, one might almost say, intellectual interests at all, but pre-

[1] I do not forget either Mr Arnold or Mr Pater: but they look at antiquity in a different way.

[2] The *Lundis* (though that is not their fault) have perhaps given a rather terrible amount of "knowledge which is not knowledge" at second hand or further. I have often smiled at seeing some honest, if not consummate, first-hand study of a subject loftily poohpoohed, by some one who evidently knew nothing of it but what he had learnt from Sainte-Beuve.

vents tedium or satiety in those whose interests are wider. The style, though neither coruscating, nor treacly, nor enigmatic, is—in its perfection and when it has outgrown some early defects—"the model of the middle style" in criticism, suitable for the purpose and the writer's temperament. It can say anything that the author wishes to say, and does not try to say what he cannot.

But we must examine the results which he gives a little more closely before concluding, and, according to the good old plan, take the deficiencies, or the want of supremacies, first. As has been put, with examples, above, Sainte-Beuve is not entirely to be trusted with the out-of-the-way, the eccentric, even the abnormally great. The very *ethos* of the critic exposes him to this, and the opposite fault—the *engouement* for everything that *is* out of the way, that *is* eccentric, that *is* abnormal, whether great or not—is not merely an excess of a critical virtue, but a serious, an almost disqualifying critical defect. Still, to be able to admire and recognise the "earth-born and absolute fire"[1] is, if not a critical *sine qua non*—for without it the critic may do good work—yet his rarest and noblest gift. Sainte-Beuve had it not quite.

There is room for more difference of competent opinion as to his abstinence from the most definite posing and placing—from the final arrangement of his portraits exactly as he wished to have them seen by his readers, and to stand in relation to each other. There is, of course, its own merit in that abstinence, which is (as it was in the earlier case of Villemain) something of a reaction from the fondness of his "Empire" predecessors for the trenchant, the peremptory, the official distinction and ticket. There had been very much too much of this during the Neo-classic period, and there has been, to put it mildly, quite enough and to spare of it since. Nevertheless, one may think that Sainte-Beuve, though he never, as his countrymen too often do, leaves you uninformed, does too often leave you floating—undecided even as to what his own definite view of the man's or work's value, relation,

[1] Longinus, c. xxxv. *sub fin.*

position, may be. Now this surely is a slight defect. When one wants a picture, one does not want merely a sheet of drawing-paper, with the most accurate and "genial" studies of eye, nose, chin, mouth, hair, scattered anyhow about it, but the complete, or at any rate the outlined, face made up from these studies.

I can think of no general fault save these two, and we are not now to hark back to particulars. The tale of general and particular excellences is more agreeable to construct, but more difficult to put in little. The head and front of Sainte-Beuve's critical welldoing he has himself put excellently and more than once. To read; to understand; to love:—and then to facilitate reading, understanding, and loving on the part of others—these are the first and second great commandments of the critic. And few, surely, have obeyed them better. He may be a little cumbered about much serving—we do not (that is those of us who want criticism) always want such Persic apparatus of biography and history and gossip. But the Persic apparatus is very agreeable in itself, and sometimes even not useless. And there is plenty of the plain leg of critical mutton—well fed, well killed, well kept, and well dressed. Only perhaps a certain degree of expertness can fully appreciate, but ordinary sense and taste must surely not fail to perceive, the range of reading which is—be it again and again repeated—in all but the most extraordinary cases the *necessarium*, if not the *unum necessarium*, of the critic. Common-sense and taste are perhaps at least equally well prepared with the expertest *expertise* to recognise, if they are given their way, the sanity and the equity, the patience and the thoroughness, the freedom from crotchet and caprice, from the merely parochial and the merely particularist, which distinguish Sainte-Beuve from almost all other critics. He was, as we have seen, very lucky, few have had at once his gifts, and his opportunities of exercising them, and that rarest and happiest gift of "the Hour," without which Gift, and even in some sense Opportunity, will fail to estate a man in his proper place. But the Hour has seldom found the Man so ready: and the Man has in no single instance in our depart-

ment, and in few throughout all, requited the Hour by leaving such fruits of it for all time to come.

The general discussion of the Classic-Romantic quarrel—so far as we can deal with it—will be for the Interchapters; and it is not even very easy here to make a methodic distinction between the names who will best appear in this chronicle side by side with Sainte-Beuve, and those who should figure in the corresponding chapter of the next Book as his successors. But applying something of the same method which has helped us before, we may perhaps most conveniently group beside him Victor Hugo as a matter of course, with, of the rest, five representative figures—Gautier for the Romantic farthest, the out-and-out partisans of "art-for-art", Nisard for the Classical reaction, Saint-Marc Girardin as an example of that Academic criticism which has always been so important in France, and which with and after Villemain took a new colour; Planche, as the most noteworthy champion of the other school (yet not so "other" but that the two interpenetrate and overlap) of the critics who are purely men of letters, and almost purely journalists, and Magnin for the pure scholars. The rest, with one or two exceptions, but not excepting so famous a man as Janin, will bear postponement, can even be postponed with advantage. The chief exception is Mérimée, here, as always, by the joint efforts of Fate and himself, alone. But the great twin names of Michelet and Quinet may require a little mention here, and before proceeding even to Hugo.

Michelet and Quinet.

These two inseparables — more inseparable even than the other pair, Cousin and Villemain—must, I fear, be also among those whom I shall seem to some readers to slight. Both, but especially Quinet,[1] were of course saturated with literature. From his first translation of Herder to his posthumous work on the Greek genius, Quinet was always dealing with the subject, often *nominatim*, seldom in very

[1] He was Professor of it for years; he was a constant contributor to the *Deux Mondes*, he welcomed the new study of Old French, and took early part in it. But if any reader wants any more from me on him I must refer to "A Paradox on Quinet" in my *Miscellaneous Essays* (London, 1892), p 274 *sq*; on Michelet, to an article in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*.

remote fashion. Michelet no doubt directed himself more to the purely historical side of that historical study of humanity which he learnt from Vico, and Quinet probably from Herder himself. Literary citations, literary parallels, literary suggestions swarm in Michelet; even the '45 seems to him (the origin of the notion is obvious enough, but thinking it out will be found uncommonly difficult) "a Canto of *Ossian*." But for our purposes the pair are almost disqualified — Michelet more than Quinet, but Quinet very mainly—by two things. The first is that confusion — whither derived from Vico or from the Germans does not matter—of literature with history, sociology, politics, psychology, and the like, which has seemed orthodox to the two last generations, but which to me appears a dangerous delusion and confusion. The other is the peculiar *voyant* thought and style of both, which precludes them from taking anything like a clear and achromatic view of any literary matter, even if they had endeavoured to do so. Not that the prophet cannot be a critic, for we have been able to disentangle some extremely clear, trenchant, and (however disputable) orderly and logical dicta of criticism from Blake: and Carlyle's deficiencies, where he is deficient as a critic, do not at all come from this cause. But maresnesting, and night-maresnesting in special, is the very worst possible—perhaps one might say the very most impossible—occupation for a critic; and while Quinet was often, Michelet was almost always, in quest of the variety and the sub-variety of nest.

Hugo.

The temperament of Victor Hugo[1] was perhaps as uncritical a one as any man ever possessed, or as ever possessed any man: but the strength of his genius was such that it could hardly fail to confer mastery, at any rate for a time, on its various literary applications. When the sins of temperament had become besetting and habitual, and the genius was—in this respect, not others—a little failed, his criticism became scarcely more than a curiosity; when the genius was still in its prime, and the temperament had not broken through all control, it is sometimes of a very notable character.

[1] Edd so numerous that reference to particular ones would be very little helpful: the original dates of important works will be specified.

William Shakespeare[1] is the best text-book of the later and worse state; the *Prefaces* to the *Cromwell*,[2] to the *Orientales*,[3] and the *Littérature et Philosophie Mêlées*[4] of the earlier and better. To take the worst first, though there are fine things in the *Shakespeare* book,—there could not fail to be, seeing that it was written, *en regardant l'océan*, by Victor Hugo,—and though a sort of *aura* of the right Romantic fury still breathes through it, it has nothing of criticism except a splendid concionatory harangue to admiration of the best things, and a great deal of Hugonism nearly at its worst. The colossal confidence in ignorance, which made the poet a laughing-stock to his enemies, permits him to observe (in arguing that England never knew her Shakespeare till Voltaire taught her better) that Dryden *parla de S. une fois pour le déclarer hors d'usage*. It would be a good examination question,

William Shakespeare.

"Translate into the French of Hugo 'the largest and most universal soul,' &c," and the dictionary resulting would be quite a useful cipher-code. Elsewhere you have the usual page-long strings of names, the usual staccato sentences, punctuated with *nons* and *ours*, and stripped of articles and particles, the usual abuse of England (whose life for one thing that she did, in giving Victor Hugo refuge, he will yet not wholly take), and also the usual bursts of verbal and imaginative inspiration which give us the *petite fièvre cérébrale*, and make us excuse, forget, welcome any nonsense, any bad taste, even any bad blood.

Nothing that I have said, or shall say, is to be construed as implying contempt of the remaining critical works of Hugo.

Littérature et Philosophie.

On the contrary, "Read all the Prefaces of *Dryden*," which Swift said in scorn, may be adapted here in utter seriousness. And the student who wishes to know must read the whole of *Littérature et Philosophie Mêlées* —that curious collection of the poet's critical and other work from the age of seventeen to the age of thirty-two. The gods do not grant to any man to be a good critic at seventeen; but they do grant to a Victor Hugo not to be a negligible writer at any time. In the "Journal of a Young Jacobite" of 1819;

[1] 1864. [2] 1827. [3] 1828. [4] 1834.

in the "Opinions of a Revolutionary" of 1830; in the *Idées au Hasard;* above all, when the poet-critic was a little over age, in the articles on Scott and Voltaire, on Lamennais and Byron, on Mirabeau and Dovalle, there is matter which might have made twenty critics, though it did not please the Fates that it should actually make one. These things are a very open allegory; there should not be any need, and there is certainly here no space, to interpret them.[1]

If Victor Hugo had written no criticism but *William Shakespeare*, I think I should have put him, as I have put Balzac, in a note, and left him otherwise alone, out of respect, not of persons, but of the divinity of poetry. The two Prefaces that I have selected—there are others, but these will suffice us—would have given him a substantive place here, if he had written no poetry at all. That to *Cromwell* is the longer, the more elaborate, and much the more famous: but I do not think that it is really quite so important as the later and shorter to the *Orientales*. In the first, with a proud humility which retains a little more of the noun, if it has not much less of the adjective, than the undisguised arrogance of the later work, Hugo, while professing not to defend himself at all, and to regard the Classic *v.* Romantic debate as practically fought out and over, as a fact fights the whole battle once more. It is observable that the word "art," without being made exactly the battle-cry, recurs again and again throughout the piece, and is, in fact, its dominant. But he has a theory of poetry, not so very different in outline from that of the "Goliaths classiques," of whom he affects not so much as to take notice. Man and poetry woke in primitive times; when man is singing he is close to God; and the rest of it. The voice is unmistakably Hugo's, but the forms of thought which it chooses might almost be eighteenth, or even seventeenth, century. They work out the conclusion that Epic + Lyric = Drama—the latter being largely dealt with to show the rise of Comedy and the dignity of the Grotesque. Already we get Hugo's name-triads

The Cromwell Preface,

[1] There is a very curious and interesting half-palinode, half-explanation, as to "art-for-art" here, which is worth noting.

flung at us (to use one of his beloved Spanish comparisons) like *bolas*. There is a great deal about Shakespeare. The "Two" Unities—Hugo has extended his grace to the original one—of Time and Place are too absurd to be spoken of: but they *are* spoken of and shown to be absurd. A passage on rules, models, and imitations is perhaps the most effective of the whole, though it comes the best part of a century after Lessing. There is an excommunication of Delille (very interesting to compare with the glorification by Joubert, whose own theory of poetry fits Hugo as well, as it fits Delille, *to us*, strangely), leading to some remarks on *Cromwell* itself, which have but minor interest, and a notable conclusion on Criticism. There is here more dignity than in those remarks in which he was wont to indulge later, when he drew upon himself the dignified reproof of M. Nisard: and they contain some really good observation on False Taste, old and new, a well-founded denunciation of critique by rule and kind, by faults and beauties, and a final protest against mere Authority.

The piece is of great interest even now: and one can readily understand the immense influence it must have had as a manifesto. But it is injured by its length, by its want of method, and by the constant presence of the two dissonances above indicated. That the poet should fight *pro domo sua* is natural, desirable, laudable: but why are we to be disturbed by the constant assertion of a lofty indifference? It is again natural, desirable, laudable, that he should fight the general Romantic prize—there was every possible justification for it. But why, again, the pretence of not troubling himself about any such business, and of the business being really over?

and that to the Orientales.

The Preface to the *Orientales* escapes all these objections and, short as it is, is undoubtedly the most remarkable piece of criticism that Hugo has left, while it is also the boldest, the clearest, the least hampered with tricks and mannerisms, the most serious, the most really dignified. In it he "goes straight for the jugular."[1] He questions, and denies point-blank, the right of the critic to interrogate the poet on his choice of subject or of treatment

[1] *V. sup.*, i. 272, note.

at all. "L'ouvrage est-il bon ou est-il mauvais: voilà tout le domaine de la critique." Here we come again to one of the epoch-making sentences, one of the great *jalons* of critical history. No ancient had ever dared to say it. Patrizzi had said it, hardly knowing what he had said. The German and English Romantics had cast about it, implied it, made themselves responsible for it, or something like it; but never posed it plumply as the Charter of Literature. And Hugo does not leave it as if he were afraid of it, or half-ignorant what it means. He turns it over and over, so as at each turn to give a fresh blow to the Neo-classics. Never mind the means employed: ask *how* they are employed. There are no good or bad subjects in poetry: there are only good or bad poets. Everything is a subject. Poetry is a country of universal suffrage: examine *how* the artist has worked, not *why.* Art has nothing to do with gags, leading-strings, handcuffs: he may go where he list, believe as he list, do what he lists. Kind, story, space, time, fashion, all are at his choice

And then, amplifying more particularly the phrase about the *limits* of art, Hugo has one of his most characteristic and finest passages of exuberant prose, expressing the wish to make his poetry like a Spanish city—half oriental, half mediæval—and finishes very briefly with some words on his actual book.

This is the real *clou,* the central decisive point of Hugonic, and indeed of all Romantic, criticism. "Never mind the subject, the kind, anything of that sort: is the treatment good?" is practically the gospel of modern as opposed to ancient, of Romantic as opposed to Classical, criticism. Of course, like all hard-and-fast propositions and prescriptions as to things that are not hard-and-fast, and especially like all controversial propositions and aggressive prescriptions of all kinds, it does not contain the whole truth, and it does not even contain nothing but the truth. If it be construed in the sense that one subject is as good as another, it may, and probably will, lead wrong. If it be taken to mean that even the experience of our two thousand five hundred years (or whatever it is) of literature does not show that some subjects are so much more difficult and thankless than

Capital position of this latter

others that they are *practically* impossible, it will entice the poet to useless and probably dangerous experiment. But then, with reasonable people, it does not mean either of these things. It is in reality a defensive much more than an offensive proposition,—a protest which must be allowed in any Court of Historical Criticism against the Classic and especially the Neoclassic notion of *a priori* classification of Subject and Kind, and of referring to this instead of considering *the work* first.

The "work."

I have known objection taken to the use—at least the frequent use—of this word "work" in literature, and as to literature. It is, in fact, something of a shibboleth: but, I think, a valuable one. No one who uses it intelligently is likely to forget that it is the *work*, the work*ing*, the art, not the material, that he is to look to first. And Victor Hugo, in the document before us, was practically the first to enjoin this duty with authority and conviction.

We may pass appropriately to his most distinguished opponent and his most enthusiastic disciple in regard to this gospel.

Nisard: his Ægri Somnia.

The memories of a reviewer, however hard he may have tried to do his duty, are apt to lodge in a tomb from which there grow more briers than roses. It is not the most unpleasant of the thoughts of the present writer on his own reviewing period that the *Ægri Somnia*[1] of M. Désiré Nisard enabled him, not quite too late, to revise, in the right direction, his opinion of their author. There needed, and there needs, no grovelling palinode—Nisard still seemed, and still seems to me, to have taken on the whole the wrong side in criticism. And I am not quite certain that the reproach (which was brought against him and which he endeavoured to refute, almost as late as the publication of *Ægri Somnia* itself, by boldly and wisely reprinting his early articles) of having "burnt what he had adored" was quite unjust. But in these last utterances there was a singular dignity, justice, and good taste, contrasting rather fortunately or unfortunately, according to the side on which one looked, with the insolences which Hugo had permitted himself during

[1] Paris, 1894.

the senile apotheosis of his fifteen years' restoration after the Année Terrible. And one saw—as indeed one always had seen more or less—that whatever had been faulty in M. Nisard's earlier, but not earliest judgments, had been the result of an undue, an exclusive, a not quite intelligently catholic devotion to justice, dignity, good taste. There have been greater men who had worse gods.

His Essais sur le Romantisme.

If one did not know how very differently personal matters strike the person and the not-person, it might be surprising to a reader of the reprinted *Essais sur le Romantisme*[1] that M. Nisard should have in any way complained of the charge of burning what he had adored. The first half of the book is occupied with articles dating from 1829 to 1831—on Hugo, Vigny, Sainte-Beuve, Lamartine, and even Musset. They are very good articles; they are, I think, better criticism than Sainte-Beuve's own was at this time: but, though they are not wildly ultra-Romantic, they in each and every case—even in that of Musset himself—take the side and the defence of the innovators. It is true that there is, towards the last, a momentous and germinal doubt whether there is not something *excessive* in Hugo—whether there is not *de trop*.

And in the Preface to the second part, written in 1838, the critic announces his conversion in terms which admit of no dispute. He speaks of his *retour aux doctrines classiques*, he says that he has "ranged himself," that he "climbs back, with discouraged and dragging step, the road that he had run down in his intoxication." Metaphor for metaphor, has this much change to give or to receive from that of "burning the adored"? And the substance of the remainder bears this out. Much in the manifesto *Contre la Littérature Facile* is quite true—not merely of 1830: and the subsequent controversy with Jules Janin is not idle or one-sided. But as for the articles on Hugo himself which follow, an innocent person might suppose them to have been written by quite another M. Nisard than the author of those above referred to. The *Chants du Crépuscule*, we are told, "ont achevé de désespérer les

[1] Paris, 1891.

amis de M. V. H." (They contain, let it be remembered, *Napoleon II*) There is a *caractère de décadence* in them. His prose has a better chance than his verse. His *mort littéraire* is *prochaine* (so near, in fact, that he wrote the *Légende des Siècles* twenty, and published the *Quatre Vents de l'Esprit* more than forty years later).

Yes! M. Nisard was burning what he had adored; but it is fair to admit that for the rest of his long life he adored what he had certainly never burned. His most famous work, the *Histoire de la Littérature Française*,[1] is written in rigid confinement to the Classical house, with fresh windows opened, indeed, so that the critic could see the glory of Shakespeare and others outside, but with a strict regulation that nothing shall be changed in the furniture and regulations within. The capital studies of Latin Poets, the miscellaneous literary work—professorial and other—are all the consistent utterances of a man who has pulled himself up on the edge (or a little over the edge) of a precipice, and has resolved, for the rest of his life, to walk steadily in the other direction. No article of Sainte-Beuve's is at once juster and more acute than that on M. Nisard's *History*, with its exposition of the way in which the critic-historian has constructed an *a priori* theory of the French literary genius, and has written his history accordingly —accepting and eulogising those writers who illustrate his conception, neglecting or denouncing those who run counter to it. And the conception itself is formed altogether according to the second manner of viewing—the view according to which *Les Chants du Crépuscule* is, in another sense, a song of approaching night. M. Nisard tells us that his conversion was effected during a visit to England, and under the influence of Homer and La Fontaine. Surely never was there such a singular instance of *similia similibus* in literature; nor has the country of Shakespeare—where, by the way, Tennyson and Browning had just brought out their first books—ever exercised a more remarkable influence upon a studious visitor.

By whatever process, M. Nisard had become a confirmed anti-Romantic, and such he remained to the end. He is one

[1] Begun in 1844, finished in 1861, and often reprinted.

of the best of the breed: learned, consistent, courageous, courteous withal, as the critic who is or wishes to be considered "scholarly" too seldom is. But he has given himself up to an idol: he will not take the Work as the Work presents itself, and judge whether it is good or bad. And the result is inevitable.

Their culpa maxima.

The conclusion of the reprinted *Essais*, with great temper and in excellent taste, practically confesses M Nisard's weakness as a critic. It is the weakness of the old "faults-and-beauties" method, joined to the moral heresy. Victor Hugo, he says, was a man with very grave moral faults He was. and what is more, these moral faults were of a singularly disenchanting kind Further, Victor Hugo's works are full of faults not merely moral. They are: and sometimes these faults are almost inconceivable. But what M. Nisard forgot is that the critic, like the miner, is finally concerned with the quantity and quality of poetic gold which a poet—or, for the matter of that, with the quantity and quality of literary gold which any man of letters—will yield. No matter that it lies in a pestilential neighbourhood; no matter that you have to smelt out quartz, and far worse and uglier things than quartz, to get it. Is the gold there? That, and nothing else, is the question. Now, in Hugo the gold is there; it is there not by pennyweights, not by ounces, not by pounds, but by hundredweights to the ton. And the critical process, if only it be perfected, is after all not so laborious as the process of stamps and cyanide; the critic himself is not susceptible to wild beasts and malaria. Gold or no gold? much gold or little? these are his true questions. M Nisard could not see them. The gold must be ready smelted to a certain orthodox French standard; it must be even brought in ingots, or ready worked into jewellery, according to pattern. Otherwise he would not have it. And of the many critics that have been, are, will be, like unto him, he was after all one of the best.

France—I have been told frequently of late, and even not so very late, years—has forgotten her Théophile Gautier. And some of the voices have generally said that she has been

quite right in doing so, whether urged to the forgetfulness by serious arguments such as those of M. Émile Faguet (whom, though I differ with him not seldom, I desire to take the opportunity here of saluting with all possible respect as an admirable critic, and to whom I could almost pay the doubtful compliment of wishing that he were dead in order that I might discuss him fully), or by the mere impertinences of quite trivial folk. I have never seen the least reason to change my own opinion to the contrary, that "Théo" was not only one of the most amiable and (with some peccadillos) estimable men of letters of the whole French century, but one of the greatest of its men of letters in verse and in prose, in romance and in travel-writing, in miscellanies and in criticism. He was not greatest in the function which here concerns us, but he was great. The common complaint that he was too good-natured, though it may have some faint colour, is mainly a blunder and the son of a blunder—that is to say, of the notion, far too often encouraged by critics themselves, that the critic is a schoolmaster, whose business is to say nothing but "Blockhead!" and "Sit down!" and "Come to me after school!" But the comparative ill-luck which pursued him, and forced him always to write for bread, partly turned him away from pure literary criticism,[1] and sometimes made him write smooth but not very significant things to please, though never at the cost of friendship and principle. Much that he wrote is not reprinted; he could not afford, like M. de Pontmartin, for instance, to "embook" all his *feuilletons*. Yet certain volumes of his printed works, the *Grotesques*, the *Histoire du Romantisme*, and its companion the *Portraits Contemporains*, with some separate articles, prefaces, &c., will give us good matter to indite of.[2]

Gautier

"Théo" has not been a favourite with the grave and precise sort among our fellowship as a rule: yet, if they could

[1] In his later days, too, the very disgust at being himself kept from producing literature kept him from dealing with it, and threw him upon the theatrical and artistic subjects in which he had indeed a great, but only a secondary, interest.

[2] There are some very noteworthy things in the early articles recovered and reprinted posthumously in *Fusains et Eaux-Fortes* (Paris: 1890).

be consistent, they should at least admire him for his own consistency, and for the fact that, from the very first to the very last, his criticism, apparently so impressionist and occasional, was conducted on an almost rigid — on a quite logical and well co-ordinated — theory. This theory was the famous one of "L'Art pour l'Art," with, for inseparable companion, the doctrine that *the* instrument, *the* medium, *the* vehicle, almost *the* constituent of literary art, is the Word, the beautiful word, furnished with its beauty by light and colour, by sound and form, and developing it by skilful and laborious arrangement, selection, and rejection. As for the major theory (the formulation of which is sometimes attributed to Hugo himself, and was admitted by him as late as *William Shakespeare*, but with an important qualification, and even, to a certain extent, disclaimer, as to its range and meaning) I have already said,[1] though I see that some critics have not observed the observation, that, especially with the addition "Art for Art's sake *only*," it is at best but a half truth, and may be a full half "error and curse." And we all know to what sort of whole a half truth constantly turns. Art, after all, is a *means:* and "means for means' sake only," if not nonsense, is at any rate sense very incomplete. But it was necessary, and it was almost desirable, that the exaggeration should be formulated, because of the incessant intrusion of the opposite theories, which are scarcely even *quarter*-truths, that all depends on the subject, that art must serve morality, and the like. As for the second doctrine above formulated, I need not say that, with Longinus and with Dante, I accept it absolutely and *sans phrase*. To both doctrines, however, to the more disputable as to the less, Gautier flew at first, and clung at last, not more in the provocative youthfulness of the Preface to *Mademoiselle de Maupin* than in the famous and exquisite

His theory: "Art for Art's sake," &c.

"Oui, l'œuvre sort plus belle"

of *Émaux et Camées*, many years afterwards, or in conversation

[1] Vol. i. p. 19.

and writing, more than as many years later still. The first is an eager and passionate sermon on the doctrine by a fervent neophyte; the second, its mature embodiment in imperishable verse by a master. Both together leave very little to be said on the matter save the single word "Read!"

His practice: Les Grotesques.

At any rate, what has to be said on them by way of comment belongs rather to Interchapter and Conclusion than to this place, where we are busy with Gautier's application of his doctrines. The next considerable document to the Preface just noticed is the *Grotesques* of 1844, a delightful book. After all that has been written since on Villon, one comes back to it about him. Scalion de Virbluneau and some others are mere *hors-d'œuvre*, agreeable enough, but no more. The *pièce de résistance* of the book is the long, ardent, but at the same time humorous (Théo was one of the few indubitable humourists that France can boast) vindication of the critic's namesake, Théophile de Viaud, one of the most luckless of the many luckless poets of genius. But Saint-Amant, Chapelain, Scudéry, Scarron, supply him with occasions for work scarcely inferior to the "Théophile." The criticism is of course, on the whole, avowedly criticism of the lighter kind, gossip-criticism, criticism intended not to disgust those who do not take literature very seriously. But it is also intended to please those who do: and it does.

Histoire du Romantisme, *&c.*

The various documents included under the general head of *Histoire du Romantisme* and *Portraits Contemporains* are of very different dates, covering nearly the whole of Gautier's forty years of literary life. Being ranged rather by subject than by date,[1] they enable us to judge the singular evenness and continuity of his critical spirit, which (as Maxime Du Camp, I think, has urged, and as I myself have always held) was systematic by tendency and nature, though haphazard on the surface. The *Histoire* itself was actually interrupted by the critic-poet's death: and the masterly Essay on the French Poetry of the middle of the Century (which should be compared with Sainte-Beuve's)

[1] But never, I think, *without* date—a blessing for which one cannot be too truly thankful to M. Du Camp or somebody else.

is only five years before it: but some of its companions go back twenty years, and many of the *Portraits Contemporains* recede to the legendary decade of the 'Thirties themselves.

Ubiquity of felicity in his criticism.

In all, the same critical qualities are apparent—a central motive and directing power of belief in the two doctrines stated above, but at the same time a system of gearing, flexible enough to accommodate itself to the most widely different subjects, an unwearied and rejoicing faculty of appreciation proper, an unrivalled science of verse and of descriptive and decorative prose, an ever-present charm, and, over all and through all, the atmosphere of the sweet and sunny temper which it is so specially delightful and so rare to find in a competent critic. But for those who want sufficient yet not too copious examples, three long pieces—the article on French Poetry above mentioned, the "Balzac" of 1858 (which M. Montégut, I think, has justly called *magnifique*), and the Introduction to the posthumous edition of Baudelaire in 1867—will do excellently. Between them they would fill a not so very small volume, and there would be hardly a page in that volume destitute of the merits just enumerated, and others to boot. The first is perhaps the greatest example extant of reviewing, brought *sub specie æternitatis*, and made really higher criticism. From the *Légende des Siècles* (and remember what Gautier writing on Hugo meant under the Second Empire!) to the *Odes Funambulesques*, from *Poèmes Evangéliques* to *Fleurs du Mal*, on scores of poets and books of poetry besides, he finds always the suitable, and, at the same time, always the admirable word to say. On Balzac and Baudelaire alike—great as is the alteration of palette, and viewing-glass, and style of handling that the two require—he shows alike that "impeccability," that "perfect magic in letters," which the younger of his subjects had ascribed to him. I do not know any critic who deserves the older and now strangely altered epithet of "candid" (*i.e.*, "*amiably* just") better than Gautier: but his amiability is never indulged at the expense of his justice. And perhaps it needs nothing more than the statement of this fact to express, *συνετοῖσι*, the infinite resources of his skill in thought and phrase.

Saint-Marc Girardin

Saint-Marc Girardin[1] (who was three or four years older than Sainte-Beuve, and outlived him by four or five) has, in a reference above, been coupled with Villemain, and the resemblance both of career and of critical quality is rather strong. Both were politicians, both professors, and both played their double part after a fashion to which there are few parallels in English history, and those few not very encouraging. But Saint-Marc Girardin was a really considerable person in politics—not least in the very last days of his life, when, in the National Assembly, charged with the reconstitution of France after the Prussian War, he was a strong monarchical and Orleanist partisan. Of his numerous works, our chief texts are his *Cours de Littérature Dramatique* and his *Essais de Littérature et de Morale*, which appeared in succession[2] about the middle of the fifth decade of the nineteenth century. It may be well to say frankly and plumply that he is one of our (or perhaps it were better not to avoid the *moi haïssable*, and say "my") disappointments. I did not read him very early, and had a very fair conceit of him when I began: but I find little to recommend in him.[3] He is emphatically "clever"; must have been a stimulating and effectual professor; writes very well; has a real (and not, as is rather common, a painfully simulated) combination of the man of letters and the man of the world. But he does not give me the idea of having had any spontaneous, individual, love for literature, or any original personal views about it. He has everywhere the *juste milieu*, the opportunism of his time, and his party, and his profession. He is neither a *perruque* nor an *échevelé*: he is, in fact, an accomplished Angel of the Church of the Laodiceans. And Time is terribly of the Divine mind as to Laodicea and its angels.

Moreover, his method of dealing with Literature, and especially with that dramatic literature which chiefly interested him, is of the kind from which, as it seems to me,

[1] He seems to have *canonised* himself: his godfathers and godmothers had been contented to call him Marc.

[2] The *Cours*, in 5 vols. (afterwards 4), (Paris, 1843 *sq.*); the *Essais*, in 2 (Paris, 1845).

[3] It is fair to say that Sainte-Beuve's references to him are not quite trustworthy. There was probably some jealousy.

there come few good things—"De l'Amour Conjugal chez Shakespeare," "Le Mariage au Théâtre dans Molière," "La Jalousie" in this, that, and the other. It may be because of that "barrenness in the philosophic" with which I have been charged; but these things seem to me to be learning's labour lost. Study Othello, study Leontes, study Posthumus as much as you like; but to see the life, the poetry, the passion in these live, poetic, passionate men and plays, not to extract a dead essence in a bottle and label it "Jealousy in Shakespeare"—or rather *in vacuo*. Still, there are others who have other tastes, and Saint-Marc Girardin's half score of editions prove it, and perhaps justify them.

Planche.

Gustave Planche, on the other hand—a critic probably much less known now, except vaguely and anecdotically, than Girardin—appears to me to have been a real critic, and to have missed, so narrowly that I do not quite know *how* he missed it, being a very great critic. Probably it was *quia non multum amabat:* because he succumbed to that fatalest temptation of our kind to scratch and scoff and snarl instead of embracing. Anecdotically, as I have said, he is probably well enough known—his passion for George Sand, and his odd ways, and especially that most unlucky indifference to clean linen, and cleanliness generally, which he shared with the authors of the *Song to David* and the *Rambler*, turn up in all the books. He appears in the *Comédie Humaine*,[1] and the more extreme Hugolaters shudder or storm at him as a blasphemer of Hugo. But I rather doubt whether many people read his criticism now.[2]

Weight of his criticism.

Yet it deserves reading thoroughly: and it is only a pity that there is not more of it easily accessible. That Planche entirely avoids the quest of the mare's-nest cannot be said; but some varieties of that curious structure are very tempting even to good critics. He may be thought

[1] As Claude Vignon in *Béatrix*.

[2] Part of his collected work deals with Art. The rest—*Portraits Littéraires* (1836-49), *Nouveaux Portraits Littéraires* (1854), and *Études sur l'École Français*, (1855)—are out of print. The copies I *possess* consist of *Portraits Littéraires*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1854), and *Nouveaux P. L.*, 2 vols., 1855.

to have found or built a famous one in the discovery that the three egregious books of the excellent Henry Mackenzie, instead of being Sterne *plus* Rousseau, watered down with *quant. suff.* of artificial tears, are "a sorrowful and unique hymn on the insufficiency and obscurity of actual life," the "confession of an immaculate soul." One thinks of the entire pressgang lifting up its voice and weeping at the noble conduct of old Edwards, and the like, and one marvels—but not, in my case at least, contemptuously. It is perhaps not wonderful, after this, that Planche, though he admires Fielding, cannot tolerate *Jonathan Wild*. Yet in close context he gives us taste of his quality by a really admirable inquiry—one of the best I know—into the difference of Drama and Novel, and the light which is thrown by and on this difference, in regard to the inferiority of Fielding as a dramatist, and his greatness in prose fiction. No one who has been so kind as to interest himself in my views will think that I agree with Planche when he holds that "literary quality does not matter," when he bids us seek "the will before the inspiration, the fatal irresistible *idea*." He would certainly have anathematised, and does, I think, somewhere very nearly anathematise in terms, my favourite doctrine of the Poetic Moment. But what do such differences of opinion matter? You blaze away at the enemy, but, if he and you be of the right stamp, you salute the soldier.

And Planche (for all his most unfortunate objection to soap and water) is, I think, a "gentleman of the French Guard," a *Black Mousquetaire* of the doughtiest. His objection to Hugo[1] is not in the least fossil or stupid. He has a right to it: it is a legitimate and inevitable deduction from his general poetic creed and likings. No poet gives more "poetic moments" than Hugo: and Planche, as we have seen, does not hold with them. No poet has more of *poésie visible* than Hugo: and Planche objects to this poetry *nominatim*, directly, again and again, and wants to go back to that *poésie intelligible*, in which, it must be admitted, Victor would not be quite so victorious He

[1] *P. L.*, i. 112-181, and *N. P. L.*, i. 193-353, consist of Hugo articles.

argues—and I do not know that one can so easily deny it off-hand as point out that it is a dangerous suggestion of false issues—that beauty of form does sometimes "appeal to the very lowest passions": while, on the other hand, a poet *doit toujours avoir une idée philosophique*, which (again we must confess) Hugo very seldom, if ever, had. Yet for all this he can say plumply, *pour le maniement de la langue, M. Hugo n'a pas de rival*, and he admires, little as he can have agreed with much of it, that remarkable Preface to *Littérature et Philosophie Mêlées* on which we have commented above.

He is nothing if not a daring critic. Some of us, who have studied French Literature very long, would hesitate to tell a Frenchman, as Planche unhesitatingly tells Bulwer,[1] not merely that he ought to be *plus serré, plus précis, et moins vague*, which is true and within any one's competence, but *moins incorrect*, which from a foreigner seems going far. This *verbality* of Planche's is in fact one of his main notes. Lamartine,[2] one might think, was made for him as a poet: and he does indeed think that Lamartine's position is *magnifique et incontesté*. But he does not scruple to say that *la grammaire est souvent offensée* by the poet of the *Méditations;* that *l'indicatif se croise avec l'imparfait* (think of the horror of this crime!) *à trois lignes de distance;* that the ambitious *Jocelyn* is *un beau poème sans composition et sans style*. It may be more surprising that he is not cordial to Alfred de Vigny, and cannot in the least grasp *Dolorida* · but it must be remembered that Vigny's earlier work (the posthumous Poems might have pleased Planche better, had he lived to see them) is distinctly inclined to that *poésie visible*, which the critic did not like because, I think, he could not himself "see" it. It must be admitted that he "gets home" on Leconte de Lisle's Wardour Street Greek—though I do not know that his sharp correction is more fatal than "Théo's" mild one.[3]

Lastly, we may mention the extremely remarkable paper[4]

[1] See *N. P. L.*, ii 67 *sq.*

[2] Who has *P. L.*, i. 81-112, and *N. P. L.*, i. 45-193.

[3] "Ce serait plus simple d'écrire en Grec"

[4] *P. L.*, i. 325-367.

on *Les Royautés Littéraires*, with its notable classification of critics into those who gauge works of literature (1) by comparing them with the past, (2) as present things merely, (3) by looking to the future and the end that the author proposes to himself. Here it is enough to point out to the intelligent the curious difference between this classification and some others. For Planche, near as his terms may seem to come to it, does *not* mean, by the criticism of his first class, what we mean by the Historic-Comparative method.

These specimens will, I hope, for all their scrappiness and want of context, give some idea of the force, weight, acuteness, and intellectual moment of Planche's criticism. It is not in merely accidental and catalogue fashion that I have put him next to Saint-Marc Girardin. There is a real and a vital contrast. Planche may be right or he may be wrong, but what he says is coherent; it comes from a direct and real examination, intensely interested, of the subject under discussion; it is guided by and supplemented from a body of definite and, to some extent at any rate, reasoned literary preferences and principles. In short, once more, the live contact, the true, fruitful, critical embrace. It *is* a pity he did not wash!

Magnin.

Of Magnin we need not say so much, but all that is said must be good. A librarian for many, and a professor for a few, years, he was, as we have called him, a pure scholar, but with his erudition mellowed and sweetened by literature. His *Origines du Théâtre en Europe*,[1] written in the early days of historical comparative study of mediæval literature, is a classic still: and his *Causeries et Méditations*[2] contain many things worth reading. He was much interested, as were so many Frenchmen, by the visit of the English company of actors, in which Miss Smithson was leading lady, to Paris: and he was led to study the older English theatre, though he misjudges *A New Way to Pay Old Debts*, and rather staggers one's notion of the necessary acquaintance with the language of the literature you are criticising, by talking about an English poem entitled "*The* Greece" (not

[1] Paris, 1838. [2] 2 vols., Paris, 1843.

"*La Grèce,*" understand). But probably we all do things as bad or worse. And at any rate, Magnin, with this work, his *Origines*, the re-introduction of modern readers to Hroswitha,[1] and other things, is a protagonist of the historical and the comparative in the study of literature.

Mérimée.

As we separated Beyle in a former chapter, so we may separate Beyle's "most remarkable production," Mérimée,[2] in this. His temperament, the very opposite in all ways to Hugo's, was as critical as Hugo's was uncritical, and his exquisite style—in some respects the most exquisite of the French nineteenth century—should have lent itself to criticism with a sort of pre-established harmony that could never have belonged to the merely plain, or to the mainly "fulgurous." But, as in other ways, there was something suicidal, or at least self-silencing, in this same temperament, and Mérimée has not left us very much to deal with here. There are numerous strokes of it in the *Letters* to Panizzi and the *Inconnues*, some of them not unprecious. We knew that Mérimée (ii. 205, to *the* Inconnue) would think Hugo "words without ideas," and recommend a dose of Madame de Sévigné as a remedy (why not enjoy both and turn them to profit?). But it is really interesting to find that he cannot like Baudelaire, and most of all to find his first (though even then rather lukewarm) approval of Renan as a brother in freethought lessening, till we have the famous description—worthy of a Veuillot who should cease to be a swashbuckler and become a gentleman of the sword—of the style of the *Vie de Jésus* as "the delight of all the servant-girls of France." But Mérimée, like some others whom we have noticed, was drawn away by his studies, no less than by those contradictions of cynical-sentimental temperament of which we have spoken, from pure literary criticism to things like History and Antiquities, where he had not to "distrust himself." There may even have been some of the Congrevian affectation, which Voltaire not unjustly

[1] Paris, 1845.

[2] If any one is inclined—as some may be—to apply to this book Mérimée's own censure of Ticknor and other literary historians for putting things in merely because they have read them, let me simply quote here the names of Henri de Latouche, of Fiorentino, and of Ozanam, to which I could add many others.

rebuked, in the caprice which made him, as M. Blaze de Bury[1] says, "causeur, érudit, archéologue, académicien, sénateur, tout ce qu'on voulait, mais homme de lettres! jamais!" which brought it about that "avec lui la littérature ne venait que par surcroît." In his published things of the kind, *Mélanges Historiques et Littéraires*,[2] *Portraits Historiques et Littéraires*,[3] and the like, the literary side is studiously kept down and away from, though, as we see from the *Letters*, it was always really present. He imputes to Beyle[4] his own assumed detachment from it; the review[5] of Ticknor's *Spanish Literature*, which he was so admirably qualified to write, is full of traits going in the same direction. One is rather sorry to find Mérimée siding with those who would have mediocre authors kept out of literary histories, pretending that a man may read too much (he was himself almost omnilegent), that you can understand French seventeenth-century theatre (you cannot) "without having read Campistron." But this is the fanfaronade of a modern Signor Pococurante, with a difference; and in the piece Mérimée cannot help showing his own critical sense (whether consistently or not) in his demand for more on the early literature, in his contempt of symbolic and Germanising explanations of *Don Quixote*. Of the two papers[6] which, with the "Beyle," are the longest of his literary essays, the "Cervantes" and the "Brantôme," the latter has a mere *coda*, the briefest possible, of true literary criticism, and the former not very much of it. Even on his beloved Russians, Gogol,[7] Pouchkine, Tourguénieff—though there was bound to be more here in the case of an actual Introduction, so to say, at last by a Grand Master of the Ceremonies of a new language and literature—there is hardly so much, except perhaps on Pouchkine, as we should expect. Like Lockhart, to whom he had a great resemblance, Mérimée hated "your d—d literary

[1] In the Introduction to *Lettres à une autre Inconnue* (Paris, 1875), p. xlv.

[2] Third ed., Paris, 1876.

[3] Ibid., 1874.

[4] In the *Portraits*.

[5] In the *Mélanges*.

[6] Also in the *Portraits*, where the shorter paper on Nodier has some excellent criticism.

[7] Rather oddly pitchforked into the *Carmen* volume; the others are in the *Portraits*.

man" so much, and feared so much to be mistaken for such a person, that he would not, perhaps at last could not, be what he might have been as a critic. But we could not do without the stories from *Charles IX.* to *Lokis*, and we can very well do without criticism from him. So all, once more, is for the best —a reflection which, when made in connection with Mérimée, has unwonted piquancy.

CHAPTER III.

GOETHE AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES.

HAMANN — LICHTENBERG — HERDER — HIS DRAWBACKS OF TEDIOUSNESS, PEDAGOGY, AND "METEOROSOPHIA," BUT GREAT MERITS — THE 'FRAGMENTE' — THE 'KRITISCHE WALDER' — THE 'URSACHEN DES GESUNKNEN GESCHMACK,' THE 'IDEEN,' ETC — 'AGE-, COUNTRY-, AND RACE-, CRITICISM' — SPECIMENS AND REMARKS — WIELAND — GOETHE — THE 'HAMLET' CRITICISM, ETC. — THE 'SPRUCHE IN PROSA' — THE STERNE PASSAGES — REVIEWS AND NOTICES — THE 'CONVERSATIONS' — SOME MORE GENERAL THINGS GOETHE ON SCOTT AND BYRON — ON THE HISTORIC AND COMPARATIVE ESTIMATE OF LITERATURE — SUMMING UP THE MERITS OF GOETHE'S CRITICISM — ITS DRAWBACKS: TOO MUCH OF HIS AGE — TOO MUCH A UTILITARIAN OF CULTURE — UNDULY NEGLECTFUL OF LITERATURE AS LITERATURE — SCHILLER — HIS ÆSTHETIC DISCOURSES — THE BÜRGER REVIEW — THE 'XENIEN' — THE CORRESPONDENCE WITH GOETHE — THE 'NAÏVE AND SENTIMENTAL POETRY' — OTHERS: BÜRGER — RICHTER — THE 'VORSCHULE DER ÆSTHETIK' — THE SO-CALLED "ROMANTIC SCHOOL" — NOVALIS — THE 'HEINRICH' — THE EARLIER 'FRAGMENTS' — THE LATER — HIS CRITICAL MAGNIFICENCE — TIECK — THE SCHLEGELS — THEIR GENERAL POSITION AND DRIFT — THE 'CHARACTERISTIKEN' — A. W THE 'KRITISCHE SCHRIFTEN' OF 1828 — ON VOSS — ON BURGER — THE 'URTHEILE,' ETC — THE 'VORLESUNGEN ÜBER DRAMATISCHE KUNST UND LITERATUR' — THEIR INITIAL AND OTHER MERIT — THE SCHLEGELIAN POSITION — THE 'VORLESUNGEN ÜBER SCHONE LITERATUR UND KUNST' — ILLUSTRATED STILL MORE BY FRIEDRICH — UHLAND — SCHUBARTH — SOLGER — PERIODICALS, HISTORIES, ETC.

THERE is a difficulty in writing about German criticism, especially in the great period of Goethe's productiveness, which hardly occurs in any other department of our subject. Not only is there much positive critical writing from all the writers, great and small, of the time, but almost all the writings of

the great ones are criticism of an indirect and applied kind. The whole of German Literature from 1750 to 1830 is a sort of *Seminar*—a kind of enormous and multifarious Higher Education movement, pursued, with much more than half consciousness, by persons often of great talent and sometimes of great genius. To give an account of all this is impossible: if it were possible it would be really improper, because much of what the Germans found out with infinite labour was only what nations more fortunately situated in regard to literary position had inherited, if they sometimes neglected their inheritance. But they also found out certain things which other nations had not: nor is it easy to combine an indication of these with an account, full, but not too full, of the entire movement; and hardly any two persons are likely to agree on the point where fulness is reached but running over has not begun.

Hamann

An early and remarkable instance of this critical permeation is Hamann,[1] the "Magus of the North." If Hamann had been anything but a German, superficial readers might take him for a quack; indeed, as it is, they have done so, and possibly may still do so. After an early visit to England—which was anything but fortunate, save that it imbued him with English literature—and after trying various occupations, he passed the greater part of his life in a very poor public employment He wrote large numbers of letters to Lindner, Herder, Moses Mendelssohn, and other persons, and published many short treatises, of the most miscellaneous in kind, and the most eccentric and occasionally apocalyptic in style and title. But he was in reality as deadly a foe of affectation and sham as Carlyle himself, who, no doubt, took not a little from him. His polemic with his friend, and townsman, and "high-honoured Herr-magister" Kant (whom, however, one shudders to find elsewhere described as "ein guter *homunculus*") does not concern us. But it is almost impossible to

[1] *Schriften*, ed. Roth, 8 vols in 9: Berlin, 1821-42. The second part of the eighth volume is wholly occupied by one of the best indices that I know in any German book—a very special blessing in the case of a writer like Hamann.

read a few pages in his works without coming across some literary reference, more or less remarkable when its date is considered. As early as 1759 he writes[1] to Kant himself, "Wir schreiben für ein Volk das Maler und Dichter fordert"; three years later[2] he entitles two of his quaint little pieces "Author and Critic," "Reader and Critic," and fills them with ironic wisdom. Earlier than these last, in May 1761,[3] he has read Diderot, and, like Lessing,[4] has discovered in and with him that rules are all very well, but that there is something "more immediate, more intimate, obscurer, but more certain" than the Rule.

He is harsh, but by no means wholly unjust (as indeed we have seen), when he finds, in *The Elements of Criticism*, "Mehr Worte und Wendungen als Sachen"; he knows Burke; and he leaves his "Magus"-tower to discuss Baretti and Goldoni. Mystic as he is, he detects the emptiness of the new Æsthetic:[5] and consistently champions direct perception of literary and other beauty in individual cases. It is admitted that his Shakespeare study[6] transmitted itself to Herder, upon whom he had great influence: and, generally speaking, he may be said to have exercised at least as much power in the germinal and stimulating way upon the younger writers, who were to form the great generation, as Lessing did in the way of dogma and method. Against the mere *Aufklärung* and against *Sturm und Drang*, Hamann was alike a conservative and preservative agency. and he is one of the authors, now getting terribly numerous, on whom I should like to spend much more time and space than can be afforded here.

[1] i. 509.

[2] ii. 376-418.

[3] iii. 81.

[4] Who is mentioned in the same passage for his discourse on *Fables*.

[5] He speaks, for instance (ii 437, saying, of course, that he will *not* speak), of "our æsthetic" as "Bohemian glass"; of the "falsity of its subtlety," &c.

[6] He describes himself in a letter to Reichardt, of June 1777 (v. 248), as spending the livelong day in reading "the Greek Testament, some classic, or *Shakespeare*." Fifteen years earlier, in one of the maddest-looking of his tract-groups (*Essais à la Mosaique*, vol. ii.), written in French and giving itself out as written in England, "at Bedlam," "Tyburn Road," &c., he had pronounced Falstaff "unique": and his quotations from *Hamlet*, at a time when the future author of *Wilhelm Meister* was scarcely breeched, are frequent.

There are rather strong points of resemblance between Hamann and the somewhat younger Lichtenberg. Both were very much influenced by visits to England, and both show the inspiration of English humourists—especially Swift—in their not exactly forced, but very decidedly *purposed*, eccentricity. Lichtenberg, however, was more a man of this world than the "Magus": and he shows very much more of the passion of the time for physics. Never did any one's writings better deserve the title of *Vermischte Schriften*[1] than his, consisting as they do, for the most part, of a bewildering assemblage of mote-articles, ranging from the question "Why Germany has no seaside watering-place,"[2] and from an account of a "Sausage-Procession"[3] (which gives a foretaste not merely of Jean Paul but of *Sartor Resartus* itself) to serious mathematical and physical discussions. Lichtenberg is perhaps best known to English readers by his dealings with Garrick and other English theatrical persons: but there is not a little pure literature in him, outside as well as inside his two sets of titularly literary *Bemerkungen*[4] He has actual animadversions on Pope, on Swift, on the early German drama even. but his most noteworthy critical achievements are to be found in more general maxims and judgments, many of them showing that creditable anxiety for the literary improvement of his country which the best men of his generation all felt, and which was rewarded in and by the next. He stigmatises that excessive *imitation* which even here we have had to notice: he says plumply,[5] *Die Deutschen lesen zu viel;* he is prophetically, as well as actually, notable on the process of commenting and translating Shakespeare[6] But perhaps his best judgment-epigram is on that critical vice which is the other extreme from general denigration "Men call," says he, "others by the name of genius, as wood-lice [*Kelleresel*] are called Millepedes. Not that they *have* a thousand legs, but that people won't take the trouble to count!"

Lichtenberg.

With Herder himself a different form of difficulty besets

[1] 9 vols.: Gottingen, 1844-47.
[2] v 93
[3] v. 331.
[4] In vols. I. and II.
[5] II. 383.
[6] i 283 *sq.* He is very interesting here to compare and contrast with Goethe.

Herder.

the historian. Here there is no question of scattered literary *obiter dicta* occurring in a range of obstinately miscellaneous thinking. Twenty volumes[1] of ostensibly and really literary work, of which something like a full half is actual criticism, present themselves to the inquirer; he knows, and everybody knows, that his author counts, as hardly anybody else, save Lessing and Goethe, has counted, in the literary development of one of the great "completely equipped"[2] literary nations of Europe; he can see, if he has any eyes at all, that Herder is, with Lessing, Diderot, and the shy and mainly apocryphal Gray, one of the very few leaders in the conversion of Europe at large to a catholic study of literature. And yet the arguments against any very full treatment of him in such a book as this are twenty-legion strong. In the first place, there is what I can only call a certain fearful *woolliness* about Herder's literary work. It scarcely ever compresses and crystallises itself into a solid and fiery thunderbolt of literary expression. He himself, in the very forefront of it,[3] speaks of "Die liebe Gottin Langeweile," "the dear Goddess Ennui," as having "hunted many, if not most people, into the arms of the Muses." I am afraid it must be said that in his own case the dear Goddess did not understand where her mission as matchmaker ended, and is too frequently present at the interviews of man and Muse.

His drawbacks of tediousness,

In the second place, that pedagogic instinct which has been noted, which is so excusable and so praiseworthy in him and in his contemporaries, when we consider their circumstances and *milieu*, interferes somewhat disastrously with the freedom and the lasting interest of his writing. The Latin nations, by their inheritance of real or supposed prerogative from Latin itself, we English by our alleged national self-

pedagogy,

[1] I-XX of the 60-vol. ed (Stuttgart, 1827) I have in some cases sought to compare, but have not been able continuously to work with, the much better ed. of Suphan (32 vols.: Berlin, 1877-1887)

[2] The phrase is De Quincey's and a good one: but it does not occur in his Essay on Herder, which is one of the most unsatisfactory things he ever did.

[3] *Einleitung* to the *Fragmente* (1767), ed. cit., I. 9.

sufficiency, escape this in greater or less degree. All the four, Italians, French, Spaniards, English, take themselves in their different degrees and manners for granted; they are "men," if only in the University sense. The Germans of the mid-eighteenth century are, and take themselves for, schoolboys: it is greatly to their credit, but it does not precisely make them good reading without a great deal of good will. Lastly Herder, as it seems to me (though, no doubt, not to others), in consequence of this sense of dissatisfaction with his own literature, climbs too rapidly to generalisations about the relation of literature itself to national character, and to the connection of literature generally with the whole idea of humanity. All this is noble; but we are in a bad position for doing it. It will be a capital occupation for persons of a critical temperament when humanity has come to an end—which it has not even yet, and which it certainly had still less in Herder's time.[1]

and meteorosophia.

These general disadvantages are indeed compensated by general merits of a very eminent kind Stimulated by Hamann, by Lessing, and by his own soul, Herder betook himself, as nobody had done before him, to the comparative study of literature, to the appreciation of folk-song (perhaps his best desert), to the examination of Ancient, Eastern, Foreign literature in comparison with German. This is his great claim to consideration in the history of literature and of criticism: and it is so great a one that in general one is loath to cavil even at the most extravagant expressions of admiration that have been lavished upon him.

but great merits

But individual examination of his works revives the objections taken above. For instance, the early *Fragmente zur Deutschen Litteratur*[2] has an almost unique *relative* interest. I do not know where to look for anything like it as a survey (or rather a collection of studies) of a literature at a given period of its development. On the language;

The Fragmente.

[1] I am not yet sure whether Vico exercised much influence on Herder in this direction: but Herder certainly ranks next to Vico as a leader in it, and had as much more immediate and wide-spreading influence as he had less originality and force. Professor Flint, I may say, thinks the actual connection of the two slight.

[2] Ed. cit., vols. i. and ii.

on the prosody;[1] on the "rhetoric" in the narrow-wide sense, of German after the close of the Seven Years' War; on the chief authors and kinds of its literature; on a vast number of minor points, positive and comparative, in relation to it, Herder lavishes an amount of filial devotion, of learning, of ability, which is quite admirable. Taken *absolutely*, the value and the interest, and therefore the admiration, shrink a little.

The *Kritische Walder*, which followed the *Fragmente* in a couple of years,[2] are occupied, first, with a sort of continuation of the work of Winckelmann and of Lessing in the *Laocoon* (a continuation which, like its forerunners, busied itself chiefly with the arts other than literature), and then with some work of Lessing's enemy, Klotz,[3] somewhat more directly literary in kind. Klotz, however, had busied himself, and Herder necessarily busies himself in turn, with general questions of the moral-literary type, especially in reference to Homer and Virgil. The book is full of those curious *Rettungen* or "white-washings," of which we have previously referred to an example in speaking of Lessing on Horace. But it has not very much for us.

The Kritische Walder.

There is some more, though the quality may be differently appreciated by different persons, in the Prize Essay of 1773 on the *Causes of the Decline of Taste in different Nations:*[4] and a great deal more in the twenty years later *Ideen zur Geschichte und Kritik der Poesie und bildenden Kunste*[5] In the first, Herder develops (not of course for the first time, for Montesquieu had given the line long before, if he had not applied it much to literature, and Du Bos had started it before *him*, and Vico had in a manner anticipated both; but for the first time in a wide,

The Ursachen des Gesunknen Geschmack,

[1] The Germans had been creditably troubled about their prosodic souls ever since Opitz (see the large concernment of this matter in Borinski, *op cit. sup.*); and the middle of the eighteenth century saw the strict iambic Alexandrines of Opitz himself and others deserted, partly for the so-called "British" or Miltonic scansion (decasyllables with certain licences of substitution), partly for classical metres and unrhymed "Pindarics," both of which had a great reflex influence on ourselves.

[2] 1769. Ed cit., vols. xiii., xiv.

[3] *V. sup.* pp. 47, 48.

[4] Vol xv. [5] Vols. xv., xvi.

and at the same time not loose, application to literature itself) the idea of Age- and Race-criticism—the close conjunction of a general conception of the characteristics of a time and a country with the phenomena observed or supposed to be observed in groups of literary production. In the second, at once generalising further, and descending to further particulars, we have an attempt to connect literature with general characteristics of humanity, and almost innumerable critical experiments of this process, on different authors and schools and kinds

Anything that has to be said in general on these processes is for the Interchapters; but we may here repeat that no one can well exaggerate their historical importance or the influence that they have exercised since. Further, the merit of their combined precept and example, in directing study at once to those features which are common in all literature, and to the individual bodies by comparison of which the general features are discernible, is quite beyond question. The Prize Essay has perhaps the main defects of its kind, that of "figuring away" in plausible gyration, without bringing home any very solid sheaves, or even leaving any definite path. But the immense Miscellany of the *Ideen* more than makes up for this. Herder's general scheme, here, in the *Adrastea*,[1] in that *Aurora* (suggested by the dawn of the nineteenth century) which he only planned, and which was but a small part of the huge adventures for which he died lamenting his lack of time, may be described as that of a mediæval collection of *Quæstiones Quodlibetales*, methodised by the presence throughout of his leading practical and theoretic ideas. These were, as has been said, the necessity of enriching German literature with material, and furnishing it with patterns, "plant," and processes, by the study of *all* literature, ancient and modern, as a practical and immediate aim; and the working out of the notions of literature, as connected with the country, and literature, as connected with the general race, for ultimate goal.

the Ideen, *&c.*

Age-, Country-, and Race-, Criticism

[1] For this and the rest see ed. cit., vols. xvii.-xx.

But, owing to the enormous *dissipation*,—the constant flitting from flower to flower which his task imposed on him,—Herder was not and could not be a very important critic on particular points. He was bound to share the over-valuation of *Ossian*[1]—for was not *Ossian* exactly what was wanted to dissolve and lubricate the *sècheresse* of French-German enlightenment, and did it not appear to give a brilliant new example of "national" literature? So we must not overblame him for this, any more than we must overpraise him—while praising him heartily—for having been undoubtedly the main agent in inoculating the Germans with Shakespeare.[2] Elias Schlegel had begun the process, and Hamann had continued it; but the first was cut off too early for him to do more than make a beginning, and Hamann's mission was rather to send others, including Herder himself, than to work directly upon the general. It is also fair to say that, with all his soaring ideals and world-wide aspirations of mental travel, there was little *Schwärmerei* about Herder, except in a few semi-poetical passages, which can easily be skipped. His judgment is a pretty sound and sensible one, if his taste is not infallible—see for instance his remarks on political poetry (xvi 169, *op. cit.*), and the equally modest and intelligent observations which follow on the impossibility of emulating or surpassing the special qualities of foreign literatures, however useful these literatures may be for study.[3] To any nation Herder must have been a useful and stimulating teacher, to the Germans at this time he was simply invaluable. But the definition of his general scope, and these few particulars of his procedure, must suffice us here.[4]

Specimens and Remarks

Wieland, the other chief of German *belles lettres* between Lessing and Goethe, is also one of those writers—necessarily

[1] See xviii. 65 99

[2] His Shakespearian passages are numerous, see especially xvii. 228 *sq*

[3] There can be no doubt that, here as elsewhere, Herder was administering a much-needed correction to the ridiculous Chauvinism of Klopstock, who was wont to extol German language and literature over all languages and literatures—past, present, and future, actual, possible, and impossible.

[4] Let me only add a reference to his own interesting sketch of German criticism up to his time *Ideen*, ii. 55, 56, ed. cit. xvi. 159 *sq.*

thickening upon us as we proceed—who were very important to their own times and countries, but whose importance historically is here less a matter for detailed investigation than for general summary. His extensive work[1] is full of criticism; indeed his position as editor of the *Teutsche Merkur* was one of the most responsible and not of the least influential in the great German period. The curious modernised-classical or classicalised-modern novels and miscellanies of which he was so fond—especially the *Abderiten*—abound in it, in a more or less dissolved and diffused state; the seven or eight volumes of his miscellaneous works[2] contain more in a precipitated and concentrated condition. Now he will ask—but perhaps not answer—the question, "Was ist eine schone Seele?"[3] then discourse (after the fashion of Burke and Barnwell and Bulwer) on "the Relation of the Agreeable and Beautiful to the Useful";[4] then come closer still to real practical criticism in the interesting "Sendschriften an einen Jungen Dichter" of 1784.[5] The alphabetically arranged reviews and notices which fill, or help to fill, the three last volumes deal with all manner of authors and books, from Aristophanes to the *Amadis*, and from Louise Labé to Luis Vivès. In all, modified to some extent by the influence which his greater juniors exercised latterly on him, there appears that somewhat rococo, but interesting, attractive, and very largely beneficent blend or coupling of wit and imagination (or at least fancy) which is Wieland's characteristic, and which undoubtedly did much—very much—to raise the Germans out of another and much less attractive mixture of pedantry and horse-play and bombast. But his individual critical utterances are of less importance to us. And so to Goethe himself.

Wieland.

In a certain sense the whole six-and-thirty volumes[6] of

[1] I have used the ed. in 36 vols., Leipzig, 1839-40.

[2] 29-36 in ed. cit.

[3] xxix. 129 *sq.*

[4] xxxiii 255 [5] In same vol.

[6] In the *Bibliothek der Weltlitteratur* of Cotta (Stuttgart, n. d.), which I use. Besides the texts more particularly noted above, *Dichtung und Wahrheit* is perhaps the chief place to be examined but nothing can be quite neglected Readers confined to English may profitably consult *Criticisms, Reflections, and Maxims of Goethe* (London, n d.), ed by W B Ronnfeldt, who thinks Goethe "probably the greatest literary and art critic whom the world has seen."

Goethe's work, with all the *Letters* and *Conversations* added, may be said to be a record of his criticism: in this sense he certainly deserved the hackneyed "nothing if not——" But for our purposes, though we may step beyond them now and then, the famous passages in *Wilhelm Meister* and elsewhere (especially "Shakespeare und Keine Ende") on Shakespeare, the *Sprüche in Prosa*, the collected papers on German and other literature, and the *Conversations* with Eckermann, will give a sufficient collection of texts. The *Xenien* will be more conveniently postponed till we deal with their other author.

Goethe.

The Hamlet criticism, &c

One thing must or should have struck every reader (at all accustomed to draw conclusions from what he reads) about the *Hamlet* passages in *Meister*.[1] *These passages might have been written by a man who was only acquainted with a prose translation of the piece into a language other than its own.* This may seem a little staggering: but it is true Goethe handles—with extraordinary and for the most part unerring insight—the characters, the situations, the conduct of the play. But there he stops dead. Of its magnificent and ineffable poetical *expression*—of those phrases and passages which, read hundreds of times through scores of years, produce as much effect on the fit reader as at first, and more—he says nothing. "Shakespeare und Keine Ende" tells the same story: nearly all, if not all, the scattered references from the Frankfort speech of 1771, when he was just of age, to the last remark to Eckermann sixty years later, tell the same. It is at least a curious one. One begins to wonder whether the person who wrote Shakespeare was, not Bacon, but, say, Wieland.

Many things, however, might, and some perhaps shall, be said

[1] Goethe would probably not himself have refused this ascription, but might, on the contrary, have welcomed it He even wanted the *Nibelungen* in prose: and more than once, I think, adopts translateableness as a *criterion* of Poetry (*v. inf.* note, p. 368) But this does not bridge, it only deepens, the gulf. Again, it may be, and has been, urged that in the *Hamlet* piece he was avowedly speaking from the theatrical point of view in every direction. True again but if anybody, with such literature as *Hamlet* before him, can take this point of view, we know that his heart and his treasure he, not in the book, but on the boards.

about this. Let us turn to the more miscellaneous and general utterances of the *Sprüche in Prosa*, which, with the parallel verse jottings, especially some of the *Zahme Xenien*, are recognised as supplying a sort of running accompaniment of Goethe's thought, for all periods of his life. No one (again with the same slight goodwill to think) can read far in either of these divisions, much less in both of them, without perceiving the very strong, we might almost call it the overbearing, practical and ethical tendency, even of those passages which apparently bear most closely on literature. All the best things are *generalised* as much as possible, with perhaps some forgetfulness of the writer's own caution about *Allgemeine Begriffe*.[1] In these generalities there is much that is admirable, such as the famous "Superstition is the poetry of life,"[2] and the much less known but very striking "Rhythmical movement has something magical about it: it makes us believe that the Sublime is our own property."[3] The danger appears in his often-quoted comparison of Classicism to Health and Romanticism to disease[4]—if he had said "Classicism is precaution against disease: Romanticism is making the best of that which must come," there would have been something to say for him. But it is far off in the admirable, "There are pedants who are also scoundrels; and they are the worst of all."[5]

The Sprüche in Prosa.

But when we pass from these generalities—disputable sometimes, indisputable not seldom, almost always stimulating—to individual judgments, the case is a little altered. If he had oftener written such notes as "*Vis superba formæ.* Ein schones Wort von Johannes Secundus,"[6] it had been better. What is the good of saying of *Henry IV.*[7] that "If everything else extant of the kind were lost, we could restore poetry and rhetoric completely out of this alone"? Nobody shall outgo me in rational admiration of *Henry IV.* I will not give up a hair of Doll Tearsheet's head, nor a blush of

[1] *Allgemeine Begriffe und grosser Dünkel sind immer auf dem Wege entsetzliches Unglück anzurichten.*—*Spr. in Pro.*, ed. cit., p. 109.

[2] Ibid., p. 129.

[3] *Gehöre uns an*, p. 128.

[4] P. 177.

[5] P 216.

[6] P. 143.

[7] P. 173.

the page's cheek. Everything in it is good: but to say that everything that is good is in it would deepen the inscrutable smile on Shakespeare's face a little less inscrutably. The saying, however, may perhaps be allowed the credit, as well as the discredit, due to enthusiastic exaggerations. This is not the case with the passages on Sterne,[1] which are numerous, which form a tolerably complete context, and which are yet separated from each other, and returned upon, in a fashion which shows what a strong impression the subject had made on the writer's mind.

The Sterne passages.

We begin with the sufficiently round statement, "Yorick Sterne was the finest[2] spirit that ever worked. Whosoever reads him has at once the feeling of freedom and beauty; his humour is inimitable, and not every kind of Humour frees the soul." Now, as a thing said once, this would be surprising enough, however well we may think of Sterne: but Goethe does not leave it alone. After the widest casts round to the general aspects of Poetry and Science, Art and Humour, he circles back to "Tristram." "Even at this moment" (the context shows that this must have been pretty late in his life), "every man of culture should take his works once more in hand, that the nineteenth century may learn what we owe him already, and look out for what we may still owe him." Another page and more of generalities, and he harks back again. "Sterne was born in 1713 and died in 1768. To comprehend him one must not leave out of consideration the moral and ecclesiastical state of his time: we should remember that he was Warburton's contemporary." And then a context of notes remarks on his "free spirit," "his power of developing things from within," of "distinguishing truth from falsehood," his "hatred for the didactic-dogmatic, the pedantic tendencies of the serious"; his wide reading and discoveries of "the inadequate and the ridiculous"; his "boundless sagacity and penetration," and a great many other things. Admitting that

[1] Pp. 165-169.

[2] *Schönste*, which, with *Geist*, is a little difficult to translate adequately. But it coincides interestingly with Lamb's, "one of the wisest and finest spirits breathing," of Hazlitt.

Sterne is "never a model," he thinks him "always suggestive and stimulating," and makes the charitable remark that "the element of coarseness in him, *in which he moves so carefully and elegantly*, might have spoilt many others."

Now this is at first odder than the hyperbole about *Henry IV.*, and takes one's breath away more completely for the moment. One may have a very strong liking for "Atalanta's better part," for the lightness, grace, good sense, refreshing qualities of Shandyism, and a very great admiration for Sterne's genius, especially for the uniqueness, if not exactly the impeccability, of its literary expression. But to make of him, even to the extent to which it is possible to make of his master Rabelais, an author to be turned over by day and night, a *vade mecum*, a great teacher, a literary discoverer and deliverer, the "finest spirit that ever worked"—this is really going rather too far. Yet the point of view is perfectly obvious, and it is equally obvious that it is not a literary point of view at all. Goethe felt severely the Philistinism of his own country, and he had—as most Continentals always have had, and as some dear good Englishmen think it proper still to have—the idea that England was specially dominated by the weaver's beam. Sterne to him is a David: his jests and pranks are the small stones of the brook, and he thinks of nothing more than of the discomfiture of Goliath.

Yet he could be Philistine enough himself, as where, in *Shakespeare und Keine Ende*, having talked of the universality of Shakespeare[1] more mysteriously and pretentiously, but far less intelligently and forcibly, than Dryden a century and more earlier, he tells us that "Coriolanus is *pervaded throughout* by the chagrin experienced at the refusal of the mob to recognise the choice of its betters." In *Julius Cæsar* "*everything rests on* the idea that the leaders are averse to seeing the highest place filled, because they wrongly imagine that they can work successfully in co-operation." *Antony and Cleopatra*

[1] We all laugh with Dickens when Lord Frederick Verisopht sums up Shakespeare as "a clayver man." Yet it may be doubted whether Goethe had not in effect anticipated his lordship. It is almost always as the "clever" *man*, not as the Prospero of the poetic moment, that he considers Shakespeare.

"declares with a thousand tongues [*plus* a thousand copybook headings?] that idle enjoyment is incompatible with a life of activity." We have all heard of Goethe as a great and true Apollo, a Philistine-slayer from youth to age. Was there ever more platitudinous and trivial chatter of Ashdod than in these three sentences? And how, again, when we find him, like a seventeenth-century Preceptist, dividing literary motives into Progressive, Retrogressive, Retardative, Retrospective, and Anticipatory, a list which yet once again sets one thinking, with a shameful joy, on possible Rabelaisian developments and parodies of it? Is our own poor Alison, with his Bandit unequally yoked to a Grecian nose[1]—are the poor Le Bossus and Rapins themselves—to be scoffed at, when we find this Jove of Weimar and Germany laying it down that "Christians contending with Christians will not, especially in later times, form a good picture," but that "Christians conquering Turks" are admissible?

Reviews and Notices

The very numerous literary reviews and notices which fill nearly two volumes[2] of the Works in the edition we are using must, of course, be read by every one who desires to acquaint himself thoroughly with Goethe's criticism: but they have not quite the importance which they might be expected to have, and very often, when they are at their best, that best comes to little or nothing more than we find condensed and quintessenced in a maxim of the *Sprüche* or a sentence of the *Conversations*. This indeed could not be otherwise: for the most "panoramic intellect" (a phrase which Goethe acknowledged with rather sardonic politeness when it was applied to him by some English critic[3]) cannot see, and the most facund tongue cannot say, the same thing differently every time. Even in the earliest there are very neat things, as where[4] poor Sulzer's *Die Schönen Künste* is described in the opening sentence of the review as "Very suitable for transla-

[1] *V. sup* p 167.

[2] xxvii. and xxviii. The former is devoted to "German," the latter (in part) to "Foreign" literature This last contains much of interest, especially on French and English books of the last decade of Goethe's life, and on Folk Verse.

[3] Who probably meant "panoptic." A work can be panoramic; an intellect hardly.

[4] xxvii. 25

tion into French: indeed it might very well have been translated *from* French." The very latest, such as that on Mérimée's *La Guzla*,[1] display that combination of fresh interest, impartial judgment, and experienced knowledge which ought to be the reviewer's equipment, but which unluckily few attain.

On the whole, however, the *Conversations with Eckermann* are the richest *placer* of Goethe's criticism, and the most convenient for the general reader. There appears to be no reason for any exaggerated scruples about admitting them as genuine and trustworthy. Eckermann, no doubt, has some of the irritating qualities which are almost inseparable from the Boswellian temperament: one need not be ashamed of enjoying that characteristic Heinesquery, the regret

The Conversations.

> "Dass Goethe sei todt,
> Und Eckermann sei zu Leben"

But this need not prevent our being thankful that Eckermann remained *zu Leben* long enough to put these things on record. There is nothing in the least disloyal or disgusting about them: the sternest hater of eavesdropping need not be afraid or ashamed to take up the book. And Eckermann seems to have been very fairly in possession of the two positive and the one negative qualities required by his difficult and rather thankless art—exactness, intelligence up to a certain point, and the absence of the superfluous cleverness which might have tempted him to refine, and touch up, and overlay. Therefore some analysis of the chief critical utterances of the book should find a place here. It must, moreover, always be remembered that Goethe was a man soaked in literature, and that those who read him without having at least dipped in it are apt to make mistakes.[2] Pretty early we have one of those

[1] xxviii. 60.

[2] I can give one very egregious example of this. The famous phrase, "Ueber allen Gipfeln ist Ruh," has been seen from a very early period to have an allegorical, as well as a literal, interpretation. Indeed, in the Latin original (for the words are a translation, as genius translates, of Lucan, ii. 273, *Pacem summa tenent*) the context is perfectly unmistakable. I had myself fallen in love with *Ueber allen Gipfeln* when I got the *Gedichte* as a school-prize in the year 1860, and both the possible interpretations had struck me. Yet a very few years ago, for giving the *poetical* application, I was solemnly warned by a reviewer that there was

striking generalities which catch mankind, and which—in a sense not unjustly—have earned their author his immense reputation. "Fact must give the motive, the points that require expression the particular kernel; but to make a beautiful enlivened whole, *that* is the business of the poet."[1] The practical advice about a certain job of verse[2] is as good as it can be, and as we should expect it to be; to find a better and more *conscious* craftsman of letters than Goethe, you may take the wings of the morning and put a girdle round the earth in vain. Nor perhaps is much more needed than mere quotation for the three words on the opposite page, *Ach, das Publikum!* There is a very noteworthy passage[3] on Schiller and his philosophy, and a still more noteworthy one,[4] indeed one of the cardinal places of the whole, on the character of writers, with a context—accidental as far as dates go (for there is a full fortnight between them), but real in thought—on Style.

The classification of his enemies[5] is very interesting and curious, as are, both from the critical and the personal standpoint, the observations[6] on Klopstock and Herder. But what follows[7] immediately, on the contemporarily intimate relations between France and Germany in literature, is more noteworthy still, and so is, especially when we take account of the dates and of other places, Goethe's dissuasion[8] of Eckermann from undertaking a *compte-rendu* of German Literature for an English Review. At this very time[9] the *Globe* was being founded in Paris: and Goethe's admiration for the *Globe* was unbounded. J. J. Ampère he knew personally: but the praise which so constantly recurs applies to Sainte-Beuve, Rémusat, and others almost more than to Ampère. In one

nothing disgraceful in my not knowing German, but that to pretend to do so, and to give an impossible meaning to well-known words, was quite intolerable.

[1] *Gespräche mit Goethe* (3 vols., Stuttgart), i. 50.

[2] i 66. It has been urged, not without justice, that this intense *craftsmanship* must fairly be taken into account in estimating his criticism. He is always identifying himself with the worker rather than the spectator-reader, thinking of the process rather than of the result.

[3] i 70 [4] i. 102.

[5] Or at least "opponents"—*Gegner*, i. 104, 105.

[6] i. 116. [7] i. 118

[8] i. 120. [9] 1824.

place later, he expresses his surprise that these young French reviewers did not think it necessary, as the Germans did, to "hate one another" if they differed in opinion.[1] Alas! the disease was not, and is not, confined to Germany: and it certainly did not spare these same contributors to the *Globe*. But their width of range, their comparative spirit, their judicial and yet not pedagogic manner, justly enchanted Goethe. And it was doubtless because he did not, in 1824, think it possible for a reviewer to show them, that he bade Eckermann not "eat the beans" of reviewing.

The passage[2] which naturally and immediately follows on the connection of German and English literature, and the frank avowal of the enormous indebtedness of the former to the latter, is deservedly famous, and certainly shows Goethe most favourably in the light of that combined lamp of intelligence, learning, and character which he himself always liked to turn on his subject. But one does not read with so much satisfaction what follows at a little distance on the sufficiency of translation,[3] a passage at which, I feel sure, all the Muses wept. Scientifically, morally, practically, translation can do much: from the point of view of pure literature, all it can do is to supply something different from the original—good perhaps, bad perhaps, between the two most probably, but never *the* original. Once more he refers valuably[4] to the great older contemporaries of his youth—Lessing, Herder, Wieland, as well as to Schiller. Always we may apply to Goethe when he speaks of Schiller what Thackeray says so well of Pope[5] when he speaks of Swift. His remarks on Menander in more places than one supply a very curious document, or item of a document, as to his criticism generally, when we reflect in what a fragmentary state the great New Comic has come down to us. Many notable passages on Shakespeare and Molière follow: indeed, the various contexts on Molière should be as carefully looked at and compared as those on Shakespeare,

[1] i. 166.
[2] i. 121
[3] P 125. Cf. what has been said above.
[4] P 134.
[5] "Everything Pope said and thought of his friend was good and noble"—*The English Humourists*.

Byron, and Scott. They will form, with these, the chief bases of our general estimate of Goethe's criticism.

The judgment[1] of January 1827 on Hugo is famous and interesting. More favourable than later ones, it shows the critic's eclecticism, if not quite his catholicity. He saw, and saw rightly, the connection with Chateaubriand: and we must not *now* be too severe on him for thinking *then* that Hugo "may be as important as Lamartine and Delavigne." A less agreeable side of his criticism—one to which we have had, and shall have, to turn and return—is the remark on Flemming,[2] *er kann jetz nicht mehr helfen.* Now Flemming certainly was not a very great poet; he *has* only "a very pretty talent, rather prosaic and *bourgeois*" But the "er kann jetz nicht mehr *helfen*" is hard to forgive. It is a point of view which has done harm to many, notably to Mr Arnold: but that is between the Muses and themselves. What concerns us, is that it is bad in itself. The idea that such and such a writer "won't *pay*," that you can't "get culture" out of him, is the pure Philistinism of culture itself. It is the exact analogue to the theory and practice of "saving your own dirty soul" in religion. What does it matter whether he "helps" or not, if he is good and, in his own little or large measure, delights? This calculus of profit is mighty disgusting and, we may add, mighty dangerous: for it is at the root of much of the bad criticism in the world.

He is in his better mind, and in his own sphere, with the remark[3] that now, fifty years ago, and fifty years hence, it is, was, will be so that what men wrote when they were young will be best enjoyed by young men. And we may note in passing wise and witty things on destructive criticism,[4] on Smollett,[5] on *Lazaret-poesie*,[6] before leaving with a good taste in our mouth, the first and, for literary utterances I think the weightiest, volume of the *Conversations*.

A good example of that common-sense judgment which is

[1] P 182.

[2] P. 184. And again, the *craftsman's* point of view must be allowed for. Flemming "will not help the *poet of 1830*," is what he means.

[3] P 193.

[4] P. 219.

[5] P. 233.

[6] (*i e*, the poetry of the horrible and the miserable) p. 245.

perhaps Goethe's chief claim as a critic is to be found early in vol. ii.,[1] where he speaks of Aristotle as "rash in his opinions." At first sight this may seem not merely impertinent, but contradictory of the facts: and yet there is much in it. Undoubtedly Aristotle, great as he is, *was* rash, with the peculiar Greek rashness of imagining that Greek facts were all facts: and this was nowhere more the case than in his literary criticism. We may be less happy—on the same page and the next—with a repetition of Philistinisms against Fouqué and the Middle Ages, about there being "nothing worth our fetching from these dim old German times," or with an additional mistake (which again has done much harm) about the "miseries" of these said times and the uselessness of adding them to our own. How much better is a fresh application of "the apples of gold and pictures [frames] of silver," a metaphor of which he was fond, a little later! "Die Frauen," says he,[2] "sind silberne Schalen in die *wir* goldene Aepfel legen." In other words, their worth and their fairness are their fairness and their worth to *our* imagination, which indeed is the conclusion of the whole matter, not merely in gynæcology. His statement as to Voltaire[3] that "everything which so great a talent writes is good," is interesting to compare with the direct negative of Joubert. And it may repay anybody if he thinks a little about its connection with a more general and very important statement of Goethe's, that "in Art and Poetry Personality is everything,"[4] wherewith also it were well to combine his frequent references[5] to his favourite idea of the "dæmonic." His extreme and repeated[6] admiration of *Daphnis and Chloe* (undoubtedly a charming thing) is to be noted.

The third volume, giving us[7] Eckermann's second skimmings of his notes and memories, is, perhaps naturally, less fruitful, but it is far from barren. Another of the audacious and felicitous phrases which have done so much to establish Goethe's fame is that[8] about Shakespeare's "unflustered, innocent, *sleep-*

[1] P. 9.
[2] P. 26.
[3] P. 33.
[4] ii. 162.
[5] P. 180.
[6] Pp 184, 194.
[7] With reinforcements from Soret, the Genevese botanist and mineralogist.
[8] iii. 29, "Jenes ungestorte, unschuldige, nachtwandlerische Schaffen."

walkerish manner of production": and the passage on Schlegel[1] is a good combination of magnanimity and veracity. One of the strangest blunders of interpretation ever made by such a man is that by which he makes[2] Macduff's "He has no children" apply to Macbeth instead of to Malcolm, thereby not only making necessary a clumsy explaining-away of Lady Macbeth's own words, but spoiling the poetry of the actual passage. In the same context comes the contradiction of himself, that Shakespeare thought mainly of the stage when he wrote[3] On the other hand, the passage[4] on Burns, Béranger, and the effect on literary talent of an exciting atmosphere of various kinds, from the clash of sentiment and thought in a city like Paris to the inspiration of traditional ballad-literature, is all but consummate in a certain way.

Then read him on the *incommensurableness* of poetry,[5] and (in a happier vein about Classic and Romantic than that which has been noticed) pronouncing[6] that, for all the fuss (*Lärme*) about the two, "a work that is good all through will be a classic sure enough," and you may leave him in a state of reconciliation which, in wise persons, will not be disturbed by later utterances on French authors, Guizot, Villemain, Mérimée, Victor Hugo even, though on the latter you may think that he has got at a wrong angle. After all, one may say that Hugo and not Goethe was in that position: for few persons with a critical head now think of the author of *Marion de l'Orme* as they think of the author of the *Contemplations* and the *Légende*.

To proceed from particulars to mediate generalities, a very instructive light on Goethe's general critical attitude may be obtained by comparing his expressions in regard to Scott and to Byron.[7] He admires both. But in regard to Scott he justifies his admiration. His analysis to Eckermann[8] of *The Fair Maid of Perth* is really critical: he points out how good

[1] P. 86. [2] P. 99.

[3] He had earlier said that Shakespeare and Molière did just the reverse.

[4] P 102. [5] P. 110 [6] P. 161.

[7] I could make this point even clearer by putting together and enlarging upon his Shakespearian criticism: but this would take too much room, and it has been done in sample already. The English reader will find the chief texts collected in the first sixty pages of Mr Ronnfeldt's book, cited above.

[8] ii. 10 *sq.*

this passage is, how cunningly that episode is worked in, how powerful is that other picture. He praises *Rob Roy* in the same manner,[1] "going at the jugular," selecting the truth of detail, the *unendliche Fleiss in den Vorstudien* (the very thing which shallow critics deny to Scott), and so forth. Now, his eulogies of Byron are quite different. They are nearly all in generals; the most definite passage that I remember, about the wigshops and lamplighters in *Don Juan*, comes from Eckermann's mouth, not Goethe's. The great man himself is struck by Byron's social and political position; he is lost in wonder at Byron's real or supposed revolt against what he, like others, supposes to have been English Philistinism (the Philistinism of Shakespeare, Swift, Fielding!), and the like. It is never a phrase, a passage, a situation, hardly ever a book[2] that he praises. And I do not know a closer approach to the merely and purely *bête* in a writer of the greatest literary, and of great critical, genius than the remark[3] that a few lines of *Don Juan* "poison the whole *Gerusalemme*." It would be as sensible to say that one stanza of Tasso is an antidote to the whole of *Don Juan*. The two things are "incommensurable," and severed by a gulf.

Some more general things: Goethe on Scott and Byron.

Another remarkable thing about Goethe's criticism, which might be illustrated from the *Sprüche*, from Eckermann, and from other sources, may again surprise those who have simply adopted the common opinion of him as an apostle of universal culture. Curiously enough, he, the "Doctor Universalis" of nineteenth-century literature, as some would make him, distinctly discourages and disparages that historic study of Comparative Letters which is the distinguishing nineteenth-century principle. His warning to the Germans, that they have most to lose by the introduction of a "world-literature," is no doubt true enough *ad hoc* or *ad hos:* and when, close by, he emits the wish, "May the

On the historic and comparative estimate of literature.

[1] P. 184 *sq.*

[2] I do not forget his reviews of *Don Juan*, *Manfred*, and *Cain:* nor the rather astonishing attribution to *Don Juan* itself of being the first book to supply English with "a polished comic language."

[3] iii. 40.

study of Greek and Roman literature remain the basis of the higher Culture," we can only say "Amen, and Amen" everlastingly. But his stigmatisation of Chinese, Indian, Egyptian literatures as *Curiositäten*—useless for moral and æsthetic culture—is very tell-tale: and even the most experienced person may be slightly shocked when he finds Goethe extending this taboo to European-mediæval letters as well.[1]

Summing up: the merits of Goethe's criticism.

I hope that it is not extravagant to think that this selection of the actual facts of the case, individual and grouped, may serve to base, with some solidity, a judgment of Goethe's actual position as a critic. For a considerable time, let us say roundly the middle forty years of the nineteenth century, from 1830 to 1870, this position, very mainly owing to the efforts of a large number of great men from Carlyle downwards, was exalted to the very skies: and even more recently it has been rather left alone than seriously attacked. The causes of this—causes which to some extent are true causes and must always operate—may be put shortly as follows. Goethe possessed, to an extraordinary degree, and later perhaps than any one else, that singular *wisdom* which has been more than once animadverted upon as the property, in the strict sense, of the eighteenth century. He was, for half its length and for nearly two-thirds of his own life, a man of its own: and he never escaped, or wished to escape, entirely from its influence. He was always "in touch" with life and fact: there was "no nonsense about him," to use an excellent vernacular phrase which, if somewhat double-edged, has a keen and heavily backed edge on the favourable side. There are no "Samothracian mysteries of bottled moonshine" in him; the most apparently dreamy parts of his loftiest and greatest things, such as the second part of *Faust*, are always, like natural and healthy dreams, merely sublimations of actual facts—experienced or capable of being experienced.

[1] Once more the sordid "business" view which we noticed in regard to Flemming seems to have crept over him. He did, of course, admire the *Nibelungen*, and the Ballads, and some other things. But his general belittlement remains.

But further, and on the other hand, he had, from very early youth, and by the favour of those of "the Mothers" who allow men of great genius to anticipate and combine the gifts which most have only later and separately, a very strong infusion indeed of Romance *and* of Science—the two apparently opposite characteristics of the century to which his last thirty years belonged. He had hardly a touch of the special stupidity which accompanied the special cleverness of his earlier century—the degeneration of "common-sense." In him the fashionable and epidemic diseases of the Neo-classic period were neutralised by the appropriate agencies, without any of these turning to the morbid. The comparison of *Goetz* with *The Robbers* is an education in pathological criticism. Nobody ever served under two flags with such honour and credit as Goethe; he may even be said to have effected, if not alone, yet mainly, a reconciliation and junction of arms between his two masters. Yet again his almost unique mastery (just glanced at) of the tendencies of the morrow; his sympathy, in his age, and when he was in a way the greatest man of letters in Europe, with the ideas, tastes, aspirations of quite young men—not merely secured, but to no very small extent deserved, the enthusiastic adhesion of these latter. And when we add to these powerful general things his extraordinary literary gifts, the still more extraordinary range of his interests, the Olympian good-nature of his character, and his singular, and almost supra- or infra-human, avoidance of extremes, it ceases to be at all surprising that the position above noted should have seemed to good wits to be his: it may even seem ungracious, pedantic, absurd to take any exceptions to it.

Its drawbacks: too much of his age.

Yet the exceptions must be taken, and, if possible, made good. The greatest of them—at least, according to those general lines which he himself loved and followed—is connected with that peculiarity of his which has been noticed a few lines previously. He is just a little too much of the day and the morrow combined—not enough of yesterdays and to-morrows far behind and far ahead. The least local and temporary of those who are for an age—possessor of the widest "age" perhaps of them

all—he is still of that age, and, except in criticisms that are of life rather than of literature, not sufficiently of all time. As we have seen and shown, he cannot duly appreciate the Middle Ages; and the fact that others were over-appreciating them does not excuse him a whit. In his formative precepts he looks too much to what he thought the requirements of actual nineteenth-century literature—a modified Romanticism, not excluding Science. In other words, he keeps time without winding for a longer period than any other clock on record, but he is perhaps rather impossible to wind afresh. On that calculus of his own which we have disallowed and protested against, which we shall shortly disallow and protest against afresh, one might too often say that *he* cannot "help us any more." He is not as "rash in his opinions" as he thought Aristotle was, but he is more inadequate, we can nowadays allow for and discard Aristotle's rashness, and find abundance of the eternal left in him, and we cannot quite do this with Goethe. We must sometimes, with Aristotle, have, and mark, the side-note, "This was a man of the fourth century B.C.", we must always with Goethe have the other, "This was the cleverest man of 1770-1830." Take him again with Longinus, and we find that Longinus needs hardly any side-note at all—only here and there in utterances such as that about the *Odyssey*. And I at least think that Coleridge, though he certainly needs it here and there, needs it seldomer, far seldomer, than Goethe.

Too much a utilitarian of Culture.

But there is another count. Goethe, as everybody knows, had a private chapel (which has bred chantries and churches and cathedrals all over the world), with an ephod and teraphim and everything complete, dedicated to the great god, Cham-Chi-Thaungu, otherwise called Culture. It is ill to be joined to any idols: and this was well seen of him. "This cannot help us," he says constantly; "we cannot fetch any good out of this." "Such times, such books, such men have nothing to say for us" Now, such sentences, from the point of view of the really higher criticism, are anathema, because they are *negative*. The corresponding positives are not condemnable at all. If a thing does help any

one, if any can fetch good, or delight, out of it, it passes at once—in a low class perhaps, perhaps in a high—but it passes. That it does *not* help any particular person proves nothing at all. If the work is good, on its own scale and specification, it can afford to wait for the persons whom it will help, to whom it will "give culture." Its beauty is its sole duty. Indeed "What *is* culture?" is a question to be asked not at all jestingly, and it will be hard to find the answer.

Unduly neglectful of literature as literature.

Yet once more the specimens given (I believe quite fairly) above entitle us—and all but the most blindly fanatical *Goetheaner* will find it hard to *dis*entitle us from the observation—to observe in them a constant deflection from the strictly literary consideration of things. He likes to consider "poetry" rather than "poesy," poets rather than poetry; and in poets he is always considering the not strictly poetical qualities. He extols, for instance, in a well-known passage, Byron's "Keckheit, Kuhnheit, Grandiositat." Now the last, though a somewhat questionable, may be a real, poetical quality: but what is there essentially poetical in *Keckheit* and *Kuhnheit?* The occasion requiring them, it is good that a poet—as that a fox-hunter, a sub-lieutenant left in command of the regiment, a householder facing a fire or a burglar at two o'clock in the morning—should have them: but what is there specially *poetical* about them? On the contrary, may not a man have them and be, in virtue of having them, a bad, and the worse, poet? Character, conduct, personality (the second construed in a liberal way), these things are what Goethe is always harping on. Now, ten generations of foes and friends have (with the good leave of some friends as well as foes of mine) been able to make out next to nothing at all about Shakespeare's character, conduct, and personality. Yet most people think that Shakespeare was, let us say, one of the great poets of the world. Shelley's character was rather weak; his conduct was sometimes disgusting, his personality, though generally amiable, is very vague; and some of us think him the "next poet," not merely the next English poet, to Shakespeare. We may be wrong: but our case is a case.

Therefore, insolent absurdity as it may seem, I venture to doubt whether Goethe's criticism is of the absolutely greatest value. We have met with many marks or notes of the true critic in our "journey across Chaos," and some of them Goethe has. But there are most important ones which he lacks. That he is a great *dramatic* critic I can very well admit: but his very greatness here, on the principle more than once referred to, makes him a dubious critic of literature. For the Goethe of *Faust* (not least of the Second Part of it), of the best lyrics, and of some other things, I have, and for a great number of years have had, almost unlimited admiration: for the critical Goethe I feel very much less. That, assisted by natural xenomania, he was a great revelation to Englishmen seventy, eighty, even a hundred years ago, I can very well allow and believe: that he was a valuable populariser of a critical attitude, useful as an alterative to that of Neo-classicism, I know. But I am less sure that there is much in him, as he would himself say, for us now. Aristotle, Longinus, Coleridge, are *creeds:* though the first and second are too succinct and the last too discursive and full of *lacunæ*. I can admit even Scaliger, even Boileau, to be of the calibre of a will-worship But Goethe, the critical Goethe, has too much the character of a superstition, now rather stale.

Schiller.

Schiller's critical position, which some have estimated very highly, depends first upon the collection of small æsthetic treatises, and of a few actual reviews, which is included in his prose works;[1] secondly, in his share of the *Xenien;* and thirdly, in the critical utterances of his *Letters,* especially those in the correspondence with Goethe, though by no means neglecting those to others, especially Korner. With regard to the first part of the first division, extraordinary importance has been attached to it by some—importance which a wary person would be slow to accept on trust, when he remembers, not merely the remarks of A. W. Schlegel, a declared unfriend, but those of Goethe, Schiller's unflinching defender, and those of Novalis, a very competent

[1] Vols. xii.-xv. of the Cotta ed.

and apparently quite dispassionate observer.[1] Much, however, will of course depend on the estimation in which "æsthetic salt for putting on the tail of the Ideal"[2] is itself held.

His Æsthetic Discourses.

The very strong inclination of the poet towards the abstract discussion is shown in his "Dissertation on the Connection of the Animal Nature of man with the Spiritual," written and printed in his twenty-first year: as well as in others nearly as early. And few things of the kind can be more curious than the comparison of the "Briefe über *Don Carlos*" with such other defences of a man's own work as Dryden's or Corneillle's.[3] The Discourses on Tragedy,[4] which appeared in the *Thalia* for 1792, of course have their interest. But Schiller's most noteworthy exercises in this direction have, I believe, been generally thought to be the æsthetic discourses of the Fourteenth volume[5] and those on "Naive and Sentimental Poetry,"[6] and on "The Sublime" in the Fifteenth.

The Bürger review.

This also contains the few reviews preserved. Of these, the most remarkable is the unlucky one on Burger, as to which I can only say that, having first read it when I had not read A. W. Schlegel's reply,[7] and did not know the tenor of this, I had anticipated Schlegel's verdict, that it is "an offence against literary morality." In one case, therefore, however humble, Schiller's later plea,[8] that posterity would do justice to the uprightness of his intentions, has not itself been justified: and I cannot think that it can have been so in many others. For, though the ill side of human nature will always rejoice in its own likeness, and though, even putting this aside, there is still a singular notion abroad that

[1] *V sup.*, p. 368, and *inf.*, p. 389.

[2] *V inf.*, p. 396.

[3] All these are in vol. xii. ed cit.

[4] "On the Ground of Pleasure in Tragic Objects," and "On the Tragic Art." Vol xiii.

[5] "Über Anmuth und Wurde," "Über das Pathetische," "Zerstreute Betrachtungen," and "Über die aesthetische Erziehung der Menschen" All these fall under our exclusion of pure æsthetic, after the earliest examples in each country.

[6] The adjectives do not give the force of their originals Schiller meant the poets who are not *self-conscious* and those who are.

[7] *V. inf.*, p. 395.

[8] In a note subjoined when the review was republished, eleven years after its first appearance, after Burger's death, and after Schlegel's counter-blow.

an abusive review must be an honest and well-intentioned one, *this* review is one of the worst ever written, and in one of its own latter sentences it writes itself down so. Burger, we are told, has "wealth of poetical painting, the glowing and energetic language of the heart, a streamer of poetry, now waving gorgeously, now caressingly floating, and [finally] an honest heart that speaks from every line." If it were possible to imagine a reader who did not know *Lenore* or anything of the rest, and who had worked patiently through the pages on pages of carping and sneering which lead up to this astonishing confession, we can only suppose that he would gasp for breath, and wonder whether he had turned over half a dozen sheets at once and come upon the end of a quite different paper.

The truth appears to be that Schiller, with all his talent, all his genius, was something of a prig: and a prig is capable of almost any discreditable act. It has often been pointed out that for the author of *Die Räuber* to find fault with Burger as not being strictly proper is "rather too rich": but it must be remembered that when Schiller wrote *Die Räuber* he was a prig too, though a prig in a fit of unconventional, Bohemian, and *Sturm-und-Drang* priggishness. *Here* the cold fit had followed the hot. The poet of the Moors is now busied with "the man of culture," with "Idealising art which collects and mirrors all the morality, all the character, all the wisdom of the time," and which of course rejects equally raptures about "Molly," and childish things about the dead riding fast. He informs us, with the true superior air, that Burger "not seldom mingles with the People, to whom he should only let himself condescend." And he has succeeded, marvellous to say, in reducing *ad absurdum* the argument against popularity as a test of poetry, in his very endeavour to reduce thereto the argument *for* it. "'Tis as much as to say," cries he with lofty scorn, "'What pleases excellent judges is good: what pleases all without distinction is better.'" "Why, so it is, oh well-born Court-Counsellor and Professor at Jena," one may reply.[1]

[1] Unfortunately the Burger review is not the only one, of the small handful given us, in which Schiller "harps and carps" in this evil fashion. That on *Egmont* is almost as bad.

As for the *Xenien*, I am afraid I am still more out of accord with Schiller's admirers here. The ill-nature of them is very suspicious when we find that, in this collaboration, it communicated itself to Goethe, who was certainly not ill-natured as a rule, though he was rather selfish. But the ill-nature is not the worst part. This kind of thing, whether it is done by a Pope, or by a Firm of Goethe, Schiller, & Company, has some of the disgustfulness of pigeon-shooting or even rabbit-coursing. There is hardly any real sport in it; the victims are nearly always rather defenceless, and generally quite harmless: their destruction does little, if any, good to anybody; and the spectacle is demoralising.[1]

The Xenien.

These *Xenien*, I confess, appear to me to be one of those superstitions of literature which it is certainly the business of the critic, and the historian of Criticism, to protest against and demolish if he can. I never thought very much of them: and I think still less of them after a very careful study for the purposes of this book.[2] They corresponded, of course, in a certain sense, to the nearly contemporary, but much less famous and, as far as their authors are concerned, much less remarkable *battues* of Rivarol and Gifford in France and England. Goethe and Schiller were not only much more formidable sportsmen, but had much better game—or worse vermin if anybody likes—for quarry. The imperfections of German literature were, as they always have been, much greater than those of French, and much more easily got at than those of English. It is rather ridiculous, and more than rather disgusting, to find even such men treating such others as Wieland and Jean Paul (Herder himself seems only to have escaped because of his personal connection with Weimar) as if they were "Tom

[1] Herr Boas, *op. cit. inf.*, cites Gervinus as saying that his investigations entirely confirmed the *Xenien* estimates. I have not verified the quotation, but I know enough of Gervinus (see on him *inf.*) to be certain that his judgment would have been equally accommodating whatever these estimates had been.

[2] The most convenient subject for such a study known to me is the *Schiller und Goethe im Xenien-kampf* of Eduard Boas (Stuttgart und Tubingen, 2 vols., 1851), which gives the text with all necessary apparatus, and a long account, with specimens, of the retorts of the victims and the appurtenant literature generally. I exclude, of course, from the remarks in the text the *Tabulæ Votivæ*, &c.

Sternhold or Tom Shadwell." But this is not the worst of it. The *Xenien* are not, as a rule or in any large proportion, particularly *good:* and if they did not appeal to the ill-nature of mankind, and had not great names attached to them, few people would think them so. Schiller's are often very lumbering verse and phrase, regarded merely as phrase and verse: Goethe's are less often so, but seldom very brilliant as either.[1] If more people would read them in comparison with Martial himself, their lameness and awkwardness could hardly fail to be made clear. It would need a rather wider reading (though I at least have as little doubt of the result) to show not merely their pervading ill-nature and arrogance but their frequent miss-fires.

The Correspondence with Goethe.

Most fortunately, however, we are not left either in the cold with the Æsthetic treatises, or in hot water with the Burger review and the *Xenien.* The *Letters of Schiller and Goethe*[2] are a twice-blest book. Nowhere does one *like* Goethe so much as in them: nowhere is it possible to understand, and therefore to like, Schiller better than in parts of them. It is true that the sense of his being fundamentally a prig of genius remains—that even the sense of his having something of that "bad blood," of which Milton, Racine, and perhaps Wordsworth, are the chief other examples among persons of genius of the Upper House, remains likewise. But Goethe meets him with such an amiable *camaraderie,* he softens his asperities with such a never offensive but always effective blend of cordiality and irony, that, after the first few letters, Schiller begins to talk almost like a man of this world, and yet neither loses his predominant interest in literature. It is true that when we come to the *Xenien* the offence returns. It is not pleasant to find two men of genius calmly plotting how to put, into the smallest space and the neatest form, most envy, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness towards the

[1] No doubt there are exceptions. Goethe's best seem to me 278 (directed, it is said, at F. Schlegel) and the rather ill-natured but clever *Charade* (282) Schiller was happy in 346 on Gottsched as Tantalus: but any one could, and can, shoot Gottsched sitting.

[2] 4 vols. in the Cotta collection. This also contains Schiller's correspondence with Korner, which should be compared.

greatest number of persons obnoxious to them. And Schiller's remarks on the necessity of "giving it hot" to a certain unlucky Reichardt, who had had the impudence not merely to praise the *Horen* lukewarmly, but to praise the wrong things in them, can only be matched with Macaulay in reference to Croker, while there is much more deliberate malice in them. It is no excuse to say that severe criticisms are sometimes necessary. The reviewer is a policeman who may sometimes have to use his staff: the *Xenien*-writer is a bravo who chooses the stiletto. But enough of that matter.

And, as has been said, the book as a whole is very interesting to us. Schiller's criticisms on *Meister* never reach the concentrated justice of Novalis (*v. inf.*) But they are by no means without *parrhesia:* and the picture they give us of the successive results of the instalments, on an eagerly receptive and extraordinarily sensitive literary wit-gauge, is not readily to be paralleled, except by the companion remarks of Goethe on *Wallenstein* later. And Goethe's practised *Weltweisheit* deprives his observations of the naive character which Schiller always, for good or for bad, retains. The latter, however, always retains likewise his porcupine attitude towards contemporary men of letters who are not quite of "ours." From Richter to Bouterwek he cannot away with them in one sense, and would like to away with them very much in the other. Where this disturbing element does not come in, he is better; but seldom quite satisfactory. He was right not to think much of Darwin, and not wrong to think something of Restif's *Monsieur Nicolas:* but this last, at least, has little to do with literature. His Shakespeare criticisms are always informing from the ethical-æsthetic side; they hardly even attempt the literary. But the elaborate character of the Index to these letters, which exhibits all the literary judgments of both the poets under separate reasoned catalogues, makes it almost unnecessary to pursue our usual process of sampling, the task being done to hand.

Of the definite critical treatises, by far the most important for our purpose (the "Æsthetic Education" being omitted, on the showing of its chief admirers, as of a more general bearing) is the tract on "Naïve and Sentimental Poetry." It has even

been claimed for this, that here, for the first time, is a distinction made out between ancient and modern poets, on the score of their objective and subjective character respectively. The distinction is not quite real, and it is not critically made out. In support of the first demurrer (which is something too wide for us here), let me request anybody who really knows the Greek choruses, and especially those of Æschylus, to say whether, on his soul and conscience, he can deny them "sentimentality" in the good sense, subjectivity in any. Goethe and Browning will be hard put to it to fight this prize against the choruses of the *Agamemnon* alone. The other point is more relevant At the time[1] when Schiller wrote this essay we know, from a subsequent letter of his[2] to Goethe, that he had not read the *Poetics;* this is dangerous, but it is not fatal. What is, as it seems to me, fatal is that nearly all his literary citations are of a general and second-hand character. I can see nowhere any direct evidence of "contact" with the texts. He knows Kant at first hand certainly; he probably knows Lessing and Herder; he of course knows Kleist and Wieland. But did he know, at first hand and in the originals, besides the ancients, Shakespeare and Milton, Dante and Ariosto, Rabelais and Molière? I cannot see much evidence of it.

The Naïve and Sentimental Poetry.

In fact, though I know well to what danger I am, once more, exposing myself, I must once more say that Schiller does not seem to me a great critic, or even a good one. He was a man of letters who, as such, possessed genius, and a philosopher who at least had a very great talent for philosophy; and so much of a critic as can be made by these two qualifications he was. To put it in other ways, and perhaps to go even a little further, he was, as a merely *a priori* critic, or a critic furnished with such *a posteriori* knowledge as can be supplied at second-hand, very clever indeed. He could spin out of his interior more criticism, and of a better quality, than most men could. But he was excessively deficient in Love—that first and greatest fulfilling of the law of the true critic: and, partly without his

[1] 1795-96 ii. 96.

[2] Letter 309, May 5, 1797; ed. cit.

own fault (for, as is well known, his life was short and not altogether favoured by fortune), partly by it, he did not give himself, or was not given, sufficient opportunity to warm his hands before that immortal fire of literature which each generation keeps burning, to soften what is harsh, feed what is starved, anoint and cheer and clean what is stiffened and saddened and soiled in the nature of man. The best of life might yet have been for him in criticism, as in other things: the *Versöhnung*, the time of the "calmed and calming *mens adepta*," might have come. But it did not so please the Gods; and the most illogical form of playing Providence perhaps, though not the most mischievous and impertinent, is to refuse to accept the fact of what the Gods did *not* choose to do.

Others: Bürger.

Others of the greatest men of this Augustan period of German literature were more or less given to criticism, while not deriving their chief titles from it. Burger himself was not at all contemptible in this respect. His answer to Schiller[1] is not undignified, and a little more of that wisdom of the serpent, which Molly's adorer never possessed, would have made it very damaging. As we have said, it was Schiller's ridicule of his theory of popularity that was ridiculous, not the theory in itself: and several things worth attention will be found in the two *Prefaces* to his *Poems*, in his "Thoughts on translating Homer," and in his Prose Fragments. In these last, indeed, there are some critical utterances of real weight on the extreme sensuous and individualist side of theoretical Poetic. Burger says boldly that "among people to whom asafœtida gives a more charming scent than roses the poet ought to celebrate asafœtida"; and I am bound to say I think he is right.[2]

There is a note to the Preface of the second edition of Jean

[1] All the pieces here mentioned will be found in the Cotta ed. of Bürger's *Ausgewählte Werke*. The epigram on Goethe's doubling the part of artist and minister (ii. 78, ed cit.) has much more satiric quality than most of the *Xenien* themselves possess.

[2] Ed cit., ii 208. But Bürger ought to have faced the question, "If the asafœtidarian poet has travelled, and been convinced of roses, what then?" See, however, some notable things here on Style, &c.

Paul's[1] *Vorschule der Æsthetik* which expresses my own opinions on its subject so completely that I must give it in full. "A collection of Wieland's reviews in the *Teutsche Merkur*, or, in short, any honest selection of the best æsthetic reviews from newspapers and periodicals, would be a better bargain for the artist than any newest *Æsthetic*. In every good review there is, hidden or revealed, a good 'Æsthetic,' and, more than that, an applied one, and a free, and the shortest of all, and (by dint of the examples) the best."

Richter.

No one, of course, who has the slightest knowledge of Richter will suppose that the whole book is written in such a straightforward and common-sense style as this. But it is very far indeed from being one of his thorniest or most acrobatical: and Carlyle[2] need scarcely have feared that it might "astonish many an honest brother of our craft were he to read it, and altogether perplex and dash his maturest counsels if he chanced to understand it" Nobody who can understand the *Biographia Litteraria* could have the faintest difficulty with the *Vorschule*.

Such Richterisms as do appear are chiefly in the appendix lectures, the "*Miserikordia*-Lecture for Stylists," the "*Jubilate*-Lecture for Poetical Persons," and the "*Kantate*-Lecture on Poetical Poetry," which, nevertheless, do contain excellent things. In the main body of the book there are only occasional flings (such as, "according to Kant, the formation of the heavenly bodies is easier to deduce than the formation of a caterpillar"), while the famous and very just description of a certain thing as "like a lighthouse, high, shining, empty," is mere justice lighted up itself by wit. The fact is, that the book is one of the best of its kind, and deserves to be reserved from that exclusion of titular Æsthetics which prevails in this part of our History, not more by the large intermixture of actual criticism in it than by the sanity, com-

The Vorschule der Æsthetik.

[1] See his *Works*, or separately in two volumes of Cotta's *Bibliothek*. The note cited is at i. 43. Observe that Richter was by no means a partisan Wielandist.

[2] In the Essay which opens the *Miscellanies*.

bined with inspiration, of the rest. From its separation at the beginning of the "Nihilists" of Poetry (those who generalise everything) and the Materialists (who abide wholly in the sensuous) to the fragments on Style and Language at the end, it is a really excellent book, and if it has not been translated into English it ought to have been, and to be.

The so-called "Romantic School."

The German "Romantic School"[1] has been the occasion of divers solid books[2] (and famous booklets) all to itself, and I do not consider it necessary to say much about it generally here. In a certain justifiable sense it may be said to have begun with Klopstock and only died, if it died even then, with Heine, who, on a calculus to me, I own, incomprehensible in any other sense than this, is thought by some to have killed it. But its usual connotation in literary histories, a connotation responsible, I think, for this and other errors, is that of a period extending from the latest years of the eighteenth century over about the first quarter (or the first thirty or forty years) of the nineteenth, and dominated by a remarkable quartette of friends—the two younger Schlegels, "Novalis," and Tieck. The work of all the four is saturated with literary criticism of the polemic and propagandist kind, but it is rendered more troublesome to handle than it need be by the pestilent habit (which the Germans took from Rousseau, and from Goethe downwards indulged after the most intemperate fashion) of throwing polemic and propagandist thought into the forms of prose romance.

Of these four the *greatest* critic is, in my humble judgment, Novalis—though he wrote the least criticism. Indeed, there

[1] A not unamiable reviewer has suggested that if I would draw up a neat tabular contrast of "Classic" and "Romantic," and put it—mounted on linen, I presume, but he did not say so—in a pocket of this volume, it would be useful, especially for examinations. I am afraid I do not regard examinations in a sufficiently orthodox spirit to make any effort to supercram their crammableness, and I hope I have more wit than to attempt to define anything. Something, however, will be found in the Interchapters of this volume which may stimulate if it does not satisfy. The rest the *Lector Benevolus* may consider as destined to form part *du Quart Livre*, if I may speak Pantagruelically.

[2] The chief—a kind of classic—is R. Haym's *Die Romantische Schule* (Berlin, 1870). Dr Brandes's later work on the subject, as on much else that we touch, should not need recommendation.

is a sense in which one might, without absurdity, call Novalis the greatest critic of Germany. He is, in fact, the Shelley of criticism; and it may be left to the Devil's Advocates to suggest that, like Shelley, he had time to indicate, at least, all that was of truth in him, and had no time to turn it into, or muddle it with, error. He, very much more than Jean Paul, is *der Einzige:* though his uniqueness is such that, while it does not adjust itself to all times or temperaments, it will, when once apprehended, always re-present itself at some time or other with some slight assistance of fortune.

Novalis.

It would hardly have assisted his critical position if he had carried out the intention, which we are told[1] he entertained (under the influence of the above-noted delusion, as to the suitableness of the Romance for such purposes), of writing seven documents of the kind, on Poetry, Physics, the Civic Life, Commerce, History, Politics, and Love! *Wilhelm Meister,* which (see below) he judged so well, would have had much to answer for if this had been done. As it is, the existing but unfinished *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* represents the first of these, and the not much more than begun *Lehrlinge zu Sais* is believed to represent the second: but the rest remained bodiless and in the gloom. It was much better so: for neither the partly completed nor the hardly begun book approaches in value the *Fragmente* which follow. In fact, even if the scheme were really practicable (which, despite certain imposing instances, may be very much doubted), it is pretty clear that Friedrich von Hardenberg was not the man for it.

It can hardly, on the other hand, rejoice any reader of *Heinrich von Ofterdingen,* whether he be philosopher, critic, or simple reader for reading's sake, when the Quest of the Blue Flower, and all the other agreeable Fouqué-like "swarmeries," are interrupted by a discourse of three pages from the poet Klingsohr on the *Überschwenglichkeit* of certain subjects for poetry. Even if you are a poet; and a

The Heinrich.

[1] *Novalis Schriften* (3 vols., 1 and 2, 5th ed., Berlin 1837, 3, 1st ed., ibid., 1846), i. 239. Appendix-note to *Heinrich von Ofterdingen.*

Middle-High-German, and the father of Matilda, you must not talk like that in a novel. And your poetry, and your Middle-High-Germanship, and your fatherhood of Matilda are very distinctly *überschwenglich* for you in your character as a critic. From *Heinrich*, therefore, we shall chiefly get (though there are tempting *aperçus* in it here and there) a somewhat vague notion of the *clair-de-lune* Poetic of the central Romantic school. The *Disciples at Sais* hardly concern us. But the *Fragments* that remain give much less unsubstantial food.

The earlier Fragments.

Here is that witty and appallingly accurate judgment of Klopstock, which applies to a whole class of poets as well, that "His works appear to be, for the most part, free translations and workings up of an unknown Poet by a very talented but unpoetical philologist." Here, too, is that remarkable judgment of Goethe's work in general, and of *Wilhelm Meister* in particular, of which Carlyle bravely gave the gist,[1] though it certainly did not coincide with his own opinion, and which remains almost a pattern of independent and solid judgment, unspoilt by any petulance or jealousy of youth, from a young man of letters on the living leader of his country's literature. Here also are some almost equally remarkable things on Shakespeare, not quite showing the *adequacy*[2] of those on Goethe, but very acute and especially valuable because they enter a protest against the exaggeration —a reaction, of course, from the opposite exaggeration of Voltaire & Co.—of Shakespeare's deliberate artistry. And these individual judgments occur side by side, in the æsthetic and literary division of these *Fragments*, with more general dicta of astonishing profundity and beauty.

The most pregnant of all the sayings, as it seems to me, though the æstheticians may not like it, is this,[3] "Æsthetic is absolutely independent of Poetry"; and I should pair with it the other,[4] "May not poetry be nothing but *inner* painting and

[1] Translating it, with other things, in his Essay on Novalis.

[2] *Cosas de Inglaterra* generally appear to have been (as he confesses, Shakespeare partly was) "dark" to Novalis. His is the famous statement that "every Englishman is an island." Now islands form the most beautiful and delightful part of the earth's surface: but you must go to them to know them.

[3] P. 179. [4] P. 180.

music, freely modified by the nature of [the individual's ?] feeling (Gemüth)?" The further Shakespearian remarks[1] on the blending of contradictories in our poet, with the remarkable approximation of his style to Boccaccio's and Cervantes' prose, as "grundlich, elegant, nett, *pedantisch* und vollstandig," may puzzle some people, but they do not puzzle me. What a critical genius must a German have had who, about 1800 and before he himself was thirty, combined[2] with the above-cited judgments of Klopstock and Goethe, recognition of the facts that Wieland and Richter sin from formlessness, and from having "not æsthetic or comic *spirit*, but only æsthetic or comic *moods*," *and* that Schiller "starts from too definite a point, and draws in too sharp and hard an outline." "Man ist allein mit allem was man liebt"[3] may be said, by any one who likes, to be mere "dropping into poetry" in feeling as in form. Again: it is not so to me. And the postil[4] on a highly aggressive text, "Die Welt muss *romanticisirt* werden," is not so aggressive as it looks.

I am, however, inclined to think that there is still further improvement in the fragments and thoughts of the *third* volume. This was not published till nearly twenty years after Carlyle wrote the Essay by which, in all probability, most Englishmen know Novalis. But I should venture to recommend, to any one who wishes to understand him, the reading of it both first and last. The biographical article, written many years before by his old friend and chief, Just, gives, I think, a fuller and truer notion of the man than Tieck's *Vorrede* in the first collection. The Diaries, Letters, and oddments of various kinds help to fill out this portrait, and the *Fragmente* themselves, from p. 160 onward, contain most admirable things. This third volume, in fact, forms a much earlier pendant to Amiel's *Journal*, with, as some people may be excused for thinking, much less *Katzenjammer*, a much manlier tone, and far more positive genius.

The later.

How much more critical and more informing is the confession[5] that "Shakespeare is darker to him than Greece"—that he is more at home with Aristophanes' jokes than with

[1] P. 185. [2] Pp. 187, 188. [3] P. 190. [4] P. 195. [5] iii. 164.

Shakespeare's—not merely than the old abuse, but than certain kinds of laudation! What a combination (on a par with the sentence on Klopstock, elsewhere cited) of *giustizia, potestate, sapienzia, e amore* (not a bad definition, by the way, if I may dare to borrow it, of the qualifications of the critic) is there in the saying[1] that Goethe is "der wahre *Statthalter* des Poetischen Geistes auf Erden"! The words—idle paradox as they may seem to some—"Moments may occur when A B C books and Compendia seem to us poetical,"[2] are a better text for a whole æsthetic—or, at least, for a whole theory of real criticism—than *oratio sensitiva perfecta* or any of its clan. So is this.[3] "By industrious and intelligent study of the classics of the Ancients, there arises for us a classical literature which the Ancients themselves had not." How just the observation[4] that "Lessing saw too clearly: and so missed the feeling of the *undefined* Whole"!

His critical magic.

These are but specimens. But I shall venture to say of them that for awaking the critical power, and qualifying the critical taste where it exists—as examples of that critical unity of subject and object which has been so often spoken of—they are specimens of some significance. There is only one other person who can, I think, be yoked with Friedrich von Hardenberg. If you want critical system, range of actual critical examination, and the like, you must go elsewhere. But for critical *magic*—for the critical "Open sesame!"—go to the two contemporaries, Novalis and Joubert.

Tieck.

Tieck, at one time very famous as a critic, and not undeservedly so, need occupy us less than his friends: for he has less intensity than Novalis, and less extension than the Schlegels. Survey of his critical work may, therefore, with advantage be confined to the actual collection of his *Kritische Schriften*,[5] which he issued in his last years: for the *Nachgelassene Schriften*,[6] the two thin volumes of which

[1] in 1804. [2] P. 168. [3] P. 174. [4] P. 176. *All* the context here is precious.

[5] 4 vols., Leipzig, 1848-52. I fear it was not widely bought, for the first edition seems never to have gone out of print.

[6] Leipzig, 1855.

appeared after his death, contain only an eristic or apologetic piece, "Über Parteilichkeit, Dummheit, und Bosheit"—an "*un*hübsches Lied" which we all feel inclined to sing now and then—and some fragments and sketches for his great projected Shakespeare-book. It need hardly be said that Tieck occupies a very important position in the succession of German Shakespeare critics, or that some of the most interesting of his criticisms belong to the subject. Three out of the four earliest articles of the *Kritische Schriften*, all dated before 1800, concern the Master—the first being a perhaps excusably ill-tempered one on the engravings of the too famous Shakespeare Gallery; the second, the really valuable discussion of his "Handling of the Marvellous"; and the third, "Letters" on him. Tieck, as is again matter of common knowledge, was an early student of the Pre-Shakespearian drama, dealing with it at intervals in 1811, 1823, and 1828. His criticism is generally appreciative: but his textual suggestions are not always fortunate.[1]

As an example of what may be called the Romantic *pot-pourri*, Tieck's work is very interesting and symptomatic. It ranges from Early German drama through Kleist to Goethe at home, and from Espinel to the history of the *Novella* abroad. It is all sensitive, appreciative, catholic; and there is a remarkably sound sense of Literary History (which it must be remembered was still in its infancy) in an article on "Criticism and German Bookishness" (*Buchwesen*). On the whole, however, that subordinate position, from the historical point of view, which I have assigned to him, in comparison with the other members of the quartette, seems to me not unjustifiable.

The Schlegels.

There are not many better known names in the History of Criticism than those of the (younger) Schlegels. They may even be said to be, in a vague and general manner, more associated with the idea of "Romantic" criticism than any other persons: and the question of the exact

[1] One of the unluckiest is on *The Second Maiden's Tragedy* (i. 320), where he observes on the lines—

"If you can construe but your doctor's bill,
Parse your wife's waiting-women"

"*Parse*? Was kann es bedeuten?" "*Pierce* ist dem aufmerksamen Auge leserlich genug." Here one can only open one's eyes at the question, and smother one's laughter at the reply.

relationship of both to Coleridge, or of Coleridge to them, is one of those which seem to have more power than anything else to conciliate the attention to critical persons, though, as has been confessed repeatedly, the attraction is rather repulsive to the present writer. Of their influence on Madame de Stael —who at least served as a most influential vulgariser of the new critical ideas in Europe—there is no question at all: the later critical Corinne is mainly, if not merely, as much Schlegel as could go clothed in French petticoats, and remember itself there. Those who adopt the common, but to my thinking quite erroneous, idea that Romanticism began to wane towards the middle of the nineteenth century, or even earlier, probably mean Schlegelian Romanticism, and are so, perhaps, not quite wrong. In any case, the name, if shadowy and in a sense antiquated, is still imposing, if only as having once imposed.[1]

Their general position and drift.

The work of the Schlegels generally—for not a little of it was done in common, and almost all expresses a common tendency—may be described as a continuation of that of Herder, with a still more definitely literary intent, and with what may be called a *complexion* to that intent which was most definite of all. Criticism in Germany had been a long time focussing itself, and it may perhaps even be questioned whether the period of actual focus which it had now reached lasted very long; but for a time it did last. The somewhat wool-gathering and tentative efforts of Bodmer and his school had started the movement: and those of Gottsched, with, in a less utterly perverse direction, those of the half-French school—of whom Wieland is the representative, "too good for such a breed"—had wholly failed to divert it; the keen-edged strength of Lessing had given it movement and penetration; the immense literary excursions of Herder and others had opened up the widest fields to it. Nay, the Æsthetics, from Baumgarten to

[1] The *Works* of Friedrich (except some *Juvenilia*) are included in a complete edition (Vienna, 1846) in fifteen vols., of which the first eight are entirely filled with critical matter. Of August Wilhelm, besides the *Sammtliche Werke* (12 vols., Leipzig, 1846), there are three vols. of French and two of Latin works, and also the *Lectures*, which were not published till 1884 (Heilbronn).

Schiller, with the imminent or accomplished transcendence of their transcendentalism in the minds, if not yet on the pens, of such men as Fichte and Hegel, had in a dangerous balloon-like fashion given new motive and vehicle; and the amiable if excessive Chauvinism of those about Klopstock had its good side likewise. If the extraordinary critical insight and sureness of hand which we have seen in the fragments of Novalis could have been allowed to preside over the concentration of all these, and had taken into partnership the practical wisdom of Goethe, and the exact scholarship of the great German school of philologists from Reiske downwards, there is no knowing how great the things done in consequence might have been. As it was, these two friends of Novalis were not quite equal to so mighty a task: but they did what they could, and it was a good deal.

On the whole, Carlyle, I think, showed a right *flair*, due not merely to the fact that he had probably made his own first acquaintance with them in it, by selecting the *Charakteristiken*[1] as more than titularly characteristic. No matter what article we take, or which brother, the eulogies of Lessing and of Meister, or the apology for Burger, the "Romeo and Juliet," an admirable thing in all but its title,[2] or the capital "Letters on Poetry" (in which A. W., unhampered by the connection with a heretic on the subject which afterwards hampered Coleridge, puts the indissolubility of the marriage between metre and poetry with the greatest force), the "Bluebeard and Puss in Boots," or the "Don Quixote," there is noticeable, in all, the peculiar modern blend of criticism—moral, æsthetic, verbal, and purely literary—compounded and applied with the utmost freshness, vigour, and skill. I do not know that they ever did better work,

The Charakteristiken.

[1] They were redistributed later in the *Works* of the brothers and in A. W.'s *Kritische Schriften* But it is good to read, and possess, the original *Charakteristiken und Kritiken* (2 vols., Konigsberg, 1801)

[2] I should think better of the criticism of Germany if it did not habitually speak of "Romeo und Julia." In the first place, it is surely common good manners not to alter an author's title—though you may abbreviate it. In the second, which is more important, the change argues an æsthetic and gynæcologic callousness *Julia* and *Juliet* are quite different persons.

though, no doubt, there is observable, here as elsewhere, the great fault of Romantic criticism generally—that the critic is, so to say, too much at the mercy of the last speaker. The actual goose, on pool or grass, is always not only a swan, but *the* swan. Shakespeare and Calderon, Indian Literature and Chamfort, rule the roast so absolutely and exclusively for the time that one has twinges and qualms of doubt as to the legitimacy of the kinghood of any one of them.

A W.: the Kritische Schriften *of* 1828.

But henceforward we may separate the brothers for a moment and take the elder first. His *Kritische Schriften*, mentioned in the note above, have the advantage, which it is nearly impossible to exaggerate, of containing not merely reviews and critical writings of different periods, but also later annotations on the earlier ones[1] There can be no better test of a man's critical quality than this: and Schlegel comes out of it very well, though the result no doubt does not place him quite as high as his friend Corinne and some others would do. The two best examples are the long and early review of Voss's Homer,[2] and that (later but still early) of Burger's *Poems*. There is perhaps a slightly excessive patriotism in the author's contention that German is better suited than any other language for the purpose of translating Homer; one is almost tempted to echo Garrick to Goldsmith: "Come, come! you are perhaps the worst . . . eh, eh?" in certain respects, though no doubt not in all. Yet even here there is force as well as ingenuity in the contention that the very fact of Germany possessing no large amount of great literature at the time prevented German phrase from being hackneyed in, and, as it were, *ascript* to, certain contexts and associations, as was the case with Italian, French, and even English, while the enormous and unquestioned xeno-

On Voss.

mania with which the Germans had for generations been refreshing and stocking their speech and their culture was another advantage. There is, moreover, too much

[1] Schlegel was twenty-nine at the date of the earliest, and sixty-one when the book was published. The climacteric of accomplished youth and that of not yet absolutely declining age could not be much better hit off.

[2] i. 74-164.

distinct animus against Pope as a coryphæus of the English Neo-classics; but this itself marks Schlegel's attitude, which, let it be remembered, was fresh and novel. Nor is it surprising that, as the author tells us with pride, both Goethe and Schiller, personages not always well disposed to him, warmly approved the metrical part of the essay. It is now pretty generally admitted, both that Schlegel was a very sound critic on this all-important subject, and that the importance of it was almost greater in Germany than elsewhere owing to the extreme laxity and cacophony, descending at times nearly to the level of the horse-fiddle, in which men not merely like Klopstock but like Burger had indulged. And the whole is one of the first examples I know of a full modern review of the best kind, neither "puff" nor "slate" (though there is a good deal of severe criticism in it), neither mere *compte-rendu* nor mere divagation from the subject into some general discussion which happens to interest the reviewer.

On Bürger.

The Burger article[1] has the additional interest of being an answer, and a crushing one, to a precedent criticism. I have said[2] something earlier of Schiller's unlucky production, and need not return to it: but it may fairly be observed that this is as good an instance of obedience to literary morality as that was of offence against it. Burger had been a friend of Schlegel's, and he was one of the poetical protagonists of the cause for which Schlegel himself was fighting. Yet there is no unfair praise here: and, what is more, there is no abstinence from just censure. Indeed Schlegel may be thought to be even a little too hard on the unlucky *Lenardo und Blandine*, though this piece has nearly all the faults of "Monk" Lewis and other imitators.

If, however, these and other pieces of themselves place Schlegel in a high position as a critic, the volumes do not fail to show his shortcomings. The system of self-annotation, though possessing some advantages, is dangerous, as giving opportunity for those egotistical displays of which Schlegel

[1] It opens the second vol., and goes to p. 81.

[2] *V. sup.*, p. 81. That which follows on Voss, Matthisson, and Schmidt is rather over full of citation.

has been commonly accused: but this does not matter so very much. The batch of *Urtheile, Gedanken,* &c., which closes the first volume, and which originally appeared in the *Athenæum* (the periodical which the two brothers had founded in 1798, the very year of the *Lyrical Ballads*[1]), do not raise our opinion of Schlegel's talent, and they certainly do not, as do the corresponding *Fragments* of Novalis, give us any idea of critical genius. The one exception[2] is not at all like the others, and *is* very like Novalis himself. But even this is rather an amusing and well-aimed "fling" than a real critical plummet suddenly let down to the bottom of the well of critical Truth. The rest are quite ordinary and commonplace things, by no means unrespectable but nothing more. Now, no one is bound to isolate his critical judgments and set them up in specimen-cases for examination after this fashion. But if he does so, they should be something more than commonplace, and ordinary, and respectable.[3]

The Urtheile, &c.

There is no doubt that Schlegel's best-known work is, as sometimes, though not always, happens, his best, and by a very long way. The *Lectures on Dramatic Art and Literature*, which he delivered at Vienna in 1808, printed next year, and issued finally in book form three years later, undoubtedly deserve a place, not merely in any library of critical literature, but on any shelf devoted to criticism which will hold, say, a score of

The Vorlesungen über Dramatische Kunst und Literatur.

[1] I have already waived the controversy between Coleridge and the Schlegels. The fact is that the resemblance is mainly one of *attitude*—one of those results of "skyey influences" which constantly manifest themselves in different persons of genius and talent more or less simultaneously. And it may be added that the *general* presence of this attitude in Coleridge before his German visit, before either Schlegel had attained any great notoriety, or had written anything likely to penetrate to England, or even anything very characteristic, is attested not merely by the concrete document, in not so very alien material, of *The Ancient Mariner*, but by testimonies as to his conversation, from half a dozen different people.

[2] It is No. 19, which describes Æsthetics as "the salt which dutiful disciples are going to put on the tail of the Ideal (enjoined upon them as so necessary to poetry), *as soon as they get near enough.*"

[3] Nor had Schlegel attained the art of grasping and exhibiting a writer, not merely as Sainte-Beuve was to do, but even as Johnson had done. The "Chamfort" in this book (i. 388-365) shows this.

volumes. They have indeed faults, and grave ones. The attitude towards French Drama, and especially towards Corneille and Molière, does not sin merely by an excess of party spirit. There would be some excuse for that, especially in face of the absolutely ridiculous over-valuation of themselves by the French, who had held the critical ear of Europe for a hundred and fifty years. Moreover, as has been, I think, hinted more than once here, there are worse things than thorough-going advocacy, prosecuting as well as defending, in criticism, provided only that it observes literary manners and literary morals, that it is well informed, and that it is intelligent. Schlegel is not exactly guilty under the first count, but he is under the two last. He ought to have seen that Corneille is really a Romantic Samson in the mill of the classical Gaza. And as to Molière the case is even worse. Further, to confine ourselves to really large and important matters, the complete omission of the mediæval drama in the earlier part of the book, where we stride straight from Seneca to the Renaissance, and the very inadequate treatment of it later, form a really serious drawback. I have myself little doubt that the almost incomprehensible blunder of those who deny the influence of this mediæval drama on our Elizabethans, is in some cases due to the blunderers having taken their notions on the subject from Schlegel. And it would be extremely easy to pick out a small number of great errors, and a great number of small ones, to supplement these two.

Their initial and other merit.

Yet they are but little to be considered—they are certainly not to be considered as at all fatal—in face of the merits of the book. To me the greatest of all these is contained in its very first page, where the whole question of the kinds, or parts, or phases of criticism, and of their relation to each other, is treated with a completeness and sureness which I do not know where to find before, and which I wish I had found oftener since. On the one hand, says Schlegel, there is the general *History* of Art—indispensable, but not always easy to understand. On the other, there is the *Theory* of Art in general, and the arts in particular—extremely important to the philosopher, neces-

sary to some extent for the artist himself, but inadequate by itself. Between these two, connecting them, completing them, making them fruitful, is actual criticism—the comparison and judging of existing productions. There is really little or nothing to add to this: and if no other line of the book had ever been written, it would give Schlegel an abiding and important place in our history. But the book itself, though necessarily in other parts somewhat antiquated, though of the kind which has to be done afresh for itself, if not by every generation yet by every century or so, remains excellent and masterly—one of the best individual summaries of the critical struggle for independence of the eighteenth century, and by no means merely dead or exhausted after the end of the nineteenth.

The Schlegelian position.

We should draw from this book the idea that though Goethe's contemptuous dismissal of August von Schlegel (almost in his presence) as *kein Mann*[1] is not borne out by it in the critical respect,—though the accompanying compensation-prize of "learning and service" to literature certainly *is*—there remains to be added, if in the favourable sense an acknowledgment of the completeness, and value of his playing of his part, and of the part itself, yet also a further limitation. We have seen and acknowledged the truth throughout, though we have protested against the common exaggeration of it, that "old critics are like old moons." Perhaps the Schlegels are the most eminent examples of this. They did yeoman's service in their own time and to their own country—perhaps even at that time they did service to other countries, too, in preaching and spreading the Romantic gospel. But they were diffusers and popularisers, not origins: and they did not give to their diffusion and popularisation quite that touch of pure literary genius which will save anything and anybody. They thus rank rather with Addison among ourselves than with Dryden or Johnson, though in thoroughness and width of critical knowledge and

[1] *Gespr. mit Eck*, iii 100. Effeminacy, as well as coxcombry, was frequently charged against him, and the unpopularity of both brothers as persons was very great. But this Camarina, like all such, is better unstirred.

practice they are ahead of all three. If I were writing this History of Criticism in German, and for Germans, I should give them much more space than I give them here, of course. But even if I were a German, "writing on this German matter in the German tongue for German men," I should never put them on a level with Coleridge, any more than I should with Aristotle or Longinus in one class of critics, with Novalis or with Joubert in another.

The long unpublished Berlin *Lectures on Art and Belles Lettres*, in the three first years of the nineteenth century, supply a document of A. W. Schlegel's criticism which is of the very greatest value. It is true that they are "half-done work"—in some cases bare notes for lectures, in others detached pieces of them, in only a very few (which were separately published) finished even as parts. But it would be very unwise of a writer to put his readers, and very unbenevolent of readers to put their author, in either of the two classes to whom "half-done work" is taboo. In fact, the book is as much finished as not a few of the contemporary documents for Coleridge and its great bulk and very extensive range promise well enough. Nor is the performance to be evil spoken of. Ambitious as is his scope, Schlegel nowhere shows that shyness of detail which we shall have to notice in his brother: and his width of knowledge, which would be unusual even at the present day, is quite astounding when we remember that it was shown by a man of not much over thirty a hundred years ago. The first volume, or course, deals with Æsthetics generally, though from a peculiar point of view: and only a few things in it need be noted, the most remarkable of which is Schlegel's scorn for Longinus on the one hand,[1] and on the other his very ample acknowledgment of the dangers of Æsthetics themselves.[2] The second deals with Ancient Literature (not without

The Vorlesungen uber Schone Literatur und Kunst.

[1] i. 47, ed cit. He is "the last in value as in time," of ancient critics, "the inventor of sentimental æsthetic," "empty of ideas." "All which propositions I for the present content myself," as Carlyle observes in another matter. "with modestly, but peremptorily and irrevocably, denying"

[2] P 49. He bewails their "practical sterility," their "muddle of Art and Nature" (*das man Kunst und Natur so durcheinander warf*), &c.

ample reference to modern classics), and the third, which is in the least complete state, with Modern Literature itself.

The Longinus passage just referred to is partly a corrupt following out of the critic's usual and very healthy distrust of such generalities as "*The* Sublime," "*The* Tender," and the like; but it has a worse side to it. As we have already seen, Schlegel is guilty of excess of party spirit: and I have little doubt that, if Boileau and others of the objects of eighteenth-century-worship had not expressed admiration for the Περὶ Ὕψους, he would have judged it more wisely. In fact, his judgments, which, either in the straight way of his courses or as *obiter dicta*, are extremely numerous, are, though always interesting, a curious mishmash of hit and miss, and the misses may be too generally accounted for as the effects of that "trying to be different" which so often besets young men of talent. The severity with which he treats Burke[1] has some justification. But his handling of, for instance, Opitz[2] is quite out of the right tone, and has all the faults that beset the "company of warm young men." Some of his English judgments—for instance, those on Milton's verse and on Thomson[3]—suggest, besides this, an uncomfortable suspicion that his actual knowledge of our language was not very perfect. In Greek he fails to respond quite satisfactorily to the test of Æschylus. And in regard to a person very different from Milton and from Æschylus, Ariosto, it is remarkable that, where he praises him, he is doing it to disparage Wieland, and that in the preserved heads of an intended fuller treatment he is most unsatisfactory. No doubt much of this mere will-worship and "will-blasphemy" (to invent a counter-word) would have disappeared in a final redaction for press, but unfortunately it is there.

Fortunately there are also many better things, and on the whole the book bears out, with evidence of a class peculiarly cogent, the praise which has been given to Schlegel of being

[1] He praises the *mot*, "According to Burke, the Beautiful is a tolerably pretty strumpet, and the Sublime is a grenadier with a big moustache." Who said this?

[2] In several places, especially iii. 62, 63. There is a useful index to these lectures, but their condition requires a full table of contents.

[3] ii. 210, 313.

freer than any German critic from a temptation to "speak off book," to shirk and jilt the Book itself, for expatiatory flirtations with so-called Ideas. He is in the main faithful to Literature, and there is no higher praise.

Illustrated still more by Friedrich.

Friedrich, though a very important person for us in general, has a good deal less for us here, and has to a certain extent been already touched and dealt with in the remarks on his brother. He seems very early to have launched out into the expanse—I shall not here by any means say the *inane*—of general literary outline and survey; and when he arranged his collected works not so very long before his death,[1] he showed the way in which he would himself have wished to have them regarded by putting the *Geschichte der alten und neuen Literatur*[2] first, though it was nothing like the first written; and by arranging after it, in the position of fillings-up or developments, the studies on Greek[3] and on Romantic[4] poetry, the book on Indian Literature,[5] and the smaller critical pieces.[6] Of these smaller pieces he reproduced but few, and the actual reviews or definite criticisms which they contain are of slight importance.

In fact, "judging of books, and even "judging of authors," was not Friedrich's forte at all. The *Ancient and Modern Literature* is from some points of view a book more curious than entirely edifying. When we find Greek literature dashed off in some sixty pages, which include a great deal of preliminary and general matter; Roman in another sixty, which have likewise to provide for Hebrew and Persian; five-and-thirty doing duty for the rise of the Novel, all English *belles lettres* from Spenser to Milton, *and* the Spanish and French dramas, it is surely not carping to say "this is either too little or too much."

Nor, when we turn to what we have called the "fillings," do we find much more satisfaction in some directions. Here Greek has something like three volumes and seven or eight hundred pages to itself—and not a volume or a page too much

[1] The first and less complete issue, in 10 vols., was in 1821-25.
[2] Ed cit., vols. i. and ii.
[3] Vols iii., iv., v.
[4] Vol. vi.
[5] Vol. viii.
[6] Ibid.

—as no one can add more heartily and whole-souledly than the present writer. But even in this ample room or verge we find that Schlegel blenches at the book—still more at the passage and the phrase. What he likes to talk about is matter such as the Pelasgians; as epic (specially Homeric) and lyric poetry in general; as this and that "school"; as "The Artistic Worth of the Old Comedy" and "The Presentation of Female Character in Greek"; as "The Connection and Contrast of the Interesting and the Beautiful." In presence of the actual literary integer he seems like a shy person at a *tête-à-tête*, though he is perfectly at home when he is addressing himself, *ex cathedrâ*, on generals to a large audience. People of his kind are, in their place and at their time, most useful: the Schlegels were really born to burst up the old narrowness, to encourage catholic (Friedrich does not seem to me to have been quite fairly charged with turning this into *Roman* Catholic) views: to cheer the student on to the discovery and appropriation of the enormous and far-flung wealth which had been so long neglected. Their doctrines were so widely diffused in the middle of the nineteenth century that at the end thereof they came to be regarded as truisms and almost "falsisms." But their place is still honourable, though it is a place rather in the museum of Criticism than in her living-room of study.

We may conclude this chapter — since an exhaustive examination of the German work of this period is here impossible, and, if it were possible, would be of very little service— by noticing one or two authors and books of different kinds, specimen-fashion.

Uhland.

The best known in England of German lyric poets next to Bürger and Goethe, and (in time) before Heine, Uhland, was a man forty years younger than the author of *Lenore*, and did not die till Heine himself was dead. But his most important work[1] in verse was done quite in this period,[2] and one of his most important works in connection

[1] *Gesammelte Werke*, 6 vols., in the Cotta Library.

[2] Most of his best things were published by 1815, and many of these had been written years before.

with, if not strictly within, our subject, the excellent Essay on "Walther von der Vogelweide," appeared as early as 1822. Uhland's critical dealings with northern poetic literature are of no inconsiderable bulk,[1] and they are very important for the history of literary taste. Not merely in time, but in character, they stand between the earlier, most creditable and stimulating, but often insufficiently informed, and still more often too discursive and popular handlings, of Herder and even the Schlegels, and the modern method of pure philology, from which all literary appreciation is too often deliberately left out. Uhland combines real scholarship, for his time and means, with poetical and critical appreciation in almost the exactly desirable blend. Would there were more such!

Schubarth.

The work of Schubarth, *Zur Beurtheilung Goethe's*,[2] may be worth a short notice as an early and by no means contemptible example of a kind of book which has been very largely written during the nineteenth century, but which we can only here take by sample. A contemporary cannot often have been handled earlier on so great a scale: for there are some nine hundred pages in the second edition, and the author makes the widest possible casts round his subject. He is not in the least satisfied with the consideration of particular works (which he gives mainly in two batches, on the earlier and the later respectively), or on his author's general literary characteristics. He has long excursus on the personages, especially Mephistopheles. He can never refuse himself what he modestly calls a "glance" (*Hinblick*), but what is generally a very durable and substantial stare, at things that occur in passing,—some criticisms of A. W. Schlegel's, the literary contrasts of Christianity and Heathenism, Lessing and the Education of the World, the great succession of German philosophers from Kant to Schelling, the Historical Method, Shakespeare, Poetry and Criticism in our day, the Nibelungen Lied, the Devil in the Middle Ages, the Moral and the Immoral in Art and Poetry. In short, the book is a sort of *Quodlibeta*

[1] They fill 4 out of the 6 vols., as given in ed. cit.

[2] I have used the *second* edition (Breslau, 1820). The first appeared in 1818, as a mere booklet in comparison.

—a treatise upon "Goethe and Things in General." We have seen many like it since: let them appear here by it their foreman.

Solger.

Solger's *Vorlesungen*[1] are an early and good example of the defect of Æsthetic from the standpoint of this book. He often says true things; but they are generally not the whole or final truth, and they are almost always too abstract. Thus, for instance: "Oft verwechselt man das Interessante mit dem Schönen."[2] The truth of this is constantly exemplified both in life and in criticism; but, laid down too isolatedly, it blinks the question whether, in certain degree, matter, and circumstance, the Interesting *is* not the Beautiful: and it has an obvious and possibly dangerous connection with the very important critical question of the "Unity of Interest." So, too, distinctions of Heavenly and Earthly Beauty are full of snares: and the danger of generalisation perhaps reaches its highest in the dictum, "In Epic and Lyric, matter is the important thing: in the Drama, form and the pure activity of fancy." One might almost make out "twenty-nine distinct damnations" involved in this, with hardly more than a thirtieth and single way of salvation and escape!

Periodicals, Historias, &c.

To complete the notice of this remarkable division, which has, by authorities respectable and more than respectable, been pronounced to be the greatest of all, and which is certainly most important, something should be said of the critical publications which, in Germany as elsewhere, but almost earlier there than anywhere, played so important a part, and of the immense industry in literary history which came to supply perhaps the greatest of critical needs. Of the Translations, which some would rank with these, I shall say nothing more than that they seem to me to have been a great misfortune for Germany—encouraging the tendency of the nation to keep aloof from the pure literary integer of the book-as-it-is; assimilating the literature of other nations insensibly but unduly to German ideals; and so making even the general judgment of authors untrustworthy and unsound.

[1] *Vorlesungen über Æsthetik*: Leipzig, 1829.

[2] P. 7.

The Periodicals of this time are gradually shaking off the disguises and mannerisms which the *Spectator* had imposed upon those of our last period. The most important of them, after Lessing's *Dramaturgie*, are the *Frankfurter Gelehrten-Anzeigen* of Merck, Herder, and Goethe (1772); the *Teutsche Merkur* of Wieland, next year; the Berlin *Monatschrift* (1783); the *Jena Allgemeine Literatur-zeitung* (1785); Schiller's *Horen* (1795), and *Musenalmanach*, next year; the Schlegels' *Athenæum* (1798) Of literary historians from Bouterwek to Menzel, Schlosser,[1] and others, the list is almost too long to attempt

[1] De Quincey's Essay on Schlosser (*Works*, vol. vii.) is disfigured by his usual rather boisterous fooling and rigmarole, but very sound in the main.

CHAPTER IV.

THE CHANGE IN THE OTHER NATIONS.

THE present chapter could hardly be omitted; but it must be almost necessarily rather an apology for what does not appear than a substantive presentation. Something has been said already[1] of the state of Italian and of Spanish criticism during the eighteenth century. Its lethargy was only quickened after (and even some time after) the beginning of the nineteenth, by the spread of those very waves of influence which have been described, and their origin and progress traced, partly in the last Book, and partly in the three preceding chapters of the present. Neither country contributed anything original to the critical change—to the establishment of Romanticism—though both had much to do with that establishment as furnishing those texts of past creation which were, as we have seen, almost the most powerful, and certainly the most beneficent, of all agencies in the revolution. None, perhaps, did so much by furnishing further scenery and apparatus to the new movement: though Byron, by adopting these, enhanced their influence in this way, yet it had been exercised long before he wrote — before he even existed — in England, from the time of the *Castle of Otranto*, in Germany, from one somewhat, but not so very much, later. But all this belongs to the far-off fringes of our subject, if even to them; and we have only too little room for its central and substantive portions.

The critical awakening of more backward and outlying

[1] Vol. ii. Bk VI. chap. iii I do not yet know Molledano (R. y P. R.), *Historia literaria de España*, 9 (10) vols. 4to, 1769-79.

nations and languages, such as Russian, Polish, and Hungarian, was in much the same case; that of the Scandinavian countries was a little more advanced. The closer relations in which Denmark at all times stood with Germany, and those which Sweden maintained, not merely with Germany but with France, must have kept them more to the front in these matters, while the double influence was of course still more constantly, though not quite so effectually, at work in Holland. Holberg and Tullin and Ewald, with Baggesen a little later in Denmark, rather accompanied than followed the reconstructive reformation of German literature; Kellgren, Leopold, and Thorn conducted the attack and defence in Sweden a little later still; and the literary decadence of Dutch was at last relieved, towards the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century, by Southey's friend, Bilderdijk. In regard to all the languages referred to in this paragraph, though not in regard to Italian and Spanish, I am in the disability formerly acknowledged, as to one of them — Dutch. But I cannot learn from any good authority that this disability is likely here to be fatal, or even injurious. In the history of the individual literatures their criticism is of course of great importance: but in the history of the general subject it can have very little.[1]

[1] See also *infra* in the last chapter of the next Book. I suppose the name most likely to be missed here is that of Ugo Foscolo. The author of the *Letters of Jacopo Ortis* must seem, to those who think Rousseau a critic, to be another, and the commentator on Petrarch and Dante certainly was one. But I think we can do without him.

INTERCHAPTER VIII.

(WITH AN EXCURSUS ON PERIODICAL CRITICISM.)

We here come to the point antipolar to that of the last volume, at which[1] we ventured to give a sketch of the Classic or Neo-classic creed. The challenge to array definitions of Classicism and Romanticism in a tabular form has already[2] been respectfully declined: but that this "declinature" comes neither from pusillanimity, nor from complacency in purblindness, may be best proved by undertaking the much more perilous adventure of an anti-creed to that formerly laid down. Even there we had to interpose the caution that absolute subscription, on the part of all the critics concerned, ought not to be thought of: but here the very essence and quiddity of the situation is that no such agreement is in any way possible. In fact, no single and tolerably homogeneous document could possibly here be drawn up, for there would be minority (and sometimes majority) counter-reports on every article. Even those who resist the extremer developments take large licenses upon the old classical position. You have your Jeffrey expressing admiration of a *Pharonnida* which would have seemed to Dennis a monstrous stumbling-block, and to Johnson mere foolishness: while among the extremists themselves, each man is a law unto himself. Still, it is perhaps possible to draw up some articles of the Modern or Romantic Criticism which was reached during this period, and we have already, in the last two books, described at some length the process by which they were reached. These articles will be best

[1] II. 216.

[2] *V. sup*, p. 386.

separated into two batches, the first representing the creed of centre and extremes at once, the second that of extremes (left or right) only: and it will be well to mark the difference from the former statement by giving the articles separately, and not arranging them in paragraphs.

The more catholic creed is very mainly of a negative and protesting character, and its articles might run somewhat thus:—

All periods of literature are to be studied, and all have lessons for the critic. "Gothic ignorance" is an ignorant absurdity.

One period of literature cannot prescribe to another. Each has its own laws; and if any general laws are to be put above these, they must be such as will embrace them.

Rules are not to be multiplied without necessity: and such as may be admitted must rather be extracted from the practice of good poets and prose-writers than imposed upon it.

"Unity" is not itself uniform, but will vary according to the kind, and sometimes within the kind, itself.

The Kind itself is not to be too rigidly constituted: and subvarieties in it may constantly arise.

Literature is to be judged "by the event": the presence of the fig will disprove the presence of the thistle

The object of literature is Delight; its soul is Imagination; its body is Style.

A man should like what he does like:[1] and his likings are facts in criticism for him.

To which the extremer men would add these, or some of them, or something like them.—

Nothing depends upon the subject; all upon the treatment of the subject.

It is not necessary that a good poet or prose writer

[1] See the Addenda-Corrigenda in this vol. for Dennis's counter-assertion.

should be a good man: though it is a pity that he should not be. And Literature is not subject to the laws of Morality, though it is to those of Manners.[1]

Good Sense is a good thing, but may be too much regarded: and Nonsense is not necessarily a bad one.

The appeals of the arts are interchangeable: Poetry can do as much with sound as Music, as much with colour as Painting, and perhaps more than either with both.

The first requisite of the critic is that he should be capable of receiving Impressions: the second that he should be able to express and impart them.

There cannot be Monstrous Beauty: the Beauty itself justifies and regularises.

Once more it has to be stipulated that these articles are not to be regarded as definitely proposed ends and aims, which the critical practice of the period set before itself, and by which it worked. They are, for the most part, piece-meal results and up-shots of a long and desultory campaign, often reached as it were incidentally, "windfalls of the Muses," kingdoms found while the finder is seeking his father's (or anybody's) asses. If anything general is to be detected before and beneath them, it is a sort of general feeling of irksomeness at the restraints of Neo-classicism—a revolt against its perpetual restrictions and taboos.

To recur once more to those egregious *juvenilia* of Addison's, which, though not to be too much pressed as stigmata on his own memory, are a useful caricature of Neo-classicism in regard to English, some English lover of literature feels that there is much more in Chaucer than vulgar jests, now not even fashionably vulgar, and in Spenser than tiresome preaching. He looks about to support his feeling with reasons, and he "finds salvation" in the Romantic sense, more or less fully, more or less systematically, more or less universally. The ways and manners of the finding are very much the same in all countries,

[1] Certain persons would, of course, omit even the provisos here: but of them I take no keep.

and have been dealt with in the first Book of this volume; the results of it, in critical form, have been set forth in that just finished, but may deserve some summary and *rationale* here.

In the remarkable group of English critics whom we have called "the companions" of Coleridge, and in Coleridge himself, the contemporary quality, and in some cases the direct suggestion, of that great critic appear unmistakably, while in at least most cases they are free from the chaotic or paralytic incompleteness which he hardly ever, save in the *Biographia*, shook off. They all show, as he does, though in varying degrees, the revolt or reaction from the hidebound failure of the baser kind of Neo-classic to *appreciate*—the effort really to taste, to enjoy, and so to deliver that judgment which without enjoyment is always inadequate. And it would be unjust to regard them as merely the sports and waifs of an irresistibly advancing tide. There *is* something of this in them,—the worst of the something being the uncritical scorn with which they sometimes regarded even the greatest of the departed or departing school—the astonishing injustice of Coleridge himself to Gibbon, and Johnson, and the Queen Anne men; of many of them to Pope; of Hazlitt even to Dryden. But they were not only carried, they swam,—swam strongly and steadily and skilfully for the land that was ahead. Their appreciation is not mere matter of fashion; it is genuine. They are honestly appetent of the milk and honey of the newly opened land of English literature for themselves, and generously eager to impart of it, and of the taste for it, to others.

But we must not—for these merits, or even for what some may think the still greater one of providing, for almost the first time in any literature, a great bulk of matter which is at once valuable criticism and delightful literature itself—make a refusal of our own critical duty as to their shortcomings, which were neither few nor inconsiderable, and which led directly to the sad and singular decadence of English criticism in the middle third of the century. The first and the greatest of these—let us fling it frankly and fairly to any partisan of the older critical dispensation who "expects his evening prey" as

our history draws towards its close—was, or at any rate was a result of, the very lawlessness and rulelessness by which they had effected their and our emancipation. True, many of the rules that they threw off were bad and irrational, most perhaps were inadequate, irrelevant, requiring to be applied with all sorts of provisos and easements. But they had at any rate kept criticism methodical, and tolerably certain in its utterances. There had been a Creed; there had been not the slightest difficulty in giving reasons, though they might be doubtful ones, for a faith which, if incomplete and not really catholic, was at any rate formally constituted. With the new men it was different. Coleridge indeed boasted mediate and even higher rules and principles behind his individual judgments. But with the rest it was rather a case of sheer private judgment, of "meeting by yourself in your own house."

Another drawback, dangerous always but intensified in danger by its connection with the former, is that, while most of them were much less intimately acquainted with the classics than the critics of former generations had been, this deficiency was not generally compensated by any of that extensive knowledge of *modern* literature which the ruleless or scantily ruled system of criticism imperatively requires. Nay, they were all, including even Coleridge himself and De Quincey (the two most learned, not only of these but of all English critics), very imperfectly acquainted with *French* literature—which, as a whole, is the best suited to qualify the study of our own, correct it, and preserve it from flaws and corruptions. Leigh Hunt knew little but Italian; and in Italian knew best the things that are of least real importance for the English student. As for Lamb, he was more than a fair Latin scholar; but he seems to have known very little Greek, and not to have had wide reading in the classics, either Greek or Latin, while he betrays hardly the slightest knowledge of, or interest in, any foreign modern literature whatever. Hazlitt's case is worse still, for he evidently knew very little indeed, either of the classics or of foreign modern literature, except a few philosophic writers, here of next to no use. In fact, one cannot help wondering how, knowing so little, he came to judge so well—

till the wonder nearly disappears, as we see how much better he would have judged if he had known more. Wilson (to look forward a little as we have done with De Quincey) had some classics: and Lockhart had not only classics, but German and Spanish. But one suspects the former to have known next to nothing of modern literature: and the latter did not use critically that which he knew. Even as regards English itself the knowledge of all these critics was very gappy and scrappy. They did not, with all their advantages of time, know anything like so much of early English literature (even putting Anglo-Saxon out of the question) as Gray had known nearly a hundred years earlier, and Mitford in their own early days.

Thus, while they had deliberately, and in the main wisely, discarded the rules which at least were supposed deductively to govern *all* literature, they had not furnished themselves with that comparative knowledge of *different* literatures, or at the very least of all the different periods of one literature, which assists literary induction, and to some extent supplies the place of the older Rules themselves. They were therefore driven to judge by the inner light alone; and as, fortunately, that inner light, in at least some of them, burnt with the clearest and brightest flame, they judged very well by it. But their system was a dangerous one when it came to be applied, as it inevitably had to be applied, in the majority of cases, when their own torches went out, by the aid of smoky farthing rush-lights in blurred horn lanterns.

Yet, allowing for these drawbacks of commission and of example in the most illiberally liberal manner, there will yet remain to their credit such a sum as hardly any other group[1] in any country—as none in ours certainly—can claim. Here at last, and here almost for the first time, appears that body of pure critical appreciation of the actual work of literature for which we have been waiting so long, which we have missed so sorely in ancient times, and which, in the earlier modern, has been given to us stinted and, what is worse, adulterated, by

[1] The Germans did it rather earlier but not so well: the French almost if not quite as well and more voluminously, but later.

arbitrary restrictions and preoccupations. In Coleridge, in Hazlitt, in Lamb, in Leigh Hunt even, to name no others, we have real "judging of authors," not—or at any rate not mainly—discussion of kinds, and attempts to lay down principles. They are judges, not jurists, "lawmen," not lawmongers and potterers with codes. Appreciation and enjoyment, with their, in this case necessary, consequences, the communication of enjoyment and appreciation—these are the chief and principal things with them, and these they never fail to provide.

The same merits and drawbacks, differently adjusted and conditioned, appear in the French division of the subject. Perhaps there is nothing, even in Sainte-Beuve, of the same consummate merit, from the point of view of appreciation, as the best things of Hazlitt and Lamb: and I do not think there are any critical generalities, either in Sainte-Beuve or in any other, that quite approach the best things of Coleridge. The length and the bitterness of the Classic-Romantic quarrel threw some French critics into a mood of partisanship too extreme to be quite judicial: but on the other hand it gave us that admirably trenchant profession and confession of the faith that "nothing depends on the subject" which we have dealt with from Victor Hugo, and other things from other men. And, moreover, the interest excited by this quarrel, coming to reinforce the general French spirit of system, order, and artistic adequacy, brought about that high general level in the new appreciative criticism which attracted the admiration of Mr Arnold and others, and which certainly for a time (*cir.* 1830-1860) was much above the level of English. Numerous as are the writers whom I have discussed in the chapter on this subject, I feel half ashamed of not having included more, and could easily do so. But it is almost enough to say that, in accordance with that gregarious or scholastic spirit which has always characterised Frenchmen, the merits which have been so fully displayed in Sainte-Beuve are visible more or less in almost all his fellows.

There is no doubt that these merits were to some extent (as Sainte-Beuve himself allowed with equal judgment and generosity) transmitted or inherited from the Empire critics,

especially Chateaubriand and, in a different way and lower sense, Villemain: while the whole secret of the method had been revealed, or concealed, in and by the "fuliginous flashes" of Diderot long before. But this sudden and enormous development of it is still rather wonderful. It cannot be put down merely to Sainte-Beuve, though Sainte-Beuve was its most eminent representative; for, as we have seen, he did not himself reach his perfection at once, or for a very long time, and critical results as good as, or better than, his own *at the time* had been produced by others earlier. It was a case of a plenteous and great vintage, with one growth improving beyond the rest. To this day it is impossible to read over again, well as one may have known it, any of the better critical work of France in this period without astonishment at its varied and yet even excellence. But, as has just been said, it is not always, even in its highest examples, of the *very* highest: and perhaps at no time is what we have so often called "grasp" a characteristic of it. It would be absurd to call it superficial: yet, if it has a tendency towards something not of the best, that tendency is towards superficiality.

Further, the French, though largely influenced by foreign nations and literatures at this period, hardly shine so much as some others do in criticism of those literatures. But, in reference to their own, they exemplify the new process of "judging by the result," and setting forth that result, with attractiveness rivalled by hardly any, and with facility and craftsmanship rivalled perhaps by none. From the elaborate process of Sainte-Beuve to the impressionism of Gautier, and from the strong meat and drink of Nisard to the froth of Janin, whatever is provided is provided so as to give the user and consumer the least fatigue and the most delectation The severer critics are not pedantic, and the lighter ones are seldom merely frivolous or horse-playful. Occasionally, as in Nisard's case again, there is a solidly constructed, if not quite a solidly based, system: occasionally, as with Planche, there are serious, if disputable, philosophical starting-points. In Sainte-Beuve himself there is perhaps the greatest and most orderly accumulation of positive knowledge, never of the "marine store" kind,

that any critic has brought together. But these dignified things never take leave of the Graces: and even the lightest armed of the army—even Janin and those about Janin—seldom write with the appalling absence of knowledge and of method to which we are only too well accustomed in the critics of some other countries.

The part played by Germany in this process was, of course, of the utmost importance, and it is by no means out of a pusillanimous desire to disarm the indignation or the contempt invited by some things already written that I repeat and emphasise this acknowledgment. Germans (taking their Swiss brethren with them) were among the very first to move the stagnant waters. They were among the most—they *were* the most—industrious engineers in continuing the process—in clearing out the water-courses and turning the new streams into them. It is impossible to exaggerate their merits in putting at the service of criticism the massive and acute intellect of Lessing, to substitute a new Preceptism for the old: the wide range and towering literary faculty of Goethe, to extend and popularise the new methods: the attractive and contagious alacrity of the Schlegels in overrunning the provinces and the empires of literature. But in the highest and purest work of criticism, as we here define it, even these their greatest are sometimes strangely wanting: and others are wanting less strangely but more disastrously. As a rule, the German is far *too* scientific (the epithet of praise usually selected for him and by him) in his criticism. He has curiosity, but not passionate or intimate enjoyment; intelligence, but not enthusiasm; industry, but little (and hardly at all subtle) intuition. He only gets out of the pupillary state—if he ever does so—to get into the pedagogic. And it is difficult to say which of these is the more unfavourable to true critical accomplishment.

We may, however, be justly asked, in this place or in that, to face that view of German criticism which Carlyle was the first to put in England by a famous (and indeed very admirable) "State of German Literature,"[1] and which, with some

[1] The second Essay of the *Miscellanies*, vol. i.

modifications, was maintained and enforced later by Mr Arnold, who did not like Carlyle. The eulogium is well known, and it is a magnificent one. The Germans are [1827] distinctly and considerably in advance of other nations in Criticism. They have "raised it to a higher power," in fact: though he does not, I think, use the phrase. They neither, in the old way, discuss diction, figures, logical value, &c, nor, as is usual with the best of our own critics at present, discover and debate the particular nature of the poet from his poetry: but, subordinating these two, attack the essence and peculiar life of the poetry itself. "How did Shakespeare organise his dramas?" they ask. "What unmixed reality is bodied forth in them?" &c. Then, too, how do they proceed? Not by gorgeous mystic phraseology[1] and vague declamation? No. by "rigorous scientific inquiry," of which much is said, the illustration and the enforcement at once being drawn from Schiller on "Æsthetic Education," and Fichte on the "Nature of the Scholar."[2]

This abstract is designedly cut short, not out of unfairness, but because the original is known to many and accessible easily to all. It is a high encomium: and even the contents of this book will show that it is, beyond controversy, in part at least a deserved one. From Lessing onwards there can be no question of the intent of the Germans to bring about a complete critical Reformation: nor can it be denied that, after a time, and to no small extent in consequence of their efforts, something like a complete critical Reformation was brought about. But whether there is not an indispensable nexus wanting somewhere—whether the general improvement of actual criticism in Germany and elsewhere, though not perhaps more in Germany than elsewhere, is a consequence of the endeavour to consider the essence of Poetry and frame

[1] A hit, of course, at Coleridge, as, I suppose, is that above about "the nature of *the poet*."

[2] This celebrated tractate, which cannot be too much honoured as a Counsel of Perfection, may be said to have started the belief, comfortable for those who entertain it, that all who follow not their notion of "Philosophy" and "the Idea" are "Completed Bunglers." "Perhaps so, my dear! perhaps so," as an excellent Bishop of the Roman branch of the Catholic Church is said to have once remarked to a little vulgar boy who told him he was "no gentleman."

theories of it—that is the question. It would be fatuous to say that I have shown, but I have at least endeavoured to show, some cause against the affirmative answer. In particular, I should like to re-invite the reader's attention to that *aporia* which has been stated earlier—whether the famous criticism of *Hamlet* in *Wilhelm Meister* (to which Carlyle, of course, appeals here) might not have been written without any knowledge of the original, of its language, and of its form—in short, on a German prose translation of Shakespeare? If anybody is bold enough to say "Yes: and so much the better," well and good. But in that case his idea of the essence of poetry and mine are so different that I must necessarily seem a Completed Bungler to him, and that he must necessarily seem to me (let us say) a Person to be Sincerely Commiserated.

In actual "judging of authors" I have endeavoured to collect some facts showing that the Germans did not attain to any remarkable proficiency[1] by the application of their new systems of Æsthetic—in regard to which, by the way, no two authorities agreed among them, and of which, as a whole, some great authorities among them used language not much more respectful than my own. And so, far from this "scientific" criticism having any effect in the *production* of great poetry or of great literature, it is a notorious fact that since Heine—who was a hopeless rebel to the whole system—Germany has produced no great poet, and very few great men of pure letters. While other countries, besides producing in their unscientific way critics at least not less great (I should of course myself say, much greater) than Germany's own, have maintained the production of creative literature for the best part of a century—for all but the whole of it.

[1] Carlyle, in a very fine passage, admits their acceptance of "all true singers of every age and clime" I fear the Devil's Advocate's devil, if you gave him a little time, could collect a curious *dossier* of contrary instances: but this matters little. They *are* entitled to credit for maintaining and spreading this catholic faith But even Dryden, according to his lights, had championed it a century earlier; Gray, if he could have shaken off the deadly sin of Accidia—the deadliest to the man of letters—would have been Herder + either Schlegel, and more also, long before any of them; and Coleridge is Coleridge, however much he may have annoyed Carlyle at Highgate.

And I have also endeavoured—if only by such hints and glances and instances as are allowable on the plan of this book—to show *why* the Germans seem to me to have failed, if not exactly where they seemed to Carlyle to have succeeded, yet in the same neighbourhood — how they have generally either flown too high or grubbed too low, and so have failed to gather the flowers and garner the fruit of the field of literature. Very likely these opinions are quite unjust, but at any rate they are not founded on ignorance; and he who holds them is perfectly ready to fight for them at any time with the due arms and in the proper lists.

If, more shortly and in slightly altered form, I may once more put my objection to German criticism, I can, as it happens, do so by simply inserting a "not" in a German boast on this very subject. Professor Schelling, of the University of Pennsylvania, in the *Alumni-Register*[1] of that Institution, quotes these remarkable words from Professor Lemcke of Marburg: "Let us for once lay aside our proverbial modesty and openly declare that it is not the affinity of race, nor the indications in his poetry of a German spirit, which have brought us so close to Shakespeare, but it is that God-given power, vouchsafed to us Germans before all other nations, by the grace of which we are enabled to recognise true genius, of whatever nation, better than other nations, ofttimes better than its own, and better to enjoy and appreciate its gifts." Far be it from me to anticipate the obvious comments of different kinds upon this utterance of Germanism *in cuerpo*, and with the encumbrances of modesty laid aside. I shall only observe that it is precisely this "God-given power" of recognition or appreciation which German criticism seems to me to lack. It has the best intentions; it takes the most enormous trouble; it accumulates the most extensive and sometimes not the least valuable material and plant for appreciation. But, except in the case of its very greatest exponents, it does not seem to me often to *appreciate*.

But—French, or German, or English, with whatever diversity of immediate aim, exact starting-point, felicity of method, and

[1] P. 233 of the vol. for the University—year 1902-3.

perfection of result—all the dominant and representative criticism of this time tends in the direction and obeys the impulse of some form or other of that general creed which we have endeavoured to sketch earlier in this Interchapter, and so contributes to the general progress (straight or circular, who shall say?) of which this Book is the history. And when, rather, as usual, by the influence of creative than of critical literature, and by that of Scott and Byron above all, the same purpose was inspired in yet other countries, the results were again the same. The dislike of Rule; the almost instinctive falling back upon mediæval literature as an alterative from classical and (recent) modern; the blending of the Arts; the cultivation of colour- and sound-variety in poetry; the variegation and rhythmical elaboration of prose,—in all these ways, by all these agencies, literary Criticism as well as literary practice was reconstructed. And the end is not even yet.

Some more general remarks on the sub-period must be postponed to the several parts of the Conclusion. But there is one phenomenon which, first appearing towards the end of the last volume, and much more noticeable in the last Book, now becomes what the Germans call *hervorragend*, persistently and almost aggressively prominent. And on this we must say something.

[1] To enter into all the questions connected with the Periodical here, would be obviously impossible. That it has multiplied criticism itself is a truism; that it has necessarily multiplied bad criticism is maintainable; the question is whether it has actually multiplied good. I think it has. It is very difficult to conceive of any other system under which a man like Sainte-Beuve—not of means, and not well adapted to any profession—could have given his life practically to the service of our Muse as he actually did. It is difficult to imagine any other which would have equally well suited a man like Mr Arnold, with abundant, and fairly harassing, avocations on the one hand,

[1] The rest of this Interchapter may be taken—like the two Appendices—as a sample of that fourth volume of "Critical Excursus" which I should have liked to give, had I thought that readers would endure it.

and with apparently no great inclination to write elaborate books on the other. Many officials, professional men, persons "avocated" (in the real sense) from criticism by this or that vocation, have been enabled by the system to give us things sometimes precious, and probably in most times not likely to have been given at all under the book-and-pamphlet dispensation. Above all, perhaps, the excuse of the surplusage which beset the regular treatise has disappeared, while the blind (or too well-seeing) editor, with his abhorred shears, is apt to lop excrescences off if they attempt to appear.[1] Although there certainly has been more bad criticism written in the nineteenth century than in any previous one,—probably more than in all previous centuries put together,—it is quite certain that no other period can show so much that is good And the change which has resulted in it was needed. The early *Bibliothecæ* of the late seventeenth century wanted pliancy, variety, combination of industrial power: the later *Reviews* were far too apt to be mere booksellers' instruments, while their wretched pay kept many of the best hands from them, and kept those who were driven to them in undue dependence. And further, the increasing supply of actual literature *required* more criticism than could easily be had under the old system of few periodicals, eked out by independent treatises and pamphlets.

These are not unimportant considerations, but they lie a little outside of—or only touch—the question of the altered quality and increased or decreased goodness of criticism as a whole and in itself. And when we come to discuss this, the question assumes rather a different aspect. The better pay, the increased repute, the greater independence, might be thought likely to attract, and did attract, a better class of writers to the work: but whether this better class was always better fitted for the particular task itself one may sometimes doubt. And there can be no doubt at all that the same attractions must necessarily tempt, and that the increased demand must almost force, a very much larger supply of inferior talent to the said task. Again, this increased demand, if not for critics, for somebody

[1] Add some other blessings, as that the periodical can contradict itself— which the book sometimes does, but should not.

who would undertake to criticise (which is not quite the same thing), coincided with a gradual removal of the not very severe requisitions of competence which had up to this time been imposed upon the aspirant. The Mr Bludyer of the eighteenth century was at least supposed to know his Aristotle and his Longinus, his Horace and his Quintilian, his Boileau and his Le Bossu, his Dryden and his Addison. In the majority of cases he did know them—after a fashion—though he constantly misinterpreted the best of them and put his faith chiefly in the worst. But the Mr Bludyer of the nineteenth has not been supposed to know anything at all of the history and theory of his art. Now, when you at once set up a Liberty Hall, and dispense good things therein freely to all comers, your Liberty Hall is too likely before long to become a Temple of Misrule.

As the older arrangements went to make the critic's trade not merely homely and slighted, but cramped by too many, too strict, and too little comprehended rules and formulas, so the new tended rather to make it a paradise of the ignoramus with a touch of impudence. It has never perhaps been quite sufficiently comprehended, by what may be called the laity, that though, in a sense, Blake was perfectly right in saying that every man is a judge of art who is not connoisseured out of his senses, yet it does not quite follow that every man, without training and without reading, is qualified to *deliver judgment*, from the actual bench, on so complicated and treacherous a work of art as a book You can take in at least great part of the beauty of a picture at the first glance; and, no matter what the subject may be, many of the details, with all the colour and some of the drawing and composition, require neither previous education nor prolonged and attentive study, though study and attention will no doubt greatly improve the comprehension and enjoyment of them. In the case of a book it is very different. The most rapid and industrious reader[1] will require some minutes—it may even be some hours

[1] I beg pardon: when I wrote the above I had not read the boast of the gentleman who could "come to a pile of new books, tear the entrails out of them, and write a 1500-word *causerie*, passably stylistic, all within sixty minutes"! But perhaps this also was irony?

—to put himself in a position to deliver any trustworthy judgment on it at all· and he must be an exceedingly well-informed one who is at home with every subject treated in every volume that he has to review. You have to find out what it is that the author has endeavoured to do, and then —the most impossible of tasks to some critics, it would seem —to consider whether he has done it, and not whether he has or has not done something else which you wanted him to do. You have to guard against prejudices innumerable, subtle, Hydra-headed,—prejudices personal and political, prejudices social and religious, prejudices of style and of temperament, prejudices arising from school, university, country, almost every conceivable predicament of man. You must be able first to grasp, then to take off a total impression, then to produce that impression in a form suitable to the conveyance of it to the public. One would not perhaps be quite prepared to assert that every one of the hundreds and thousands who have, under the new dispensation, undertaken the office of a critic, has been divinely endowed with these gifts before undertaking that office, or that all of them, even if they took the trouble to acquire what may be acquired, were likely to succeed. There remains, of course, the comfortable doctrine that "practice makes perfect": or, as one of the most agreeable and acute of modern political satirists, himself an admirable critic, has ironically put it—

> "That by much engine-driving at intricate junctions
> One learns to drive engines along with the best."

And if this seem small comfort to the suffering author, who thinks that he has had too great a share of the bad criticism and too little of the good—if it make him think of that inspiriting substitute in the Secularist hymn for our old-fashioned Glorias—

> "The social system keep in view!
> Good night! dear friends, good night!"—

there are two other consolations which may suit him according to his temperament. The one is that under any other system his book would very probably have received no notice at

all, which would in some cases (not in all) annoy him worse than blame. If he be of another sort, he may perhaps anticipate the all-healing question to any *alma* passably *sdegnosa*, "Would you rather *not* have written so, and be praised?"

One very necessary branch of the new criticism, as regarded poetry, the average critic, whether in or out of periodicals, was sadly slow to learn—indeed for the most part he recalcitrated furiously against learning it. This was the proper appreciation of the new effects in verbal painting and verbal music. There had always, of course, been much of this in the great old masters: but there had not been *so* much of it, and the critic had been wont to treat it alternately in a peddling and in a high-sniffing fashion.[1] On the musical side especially, theory had chiefly confined itself to the remarks on "suiting the sound to the sense," in a comparatively infantine fashion—putting plenty of *ss*'s into a line about a snake or a goose, and plenty of *r*'s into a line about a dog; giving trisyllabic feet in a line that meant swift movement, and clogging it with consonants when effort or tardiness came in. The new poets—Coleridge, Keats, Tennyson,—in increasing degree, changed this simple and rudimentary proceeding into a complicated science of word-illumination and sound-accompaniment, which the new critics perhaps could not see or hear, and at which they were by turns loftily contemptuous and furiously angry. That there was some genuine inability in the matter may appear from looking back to Johnson's well-known and very interesting surprise at Pope's fondness for his couplet—

> "Lo! where Mœotis sleeps, and hardly flows
> The freezing Tanais, through a waste of snows."

This couplet *is* beautiful, though the *homœoteleuton* of "Mœot*is*" and "Tana*is*" is a slight blemish on it. But its beauty arises from such subtle things as the contrast of the metrical rapidity of "Tănăĭs" and the sluggish progression of its waters, and from the extremely artful disposition and variation of the vowel notes *o, a, ee*.

[1] I take my examples as usual from English: but, as usual, nothing but the consideration of space prevents me from adducing French and German parallels.

Even this is not *very* complicated: and it occurs with Pope and his clan once in a thousand or ten thousand lines. *The Ancient Mariner* and *Kubla Khan* are simply compact of the colouring symphonies of sound: and the palette becomes always more intricate, the tone-schemes more various and more artful, as you journey from the *Eve of St Agnes* to the *Palace of Art*, and from the *Dream of Fair Women* to *Rose Mary*. In the *Palace* especially[1] the series of descriptions of the pictures pushes both these applications of the two sister arts towards—almost to—the limits of the possible. Rossetti alone has since surpassed them Take, for instance, the cunning manipulation of the quatrain stanza[2] itself to begin with, the figures and colour of the actual designs, and the sound-accompaniment, to suit these figures and colours, in such a stanza as—

> "One seemed all dark and red · a tract of sand,
> And some one pacing there alone,
> Who paced for ever in a glimmering land,
> Lit with a low large moon.'[3]

Now the "values" of this are not really difficult to make out: they can be thoroughly mastered for himself, without book or teacher, by an intelligent boy of sixteen or seventeen, who, having a taste for poetry, has read some—and who happens to have been born within the nineteenth century. But they do need intelligent, sympathetic, and to a certain extent submissive, co-operation on the part of the person who is to enjoy them. The adjustment of the stanza, with its successive lines of varying capacity and cadence, the fitness of those lines themselves to receive and express more or less detailed images, and add, as it were, not merely stroke after stroke, but plan after plan, to the picture, the monosyllables, the allitera-

[1] It was originally published, remember, before the death of Coleridge, and well within the period of our Book, even as to English.

[2] It is of course impossible to appreciate this stanza fully except as a modification, and in comparison with other modifications, of the normal decasyllabic quatrain of *Gondibert* and *Annus Mirabilis*. Yet persons calling themselves critics have sometimes been amusingly indignant at the suggestion of this obvious fact.

[3] The original form of this, in 1832-33, was less perfect, but the aim and the principle are there already.

tion of the last line, and the crowning effect whereby the picture is lightened after being displayed in shadow; the trisyllabic foot thrown in by "glimmering," whether you take it in the last or the last but one of the third verse, the atmosphere-accompaniment,—all these things might well be almost invisible and inaudible to a critic brought up on eighteenth-century principles. And if he saw or heard them at all, they might affect him with that singular impatience and disgust at refinement and exquisiteness in pleasure which was affected by ancient philosophers, and which seems to be really genuine in many excellent Englishmen whom the Gods have not made in the very least philosophical. I have never myself understood why it is godliness to gulp and sin to savour; why, if a pleasure be harmless in itself, it becomes harmful in being whetted, and varied, and enhanced by every possible innocent agency. But there are doubtless some people who think it a "poisoning of the dart too apt before to kill." And there are, I strongly suspect, a good many more whose senses are too blunt to taste or feel the refinements, and who receive the attentions of the poetic fairies with as little appreciation, though usually with by no means as much good-humour, as Bottom showed to those of Titania and her meyny.

This, however, is undoubtedly something of a digression, perhaps something too much of it. But it illustrates the perils to which the new reviewers were exposed, and at the same time (which is the excuse for the divagation) the constant opportunity of salvation which reviewing provides.

Nor need much be said of the general quality of the articles in these famous collections. Persons of enterprise have sometimes gone "exploring," like Mrs Elton (on or off their donkeys, and with or without their little baskets), in this direction, and have come back saying, more or less wisely, that the land is barren. Some of the more practical of them have brought back specimens of its flora and fauna, its soil and its rocks.[1] It is perhaps more profit-

Saws and instances.

[1] Mr Hall Caine, in his *Cobwebs of Criticism* (London, 1883); Mr E. Stevenson, in a useful and unpretentious collection of *Early Reviews* (London, n. d.), &c., &c

able to digest some of the general considerations which have already been stated or indicated than to dwell on particulars. Not that these particulars are useless or always uninteresting. It is good to know that *The Monthly Review*, in an article which could not be called unfriendly, thought *The Ancient Mariner* "a rhapsody of unintelligible wildness and incoherence" [the whole thing is as clear to *us* as a proposition in Euclid], with "poetic touches of an exquisite kind." It is very interesting, and not at all surprising (especially when we remember Voltaire) to find the *Edinburgh*, the oracle of political Whiggery, enunciating the doctrine of Poetical Divine Right in its article on *Thalaba*[1] It is interesting, again, and almost more instructive, to find the *Quarterly*, in the article which did *not* kill John Keats, finding fault with that poet and his master Leigh Hunt, not (as might have been done plausibly enough) for a flaccid *mollities*, for the *delumbe* and the *in labris natantia*,[2] but, of all things, for "ruggedness." If we have pursued our critical studies aright, we know the symptoms, we know the diseases. They are all varieties of *Kainophobia*,—the horror and the misunderstanding of the unaccustomed.

Their justification, such as it is.

But though it is not original, it is very far from superfluous to point out that these poor old unjust judges, these Doubters and Bloodmen of the poetic Mansoul at this crisis of its history, were by no means without their excuses. The original form of *The Ancient Mariner* is only less inferior to the later form which most people know now than Tennyson's Poems[3] as they appear in the editions since 1842 are superior to themselves as they appeared to risk the knout of Wilson and the thumbikins of Lockhart. Southey's unrhymed *vers libres* in *Thalaba* are, when all is said and done, a mistake: and their arrangement is some-

[1] "Poetry has this much at least in common with religion, that its standards were fixed long ago by certain inspired writers, whose authority it is no longer lawful to call in question." There may seem to be an ironic touch in this: but the whole article is written to the text.

[2] *V. sup.*, vol. i. p. 252.

[3] These texts can be seen in detail in more than one modern book on Tennyson, and wholly in Mr Churton Collins's painstaking and useful reprint of the *Early Poems* (London. 1900).

times as unmusical as the least successful parts of Mr Arnold's followings of them. Exquisite as are the beauties, intoxicating as is the atmosphere, of *Endymion*, no one nowadays could pronounce it free from faults of taste of more kinds than one, or deny that as, after all, it holds itself out to be a story, the demand for some sort of intelligible narrative procession is not so irrelevant as when it is put to a lyric, in even the widest sense of that word. And the critics were, in every one of these cases, justified of their victims. Coleridge and Tennyson altered into perfection the poems which had been so imperfect. Southey added rhyme and better rhythm in *Kehama;* Keats grew from the incoherence of *Endymion*, and its uncertain taste, to the perfection of *Lamia* and the great *Odes* and the *Eves* of St Agnes and St Mark. "They also serve, who only stand and—*whip*." But it is better to have a soul above mere whipping.

BOOK IX

THE LATER NINETEENTH CENTURY

"*En critique littéraire, les œuvres n'ont d'intérêt que par leur beauté et leur perfection.*"—ÉMILE MONTÉGUT.

"*Der Teufel hole alle Theorien!*"—GRILLPARZER.

CHAPTER I.

THE SUCCESSORS OF SAINTE-BEUVE.

"ORDONNANCE" OF THIS CHAPTER — PHILARÈTE CHASLES — BARBEY D'AURÉVILLY—ON HUGO—ON OTHERS—STRONG REDEEMING POINTS IN HIM—DOUDAN—INTEREST OF HIS GENERAL ATTITUDE, AND PARTICULAR UTTERANCES — RENAN — TAINE — HIS "CULPA" — HIS MISCELLANEOUS CRITICAL WORK—HIS 'HISTOIRE DE LA LITTÉRATURE ANGLAISE'—ITS SHORTCOMINGS—INSTANCES OF THEM—MONTÉGUT: HIS PECULIARITIES —DELICACY AND RANGE OF HIS WORK—SCHERER: PECULIAR "MORAL" CHARACTER OF HIS CRITICISM — ITS CONSEQUENT LIMITATIONS — THE SOLID MERITS ACCOMPANYING THEM — SAINTE-BEUVE + GAUTIER — BANVILLE—SAINT-VICTOR—BAUDELAIRE—CRÉPET'S 'LES POÈTES FRANÇAIS' —FLAUBERT: THE "SINGLE WORD" — "NATURALISM" — ZOLA — 'LE ROMAN EXPÉRIMENTAL'—EXAMPLES OF HIS CRITICISM—THE REASONS OF HIS CRITICAL INCOMPETENCY—"LES DEUX GONCOURT"—"SCIENTIFIC CRITICISM": HENNEQUIN — "COMPARATIVE LITERATURE": TEXTE— ACADEMIC CRITICISM: GASTON PARIS—CARO, TAILLANDIER, ETC.—THE "LIGHT HORSEMEN": JANIN—PONTMARTIN—VEUILLOT—NOT SO BLACK AS, ETC.—THE PRESENT.

Ordonnance of this chapter.

IT may be barely worth while to repeat the caution given above—that "successors" in the title of this chapter is not to be taken too literally; though, in fact, "Beware of the *Letter*" would be the best possible continuous heading for every page of every History of Literature or of Criticism. Construed, however, with some elasticity, the term has more than enough truth in it. Some of Sainte-Beuve's elders, most of his contemporaries, practically all his juniors, felt the influence of the flood of criticism that welled, gently but irresistibly, from the fountainheads of the *Causeries* and their companion- or forerunner-volumes. Indeed, Taine—the most influential critic purely of the second half of the

century in France—is only Sainte-Beuve methodised and formulated. Before him, we shall deal with three interesting individualities belonging to each of the groups just indicated. Then a sufficiently natural grouping will give us a notable quartette in Renan, Taine himself, Montégut, and Scherer. We may then diverge to another group, who represent the influence of Sainte-Beuve very strongly blended with that of Gautier, the most distinguished of these being Saint-Victor, Baudelaire, and Flaubert. Then we may take the "Naturalists"; then two notable theorists who pushed Taine's own theory further, one in a less, the other in a more fruitful direction; then a fresh batch of critics of the generally academic or specially erudite kind. After which we may cast back to a kind of "Cossack" division — écheloned over the century, —and finish with at least a salute to certain famous living representatives of French criticism, of whom it is not, according to our plan, lawful to speak further.

The trio first referred to were more or less contemporaries, and present various tendencies of literature and criticism in the nineteenth century strikingly enough. Two of them, Jules Barbey d'Aurévilly and Victor Euphémion Philarète Chasles, were men of letters by profession, and in constant practice and publicity, for the greater part of the period: the third, Ximénès Doudan, published hardly anything in his lifetime, and was suddenly revealed, after his death and within the last quarter of the century, as one of those observers of the λάθε βίωσας who tend to become rarer and rarer in modern life.

Philarète Chasles.

The eldest of the three, Philarète Chasles,[1] was at an early period of his life a refugee in England for political reasons, and acquired there a knowledge of our literature and institutions which stood him in good stead for literary purposes ever afterwards. He was, however, at least as well acquainted with the literature of his own country, and in the summer of 1828 he divided the Academy's prize, for a study of French literature in the sixteenth century, with

[1] His books are too numerous to defect to select from. catalogue. and too equal in merit and

an Essay[1] which is still worth studying, not merely as a foil to Sainte-Beuve's famous and epoch-making book, but in itself. Some hold that, in one piece or another of a man's early work, his whole literary development is, so to say, *acorned;* there is certainly something of the phenomenon in this tractate of Chasles. It has plenty of knowledge; it is well written; it abounds in intelligent *aperçus;* and it inclines (if with a limitation to be stated immediately) in the Romantic direction not obscurely, in the catholic, comparative, historical direction beyond all question. But there is a certain deficiency in grasp; the style, though often brilliant and forcible in a way, too seldom concentrates itself to light up, or to blast home, an important proposition; and in the principles there is a certain transaction and trimming to catch the favour of the judges. These merits and these defects alike continued to mark Chasles' work for the fifty years during which he unweariedly performed it: but the defects, if they did not exactly get the upper hand, made him more of a journalist than of a representative of literature. He was useful and important to his contemporaries, especially as a populariser of that English literature which was needed as an alterative by French, at least as much as French was by English. But even some special interest[2] cannot make me rank him very high as a critic.

Barbey d'Aurévilly

If Chasles gave some occasion to those who charged him with being a "Swiss of Letters," a journalist ready to do any journey-work—this was certainly not the case with Barbey d'Aurévilly, one of the most considerable eccentrics of recent literature. A dandy and an apostle of Dandyism, a practitioner of the most "precious" style, a transgressor as to forbidden subjects, and at the same time one of the most formidable of those free lances of Catholicism of whom Ourliac, Pontmartin, and Veuillot are the chief others in his time and country, Barbey d'Aurévilly did a good deal to invite the title of charlatan, which was freely bestowed on him by his num-

[1] *Tableau de la marche, &c., de la Littérature Française* Paris, 1828. It may also be found at the end of the Didot ed of La Harpe's *Cours de Littérature.*

[2] He was a friend of my father's in his English days, and I remember long ago seeing letters of his signed "Chasles *d'Almar*," after a not uncommon French fashion.

erous and recklessly provoked enemies. But I do not think he quite deserved it at any time: and in a very large part of his extensive work[1] he did not deserve it at all. Nor are many people likely to follow me in reading this without acknowledging him as a chief example of that steady improvement in critical power with age, which has been so often noted. He never, indeed, became a good critic *sans phrase*—that is to say, a trustworthy one. In his country the danger-flag is constantly flying; or, rather, there are all sorts of danger-flags, some of which even the tolerably wary may not always recognise as such.

On Hugo.

Not the most difficult case is that of the attacks on Hugo which provoked the poet to some of his most undignified Billingsgate in reply. It may seem indeed odd that a person who, though with a difference, was himself a *romantique enragé*—a man who calls Villemain *un eunuque littéraire opéré par le goût*—should dislike Hugo. But, first of all, there is the religious and political grudge against Hugo as a deserter: and Barbey never forgets his grudges, though he deplores the effect of other grudges on Chasles. And, secondly, one begins to wonder whether, in the soul of his soul, he cared much for poetry. One of his epigrams on Hugo himself,[2] clever as it is, gives more than a hint of this. The poet is *un puits artésien de poésie—intarissable, mais de la même eau.* This is to a very great extent true; but who ever quarrelled with a fountain of living water because it *is* a fountain of living water, and does not, like an artificial one on a holiday, alternately play milk, and milk-punch, and raspberry vinegar? Certainly no one who had ever thoroughly realised what the Water of Poetry—the Water of Life for the soul—is. So, too, no one, whatever his political and religious views, who can taste this Water of Life, could possibly dismiss the *Contemplations* as *un livre accablant, un livre qui doit descendre vite dans l'oubli des hommes.* And his distaste leads him into puerilities and almost stupidities of verbal criticism,

[1] It fills perhaps the major part of the great collection of articles called *Les Œuvres et les Hommes* (15 vols., Paris, 1860-95).

[2] xi. 72.

such as the question, when Hugo has written, "O chiens! qu'avez vous donc dans les dents? C'est son nom." "Comment s'y est on pris pour l'y faire entrer?"

But his dislike for Hugo does not, in the least, conciliate him to, for instance, Mérimée—the same prejudices working in a different way, and summoning others to their aid. This exquisite master of style and irony, this ice-covered volcano, is at one time[1] *un morceau de bois* (I wish some one would show me the Broceliande where such wood grows!), at another a "wading bird" (*échassier*) who occasionally fishes up a *Carmen!* ("O lead us to those ponds where *Carmens* swarm!") A writer who is at least as different from Mérimée as from Hugo, George Sand, is *le plus grand préjugé contemporain* (another example of Barbey's successes, at least in epigram) *la grande routine dans l'admiration de ce siècle*, nay, actually *commune*—which even those who have no mania for the lady or her work may think extravagant.[2] One stares as one reads that Southey's *Nelson* is *bêtement raconté*, till one remembers Barbey's intense, flaming, roaring Byronism, or, perhaps, till one reads the rather tell-tale statement that "stern" [Sterne] *veut dire sérieux en Anglais*, which certainly does not argue a nice acquaintance with the *nuances* of the English language. As for the other statement, that "Johnson, l'affreux docteur Johnson, l'hippopotame de la lourde critique Anglaise, fut un de ceux qui se moquèrent le plus de Sterne," it is sufficient to answer, "Why, no, sir!"

On others.

It may seem strange, after my citing these instances of wrong-going, which might be very largely multiplied, that I should have given even partial praise to Barbey d'Aurévilly as a critic. Yet I cannot withdraw it. In the first place, as examples already given will have shown, he was really a great master of the critical epigram—a thing capable of much abuse, and of late specially abused and vulgarised and brought into discredit, but (when well-bred, and well-trained, and well-ridden) a great battle-horse in the critical stable for all that. His own

[1] See vol. xiii. of *Les Œuvres et les Hommes*

[2] Note that the last outrage—*commune*—avenges Miss Austen of Madame de Stael.

critical axioms, though generally requiring correction and completion, are often most valuable, as when he says[1] that the two great critical qualities are Penetration and Weight. Only he should have added (but the addition would have hit himself hard) "Directing Judgment," without which diamond-point and battering-ram momentum can but waste themselves or do mischief. Indeed, in his own most misguided criticisms, penetration and weight themselves are seldom wanting. His ninth volume, *Les Critiques ou les Juges jugés*, is often quite admirable, almost always noteworthy, on the most different people—on Joubert as on Villemain, on Nisard as on Sainte-Beuve. And almost everywhere the writing is *alive;* the liking, if it be only crotchet, the dislike, if it be only prejudice, is, *pro tanto* and for the moment, real, felt, *vécu*. He is rather a bad example; he has, I think, like Veuillot, already done harm, not merely in France but in England. But I should be loath to lose him: for he is not as the scribes.

Strong redeeming points in him.

It is impossible to imagine a more curious contrast to the often by no means ignoble hack-work of Chasles, and the restless and somewhat "posing" activity of Barbey, than the fireside and library arm-chair quiet which pervades the writings of Doudan.[2] Critically, indeed, that work is chiefly valuable as a placid and agreeable reflection of the workings of such a life on an intellect above the average, but of no gigantic force or "genial" individuality, and a taste for literature which never raised itself to very active or deliberate discharges of the critical function. His two most regular critical exercises, the early article "De la nouvelle école poétique"[3] occasioned by Sainte-Beuve's *Tableau*, and the later but (unless I mistake) not precisely dated "Les Révolutions du Goût,"[4] are more curious than exactly important. They exhibit, as the work of these half-recluses often does, an odd mixture of reflection of the time-movements and reaction against them. His style of opposition (for he does

Doudan.

[1] XII. 245.

[2] *Mélanges et Lettres*, 4 vols., Paris: 1876-77.

[3] *Op. cit.*, I. 34 *sq.*

[4] Printed in vol. IV.

oppose it) to the Romantic movement is double, and in each case rather unexpected One horn is pure Chauvinism. "Who are these Germans and English, that we Frenchmen should imitate them?" This he shed later. But he always lifted up the other — a curious form of belief in progress and development, which once more almost persuades us to believe that no believer in Progress *can* be a critic as such and for the time. In the "De la Nouvelle École" this takes the cruder form, common in the early nineteenth century, of asking why we, with all our glorious gains, should go back to, if not exactly barbarous ages, yet less favoured ones? In the *Révolutions* it becomes a subtler, but perhaps more dangerous, heresy, which draws to its aid the fashionable fancies about time and climate and the like According to Doudan, it would seem, a real historical criticism is impossible,—"Les nuances délicates s'évanouissent quand les mœurs, etc, ont changé." You cannot keep on the tracks of poesy, *cette science émue et populaire* (note the Montaignesque perfection of the phrase, whatever we may think of the argument), you cannot sound *ces magnifiques abîmes*. Each generation sees only one side of the Beautiful—and apparently you cannot extract and combine the visions of each from their records. Which is, I think, blasphemy against Criticism and Literature; but some fight might, no doubt, be made for it, and it is admirably and suggestively put.

Interest of his general attitude,

It would require a separate and elaborate handling to show how far these half-progressist half-nihilist views are reflected in the literary utterances which stud Doudan's *Letters:* but some of these must be given. He never achieves the supremacy of his very close analogue Joubert: but he is certainly "to be made a note of." For instance,[1] in a certain *Chartreuse* (not otherwise identified, but which must be Beyle's from what follows) he says (as he should not) that it is "stupid," and accounts for, at the same time as he disables, his own judgment by adding that he has not read it. But he knows other books of the author, who is "un mauvais sujet au courant de tous les procédés d'imagination." Unjust of course:

and particular utterances

[1] i. 432.

but with how much justice and with how much more felicity in it! In 1843 he must have somewhat modified his fifteen years' earlier disapproval of Old French, for in the *Roman de la Rose* he sees[1] "mille idées passer dans ces ombres du Moyen Âge"—ideas, we may retort, which, if you see, you may surely cry Halt! to, and register. Twenty years later again, in 1865,[2] he not merely condemns, in the *Mémoires d'Outre Tombe*, "le langage torturé, comme dans M. Victor Hugo, pour produire des effets," which might be thought to show a certain obsolescence of judgment, but clears himself from this charge, and from his old fault of Chauvinist criticism, not merely by defending Eugénie de Guérin but by approving Charlotte Brontë, a combination of literary lady-loves which is not commonplace He even consents, later still, to read Miss Braddon: and expresses warm and intelligent approval of *The Small House at Allington*. Only fanatical *Goetheaner* will find much fault with his characterisation,[3] in one of his interesting letters to A. W. Schlegel, of *Meister* as "excessively desultory and chimerical" in matter: and all but fanatical Hugonians will at least understand his unhappiness[4] at *William Shakespeare*, though the expressions of it have a touch of the comic. When you have read the book for ten minutes you feel as if you were standing on your head. Polyphemus must have written like it when he had eaten a Greek and drunk a skinful of wine. And the younger generation finds it admirable! These are the tricks that await all of us as we grow older, unless we keep our feet (and our heads) very carefully when we go into the House of Literature. But Doudan is not excessively affected by them, though, on the other hand, he does not shake himself vigorously and critically free. He is a good specimen of the purely contemplative and "occasional" critic—a sort of hermit of the desert, who does not object to decide on cases that present themselves, but who will not go to seek them.[5]

[1] i. 521. [2] ii 389
[3] iii. 128. [4] iv. 151.
[5] Not a little of the later published *Pensées* (Paris, 1880) is definitely literary in subject; but the book is a small one, and its contents seem to me to lack something of the absolute spontaneity and *privacy* of the larger and earlier collection There are, however, noteworthy things; let me mention, as one of several for honour, the important dictum, p. 24, that "une

We may turn from Doudan to a very different figure, introducing a new and important group. It is not uncommon to see M. Renan spoken of as a considerable critic; on the other hand, I think some one (and no mean authority, if my memory serves me) is reported to have said of him, "Renan n'a pas le sens littéraire" Both statements are excessive: but at the risk of shocking some readers, I am bound to say that the second is a great deal nearer the truth than the first. A *biblical* critic he was, no doubt: but, as has been pointed out at the beginning of this history, the operations of the biblical critic are always conducted on principles different from, and usually on principles diametrically opposed to, the principles of the criticism of literature Yet it may be urged, Did he not help to produce one volume, and that on a very interesting period, of the great *Histoire Littéraire de la France?* Did he not almost precede Mr Arnold himself in arguing for the necessity of Criticism, and the excellent influence not merely of Science but of Literature? and quite precede him in exalting the literary uses and virtues of Celtic? Has he not left us, from the *Averroès* and the *Avenir de la Science* downwards, constant literary allusions and handlings, frequent literary papers, on subjects ranging from Spinoza to Béranger?

Renan.

This is all quite true: and if it were reasonable, as some people seem to think it is, to expect that an author should use as great length in showing why he does not deal with a subject as in dealing with what he thinks it right to handle, I could, as in the case of others from Voltaire downwards, produce chapter and verse to any extent in negative justification. But M. Renan seemed to me, on a careful perusal of all his then published work, twenty years ago[1] and more—he seemed to me, on a repetition and extension of that reading a dozen years

forte mémoire *ne dénature pas* assez ce qu'on imite," where Doudan trembles on the verge of that truth which so few have reached, that art is *dis*realisation Not so good is the wish that Scott had attempted Wellington or Napoleon as a hero, for it shows that Doudan was unwilling to accept (what nevertheless, as the context shows, he half saw) the cardinal law of the Historical Novel, that the main personages must *not* be historical

[1] For an article in the *Fortnightly Review* (May 1880).

later[1]—and he seems to me now, after recurring to his work for the present purpose—seldom or never to have regarded literature as literature. He said, in so many words, at the beginning of his career, and he published the saying towards the close,[2] that literary work is *only* valuable as the work of its time, that "the *Pensées* of Pascal and the *Sermons* of Bossuet, if they appeared to-day, would be hardly worth notice." This exaggeration of the historic view is interesting, of course, but it is as fatal to criticism as the absolute refusal to take that view.

Taine.

Not thus is to be dismissed one who thought Renan a critic and a great one Hippolyte Taine *was* a critic, though too often (not always) a "black horseman" of criticism. He was a great æsthetician, he was a brilliant literary historian—that is to say, what should be a critic on the greatest scale. He could do splendid justice[3] to another critic of tendencies and predilections so different from his own as those of Paul de Saint-Victor. To question his competence in pure criticism may seem more than presumption, it may seem pure fatuity. But, though a poet is dispensed from having a conscience, a critic and a historian of criticism is not.

His culpa.

The fault of Taine as a critic was put once for all from two different points of view and by two widely different, though each in his different way supremely competent, persons, in that conversation at one of the Magny dinners which is referred to elsewhere,[4] and the reporting of which,[5] whether justifiable in itself or not, should bribe Rhadamanthus in his condemnation of the Goncourtian *reportage*. He did not understand the sublime—the "magnificent"—in literature, as no less a person than Sainte-Beuve told him on that occasion: and he did not understand it,

[1] For the reprint and completion of that article in *Miscellaneous Essays* (London, 1892).

[2] In the *Avenir de la Science*.

[3] See his *Derniers Essais de Critique et d'Histoire* (Paris, 1894), a remarkably representative collection (though, of course, not dispensing the reader who really wishes to know, from consulting the earlier collections of the same general heading), and one specially to be recommended to those who only know the *Histoire de la Littérature Anglaise*. The *Letters*, earlier and later, I have not drawn upon.

[4] *V. sup.*, p 307.

[5] *Journal des Goncourt*, ii. 123.

because, as no less a person than Gautier (consciously or unconsciously repeating Longinus) told him, he did not see that the secret of literature lies in the "mots rayonnants," the "mots de lumière." Or, rather, he *would* not understand: for as two of his selected quotations,[1] from such an apostle of the *mot rayonnant* as Saint-Victor, show, he had the root of the matter in him, but would not let it grow.

His miscellaneous critical work.

Taine is, therefore, the capital example of the harm which may be done by what is called "philosophy" in criticism. If he had resisted this tendency, and had allowed himself simply to receive and assimilate the facts, he might have been one of the great critics of the world. That he *could* have done so is shown, I think, completely by the greatest work of his life, the *Origines de la France Contemporaine*—in which, with a good grace, if not explicitly, swallowing all he had said in his earlier remarks on Carlyle's *French Revolution*, he allowed himself to yield to the other facts, and established the truth for ever, on and in an impregnable foundation and circumvallation of document. But he had no time to do everything: and in his literary perversity he had gone too far. He began as quite a young man, but not young enough to be immature, in the famous studies on La Fontaine and Livy, by a philosophical crystallisation of the process which Sainte-Beuve had almost invented, but had always kept in a fluid and flexible condition—the process of inquiring into the "circumstances," the ancestry, country, surroundings, religion, tastes, friends, career, of the man of letters. As crystallised under the influence of a philosophical determinism, this process became one of inquiring into the racial origin, chronological period, and general environment (*milieu*) of the individual, the school, the literature, as a result of which these "had to be"—what they seemed to M. Taine. The man of letters, be he Shakespeare or Voltaire, Dante or Cervantes, was simply a made-up prescription.

[1] The first of these is *Les vies illustres s'éteignent sur tous les points du monde, comme les mille flambeaux d'une fête qui finit.* On this Taine's comment is, "tout homme qui a tenu une plume tressaille en la lisant." Most true. but how about time, place, and *milieu?* The other is an exquisite conceit about the girl-speakers in the *Decameron.*

It might not have been so disastrous as it was, if M. Taine had had the audacity—or from a different point of view the pusillanimity—to choose the literature of his own country as his sphere of principal operation. His theory would not have been so cramping as Nisard's, and he was better furnished with facilities of direct appreciation. That there would have been faults, gaps, oddities, in the survey is certain: but it would have been a great and an invaluable history of French Literature. Now his famous *Histoire de la Littérature Anglaise*—one of the most brilliantly written of its class, one of the most interesting, perhaps *the* history of literature, which has most of literature itself—is only valuable for qualities which are not of its own essence, and in the qualities which are of its essence is very nearly valueless. To any one who knows "those who are there and those who are not"—the authors whom M. Taine discusses and the authors whom he skips—it is a stimulating and piquant, if not exactly an informing, book to read. Those who do not know them will be led hopelessly astray. To begin with, M. Taine himself did not know enough, though he knew creditably much. He had many distractions and avocations at the time, and did not plunge on the document with anything like the "brazen-bowelled" energy which he afterwards showed in the *Origines*. Whole periods—especially where language or dialect present difficulties—are jumped with the most perfect nonchalance, but unfortunately not always in silence Those minor writers who give the key of a literature much more surely than the greater ones (for these are akin to all the world) receive very little attention The native, automatic, irrational, sympathies and preferences, which keep a man right much oftener than they lead him wrong, are necessarily wanting. Nothing interferes to save the critic from the influence of his theory. He has constructed for himself, on that theory, an ideal Englishman with big feet (because the soil of our country is marshy and soft), with respect for authority (as is shown by English boys calling their father "Governor"), Protestant, melancholy, with several other attributes. This ideal Englishman is further moulded, tooled, typed, by race,

His Histoire de la Littérature Anglaise.

time, *milieu*: and he becomes Chaucer, Shakespeare, Pope, Byron. And the literature of Byron, Pope, Shakespeare, Chaucer has to deliver itself in a concatenation accordingly.

Its shortcomings.

It is unnecessary to add much to what Sainte-Beuve and Scherer,[1] both his personal friends, both practically Frenchmen, both acquainted as few Frenchmen have been with English literature itself, one of supreme and the other of high critical competency, said in deprecation of this proceeding. But an Englishman, especially if he knows something of other literatures as well as his own, enjoys a *parrhesia* which they did not enjoy. And the only adequate verdict that can be pronounced on Taine's History of English Literature is that, great as a book and as a creation, it is as criticism not faulty, not unequal, but positively and utterly worthless. It does not even supply the native with useful independent checks and views "as others see," for the views are the views of a theory, not a man. It supplies the foreigner with a false and dangerous travesty.

Instances of them.

But in reference to so famous, and in a way so engaging, a book, it might seem impertinent not to descend a little more to particulars. Let anybody contrast the handlings of Dryden and of Swift. The former is one, I do not hesitate to say, of the worst criticisms ever written by a great writer, the latter one of the best. And why? Because Swift —great, arch-great as he is—is very much of a piece: and Taine can adjust him to his theory. Dryden is not of a piece at all, except in regard to that purely literary craftsmanship which a foreigner can judge least well. He is scattered, eclectic, contradictory: and if you make any general theory about him, or even bring any general theory in contact with him, you get into difficulties at once. About Keats—a great person surely, and in casting shadows before him immense—Taine is null, about Shelley, ludicrous; I am not sure that he so much as mentions Browning, most of the best of whose work was done when he wrote. To take examples all over the

[1] In *Nouveaux Lundis*, and *Études Critiques*, respectively. M. Montégut's deliverance is less important, for reasons to be mentioned presently. It does the *panegyrics* admirably.

history, on *Piers Plowman*, on the Caroline Poets, on Gray and Collins, he is at the mercy of any cub in criticism, and a thing to look at and pass for the more gracious and benign animals therein. Sometimes, as we have said above, he tempts the horrid reflection, "Had he really *read* the authors of whom he speaks?" And always his neglect (which may have endeared him to Mérimée)[1] of the minor figures throws his sketches of the major out of drawing, out of composition, out of proportion. That he started from Sainte-Beuve is certain; but he comes round to a point absolutely opposed to Sainte-Beuve's serene observatory. He speaks of what he has *not* seen.

Montégut: his peculiarities.

It is strange, though perhaps not inexplicable, that the critical renown of Émile Montégut is not greater with us than it is. He was one of the best and most popular writers of the *Revue des Deux Mondes* at a time when it still held the position of the chief critical periodical in Europe. He dealt largely with subjects of special interest to Englishmen. Yet, with us, he has nothing like the reputation, not merely of Sainte-Beuve, but of Scherer and Taine. The reasons for this lie partly in the fact that Montégut was, I believe, at all times a man who wrote for his bread, and so not only had to do translation,[2] biography on commission, and other hack-work, but even in his proper sphere could not pick and choose his tasks. Another cause may probably be found in his fondness—I will not say for prolixity, but for handling on the very great scale. I have said elsewhere that I believe part of the success of Sainte-Beuve to be due to the fact that in his very best days he very rarely dealt, at any one time, with any one subject at more than single (or at most double) *causerie* length. Montégut's treatment of George Eliot runs to 160 pages, that of Charlotte Brontë to very little less, those of Musset and (more remarkably still) of Nodier to 120 each. Now, though people will sometimes read critical estimates of great length, they will rarely re-read them. And they do not show the qualities of the critic,

[1] *V. supp.*, p. 349. Mérimée commends Taine highly to the *Inconnue*.

[2] In English he translated Shakespeare, Macaulay, and Emerson.

especially to the running reader, with as much clearness, crispness, and variety of effect as do shorter, but not too short, pieces.

Yet these qualities in Montégut were rare and admirable. I do not know that I have found any work, short of the Aristotelian-Longinian-Coleridgian level, stand the process of re-reading, among the thousand applications of it which this book has necessitated, better than his. His critical appeal is not *tapageur* and peremptory like that of Taine; nor has it quite the clear, vigorous, masculine, common-sense judgment, when prejudice does not interfere, of Scherer; but it is extraordinarily enveloping, penetrating, intimate With Taine you get soon tired, if not of his *opes*, which are indeed considerable, yet of his *fumum strepitumque:* with Scherer you think that he has said what he ought to have said, but you are not very anxious to hear him say it again,[1] and there is rarely any "second intention," any suggested but not obvious thought, for you to hear. Montégut's delicate, intricate reflection and sympathy, especially at the length at which they are given, can hardly, by the most attentive and sensitive of readers, be taken in all at once, there are always gleanings of the grapes, always second mowings of the grass to be made.

Further, Montégut was, in this group, the only one who did not commit himself to the absolute and inseparable identification of critical inquiry with the construction and application of a general theory of national character and history. He was not, indeed, always free from this besetting delusion of nineteenth-century criticism, a delusion which has done nearly as much harm as all the idols of Neo-classicism put together.[2] On the contrary, he has whole essays tending in this direction.[3] But his best work is done in quite a different one, and, in a late and remarkable study of Saint-René Taillandier,[4] he

[1] Especially, some may say, when he does not like you, or what you like

[2] This was probably due to the influence of Taine, with whom (as he once told me in an interesting letter in regard to some published remarks of mine) he at one time took much critical counsel.

[3] See the opening piece, "Du Caractère Anglais," of *Essais sur la Littérature Anglaise* (Paris, 1888).

[4] *Nos Morts Contemporains*, ii. 199 (Paris, 1884).

expressly draws a contrast between *critique littéraire* and *critique qui se propose un but social*, and lays down that in the former "les œuvres n'ont d'intérêt que par leur beauté et leur perfection." And so, unenslaved by non-literary theory, and only "servant," in the good old sense of lover, to the Muses, he is able to discern the interest of work in both directions, while the pure national-character critics are hampered in one by the theory they take to help them along in the other, and not much helped by it even there.

Delicacy and range of his work.

Among the best examples of Montégut's critical genius that I can think of is the short essay on Boccaccio[1] (where he shows conclusively that great length was not, in the least, an indispensable condition with him), almost all his English papers,[2] and the exceedingly agreeable study of Théophile Gautier,[3] which remains the best thing ever written on that author—difficult, though himself delightful If I were an admirer of the Guérins (I *am*, though no more than reason, an admirer of Eugénie), I think I should prefer his papers on these two extraordinarily overpraised young persons to either Sainte-Beuve's or Mr Arnold's. The above-mentioned piece on Saint-René Taillandier is a real triumph of friendly advocacy. On Béranger—a subject, though for different reasons, almost as much a touchstone as Gautier—he is again wonderfully happy.

Indeed it is rather difficult—except when he is *Tainising*—to discover where Montégut is not happy. To his natural genius for delicate appreciation he united very wide reading, not merely in French, but in English, German, and Italian. In these foreign tongues he has the unconventional *main heureuse*, which sometimes, though not very often, attends foreigners who are not ignorant and who follow their own judgment. The average superficial critic in England to-day

[1] In *Poètes et Artistes de l'Italie* Boccaccio—or Alaciel.

He was much pleased with the eulogy which I was able to bestow on this. M. Scherer was not—I cannot tell why, for certainly jealousy of praise given to somebody else was not one of his faults. Probably he did not like

[2] In the book already cited and its companion, *Écrivains Modernes de l'Angleterre* (Paris, 1885).

[3] In the first series of *Nos Morts Contemporains*, but written long before "Théo's" death, in 1865.

may think that he took *Guy Livingstone*[1] much too seriously; the future Sainte-Beuve of England may not. He could appreciate—as, again, not all our own critics could or can—the unequal, and for a foreigner one might think hopelessly baffling, qualities of Charles Kingsley. I am not sure that this "horizontality"—this faculty of bringing himself in line with German, Italian, English, French subjects and interpreting them, has not done him some harm. It is something so much out of the way, if not out of the reach, of most people that they suspect it. But in the court of International Critical Law—which, had it power as it has authority, would govern the literary world—his case is pretty safe.

Scherer: peculiar moral character of his criticism

It has been recognised from the first that the obituary epigram of M. Edouard Rod on M. Edmond Scherer, "Il ne jugeait pas les écrits avec son intelligence; il les jugeait avec son caractère"—especially if it be remembered that *caractère* in French combines the meaning of the two English words "character" and "temper"—is an exposition, as happy as it was meant to be friendly, of the *defects* of the subject's criticism. But, like all epigrams, it is scarcely adequate even to the portion of the subject to which it applies: and this subject was by no means one-sided. Fully to understand the dozen or so volumes[2] of trenchant and well-informed censorship which Scherer left, it is necessary, for all but persons of unusual powers of intellectual divination, to know much more of the circumstances than is always needful. He was, though French by birth, Swiss by extraction on the father's side, and English on the mother's: and he was brought up, in the straitest school of French Protestantism and English dissent, to become a Protestant-pastor Continental Protestantism has always tended towards freethought, and after many years of progressive "advance" in his opinions, M. Scherer reached something like positive Nihilism in religion, or at least Agnosticism of the extremest kind. He had, though

[1] *Écrivains Modernes de l'Angleterre*, as above.

[2] 10 of *Études Critiques sur la Littérature* (Paris, 1863-89), besides separate ones on Diderot, on Grimm, &c. I myself translated and edited his *Essays on English Literature* (London, 1891).

he must have read very widely in French Literature,[1] written little or nothing on it during this period: and he did not become a literary critic till he was forty-five. Moreover, in the process of unsettlement of his belief, his temper, which had always been very serious, seems to have acquired, as in the case of Mark Pattison and others, though not all, something like a definite roughening or souring. Further, he had paid much attention to philosophical study, and was peremptory in his requirement of "a philosophy" in all works of art and letters.[2] Yet further, his relinquishment of religion had made him only the more strenuous on the score of morality: and against any book or writer showing loose morals, or tolerance of them, he waged truceless war. And to conclude, while he had a somewhat limited sense[3] of the comic, and was slow to appreciate irony, *litotes*, and other things like unto them, his very intelligence, though remarkably strong and in certain senses acute, was distinctly wanting in flexibility, accommodation, and "play." It was a chisel rather than a watchspring-file, and when it encountered resistance or stoppage of any sort, it was apt rather to try to batter and break than to insinuate itself and so to open a way.

Its consequent limitations.

Add to these influences, not always tending for good, others tending powerfully the right way—great learning, the freedom from national prejudice derived from mixed blood, an inflexible honesty of intention, a perfect fearlessness, and a clear and forcible if not exactly attractive style—and the qualities of the resultant are easily anticipated. Such a critic will be weakest in the expression of dislikes. On Molière, Diderot, Carlyle, Baudelaire, especially on the three Frenchmen, M. Scherer is scarcely even interesting or edifying. His imperfect sympathy with the comic in the first case, his porcupine morality, perhaps again in the first, and certainly in the second and fourth;

The solid merits accompanying them.

[1] That is, since the period of the Reformation. I do not think he knew much of older date.

[2] It followed, that though less devoted to formulas than Taine, he was determined that all literary criticism must be connected with the exhibition of national character.

[3] He *had* such a sense, both of French wit and of English humour, but within very narrow and sometimes quite arbitrarily drawn restrictions.

his dislike of the eccentric, the abnormal, the bizarre, in the third and fourth,—make real appreciation impossible for him. "What he says may be used against *him*," to play on the famous police caution: but in regard to his subjects it is not so much ineffectual as almost irrelevant.

On the other hand, when he speaks of writers with whom he is more or less *in* sympathy,—on Milton, Wordsworth, Lamartine, George Eliot,—very few critics are better worth reading. His temperament saves him from the usual danger of exaggeration, except very rarely, when the indulgence is quite pleasant, his general approval confines his exposition of particular defects within the limits of an acute liberality, and his setting forth of merits has all the sufficiency which can be conferred by full knowledge, untiring industry, a strong intelligence, and a practised and logical method.

When, on the other hand, cases of attraction and repulsion are about equally present, at least when the *caractère* allows the intelligence full play, he is almost, if not quite, as good.[1] And as these two classes of Essays are, after all, in the majority, the criticism of M. Scherer is a most valuable exercise both for his craftsfellows and for the general student of literature. When his vision is not distorted by prejudice, he is the inferior of hardly any critic in argumentative power: there is a directness, solidity, simplicity about his methods and his conclusions which, without being in itself better or worse than the accumulative but not always decisive method of Sainte-Beuve and the suggestive approaches of Montégut, forms a very useful alterative and complement to both. He was never popular either in France or elsewhere: and he has hardly charm enough to recover, or rather attain, popularity at any future time. But on no subject on which he has written favourably or impartially—and not on all of those where the *caractère* has had too much the upper hand—will it be safe for the real student to neglect him. And if that counsel of perfection which I have more than once adumbrated here—the com-

[1] The best examples of this group are perhaps the *Goethe*, known in England by Mr Arnold's essay, the *Taine's English Literature*, and the treatment of Renan's *Peuple d'Israël*.

pilation of a critical *corpus* of the best work of all times and literatures — were ever undertaken, it would be possible to select from his work a volume, and perhaps more than one, of the strongest and soundest criticism to be found in the French language.

Saint-Beuve + Gautier.

These four notable writers represent, as has been said, the principles and practice of Sainte-Beuve, more or less hardened and methodised by an attempt to make a philosophy of them in Taine's case, coloured by personal and "professional" tendencies in those of Renan and Scherer, least altered in Montégut. But the specially Romantic tone, which, though it never quite disappeared, had become less and less noticeable in Sainte-Beuve himself, shows little in any of them, unless it be in the last. On the contrary, in another group, where Sainte-Beuve's general influence was strongly qualified by that of Gautier, the Romantic side, both formal and "tonal," appears very strongly, and leads on to a development rather more noteworthy (except in the attacks upon it) for creative than for critical results in the Realist-Naturalist-Impressionist-Symbolist movement. The chief members of this group[1] were, the famous master of *flamboyant* style Saint-Victor, the poets Baudelaire and Banville, and the novelist Flaubert, with whom we may join the band (among which some of them figured with Sainte-Beuve and Gautier himself) of contributors to the very remarkable *Poètes Français*, issued by Crépet forty years ago. Banville needs but little separate notice, for though a delightful prose-writer, as well as a charming poet, he did not write very much criticism besides his contributions to Crépet. But his Tractate of Versification[2] is most important in the history of French prosody.

Banville.

One very famous writer just mentioned, Paul de Saint-Victor, is perhaps hardly here entitled to the place which he must

[1] Gérard de Nerval ought to have been one of the best of these: but, like Mérimée and Gautier himself, he was much occupied with better things than criticism, and in it he chiefly dealt with drama.

[2] *Petit Traité de Poésie Française*: Paris, 1891.

occupy in a History of Literature, though, as a fact, all his pro-
Saint-Victor. duction came more or less under the head of criti-
cism in its vaguer and wider sense. The distinction is due partly at least to the fact that his professional criticism was in the main either purely theatrical or else artistic, with neither of which branches, as such, do we meddle. But there is more to say. Saint-Victor published little of this; and the chief books on which his reputation depends—the rather famous *Hommes et Dieux*[1] earlier, and *Les Deux Masques*,[2] an elaborate study of literary drama from classical times, the publication of which he undertook just before his death—put forward at least some claim to be strictly of our material; and invite attention because of the elaborate perfection of their style. Saint-Victor, after his death, was made the subject of that "nimious and indiscreet" biography which has played the ghoul to almost all men of letters, especially in France, for many years past: and a story, already referred to, has obtained currency that he built up his paragraphs by dotting over the sheet nouns or epithets of striking qualities which he wished to introduce, and then filling in the contexts to suit. This, which is half a caricature and half an antithesis of the Flaubertian theory and practice, is by no means incredible, and though the practice lends itself to criticism, it is capable enough of defence, but not as criticism itself. The more serious point is that Saint-Victor's interests are obviously not in pure literary appreciation. He rarely attempts it, and when he does (as in his article on Swift) the result is sometimes disastrous. Where he succeeds he is rather historic, and historic-pictorial, than literary. Deriving partly from Hugo (whom he worshipped) and partly from Gautier, he has more proportion, less immensity in grandeur and in absurdity than the first, and a somewhat greater sense of humanity generally than the second, while his phrase (as in the sentence admired by Taine and quoted above) is sometimes of enchanting beauty. He is interesting to compare with Mr Pater: but the Englishman has very greatly the advantage of him as a pure critic.

[1] Paris, 1867: often reprinted. [2] Paris, 1880, and later (3 vols.)

Baudelaire.

If Baudelaire had given less attention to the criticism of art[1] and more to that of literature, and if he had been permitted more health and longer life,[2] it is more than probable—it is nearly certain—that he would have been a very considerable literary critic. As it is, there is hardly a page of the two hundred or so which concern the subject in the volume of his posthumously published or republished works, entitled *L'Art Romantique*, that does not contain most remarkable things. He had paid beforehand for Gautier's admirable Preface by the most elaborate of his own individual appreciations, and the shorter notices of Hugo and others, with the few reviews of individual books (including *Les Misérables* and *Madame Bovary*), make a worthy company for it. But Baudelaire's special aptitude is for criticism of a slightly more abstract kind, such as his *Conseils aux Jeunes Littérateurs*, *Les Drames et Les Romans Honnêtes*, *&c.*; while the actual appreciations of particulars just noticed are apt to drift off in this direction. And it was not to be regretted: for these *axiomata media* are often extremely true and subtle. If people would only study them, the popular idea—as far as there is any popular idea at all—of Baudelaire as a passionate and paradoxical champion of immorality and abnormality of all kinds would be strangely altered.[3] Irony is indeed almost always present: but it is yoked with a feeling for art which is extraordinary, and with a sound good sense which, especially in its ironic leaven, often makes one think of Thackeray.

As a combined anthology of poetry and criticism, Crépet's *Poètes Français*[4] has no superior—it may be doubted whether

[1] The whole of the 2nd vol., *Curiosités Esthétiques*, and part of the 3rd, *L'Art Romantique*, of his *Œuvres* (4 vols., Paris, 1868), are occupied by this.

[2] One of the few wholly agreeable pieces of anecdotage contained in the *Journal des Goncourt* seems to show that the accusations generally brought as to the poet having hastened his own end by reckless living were at least hasty. It seems that his mother, Madame Aupick, the most respectable of old ladies, died under the same curse of aphasia and general paralysis.

[3] It would be difficult to say quite the same of the *Œuvres Posthumes* (Paris, 1887), though these also contain valuable critical matter. But much is familiar letter-writing never intended for serious perusal, and not a little bears the clear marks of brain-disease.

[4] 4 vols., Paris, 1861.

it has an equal. After its general Introduction by Sainte-Beuve, the mediæval and fifteenth-century poets were committed to the admirably competent hands of Louis Moland, a member of the second Romantic generation mainly represented in this Book, who gave up the bar to devote himself to editing and studying older French literature; Anatole de Montaiglon, a still more learned scholar and palæographer; Charles d'Héricault, the remarkable excellence of whose fifteenth and early sixteenth century studies has been referred to before, and who has hardly a critical fault except a slight over-valuation of his pet subjects. With the sixteenth century—or rather with the Pléiade—recourse was naturally had to writers who were less of specialists and more of men of letters generally. Gautier, Baudelaire, and Banville are contributors; Janin's article on Lamartine is one of the best specimens of his more serious criticism: while the great mass of minor poets were divided among divers others, of whom the most fully presented and the best known were Charles Asselineau, the bibliographer of Romanticism and a diligent student with a pleasant pen, Hippolyte Babou, the accredited inventor of Baudelaire's title *Fleurs du Mal*, and a man of remarkable though (except here) rather wasted talent, Philoxène Boyer ("Dans les salons de Philoxène, Nous étions quatre-vingt *rimeurs*"), and Edouard Fournier, an inestimable editor, in the *Bibliothèque Elzévirienne* and elsewhere, and the author, among innumerable other things, of the famous collection, *L'Esprit des Autres* (Paris, 1855).

Crépet's Les Poètes Français.

The whole collection is a real literary and critical monument—independently of the merit of many of the articles—because it is practically the first attempt to deal with the entire poetry of a literature in a catholic and impartial manner, uninfluenced by any prevailing theory exalting or depressing particular periods, or particular writers, at the expense of others. The nineteenth century had its faults, and many of them: but this book could hardly have been written before the nineteenth century.

If Rousseau, who wrote no criticism at all, ought, according

to some, to have a large place in a History thereof, how much more Flaubert? For the author of *Madame Bovary*, though he wrote, or at least published, hardly any, has filled his *Letters*[1] with critical remarks, and is the acknowledged godfather, though by no means the inventor (for we have seen it as far back as La Bruyère, nay, as Longolius, if not as far back as Virgil), of the Doctrine of the Single Word—the notion that there is only *one* phrase, sometimes only one single and integral combination of letters, which will really express an author's meaning, and that he must wrestle with Time and the dictionary and his own invention till he finds this. This, we say, will be found *passim* in Flaubert's *Letters;* it will be found, by those who do not wish to read all these (they make a mistake), admirably and forcibly put by his disciple Maupassant in the Introduction thereto. The doctrine,[2] though an obvious exaggeration of the *true* doctrine of the importance of "the word," is an interesting one, and has been—perhaps still is—an influential, but, on our general principles, I do not think it necessary to give Flaubert much space here on the strength of it. He never chose to embody his opinions on this matter in any regular form; probably, with his very peculiar temperament, it would have been quite impossible for him to do so, while his headlong ways of thought and speech, so oddly contrasted with the enormous patience of his writing, made his critical utterances in relation to others mainly genial and Gargantuan splutters—things *gigantesque*, to use his own favourite word, but not critical

Flaubert: the "Single Word."

As in the case of Flaubert and "Realism," so in the case of "Naturalism" and M. Zola, the more general considerations will be for the Conclusion, the selection of facts and documents, on which they are based, for this place. To obtain these facts and documents we must a little break the rule of not noticing persons who have lived very recently, in the case of M. Zola himself and his friend M. de

"Naturalism."

[1] The first volume—to George Sand, with Maupassant's Introduction—appeared in 1884: the general Correspondence followed. George Sand's replies, as well as other things of hers, give her a right to, at least, a place in this note.

[2] *V. inf.* on Mr Pater.

Goncourt. Their *numerus* must undergo the law of representation by chiefs which presses ever and ever more upon us. Of the host opposed to them, the chief and principal, M. Ferdinand Brunetière, is still living.

Zola

The author of *Les Rougon-Macquart* (for out of those good manners which do not determine by death, I shall not call him by the periphrasis against which he specially protested, "the author of *L'Assommoir*") wrote a good deal of criticism; his combative temperament supplying the impulse, and his journalist experience the means[1]

But of the nearly half-score volumes[2] in which this criticism has been collected, perhaps only one, *Le Roman Expérimental*,[3] is much worth re-reading; at any rate, it will give us quite sufficient "document" here. Issued at the very culminating-point of its author's talent and popularity, in 1880, long after he had come through the struggles of his youth, and long before he had fallen into that condition of a naturalist and anti-theistic *voyant* which we find in *Travail* and *Vérité*, it is thoroughly characteristic, thoroughly equipped. There is no reason, if the author had had the same talent for criticism that he had (after making all allowances) for creation, why it should not display as much power in the one direction as the nearly contemporary *Attaque du Moulin* does in the other

Not to mince matters (and waste time in the mincing), it

[1] Two such different persons and writers as Zola himself and M Anatole France have, in different parts of the *Mémoires des Goncourt*, given true and valuable testimony to one of the great merits of that much-abused and certainly much-*abusable* thing journalism—the facility and audacity, namely, which it confers. No doubt the facility which it gives may turn to slovenliness, and the boldness in attempting great tasks to levity: but this need not be so,—M. France himself is a convincing evidence in the one case at least. And there is no doubt that the practised habit of undertaking complicated things at short notice, and of doing the "day's darg" in the day, protects a man from that "impossibility of getting ready," that "not knowing how to begin" (and still less how to finish), which has sterilised even genius so frequently

[2] The title of the first, *Mes Haines* (Paris, 1866), is unlucky. Taken as a joke, it is not very good. taken seriously, it is fatal It may not be easy to preserve the critical attitude when you love that attitude is gone, without hope of recovery, as soon as you hate

[3] Paris, 1880.

does nothing of the sort: but, on the contrary, proves that he had next to no critical aptitude. The contention of the title-paper—that the exploits of M. Zola and his friends in fiction correspond to those of Claude Bernard in physics, supported as it is by extensive quotation and adaptation of the famous vivisector's own words—can, I fear, receive no other epithet than puerile. The physiologist can, of course, experiment very abundantly. But how, in the name of transcendentalism and common-sense alike, can the artist in fiction *experiment?* One artist in fiction did do so certainly: to wit, the unlucky author of *Sandford and Merton,* who trained up a little girl that she might become his wife, with the natural result that she became somebody else's. *That* was a *roman expérimental,* on all-fours with physiological and other experiments, if you like. Many persons who are entertained at His Majesty's expense, or who have stretched His Majesty's hemp, might also be described as *romanciers expérimentaux,* and the company could be strengthened from less sinister sources.

Le Roman Expérimental.

But how can the *writer* experiment? He can observe, he can experience, he can (the ambiguous sense of the word is probably the source of M. Zola's blunder) analyse, as we call it. But he can never experiment, he can only imagine. The check of nature and of the actual, the blow of the quintain if you charge at it and fail, can never be his except in the metaphorical and transformed sense of "literary" success or failure, which brings us back to another region altogether. Now "imagination," "idealism," and the like are M. Zola's abomination, the constant targets of his ineffectual arrows. He does not see that he is himself using them all the time to form his subjects, just as he is using the "rhetoric," which he abominates equally, to convey his expression.

Consult other places to fill out M. Zola's ideas of literature, and they will be found all of a piece. Read[1] his "Lettre à La Jeunesse," with its almost frenzied cry for a literature of *formula,* excluding genius, excluding individuality, though only to smuggle them in again after-

Examples of his criticism.

[1] All these will be found in the volume cited.

wards by a backdoor. Read his account (very well done and producing quite the opposite effect to that which he intends) of the old man of letters, the man of letters *à la* Sainte-Beuve, in "L'Argent dans la Littérature," and the funny details about royalties and centimes which follow. Read him on "L'expression personnelle" in the novel—where he is specially interesting, because with all his talent this is exactly what he himself had not got. Read him on the famous "Human Document," where he misses—misses blindly and obstinately, almost ferociously, with the ferocity of the man who *will* not see—the hopeless, the insuperable rejoinder, "Study your documents as much as you like, but *transform* the results of the study before you give them as art." Read the astonishing paralogism entitled "La Moralité," where he excuses the production of *tacenda* in literature because *tacenda* are constantly recurring in life, and even being inserted in the newspapers which object to them in fiction. Read his queer reversal of a truth (certainly not too generally recognised) that Naturalism is only Romanticism "drawn to the dregs"—"le Romantisme est la période initiale et troublé du Naturalisme." And read above all, in another of the papers, generally headed "De la Critique," the monumental, fatal sentence, "Balzac, qui avait pour Walter Scott une admiration *difficile à concevoir aujourd'hui.*"[1]

He has said it. *Not*—let it be also said and underlined with all the emphasis possible, that M. Zola—that anybody—is to be put out of court because he does not admire Scott. We may be extremely sorry for him; we may think him *quoad hoc* utterly wrong, but he can plead the old privilege. He likes what he can—what he does like: and there is no more to be said. But if he cannot understand why Balzac (whom he himself admires for certain, not for all, of his qualities) should have admired an author whom he himself does not admire, because his qualities are different—*then* he shows himself at once to be destitute of the primal and necessary organ of criticism—the organ which appreciates, which at any rate comprehends and admits the appreciation of, things that are different. He is even as those Neo-classics, who could not understand how

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 343.

anybody could admire what was not like Virgil, or like something else, as the case might be. He has cut the ground from under his own feet, thrown up his own charter and passport. He cannot object if he be bound hand and foot and carried into the outer darkness, where La Harpe is Minos and M. Nisard Rhadamanthus, with the third place on the infernal bench left vacant for the reader to fill at his pleasure.

The reasons of his critical incompetency.

The truth, I think, of it all is, that M Zola, though in his way a rather great man of not the best kind of letters, knew nothing critically about literature, and did not even take any real interest in it. I do not know that it has been generally remarked, but I am sure that if any one who is familiar with the enormous stretch of the novels will exert his memory, he will find an almost unexampled absence of literary reference, literary allusion, literary flavour in them. Even Dickens is not to be named in this respect beside Zola. Nay, his very critical works themselves, though they deal with books, have nothing of the book-atmosphere about them. When a man is really saturated with literature, he carries the aroma of it with him like a violet or a piece of Russian leather (less complimentary comparisons can be added at the taste and pleasure of the reader). He cannot dissociate himself from it if he would. just as another cannot attain it, however hard he pretends. When M. Zola read books it seems generally to have been to coach up his documents and his details: indeed, why should a person who despised poetry and rhetoric read them for anything else? Given this ignorance or this want of appetite, given a consuming desire to philosophise, combined with a very weak logical faculty, an intense belief in one formula or set of formulas, and a highly combative temperament, and you get a set of conditions which even M. Hennequin might admit as sufficient to turn out or account for a personage nothing if not *un*critical.

"Les Deux Goncourt."

The state of his friends, the MM. de Goncourt, was not much more gracious; but though they were even more influential, as holding up the general critical doctrine and practice of naturalist-impressionism, they have left

very little direct criticism, and what they have is of art rather than of letters. They too seem to have read not much *belles lettres*. The elder brother, towards the very end of his days (when, by the way, he thought that Shakespeare *manque d'imagination*), discovered with much interest that there had been a man named Defoe who was a considerable Realist or Naturalist, and that *M. Maspero* had hit upon a remarkably interesting story about one Rhampsinitus. Their general principle—that all literature (they, like so many moderns who cannot write poetry, thought that prose had quite superseded it) should consist of direct personal observation clothed in deliberately and jealously "personal" expression—may be dealt with later. Of individual applications of it, the most attractive is Edmond's quarrel with Flaubert because *he*, with all his labour, hit only on "the epithets of all the world *in excelsis*,"[1] while "we" achieved the "personal" epithets. From which it will appear that our old friend, Miss Edgeworth's Frederick, when he called his hat by the extremely personal epithet of "cadwallader," had finished the art of literature, had sounded the depths and scaled the heights of possible writing.

"Scientific criticism". Hennequin.

One of the objections—and not the least forcible—to philosophising too much, in æsthetic matters as in others, is that the "too much" always begets a too much more; it is like the Hybris of Greek dramatics. Some might have thought that Nisard, with his ideal French genius, and still more Taine, with his all-pervading law of place and time and circumstance, would have satisfied every normal craving for "scientific" criticism: some even that the results of their practice were sufficient to warn any reasonable person off such things. But to think this would have been to ignore humanity and history. Towards the end of the penultimate decade of the century a young and energetic critic, M. Émile Hennequin, fluttered the dove-cotes (or hawk's eyries) of criticism with a still further straitening of the method, by the promulgation of what he was pleased

[1] Again the enemy "has said it." You cannot have a much better description of the highest literary art than this.

to term *esthopsychology*. His career was cut prematurely short:[1] and, as the experienced had foreseen, "esthopsychology" soon followed—if it did not even accompany—him to the grave. But it made some noise for a time: and the three volumes,[2] which he issued in three successive years, will always remain a curiosity of criticism if not much more; while his attempt, foredoomed as it was, is, will be, to failure, is sure to be renewed. It was duly pointed out at the time that when "esthopsychological" criticism proceeded most closely on its own lines it was usually bad criticism, and that when it was good criticism its methods were not distinguishable from those of other kinds. This is true; but there is something more to be said.

Let us do M. Hennequin the justice to admit at once that he separated his new science from strictly literary criticism, and adjusted literature itself in an entirely peculiar and novel attitude and garb, before he subjected it to his own processes of pathological experiment. "Literary work," according to him,[3] is "a collection of written signs intended to produce non-active emotions": and of course in the country where, and for the people to whom, it is this, all sorts of peculiar phenomena may arise. In that country we can quite understand that they regard individuality as an *influence perturbatrice*,—a nasty, impudent, interfering baggage that upsets formulas, and brings your sum all wrong just when you have got it symmetrically arranged in the ciphering book. But those who consider individuality as the source and soul of genius, the only begetter of poetry, the incomparable companion, patron, voucher of great Art—what part or lot can *they* have

[1] He was drowned while bathing. *V. Mémoires des Goncourt.*

[2] *La Critique Scientifique* (Paris, 1888), followed by *Études de Crit. Scient.*, in two series (1889 and 1890). I am under the impression that Hennequin owed something—perhaps a good deal—to Mr H. M. Posnett's *Comparative Literature* (London, 1886), a book which, for the usual reason, escapes our survey. It may, however, be observed that "Comparative *Literature*" is a very awkward phrase, neither really representing "Littérature *Comparée*" nor really analogous to "Comparative Anatomy." "Comparative *Study of* Literature" would be all right: otherwise "Comparative *Criticism*" or "*Rhetoric*" is wanted.

[3] *La Critique Scientifique*, p. 29.

with the esthopsychologists? A sort of slender snow-bridge across the crevasse may show itself when we come to the doctrine that, in order to understand a book, you must analyse its effect on the reader as well as the evidences it gives of its own originating causes and purposes in the author; but then, as was pointed out in the antithesis above cited, there is nothing new in this—we are back again with Longinus, nay, with Aristotle. And we speedily discover that the other side of this bridge is a place to which we do not even wish to get, though the proceedings of the inhabitants are sometimes rather funny at a distance.

An enormous tabular scheme of conditioning and distinguishing circumstances, characteristics, means, effects, &c., has first to be arranged. The sea as a place is *b*: something more complicated is "*daxxx*," and so on. You compose your formula for Hugo by the help of thus symbolising his Mystery, his Grandiosity, and a good many other things, including the fact (not a fact by any means) that he had in 1888 only one disciple in England—to wit, Mr Swinburne. You study Dickens, Heine, Tourguénieff, and Poe in this way as *Écrivains Francisés*, others as *Écrivains Français*. And what is the result? Dickens has much "sensibility"; Hugo is "antithetic"; the Goncourts rather draw than write; M. Huysmans affects sensational colour; Panurge is an incarnation of the ancient French character. "Après avoir fait l'analyse du vocabulaire, de la syntaxe, de la métrique, de la composition de Flaubert, nous avons examiné ses procédés de description et de psychologie qui se reduisent à ceux—[the reader doubtless expects something new and startling]—du réalisme"! These "secrets of Punch," these "truths of M. de La Palisse," simply pullulate in M. Hennequin's pages. We travel painfully from Dan to Beersheba, and from Beersheba through all the wildernesses to the uttermost parts of the sea; we accumulate the most elaborate implements, provisions, documents of travel that the shops can furnish or our ingenuity invent: we spend months and years in painful prospecting. And we bring home exactly the same conclusions which have been written

on the walls of every house in the intellectual Israel for Heaven knows how many years. Much μόχθος περισσὸς has been seen in this story: some (though I should demur) would have it to be a history—and an example—of nothing else. But labour more utterly lost than "esthopsychology" I think we have not found, and shall not find, even here.

"*Comparative Literature*": *Texte.*

About ten years later Fate again cut short the life of an industrious and promising critic in M. Joseph Texte. I have received, from personal friends of M. Texte, such golden accounts of his character and abilities, and the purpose to which he devoted his too short life-work—that of the study of "Comparative Literature"—is so much that to which I have devoted my own much more extended if not quite unhampered opportunities,—that I should like to say nothing of him but good. His last title, *La Littérature Comparée*, sums up the drift of critical and literary-historical thought for the last hundred and fifty years, and especially for the last hundred. As we have seen, from the time of Bodmer and Breitinger in Germany, from that of Gray in England, from that of Diderot, if not even earlier, in France, it has always been this extended and comparative study which has corrected criticism. But it was not till the nineteenth century was pretty far advanced that the practice of Sainte-Beuve, and a little later the formal doctrine of Mr Arnold, recognised and, as it were, canonised the idea; while it is only within the last twenty or five-and-twenty years that it has been largely carried out, and only within the last decade or less that it has received regular academic and other sanction. I have never myself, since I began to study literature seriously almost forty years ago, had the slightest doubt about its being not only the *via prima*, but the *via sola* of literary safety.

But literary roads are never quite "royal" in the sense of the proverb: there are always obstacles and breaches in the way, as well as possibilities of mistaking it. Especially, as it seems to me, is the student of Comparative Literature exposed to the old temptation of generalising and abstracting too much. I think that M. Texte's first, and perhaps best known book,

Rousseau et les Origines du Cosmopolitanisme Littéraire,[1] is rather an example of this. It will be observed that the very title hurries us a long way to sea—that we are almost out of sight of the firm land of individual example-study. If you have been brought up solely on the drama of Racine and are introduced to that of Shakespeare—nay, even *vice versa*, though not to the same extent—it is almost impossible that the contrast should not do you good, if only by forcing you to distinguish—to give your reasons, not to "like grossly." But "Literary Cosmopolitanism"[2]? is not this a very distant and very vague City of God? is it not even something of a Nephelococcygia? It has never existed except to some extent during the Middle Ages: there is no present sign of its ever being likely to exist. And the coupling of it with Rousseau excites other apprehensions. Rousseau was a Swiss; he lived in France, Italy, England: his works were popular all over Europe. There *is* an air—but an almost obviously false air—of cosmopolitanism about this. When we examine the actual book we find that, practically, it consists of a summary of the chief literary *rapports* between France and England before Rousseau, of an ingenious attempt[3] to make Rousseau himself out as a kind of unconscious apostle of universal principles of literary criticism: and then of some remarks on the further *rapports* of English and French after him. "Rousseau and the Relations of English and French Literature" would be the real title of the book: and a useful enough monograph it is. The *Études de Littérature Européenne* are better (the studies of Keats and Browne are very good), and the *Littérature Comparée* is interesting. But M. Texte was always too heedless of the guile that lurks in generals—literary more than of any other kind. The "Descendants of the Lakists in France" really means little more than that Wordsworth exercised a considerable influence on Sainte-Beuve: and "The German Influence in France" is either a quite unmanageably large subject, or a mere disproportion-

[1] This appeared in 1895; *Études de Littérature Européenne* followed three years later, and *La Littérature Comparée* in 1900. The contributions to Petit de Julleville have been noticed (ii. 528, note).

[2] For more on it, and on another kind of it, see below on the late Karl Hillebrand.

[3] *V. sup.*, p. 97 *sq.*

tion of nut and kernel. It is very dangerous to take, as an example of "contemporary" English literature, at the end of the nineteenth century, *Aurora Leigh*, which merely represents a brief and passing phase between the first Reform Bill and the first Exhibition. But nothing is further from my wishes than to carp and cavil at M. Texte, who in an average lifetime must have made vast and valuable progress, and who, as it is, was a valiant pioneer in a great and effectual way.

Academic Criticism: Gaston Paris.

To pass or recur to criticism of a strictly academic character, it is much easier to be impartial in judgment of an enemy than of a friend. And, but for one thing, I fear I might be bribed in favour of M. Gaston Paris by the extraordinary liberality and indulgence which, without any private introduction or intercession, he showed, some twenty years ago, towards an attempt on the subject in which he was the unquestioned authority and master—an attempt which did not follow his own or any other leading, which to his expert eyes must have been full of blunders and shortcomings, and which could have had in those eyes no merit but that of being honest, and based on first-hand study. Even this would not have conciliated everybody But M. Paris had nothing of the dog who growls when any one approaches *his* bone, and it was most interesting to watch in *Romania*, the periodical which he helped to direct for more than thirty years, the difference of his method and that of some of his coadjutors. One could only marvel at his perfect freedom from this *lues* of the mere scholar.

This equity or urbanity, however, though the most pleasing to persons who experienced it, was not the only nor perhaps the chief, it was certainly not the most purely literary, excellence of M Paris as a critic. He had another, still rarer in the philologist—the faculty of appreciating literature. His philological and other conscientiousness, indeed, prevented him from reprinting—during long years in which all students of Old French coveted it—the delightful *Histoire Poétique de Charlemagne*, with which (in 1865-66) he began his literary career: and most of his time was spent on lectures, editions, and miscellaneous work in the periodical just mentioned and

others. But many of his *Romania* Essays (which we may hope will be collected) display the rare union just mentioned, as the work of few other philologists in the older modern tongues has done throughout Europe, though the late Professor Kolbing came an honourable second in Germany. And in 1885 he actually collected, under the title of *Poésie du Moyen Age*, some of his more popular lectures on the title-subject, on the origins of French Literature, on "La Chanson de Roland et La Nationalité Française" (a fine piece, delivered *crânement*, as his students might have said, in beleaguered Paris, during the central December of the Année Terrible), on the quaint semi-comic epic of Charlemagne's Pilgrimage, on the story of Parnell's *Hermit*, on his father. Some years later he gave an excellent but too brief *Manual of Mediæval French Literature*. and in 1896 he published a very noteworthy collection of articles, obituary and other, on modern men of letters, entitled *Penseurs et Poètes*. The longest and most remarkable of these is on the poet, M Sully Prudhomme—a lifelong friend—and it shows better than anything else M. Paris's power of pure literary criticism in subjects far distant in character as in time from those in which his hand usually dealt. I do not agree with him here; I cannot rank his subject's estimable and faultless, but rather cold and limited, poetic gift so highly as he did. But for careful investigation and grouping of results, for delicate arrangement of merits so that they may produce the best effect, for good taste in enthusiasm, and ingenuity, never unfair, in advocacy, the article will stand comparison with one of Sainte-Beuve's at his most interested and good-natured, or one of Montégut's at his least discursive and protracted.

The number of learned or academic critics—some older, some younger—who might be grouped round or arranged after *Caro, Taillandier, &c.* M. Paris is of course very large: but I do not know any who combined his special accomplishment with his general literary quality. Long ago, in another place, I was guilty of introducing two of the class as "M. Saint-René Taillandier, a dull man of industry, and M. Caro, a man of industry who is not dull." Neither, alas! "is" anything now: but a renewed and special study of their work for the purposes

of this book does not induce me to tone down the flippancy. Still, it is fair to say that neither seems to have intended what we call here "pure literary criticism." Caro[1] was (and was satirised rather unjustly as such, in a comedy famous in its day) a sort of ladies' philosopher, a moralist in kid gloves and dress clothes. Taillandier (the "Saint-René" appears to be one of the usual self-embellishments) was in the same way a historian and political student, who, in his capacity as regular contributor to the *Deux Mondes*, attempted a great deal of literary work, and collected a good deal of it.[2] He had little grasp or suppleness: and retained a great deal of the old academic horror of the bizarre. A review by him of Flaubert's *Éducation Sentimentale* was, I think, the particular *locus* which convinced me of his dulness: and I have never read anything which removed the impression.[3]

The "Light Horsemen". Janin.

Of what may be called the light horsemen of French criticism, almost any one, with even the slightest knowledge of the subject, would at once name Jules Janin as the hetman. He was very early singled out by Nisard in his attack on *la littérature facile*;[4] and though he replied with all the wit, style, and facility itself for which he was justly renowned, he probably—or rather certainly—knew as well as anybody else that it was easier to counter-raid the enemy's country than to defend his own. A "prince of criticism," as he was called (and is said to have liked to call himself, with the mixture of self-deceit and self-satire which all men of some brains know), he hardly was: a prince of journalism he was most certainly. Of his purely literary exercises in the art practically nothing survives, his early romantic extravagances in novel kind, *L'Âne Mort* and *Barnave*, have outlasted them, while themselves possessing no very solid fame. His purely theatrical criticisms are said to be of some value as *points de repère*. But, on the whole, if the most

[1] A good example of his literary work is *La Fin du 18ième Siècle* (2 vols., Paris, 1880). He speaks of Diderot as *un essayiste à la façon Anglaise*, which is complimentary—and instructive.

[2] *Histoire de la Jeune Allemagne, Littérature Étrangère, Drames et Romans de la Vie Littéraire*, &c.

[3] Montégut (*v. sup.*, p. 445) thought better of him.

[4] *V. sup.*, p. 336.

brilliant of journalists, he was also the most of a journalist among brilliant men of letters. His appreciations were written with all that appetising *à peu près*—that dash and sparkle and apparent mastery—which, more than any solid qualities, have given French criticism its reputation with those who do not know. But they represent little real knowledge on the writer's own part: and while destitute of any theory of criticism of the more abstract kind (which they might lack and be no worse for it), they display no standard of personal taste, no test of goodness drawn from comparative experience, to supply the place of such a theory. They had their day; but they have ceased to be.

Pontmartin.

It might have been scarcely safe to class M. Armand de Pontmartin with the light horse during his lifetime; he would at any rate, in all probability, have taken care to show that light horsemen not only do not belong to the non-combatant divisions of an army, but are one of its most formidable arms of offence and defence. The extreme voluminousness (he reprinted some fifty or sixty volumes of his *Samedis* and other work) of this Royalist critic; the sharpness of his tongue, especially in a book entitled *Les Jeudis de Madame Charbonneau*, which fluttered literary critics in the middle years of the Second Empire; and the fact that Sainte-Beuve took the field against him on more than one occasion, have created, I believe, rather an unfavourable impression. This is not quite fair. M. de Pontmartin wrote, or at least republished, too much; he was too generally under the influence of splenetic partisanship in more than one kind, and there was in his criticism a certain superficiality and tendency to gossip round a subject, whether in attack or in caress, rather than to grasp and penetrate it. But he had great acuteness, wrote an admirable French style of the older and purer kind, and certainly had no reason to be ashamed of the way in which he harassed the "Naturalists" in his later years of contribution to the *Gazette de France*. The other publications of these years[1] show a mellowing of temper and no loss of ability:

[1] The posthumous *Épisodes Littéraires* (Paris, 1890) contrasts very pleasantly with too many utterances "d'Outre-Tombe."

while even in the earlier *Samedis* a great number of true things, well put, may be found.

Veuillot.

But the most formidable of French critical Pandours—a man of genius in his own way, and the inspirer in that way of no small or inconspicuous divisions of journalism in other countries and since his own time—was Louis Veuillot. Most of his "swashbuckler" writing—to do him justice he did not merely swash the buckler, but had a right swashing blow with the sword at his enemy's face and body—was directed to religious and political matters. But he had a real interest in literature: and though his principles, as Extreme Right and Extreme Left principles generally do, allowed and indeed encouraged him to regard no blow as foul in their service, he is perhaps less unscrupulous in administering literary sensations[1] than in dealing out others.

The twelve solid volumes of his *Mélanges*,[2] despite the apparently ephemeral character of many of their subjects, are still excellent reading, especially for the judicious student who knows how to skip, and does not disdain to do so now and then. Even when Veuillot raises false issues he is seldom quite negligible; and when he is in sympathy with his subject he is sometimes extraordinarily happy; while one seldom or never detects in him the note of personal spite, or the mere pedantic snarling, which, as has been said, are the unpardonable sins of criticism.

It might surprise some people who have heard of Veuillot only as a tomahawk-and-black-flag critic to read the affectionate and admirably executed eulogy of Edouard Ourliac, at iv. 580 of the second series; until Sainte-Beuve went out of his way to offend the Clericals, Veuillot appreciated him, and even in regard to Hugo, his handling (at ii. 542 of the second series) is astonishingly clever. Further, Veuillot is very seldom silly: one of the few instances I can think of, is his attack on Sainte-Beuve and Rabelais. It is never quite easy to understand what there is in Master Francis

[1] "Call yourself Voltaire: I promise you some sensations," was one of his boasts which became famous. It was by no means mere bragging.

[2] Paris, 1856 onwards.

which upsets and disorganises even the most intelligent Roman Catholic critics, and the fact is one of the heaviest charges against the Roman form of Catholicism, from the literary point of view. Of poetry, Veuillot had not much sense; one would hardly expect it in him, and it is certain that his doctrine, that a great poet must sing *ni sa dame, ni la dame d'autrui, ni les dames de tout le monde*, would, if it were carried out universally, make poetry extremely uninteresting. He could be vulgar, as in his attack on Edmond About (at v. 372 of the second series), but then it has to be remembered that About could be and was extremely vulgar himself, and that the greatest danger of this sort of rough-and-tumble journalism is that you are too apt to accept the weapons and the methods of the adversary

Not so black as, &c.

We have little space for "Mr Bludyer" in this book, and therefore it is that I have given some to his greatest and most gifted representative in the flesh during our time. One may think indeed — I do — that Mr Bludyer is a very unnecessary evil,—that it is perfectly possible to fight as keenly and as stanchly as you like with the pen, and yet never write otherwise than fairly, honestly, and like a gentleman. But whether Mr Bludyer must come or not, he generally does; and when he does, it would be well if he always had the wits, and the raciness, and, on the whole, the freedom from mere dirty selfish vanities and jealousies and greeds, which characterised the redoubtable and notorious author of the *Odeurs de Paris*.

The present.

It is half pleasant and half unpleasant to conclude this notice of French criticism with only a reference to those distinguished living representatives of it who hold up its banner and spread its sails to all the winds of the spirit. To name no juniors, I have already had more than one occasion to refer to the great erudition, the remarkable acuteness, and the practised critical method of M. Ferdinand Brunetière. These qualities, with an agreeable and sufficient difference, appear also in M. Émile Faguet: while M. Anatole France illustrates a more strictly impressionist, and a lighter kind of our office with one of the most charming styles that

any living European writer uses for the pleasure of the human race; and there are many who greatly admire the wit, the alertness, and the truly Gallic nonchalance of M. Jules Lemaître. They have all written for some considerable time: may they put on none but Academic immortality for at least as much longer!

CHAPTER II.

BETWEEN COLERIDGE AND ARNOLD.

THE ENGLISH CRITICS OF 1830-60 — WILSON — STRANGE MEDLEY OF HIS CRITICISM — THE 'HOMER' AND THE OTHER LARGER CRITICAL COLLECTIONS — THE 'SPENSER' — THE 'SPECIMENS OF BRITISH CRITICS' — 'DIES BOREALES' — FAULTS IN ALL, AND IN THE REPUBLISHED WORK — DE QUINCEY: HIS ANOMALIES AND PERVERSITIES AS A CRITIC, IN REGARD TO ALL LITERATURES — THEIR CAUSES — THE 'RHETORIC' AND THE 'STYLE' — HIS COMPENSATIONS — LOCKHART — DIFFICULTY WITH HIS CRITICISM — THE 'TENNYSON' REVIEW NOT HIS — ON COLERIDGE, BURNS, SCOTT, AND HOOK — HIS GENERAL CRITICAL CHARACTER — HARTLEY COLERIDGE — FORLORN CONDITION OF HIS CRITICISM — ITS QUALITY — DEFECTS AND EXAMPLES — MAGINN — HIS PARODY-CRITICISMS AND MORE SERIOUS EFFORTS — MACAULAY — HIS EXCEPTIONAL COMPETENCE IN SOME WAYS — THE EARLY ARTICLES — HIS DRAWBACKS — THE PRACTICAL CHOKING OF THE GOOD SEED — HIS LITERARY SURVEYS IN THE 'LETTERS' — HIS CONFESSION — THE 'ESSAYS' — SIMILAR DWINDLING IN CARLYLE — THE EARLIER 'ESSAYS' — THE LATER — THE ATTITUDE OF THE 'LATTER-DAY PAMPHLETS' — THE CONCLUSION OF THIS MATTER — THACKERAY — HIS ONE CRITICAL WEAKNESS AND HIS EXCELLENCE — 'BLACKWOOD,' IN 1849, ON TENNYSON — GEORGE BRIMLEY — HIS ESSAY ON TENNYSON — HIS OTHER WORK — HIS INTRINSIC AND CHRONOLOGICAL IMPORTANCE — "GYAS AND CLOANTHUS" — MILMAN, CROKER, HAYWARD — SYDNEY SMITH, SENIOR, HELPS — ELWIN, LANCASTER, HANNAY — DALLAS — THE 'POETICS' — 'THE GAY SCIENCE' — OTHERS. J. S. MILL.

THERE are few things so difficult to the conscientious writer, and few which he knows will receive so little consideration from the irresponsible reader, as those overlappings on the one hand, and throwings-back on the other, which are incumbent on all literary historians save those who are content to abjure form and method altogether. The constituents of the

present chapter give a case in point. Some of them may seem unreasonably torn away from their natural companions in our last chapter dealing with English criticism; some unreasonably kept back from the society of the next. But, once more, things have not been done entirely at the hazard of the orange-peel or the die.

The English Critics of 1830-60.

There is, to the present writer at any rate, a distinct colour, or set of colours, appertaining to most of the English criticism of 1830-1860, and it seems worth while to bring this out by isolating its practitioners to a certain extent. We shall find these falling under three main divisions—the first containing the latest-writing, and in some cases hardly the least, of the great band of periodical critics, mostly Romantic in tendency, of whom Coleridge is the Generalissimo and Hazlitt the rather mutinous Chief of the Staff. Then come the mighty pair of Carlyle and Macaulay; and then a rear-guard of more or less interesting minors and transition persons. So, first of the first, let us deal with one who, not only to his special partisans and friends, seemed a very prince of critics in his day.

Wilson.

The difficulties of appraising "Christopher North" as a critic are, or should be, well known in general, but it is doubtful whether many persons have recently cared to put themselves in a position to appreciate them directly. No such revival has come to him as that which has come to Hazlitt: and I have elsewhere given at some length[1] the reasons which make me inclined to fear that no such revival is very likely to come soon. For Wilson accumulated, with a defiance valorous enough but certainly not discreet, provocation after provocation to Nemesis and Oblivion. He is immensely diffuse; he is not more diffuse than he is desultory; and in the greater part of his work he sets his criticism with a habitual strain of extravagant and ephemeral *bravura* which even the most tolerant and catholic may not seldom find uncongenial. But all this, though bad, is followed by things worse — critical incivility of the worst kind, violent

[1] In an essay originally published in *Macmillan's Magazine* for July 1886, and reprinted in *Essays in English Literature* (3rd. ed., London, 1896).

political and other partisanship, a prevailing capriciousness which makes his critical utterances almost valueless, except as words to the wise; and occasional accesses of detraction and vituperation which suggest either the exasperation of some physical ailment, or a slight touch of mental aberration. And yet, side by side with all this, there is an enthusiastic love of literature; a very wide knowledge of it, a real capacity for judging, wherever this capacity is allowed to exercise itself; a generosity (as in the famous palinodes to Leigh Hunt and to Macaulay) which only makes one regret the more keenly that this generosity is so Epimethean; and, lastly, a faculty of phrase which, irregular and uncertain as it is, apt as it is to fall on one side into bombast and on the other into bathos, is almost always extraordinary. An anthology of critical passages might be extracted from Wilson which few critics could hope to surpass; but the first and probably the last exclamation of any one who was driven by this to the contexts would be, "How on earth could such good taste live in company with a Siamese brother so hopelessly bad!"[1]

Strange medley of his criticism.

Wilson's admirers, from his daughter downwards, have lamented that the *Homer*—a good thing but not his best—was the only one of his longer and more connected critical exercitations that was included[2] in his collected works, while three others—the *Spenser*, the *Specimens of British Critics*, and the dialogue *Dies Boreales*—were excluded. The reasons of the exclusion seem obvious enough. At a rough and unprofessional "cast-off," I should guess each of the two earlier series at about

The Homer and the other larger critical collections.

[1] As I am not speaking *enfarinhadamente* about Wilson's faults, I may fairly protest against an exaggeration of them. It is surely unlucky of Mr Buxton Forman (*Keats's Letters*, i. 46, ed. 1900) to talk of *Blackwood's Magazine* having "a monopoly of frowsy and unsavoury personal gibes" in "the possession of Christopher North," when he had himself a few papers earlier cited Hazlitt's almost Bedlamite Billingsgate against Southey in the *Examiner*

[2] As the 4th vol of *Essays Critical and Imaginative* (4 vols, Edinburgh, 1856-57) It follows Wilson's usual lines of a running study of the poem and those who have written about it. Much of it, as of the essay on the *Agamemnon* which follows, is occupied by a not uninteresting parallel-collection of translations.

300 of these present pages, and the *Dies* at nearer 400. This would have meant at least another three volumes added to a collection already consisting of twelve. The Devil's Advocate, moreover, would have had other things to urge. Whatever Wilson had gained by age and sobering (and he had gained much), he had lost nothing of his tendency to exuberance and expatiation. After the first paper or two, the whole of the *Spenser* criticism is occupied with an examination of the First Book of the *Faerie Queene* only—the best known part of the poem. The *Specimens of British Critics*—an admirable title which might have served for a most novel, useful, and interesting work—means in fact a very copious examination of Dryden's critical utterances and a rather copious one of those of Pope—so that this *professor* at any rate has not filled this *hiatus*. And the *Dies*, though they have got rid of some of the superabundant animal spirits of the *Noctes*, are (it is necessary to say it) very much duller.

Yet the regretters had some reason. I myself could relinquish without much sorrow, from the matter actually republished, more than as much as would accommodate the *Spenser*, nearly as much as would make room for the *Specimens* also. As for the former, the famous compliment of Hallam[1] (not a person likely, either on his good or his bad side, to be too lenient to Wilson's faults) is at least a strong prerogative vote. Nor does it[2] stand in need of this backing. Wilson spends far too much time in slaying forgotten Satans that never were very Satanic—the silliness of the excellent Hughes, the pedantry of the no less excellent Spence, the half-heartedness, even, of Tom Warton. He does not entirely discard his old horse-play and his old grudges, though we can well pardon him for the fling that "the late Mr Hazlitt" did not think Sidney and Raleigh gentlemen. But he discards them to a very great extent, as well as the old namby-pambiness which sometimes mars his earlier work, when he is sentimental, and which, with him as with Landor,

The Spenser.

[1] *Literature of Europe*, chap. xiv., § 82

[2] It will be found in *Blackwood's Magazine*, vols. xxxiv., xxxvi., and xxxvii. (Edinburgh, 1833-35).

was a real danger. And the thing is full of admirable things, —the generous admission that "Campbell's criticism is as fine and true as his poetry"; the victorious defence of the Spenserian stanza against those who think it a mere following of the Italians: a hundred pieces of good exposition and appreciation. While as for mere writing, we have "written fine" after De Quincey and Wilson himself for some eighty years. But have we often beaten this: "Thus here are many elegies in one; but that one [*Daphnaida*] is as much a whole as the *sad* sky with all its *misty* stars"?[1]

The Specimens of British Critics.

The *Specimens of British Critics*,[2] ten years later, maintains, and even with rare exceptions improves, the standard of taste in the *Spenser*, but its faults of disproportion, irrelevance, and divagation are much greater. The author himself once insinuates that his work may be taken for "an irregular history of British Criticism," and it certainly might have been made such—"nor so very irregular neither," as they would have said in the days when Englishmen were allowed to write English, and grammarians to prate about grammar. But Wilson cannot resist his propensity to course any hare that starts. As has been said above, he has the compass of a by no means meagre volume for dealing ostensibly with no British critics but Dryden and Pope. If he dealt with them only, and only as critics, there would not be much fault to find, though we might wish for a better and fuller planned work. But not a quarter—not, we might almost venture to say, a tenth—of his space is occupied with them or with criticism. A very large part is given to discussion, not merely of Dryden and Pope but of Churchill *as satirists;* Dryden's plays, rhymed and other, receive large consideration, his theory of translation almost a larger, with independent digressions on every poet whom he translates. Two or three whole papers are devoted to Chaucer, not merely as Dryden translated him but in all his works, in his versification, and so forth. I do not wonder that, seeing

[1] For this is one of the metaphors which (as Théophile Gautier boasted of his own, and as so few others can boast) *se suivent*.

[2] Ibid., vols. lvii., lviii. (1849).

a farrago so utterly non-correspondent to its title, any one should have hesitated to reprint it. But I do know that there is admirable criticism scattered all over it, that if it appeared as *Miscellanies in English Criticism*, or *Critical Quodlibeta*, or something of that sort, it would be worth the while of every one who takes an interest in the subject to read it: and I do think it a pity that it should be practically as if it were not.

Perhaps hardly as much can be said of *Dies Boreales*,[1] which was written when the author's bodily strength was breaking, and which betrays a relapse on senescent methods, with, naturally, no relief of juvenile treatment. The dialogue form is resumed, but "Seward," "Buller," and "Tall-boys" are, as Dryden might have said, "the coolest and most insignificant" fellows, the worst possible substitutes for "Tickler," and the Shepherd, and the wonderful *eidolon* of De Quincey in the *Noctes*. There is no gusto in the descriptions, even of Loch Awe: and among the rare and melancholy flashes of the old genial tomfoolery, the representation of a banquet at which these thin things, these walking gentlemen, sit down with the ghost of Christopher to a banquet of *twenty-five* weighed pounds of food per man, is but ghastly and resurrectionist Rabelaisianism. But if there is not the old exuberance, there is the old pleonasm. Wilson seems unable to settle down to what is his real subject—critical discussion of certain plays of Shakespeare and of *Paradise Lost*. Nor, when the discussions come, are they quite of the first class, though there are good things in them. The theory of a "double time" in Shakespeare—one literal and chronological, which is often very short, and another extended by poetical licence—is ingenious, if somewhat fantastic, and, critically, quite unnecessary. But the main faults of the writer, uncompensated for the most part by his merits, are eminently here.

Dies Boreales.

These faults, to be particularised immediately, result in a lack of directness, method, clean and clear critical grip, which is continuous and pervading. Forty pages could generally be squeezed into fourteen, and not seldom into four, with great gain of critical, no loss of literary,

Faults in all.

[1] *Blackwood's Magazine*, vols. lxv.-lxviii. and lxxii. (1849-52).

merit. Now diffuseness, a bad fault everywhere, is an absolutely fatal one in critical literature that wishes to live. It is hard enough for it to gain the ear of posterity anyhow; it is simply impossible when the real gist of the matter is whelmed in oceans of divagation, of skirmishes, courteous or rough-and-tumble, with other critics, of fantastic flourish and fooling. It is no blasphemy to the *Poetics* and the Περὶ Ὕψους themselves to say that to their terseness they owe at least half their immortality.

and in the republished work.

In the earlier, better known, and more easily accessible work the same merits and defects appear in brighter or darker colours, as the case may be. In once more going through the ten volumes of the *Noctes*,[1] and the *Recreations*, and the *Essays*, I can find nothing more representative than the Wordsworth Essay,[2] the famous onslaught on Tennyson's early Poems,[3] and the eulogy of Macaulay's *Lays*,[4] though I should now add *An Hour's Talk about Poetry* from the *Recreations*.[5] In the first the author tries to be systematic, and fails, in the second he is jovially scornful, not without some acute and generous appreciation; in the third he is enthusiastically appreciative, but not, on the whole, critically satisfactory; in the fourth he compasses English sea and land to find one Great Poem, and finds it only in *Paradise Lost*. Everywhere he is alive and full of life, in most places he is suggestive and stimulating at intervals, nowhere is he critically to be depended upon Praise and blame; mud and incense; vision and blindness alike lack that interconnection, that "central tiebeam," which Carlyle, in one of the least unsympathetic and most clear-sighted of his criticisms of his contemporaries, denied him. The leaves are not merely—are not indeed at all—Sibylline; for it is impossible to work them into, or to believe that they were ever inspired by, a continuous

[1] There is much good as well as bad criticism here, but it is almost inevitable that the goodness should be obscured to too many tastes, and the bad intensified to almost all, by the setting of High Jinks Yet Wilson, like Shakespeare according to Collier, "could be very serious," and his defence of Croker against Macaulay is far more valid than has usually been allowed

[2] Essays, i 387 *sq.*

[3] Ibid., ii. 109 *sq.*

[4] Ibid., iii. 386. [5] i. 179.

and integral thought or judgment. There is enjoyment on the reader's part, as on the writer's, but it is "casual fruition": there is even reasoning, but it is mostly on detached and literally eccentric issues. A genial chaos: but first of all, and, I fear, last of all, chaotic.

De Quincey: his anomalies

Wilson's neighbour, friend, contributor, and, in a kindly fashion, half-butt, De Quincey[1] is, like Southey, though in different measure, condition, and degree, rather puzzling as a critic. He, too, had enormous reading, a keen interest in literature, and a distinctly critical temperament. Moreover, during great part of his long life, he never had any motive for writing on subjects that did not please him: and, even when such a motive existed, he seems to have paid sublimely little attention to it. The critical "places" in his works are in fact very numerous; they meet the reader almost *passim*, and often seem to promise substantive and important contributions to criticism. Nor, as a matter of fact, are they ever quite negligible or often unimportant. They constantly have that stimulating and attractive property which is so valuable, and which seems so often to have been acquired by "the Companions" from contact with the loadstone-rock of Coleridge. Every now and then, as in the well-known "Note on the Knocking at the Gate in *Macbeth*," De Quincey will display evidence (whether original or suggested) of almost dæmonic subtlety. Very often, indeed, he will display evidence, if not of dæmonic yet of impish and almost fiendish acuteness, as in his grim and (for a fellow artificial-Paradise seeker) rather callous suggestion[2] that Coleridge and Lamb should have put down their loss of cheerfulness in later years not to opium or to gin but to the later years themselves. "Ah, dear Lamb," says the little monster,[3] "but note that the

[1] As De Quincey had, for one who was not a novelist, the probably unique honour of four complete editions of his *Works* in his last years and the generation succeeding his death, it is not easy to refer to him. But the last —Professor Masson's of 1890—has the merit of methodical arrangement: and its tenth volume contains most of the *purely* critical things.

[2] In *Coleridge and Opium Eating*.

[3] As it is very dangerous to write about De Quincey, let me observe that this is a phrase of Mr Thackeray's about another person, and implies affection and even admiration.

drunkard was fifty-six years old and the songster twenty-three!"

and perversities as a critic,

Yet De Quincey is scarcely—on the whole, and as a whole—to be ranked among the greatest critics. To begin with, his unconquerable habit of "rigmarole" is constantly leading him astray: and the taste for jaunty personality which he had most unluckily imbibed from Wilson leads him astray still further, and still more gravely and damagingly. In the volume on *The Lake Poets* I do not suppose that there are twenty pages of pure criticism, putting all orts and scraps together. The main really critical part of the essay on Lamb—then a fresh and most tempting subject—is a criticism of——Hazlitt! The extremely interesting subject of "Milton *v.* Southey and Landor" (though the paper does contain good things, and, in particular, some excellent remarks on Metre) is all frittered and whittled off into shavings of quip, and crank, and gibe, and personality. The same is the case with what should have been, and in part is, one of his best critical things, the article on Schlosser's *Literary History of the Eighteenth Century*. The present writer will not be suspected, by friend or foe, of insisting ruthlessly on a too grave and chaste critical manner: but De Quincey here is too much for anything and anybody. "For Heaven's sake, my good man," one may say almost in his own words, "do leave off fooling and come to business." In the very long essay on Bentley he has little or no criticism at all; and here, as well as in the "Cicero," he is too much stung and tormented by his hatred of the drab style of Conyers Middleton to see anything else when he gets near to that curious person, as he must in both. On Keats, without any reason for hostility, he has almost the full inadequacy of his generation, with not much less on Shelley; and when he comes to talk even of Wordsworth's *poetry*, though there was no one living whom he honoured more, he is not very much less unsatisfactory.

Nor are these inadequacies and perversities limited to English. There was a good excuse (more than at one time people used to think under the influence of the fervent Goethe-worship of the mid-nineteenth century) for his famous and

furious attack on *Wilhelm Meister*; but what are we to think of a man who (admitting that much has been said and thought of it) coolly "dismisses,"[1] without so much as an unfavourable opinion, the lyric and miscellaneous poetry of one of the greatest lyric poets of Europe, or the world? He persistently belittles French literature: and he had, of course, a right to give his judgment. But, unfortunately, he not only does not give evidence of knowledge to support his condemnation, but does give negative evidence of ignorance. That ignorance, as far as contemporary literature went, seems to have been almost absolute. Even Chateaubriand (a rhetorician after his own heart) he merely names in his dealing with French writers in company with Florian (!), and expressly denies him rhetoric; while the subject before the seventeenth century seems to have been equally a blank to him. But he is most wayward and most uncritical about the classics. He gives himself all the airs of a profound scholar, and seems really to have been a very fair one. Yet that "Appraisal of Greek Literature" which Professor Masson has ruthlessly resuscitated[2] might almost have been written by the most ignorant of the "Moderns," two hundred years ago, for its omissions and commissions. He seems to have been in his most Puckish frame of mind if he was not serious; if he was, *actum est* (or almost so) with him as a critic.

In regard to all literatures.

The truth seems to be that he had no very deep, wide, or fervent love of poetry as such. He could appreciate single lines and phrases,—such as

"Sole sitting by the shores of old romance,"

or

"Beyond the arrows, views, and shouts of men";

but on the whole his curious, and of course strictly "interested," heresy about prose-poetry made him as lukewarm towards poetry pure and simple as it made him unjust to the plainer prose, such as that of Middleton, that of Swift, and even (incomprehensible as this

Their causes.

[1] In his "biography" of Goethe. [2] Vol. x., ed. cit. Date, 1838-39.

particular injustice may seem) that of Plato. Yet we should not be sorry for this heresy, because it gave us, independently of the great creative passages of the *Confessions*, the *Suspiria*, and the rest, the critical pieces of the *Rhetoric* and the *Style*. It is somewhat curious that in the midst of an appreciative period we should have to fall back upon "preceptist" work. But it is certainly here that De Quincey, though not without his insuperable faults, becomes of most consequence in the History of Criticism. In fact, he may be said to have been almost the "instaurator"[1] of this preceptist criticism which, since its older arguments had become nearly useless from the disuse of the Neo-classic appreciation upon which they were based, or which was based upon them, very urgently and particularly required such instauration.

The Rhetoric and the Style.

The *Rhetoric* in particular, with all its defects, has not been superseded as a preceptist canvas, which the capable teacher can broider and patch into a competent treatise of the ornater English style. Its author's unconquerable waywardness appears in his attempt—based in the most rickety fashion and constantly self-contradictory—to combine the traditional and the popular senses of the word in a definition of Rhetoric as *unconvinced* fine writing,—the deliberate elaboration of mere *tours de force* in contradistinction to genuine and heartfelt Eloquence But its view is admirably wide—the widest up to its time that can be found anywhere, I think; it is instinct with a crotchety but individual life; and if the defects of the new method appear when we compare it with Rapin or Batteux, the merits thereof appear likewise, and in ample measure. Nor, despite some digression, is there much of the author's too frequent tomfoolery. His erudition, his interest in the subject, and (towards the end) his genuine and alarmed eagerness to contradict Whately's damaging pronouncements as to poetry and prose, keep him out of this. The *Style* is much more question-

[1] As such it will prove interesting to compare him with Nisard or Planche, especially the latter. But the comparison will, I fear, bring out that superiority of French criticism at this time which, denying it at others, I fully admit.

able, and has much more ephemeral matter in it—the author rides out all his favourite cock-horses by turns, and will often not bate us a single furlong of the journey to Banbury Cross on them. Moreover, much of it is occupied with often just condemnation of the special vices of ordinary English newspaper-and-book style in the earlier middle nineteenth century—Satans which, though not quite extinct, have given main place to other inhabitants of Pandemonium. But the paper, with the subsidiary pieces on *Language* and *Conversation*, will never lose interest and importance.

His compensations.

No incident in the ruthless duty of the critical historian has given me more trouble, or been carried through with more reluctance, than this handling of De Quincey. I have to acknowledge a great, a very early, and a constantly continued indebtedness to him. I could, as was hinted at the beginning of this notice, compile a long and brilliant list of separate instances in which his Old-man-of-the-sea caprices have left him free to give admirable critical pronouncements. His suggestive and *protreptic*[1] quality cannot be overrated. On a philosophical point of criticism he is very rarely wrong, though even here he is too apt to labour the point, as in his deductions in the *Appraisal* from the true and important caution that "sublime" is a defective and delusive word for the subject of Longinus. But he is of those critics, too commonly to be found in the present stage of our inquiry, who are eminently *unsafe*—who require to be constantly surrounded with keepers and guards. I do not remember that Mr Matthew Arnold often, or ever, refers to De Quincey. But I cannot help thinking that, in his strictures on the English critics of his earlier time, he must often have had him in mind. He could not have charged him with narrow reading. He could not have charged him with mere insularity, or with flattery of his co-insulars. But he might easily have produced him,—and it would have been very difficult to get him out of the Arnoldian clutches—as a victim of that "eternal enemy of Art, Caprice."

There are few critics of whom we have been less allowed to

[1] The objection of some folk to this useful word may be perhaps accounted for by their spelling it "protreptic."

form a definite and well-grounded opinion, than of one of the most famous of the practitioners of the art in the first half of the nineteenth century. Some, I should hope, of the very unjust obloquy which used to rest on Lockhart for his "scorpion" quality has been removed by Mr Lang's *Life:* but of his more than thirty years of criticism not much more is accessible than what was public the day after his death. It is true that this—the main articles of it being the *Scott*, the *Burns*, the *Theodore Hook*, and the earlier *Peter's Letters*[1]—is a very goodly literary baggage indeed, and one which any man of letters might consent to have produced, at the cost of a large curtailment of his *peau de chagrin*. It is true, further, that great part of it puts Lockhart in the forefront of the critical army. But its criticism, like the mousquetaireship of Aramis, is but of an interim order; and of the great body of anonymous reviewing, wherein at once the sting and the strength of his critical powers must have been revealed, we have but few instances even indirectly authenticated, as he has now been cleared of the famous *Quarterly* review of Tennyson's early work.[2] Eking this further with indications from letters and the like, we shall find in Lockhart a notable though a more accomplished instance of the class of critic to which, on the other side, Jeffrey also belonged. He is differentiated from Jeffrey by a harder, if clearer and stronger, intellect, by more critical system, and, no doubt, by less amiability of temper. He had formed his taste by a deeper and wider education, he possessed a better style, and he had, as his non-critical work shows, far more imagination.

Lockhart.

Difficulty with his criticism.

The "Tennyson" paper, though not his own, was published under his editorship, and it represents the school of criticism to which he belongs, very far from at the best, but far also from at the worst. This worst would have been nearly reached by him, if we could

The Tennyson *review not his.*

[1] This book, which often occurs in catalogues at a very moderate price, may be strongly recommended to intelligent book-buyers. *Janus*, another waif, in which he and Wilson collaborated, is less interesting.

[2] For this, with the earlier achievement on Keats, has now (1910) been indisputably fathered, in the *Quarterly* itself, on Croker.

believe the earlier "Keats" article in *Blackwood* to be his —a charge which, fortunately, is also pretty certainly to be transferred to the heavily laden shoulders of Croker. Undoubtedly Lockhart was capable of indulging in that style of sneering insolence which, though it is intellectually at a higher level by far than the other style of hectoring abuse, is nearly as offensive, and less excusable because it requires and denotes this very intellectual superiority. But the author of the Tennyson article displays neither. He is merely polite and even good-tempered for the most part; and it is constantly necessary to remember, that if there were beauties which ought to have drawn his eyes away from the faults, there were, in the earlier versions of these early poems, faults enough to draw the eyes of any critic of his stamp away from the beauties. There were trivial and mawkish things which have disappeared entirely; flawed things which have been reforged into perfect ring and temper; things, in the main precious, which were marred by easily removable disfigurements. From unwillingness to accept the later stages of a movement of which he had joyfully shared the earlier, Lockhart could not have been cleared, but Croker can.

On Coleridge, Burns, Scott, and Hook.

In Lockhart's own undoubted work little requires apology. Quite early, in *Peter's Letters*, he had defended the genius of Coleridge against his detractors with admirable vigour and sense. He is extraordinarily good on Burns. The abundant critical remarks which he has interspersed in the *Life of Scott* itself, afford a wonderful exhibition of sensitiveness and fineness of taste, with nothing to be set on the other side except the very pardonable tendency to undervalue and grudge a little in the case of the non-Scottish novels. But an almost better instance of Lockhart's critical power, on the biographical as well as the literary side, is to be found in his article on Theodore Hook, with its remarkable welcome of the new school of Victorian novelists, which shows that his want of receptivity, as regards new poetry, did not extend to prose fiction.

On the whole, we have few better examples than Lockhart, if we have any, of the severer type of critic—of the newer

school, but with a certain tendency towards the older—a little too prone, when his sympathies were not specially enlisted, to think that his subjects would be "nane the waur of a hanging"—a little too quick to ban, and too slow to bless—but acute, scholarly, logical, wide enough in range, when his special prejudices did not interfere, and entitled to some extent to throw the responsibility of those prejudices on the political and literary circumstances of his time.

His general critical character.

If the pixies had not doomed Hartley Coleridge[1] to a career (or an absence of one) so strange and in a manner so sad, there would pretty certainly have been a case, not merely of poetic son succeeding poetic father, against the alleged impossibility or at least non-occurrence of which succession he himself mildly protested, but of critical faculty likewise descending in almost the highest intensity from father to son. And the not ungracious creatures might plead that, after all, opportunity was not lacking. During that strange latter half of his lifetime when he fulfilled, more literally than happily, the poetic prophecy of Wordsworth in his childhood, he seems to have had very little other occupation—indoors at least—besides criticism actual and practical. But, with the inveterate Coleridgean habit of "marginalling," and the equally inveterate one of never turning the Marginalia to any solid account, the results of this practice, save in the case of the famous copy of Anderson's *Poets* (shabbiest and slovenliest treasure-house of treasures immortal and priceless!) which bears his father's and uncle's notes as well as his own, are mostly Sibylline Leaves *after* the passage of the blast. When a man commits his critical thoughts to the narrow margins of weekly newspapers *unbound*—indeed, if he had them bound, the binder would no doubt have exterminated them after the fashion of his ruthless race—he might just as well write on water, and better on sand. Still, the *disjecta membra* do exist—in the *Biographia Borealis*, or *Northern Worthies*, to some extent; in the Essays, collected by

Hartley Coleridge.

Forlorn condition of his criticism.

[1] *Works*, 7 vols. (London, 1851 52), ed. Derwent Coleridge; *Poems and Memoir*, 2 vols.; *Essays*, 2; *Northern Worthies*, 3. An eighth, of *Fragments*, was promised; but if it ever appeared, I have not seen it.

the pious, if sometimes a little patronising, care of his brother Derwent, to a much greater; and perhaps in one instance only, the "Massinger and Ford" Introduction, after a fashion in a manner finished. Yet even here the intended critical *coda* is wanting, and the inevitable critical divagation too much present.

Its quality.

But in all this there is also present, after a fashion of which I can remember no other instance, the evidences of a critical genius which not only did not give itself, but which absolutely refused itself, a chance. Hartley Coleridge has never, I think, been the subject of much study: but a more tempting matter for "problem" lovers can hardly exist. Nothing in his *known* history accounts for the refusal. He was admittedly not temperate: but no one has ever pretended that he was the slave of drink to the extent to which his father was the slave of opium; his interest in literature was intense and undying—that every page that he ever wrote shows beyond possibility of doubt; and the fineness of his critical perceptions is equally indubitable. But the extraordinary and, I think, unparalleled intellectual indolence—

Defects

or rather intellectual paralysis—which beset him, seems to have prevented him not merely from writing, but from that mere reading in which men, too indolent to make any great use of it, constantly indulge as a mere pleasure and pastime. He confesses frankly that he had read very little indeed: and this, though he had been almost all his life within reach of, and for great part of it actually under the same roof with, Southey's hardly equalled library. This ignorance leads him wrong not only on matters of fact, but also on matters of opinion: indeed, he seldom goes wrong, except when he does not know enough about the matter.

It is unfortunate that we have hardly anything finished from him in the critical way, except the "Massinger and Ford" and the Essays he wrote for *Blackwood*, while these last bear such a strong impress of Wilson's own manner[1]

[1] "The Professor," it is hardly necessary to say, was an early and lifelong friend and neighbour of Hartley, whom he seems to have regarded with particular affection.

that it is impossible not to think them Christopherically sophisticated. In the *Northern Worthies* he professes not to meddle with Criticism at all, or to touch it very little. In the "Marvell," however, the "Bentley," the "Ascham," the "Mason," the "Roscoe," and the "Congreve," he is better than his word, and gives some excellent criticism as a seasoning to the biography. One cannot, indeed, but grudge the time that he spends on such worthless stuff as *Elfrida* and *Caractacus*, but we must remember that in that generation of transition, the generation of Milman and Talfourd earlier, of Henry Taylor and others later, the possibility of reviving the serious drama was a very important subject indeed. Hartley, whose reverence for his father is as pleasant as his affection for his mother, evidently thought much of *Remorse* and *Zapolya*, and might probably, if he ever could have got his will to face any hedge, have tried such things himself. On Congreve he is nearly at his best: and his essay certainly ought to be included in that unique volume of *variorum* critical documents on the Restoration Drama, which somebody some day may have the sense to edit.

and examples.

But he would be neither Hartley nor Coleridge if he were not best in the *Marginalia*, good as the "Massinger and Ford" introduction is in parts. The "Anderson" notes, and those on Shakespeare, deserve the most careful reading: and I shall be much surprised if any competent reader fails to see that the man who wrote them at least had it in him to have made no inadequate thirdsman to his father[1] and Hazlitt.

Very few people nowadays, in all probability, think much of "bright, broken Maginn"[2] as a critic; and of those few some perhaps associate his criticism chiefly with such examples of it as the article on Grantley Berkeley, which almost excused the retaliation on its unfor-

Maginn.

[1] It is, perhaps, not officious to subjoin a reminder that we have the curious pleasure of S. T. C.'s notes on Hartley in the *Biographia Borealis*. One of these — an objection to the phrase "prose Shakespeare" for Heywood—is very odd, as apparently showing forgetfulness of the fact that the phrase is not his eldest son's, but his oldest friend's.

[2] *Miscellanies, Prose and Verse*, by William Maginn, ed. R. W. Montagu. 2 vols., London, 1885.

tunate publisher, or the vain attempt to "bluff" out the Keats matter by ridiculing *Adonais*. Even as to most of his exercitations in this very unlovely department, or rather corruption, of our art, there is perhaps something to be said for him. He fights, as a rule, not with Lockhart's dagger of ice-brook temper, nor with Wilson's smashing bludgeon, but with a kind of horse-whip, stinging indeed enough, but letting out no life and breaking no bones at worst and heaviest, at lightest not much more than switching playfully. Had there, however, been nothing to plead for him but this, there would have been no room for him here. But his favourite way of proceeding in his lighter critical articles, though not invented by himself (as it was not of course invented even by Canning and his merry men, from whom Maginn took it), the method of parody-criticism[1] is, if not a very high variety, and especially not in the least a convincing one, still one which perhaps deserves a few lines of reference, and of which he was a really great master.

His parody-criticisms

Still, a mere allusion would suffice for them if they stood alone, and Maginn's paragraph might be completed by observing that he has repaired the absolutely false statement, that "Michael Angelo was a very indifferent poet," by the far too true one, that "Any modern sermon, after the Litany of the Church of England, is an extreme example of the bathos."[2] But his *Essay on Dr Farmer's Learning of Shakespeare*,[3] and the much shorter but still substantial *Lady Macbeth*,[4] are by no means to be omitted or merely catalogued. These two pieces show that Maginn, if only he could have kept his hand from the glass, and his pen

and more serious efforts.

[1] They are scattered all over the *Memoirs of Morgan O'Doherty*, and often form independent items of the *Miscellanies*. The style has borne good fruit since in Aytoun and Martin's *Bon Gaultier Ballads* (1845), in Aytoun's *Firmilian* (1854), and in the work of Calverley and Traill.

[2] It would have been interesting to hear Maginn on the Revised Version "after" the Authorised.

[3] Ed. cit., ii. 1-116. Let me guard carefully against being supposed myself to speak disrespectfully of Farmer, whose Essay will be found recently reprinted in Mr Nichol Smith's collection. Farmer is at least as right against *his* adversaries as Maginn against him.

[4] Ibid., pp. 117-144.

from mere gambols or worse, not only might but would have been one of the most considerable of English critics. The goodness, and the various goodness, of both is all the more remarkable because Maginn seems to have owed little or nothing to the influence of Coleridge. Almost the only fault in the first is the hectoring incivility with which Farmer himself is spoken of, and this, as we have seen, is but too old a fault with critics, while it was specially prevalent at this period, and our own is far from guiltless of it. But the sense and learning of the paper are simply admirable: and Maginn's possession of almost the last critical secret is shown by his wise restraint in arguing that Farmer's argument for Shakespeare's ignorance is invalid, without going on, as some would do, and have done, to argue the poet omniscient by learning as well as by genius. As for the *Lady Macbeth*, the sense is reinforced, and the learning (here not necessary) replaced, by taste and subtlety of the most uncommon kind. I do not know a piece of dramatic character-criticism (no, not the thousand-times-praised thing in *Wilhelm Meister*) more unerringly delicate and right. And this man, not, as the cackle goes, by "neglect of genius," by the wicked refusal of patrons to patronise, not by anything of the kind, but by sheer lack of self-command, wasted his time in vulgar journalism at the worst, and with rare exceptions[1] in mere sport-making at the best!

We have been occupied since the beginning of this chapter by men who, save in the case of Hartley Coleridge, were closely connected with the periodical press, and owed almost all their communication with the public to it. We now come to a pair, greater than any of them, who were indeed "contributors," but not contributors mainly.

Another great name is added, by Macaulay, to the long and pleasant list of our examples how "Phibbus car" has, in unexpected and puzzling but always interesting ways, "made or

[1] In prose such as *The Story without a Tail*, and in verse such as *The Pewter Quart*, with at least some others.

marred the "not always "foolish Fates" of critics and criticism.

Macaulay. When we first meet him as a critic of scarcely four-and-twenty, in the articles contributed to *Knight's Quarterly*, we may feel inclined to say that nobody whom we have yet met (except perhaps Southey) can have had at that age a wider range of reading, and nobody at all an apparently keener relish for it. He is, what Southey was not, a competent scholar in the classics; he knows later (if unfortunately not quite earlier) English literature extraordinarily well; he has, what was once common with us, but was in his days getting rare, and has since grown rarer, a pretty thorough knowledge of Italian, and he is certainly not ignorant of French (though perhaps at no time did he thoroughly relish its literature), while he is later to add Spanish and German. But he does not only know, he loves. There is already much personal rhetoric and mannerism especially in the peroration of his review of Mitford's *Greece*, where he reproaches that Tory historian with his neglect of Greek literature. But it is quite evidently sincere. He displayed similar enthusiasm, combined in a manner not banal, in his earlier article on Dante, and he shows wonderful and prophetic knowledge of at least parts of literature in his paper on the Athenian Orators, as well as in the later article on History, belonging to his more recognised literary period From a candidate of this kind, but just qualified to be a deacon of the Church in years, we may surely expect a deacon in the craft of criticism before very long, particularly when he happens to possess a ready-made style of extraordinarily, and not merely, popular qualities. There are some who would say that this expectation was fully realised: I am afraid I cannot quite agree with them, and it is my business here to show why.

His exceptional competence in some ways.

The early articles.

We have said that, even in these early exercitations, Macaulay's characteristics appear strongly: and among not the least strongly appearing are some from which, unless a man disengages himself, he shall very hardly become a really great literary critic. The first of these is the well-known and not seriously to be denied tendency, not merely

His drawbacks.

to "cocksureness," but to a sweeping indulgence in superlatives, a "knock-me-down-these-knaves" gesticulation, which is the very negation of the critical attitude. Even the sound, the genuine, the well-deserved literary preferences above referred to lose not a little by this tone of swaggering sententiousness in their expression; and they lose a great deal more by the simultaneous appearance of the hopelessly uncritical habit of making the whites more dazzling by splashing the deepest black alongside of them. The very eulogy of Dante as a whole seems to Macaulay incomplete without an elaborate pendant of depreciation of Petrarch, while "Tasso, Marino, Guarini, and Metastasio" are swept into a dust-bin of common disdain, and we are told that the *Secchia Rapita*, "the best poem of its kind in some respects," is "painfully diffuse and languid," qualities which one might have thought destructive of any "bestness."

The practical choking of the good seed.

It is of less importance—because the fault is so common as to be almost universal—that the "Mitford" displays very strong political prejudice, which certainly affects, as it should not do, the literary judgment. Mitford may have been an irregular and capricious writer, but the worst vices of the worst Rymer-and-Dennis criticism appear in the description of him as "bad." His style could not possibly be so described by a fair critic who did not set out with the major premiss that whatever is unusual is bad. And not only here, but even in the purely literary essays, even at their most enthusiastically literary pitch, we may, I think, without any unfairness, perceive an undertone, an undercurrent, of preference for the not purely literary sides of the matter—for literature as it bears on history, politics, manners, man, instead of for literature in itself and for itself.

With the transference from *Knight's* to the *Edinburgh*, which was political and partisan-political, or nothing, these seeds of evil grew and flourished, and to some extent choked the others. The "Milton," the "Machiavelli," the early and, for a long time, uncollected "Dryden," serve as very hot-beds for them. All three are, as the French would say, *jonchés* with superlatives, arranged side by side in contrast like that of a zebra. The

"Dryden"—a very tempting subject for this kind of work—is not the worst critically; indeed it is perhaps the best. It is, at any rate, far the most really literary, and it may not be unfair to think that this had something to do with the fact that Macaulay did not include it in the collected *Essays*.

His literary surveys in the Letters.

The real *locus classicus*, however, for Macaulay's criticism is perhaps to be found, not in his published works at all, but in the letters which he wrote to Flower Ellis from Calcutta,[1] taken in connection with their context in Sir George Trevelyan's book, and especially with the remarkable avowal which occurs in a letter, a very little later, to Macvey Napier. Macaulay, as is well known, availed himself of his Indian sojourn to indulge in almost a debauch of reading, especially in pure literature, and especially (again) in the classics. And his reflections to Ellis, a kindred spirit, are of the most interesting kind. He tells his correspondent that he has gone back to Greek literature with a passion quite astonishing to himself. He had been enraptured with Italian, little less pleased with Spanish, but when he went back to Greek he felt as if he had never known before what intellectual enjoyment was. It is impossible to imagine a happier critical *diathesis*: and the individual symptoms confirm it. Admiration of Æschylus is practically a passport for a man claiming poetical taste: admiration of Thucydides holds the same place in prose. And Macaulay puts them both *super æthera*. But it is a tell-tale that his admiration for Thucydides (of whom he says he had formerly not thought much) seems to have been determined by his own recent attention to "historical researches and political affairs." He does full justice to Lucian. He is capital on Niebuhr: a good deal less capital on the Greek Romances; for though Achilles Tatius is not impeccable in taste and exceeding peccable in morality, it is absurd to call his book "detestable trash." Perhaps he is hard on Statius as compared with Lucan: but here taste is free. It is more difficult to excuse him for the remark that St Augustine in his *Confessions* (a book not without interest) "expresses himself in the style of a field-preacher." The

[1] *Life*, p. 309 *sq.*, ed. cit.

present writer is not fond of conventicles, either house or hedge. But if he knew of a field-preacher who preached as St Augustine writes, he fears he might be tempted astray.

His confession.

And then, after the six months' voyage home in the slow *Lord Hungerford* (which must have been six months' hard reading, though not penal), comes the great avowal to Macvey Napier, now editor of the *Edinburgh*:—

> You cannot suspect me of any affectation of modesty: and you will therefore believe me that I tell you what I sincerely think, when I say that I am not successful in analysing the effect of works of genius. I have written several things on historical, political, and moral questions of which, on the fullest reconsideration, I am not ashamed, and by which I should be willing to be estimated; but *I have never written a page of criticism on poetry or the fine arts which I would not burn if I had the power.* Hazlitt used to say of himself, "I am nothing if not critical." The case with me is exactly the reverse, I have a strong and acute enjoyment of works of the imagination, but I have never habituated myself to dissect them. . . . Trust to my knowledge of myself; I never in my life was more certain of anything than of what I tell you, and I am sure that Lord Jeffrey will tell you exactly the same.[1]

Such a deliberate judgment on himself by such a man, close on the "age of wisdom,"[2] after fifteen years' constant literary practice, is practically final; but probably not a few readers of Sir George's book felt, as the present writer did, that it merely confirms an opinion formed by themselves long before they ever read it.

The Essays.

At any rate, in nearly all the best known *Essays* the literary interest dwindles and the social-historic grows. I do not object, as some do, to the famous "Robert Montgomery." This sort of criticism ought not to be done too often: and no one but a Dennis of the other kind enjoys doing it, except when the criminal's desert is of peculiar richness. But it has to be done sometimes, and it is here done scientifically, without rudeness I think, with as much justice[3] as need be "for the good of the people," and well.

[1] *Life*, p. 343 ed cit.

[2] He was thirty-eight.

[3] One of the injustices is curious from a man of Scottish blood, though every Englishman would commit it, as I own I should have done till very

Still, it is not in the hangman's drudgery, it is in the herald's good office, that Macaulay's critical weakness shows. There are some who, in all good faith and honest indignation, will doubtless cry "What! is there no literary interest in the "Milton" itself or in the "Bunyan"? Certainly there is. But, in the first case, let the Devil's Advocate's devil (it is too easy for his chief) remind us that there is very strong party feeling in both—that no less a person than Mr Matthew Arnold denied criticism to the "Milton"—that the author of the "Bunyan" himself puts in the forefront of his praise of *The Pilgrim's Progress* its "strong *human* interest," and that he goes on to make one of his too frequent uncritical contrasts, and one of his very rare gross blunders of fact, as to the *Faerie Queene* And, besides, he was still in the green tree, as he was also when he gave the, in part, excellent criticism of the "Byron," where the sweeping general lines of the sketch of the poetry of "correctness" follow those of some inferior but more original surveys of Macaulay's editor Jeffrey. And though there is interesting criticism in the "Boswell," it is pushed to the wall by the (I fear it must be said) ignoble desire to "dust the varlet's jacket," and pay Croker off in the *Edinburgh* for blows received at St Stephen's.[1]

Indeed it would be quite idle to stipulate that anything here said to the detriment of Macaulay's criticism is said relatively, if there were not a sort of doubtless honest folk who seem to think that denying a man the riches of Crœsus means that he is penniless and in debt. Macaulay *was* a critic on his day—a good one for a long time, and perhaps always a great one *in potentia*. But his criticism was slowly edged out by its rivals or choked by its own parasitic plants. It

late in my reviewing life. It is the satire on the comparison of a woman's eyes to dew on "a bramble," which of course in England means a *bush*, and in Scotland a *berry*. I wonder whether R L S. meant to appease the other poor Robert's *manes* when he wrote the phrase "eyes of gold and bramble-dew," and I should have asked him had Fate permitted.

[1] It may seem whimsical: but I doubt whether any one of a really critical *ethos* would put down, even in his private diary, that a private enemy and a hostile reviewer was "a bad, a very bad man, a scandal to politics and letters." Criticism herself would, I think, condescend to give any of her favourite children's ears an Apollonian twitch.

occupies about a twentieth part (to adopt his own favourite arithmetical method) of the Essay on Bacon, about one-tenth of that on Temple. In the famous piece on "Restoration Drama" it is the moral and social, not the literary or even the dramatic, side of the matter that interests Macaulay: and in dealing with Addison himself, a man who, though not quite literary or nothing, was certainly literary first of all, the purely literary handling is entirely subordinated to other parts of the treatment. This may be a good thing or it may be a bad thing: the *tendenz*-critics, and the criticism-of-life critics, and the others, are quite welcome to take the first view if they please. But that it is a *thing;* that Macaulay himself acknowledged it, and that—despite his unsurpassed devotion to literature and his great performance therein—it must affect our estimate of him, according to the schedules and specifications of this book, is not, I think, deniable by any honest inquirer.

Similar dwindling in Carlyle.

A phenomenon by no means wholly dissimilar in kind, but conditioned as to extent and degree by the differing temperaments and circumstances of the two men, may be seen in the criticism of Macaulay's great contemporary, opposite, and corrective, Carlyle,[1] and those who care for such investigations might find it interesting to compare both with the admitted instances of dwindling literary interest—not critical but simply enjoying—in cases like that of Darwin. But leaving this extension as out of our province, and returning to our two great men of letters themselves, we shall find differences enough between them, here as elsewhere, but a remarkable agreement in the gradual ascendancy obtained by anthropology over (in the old and good sense, not the modern perversion) philology. Carlyle had always the more catholic, as Macaulay had the exacter, sense of literary form; but it may be suspected that at no time was the form chiefly eloquent to either: and in Carlyle's attitude for many years after the somewhat tardy commencement of his actual critical career, something ominous may be observed. It may seem

[1] Carlyle was an older man than Macaulay, but he began to publish original work later.

strange and impious to some of those who acknowledge no greater debt for mental stimulation to any one than to Carlyle, and who rank him among the greatest in all literature, to find one who joins them in this homage, and perhaps outgoes most of them therein, questioning his position as a critic. Let us therefore examine the matter somewhat carefully.

Carlyle's criticism, like his other qualities, interpenetrates nearly all his work, from *Sartor* to the "Kings of Norway": it appears in the *Life of Schiller*,[1] in *Heroes and Hero-Worship*, in *Past and Present*, in the *Life of Sterling*, while it *fuliginates* itself to share in the general fuliginousness of the *Latter-day Pamphlets*, and is strewn even over the greater biographies and histories of the *Cromwell* and the *Frederick*. We shall, however, lose nothing, and gain much, by confining ourselves mainly to the literary constituents of the great collection of *Essays* in this place. The discussion can be warranted to be well leavened with remembrance of the other work.

Who indeed is more rememberable than Carlyle? Of late years, partly from having read them so much, partly from having so much else to read, I have left parts of these Essays unopened for a long time. Yet, in looking them through for the purpose of this present writing, I have found myself constantly, even in the least familiar and famous parts, able to shut the book and complete clause, sentence, or even to some extent paragraph, like a text, or a collect, or a tag of Horace or Virgil. But in this re-reading it has struck me, even more forcibly than of old, how much Carlyle's strictly critical inclinations, if not his strictly critical faculties, waned as he grew older. In the earlier Essays—those written before and during the momentous period of the Craigenputtock sojourn—there is a great deal of purely or almost purely literary criticism of an excellent kind—sober and vigorous, fresh and well disciplined. There may be, especially in regard to Richter and

[1] Any one anxious really to appreciate Carlyle's *potentia* as a literary critic may be specially commended to this. It was written, of course, not merely before he developed his own style, but before the freer modern criticism had been largely practised by anybody except apart-dwelling stars like Coleridge. But it brands the author as a great critic *if he chose*. He did not wholly choose: and, later, he refused.

Goethe, a slightly exaggerated backing of the German side. But it is hardly more than slightly exaggerated, and the treatment generally is of the most thorough kind compatible with an avowed tendency towards "philosophical" rather than "formal" criticism. Professor Vaughan was certainly justified in including part of the *Goethe* in his selected specimens of English criticism[1] for its general principles and examples of method. Nor is Carlyle less to be praised for his discharge of the more definitely practical part of the critic's business. He is thought of generally as "splenetic and rash": but it would be impossible to find anywhere a more good-humoured, and (in parts at least) a more judicial censure than that of William Taylor's preposterous *German Poetry*,[2] or a firmer, completer, and at the same time less excessive condemnation than that of the equally preposterous method of Croker's original *Boswell*. We may see already that the critic evidently prefers matter to form, and that he is by no means quite catholic even in his fancy for matter. But he has a right to be this; and altogether there are few things in English criti-

The earlier Essays.

cism better worth reading, marking, and learning, by the novice, than the literary parts of these earlier volumes of *Essays*.[3] It may be that the channels in which his ink first flowed (especially that rather carefully, not to say primly, banked and paved one of the *Edinburgh*) imposed some restriction on him; it may be that he found the yet unpublished, or just published, *Sartor* a sufficient "lasher" to draw off the superfluous flood and foam of his fancy. But the facts are the facts.

The later.

And so, too, it is the fact that, later, he draws away from the attitude of purely literary consideration, if he does not, as he sometimes still later does, take up one actually hostile to this. The interesting "Characteristics"

[1] London, 1896.

[2] Not that all Taylor's ideas were preposterous. He and others of the Norwich School would make a good excursus. Even the "quotidian and stimulant" theory, of which Carlyle makes such fun, might have a chance with Carlyle's own "highest aim of a nation"

[3] More especially those on the *Nibelungenlied* and Early German Poetry generally. These could hardly have been better done.

(as early as 1831) is one of the places most to be recommended to people who want to know what Carlyle really was, and not what divers more or less wise or unwise commentators have said of him. The writer has flings at literary art—especially conscious literary art — towards the beginning: afterwards (which is still more significant) he hardly takes any notice of it at all. In the much better known "Boswell," "Burns," and "Scott"[1] Essays, his neglect of the purely literary side is again the more remarkable, because it is not ostentatious. In the "Diderot," dealing with a subject who was as much a man of letters first of all (though of very various and *applied* letters) as perhaps any man in history, he cannot and does not neglect that subject's literary performance; but the paper is evidence of the very strongest how little of his real interest is bestowed upon it. It is of the man Diderot—and of the man Diderot's relation to, and illumination of, that condition of the French mind and state of which some good folk have thought that Carlyle knew nothing—that he is thinking, for this that he is caring. Later still, he will select for his favourite subjects people like Mirabeau, who had much better have written no books at all, or Dr Francia, whose connection with literature is chiefly limited to the fact of his having written one immortal sentence. And this sentence, not having myself seen or wished to see the works of Rengger, I have always suspected that Carlyle or "Sauerteig" edited for him.[2]

The attitude of the Latter-day Pamphlets.

And then things get worse. That invocation of the Devil in the *Latter-day Pamphlets*,[3] "to fly away with the poor Fine Arts," is indeed put off on "one of our most distinguished public men." But Carlyle avows sympathy with it. He even progresses from it to the Platonic view that "Fiction" at all "is not

[1] As an out-and-out Scottite *and* Carlylian, I would respectfully deprecate hasty judgment of this. It is a *crux ansata*, and you may easily get hold of the wrong handle.

[2] "O people of Paraguay! how long will you continue idiots?" If a casual half-breed really thus put politics and life in a nut-shell, he was certainly somebody.

[3] The different paging of the different editions makes it useless to give exact references. Nor are they wanted: for the "Contents" and Indices of Carlyle's works are ideal.

quite a permissible thing"—is "sparingly permissible" at any rate. "Homer" was meant for "history":[1] the arts were not "sent into the world to fib and dance." As for Literature more particularly, "if it continue to be the haven of expatriated spiritualisms," well: but "if it dwindle, as *is probable*, into mere merry-andrewism, windy twaddle, and feats of spiritual legerdemain," there "will be no hope for it." Its "regiment" is "extremely miscellaneous," "more a *canaille* than a regiment," and so forth. The "brave young British man" is adjured to be "rather shy of Literature than otherwise, for the present,"—a counsel which, it is well known, Mr Carlyle repeated in his Edinburgh Rectorial address sixteen years later. Nor did he ever alter the point of view which he had now taken up, either in book, or minor published work, or Letters, or autobiographic jottings, or those *Ana* which still flit on the mouths of men concerning his later years.

The conclusion of this matter.

A man who speaks thus, and thinks thus, has perforce renounced the development of any skill that he may once have had in the analysis of the strands of the tight-rope, or the component drugs of the Cup of Abominations. Still less can he be expected to expatiate, with the true critic's delight, on the elegance with which the dancer pirouettes over vacancy, or on the iridescent richness of the wine of Circe, as it moveth itself in the chalice. I do not know that—great critic, really, as he had been earlier and always might have been—the loss of his services in this function is much to be regretted. For he did other things which assuredly most merely literary critics could not have done: and not a few good workmen stepped forward, in the last thirty years of his life, to do the work which he thus left undone, not without some flouting and scorning of it. But, once more, the fact is the fact: and his estrangement from the task, like that of Macaulay, undoubtedly had something to do with the general critical poverty of the period of English literature, which was the most fertile and vigorous in the literary life of both.

Another of the very greatest gods of mid-nineteenth century

[1] Had he been reading Vico?

literature in England displays the slightly anti-critical turn of his time still more curiously. It is one of the oddest and most interesting of the many differences between the two great masters of English prose fiction in the mid-nineteenth century that, while there is hardly any critical view of literature in Dickens, Thackeray is full of such views.[1] He himself practised criticism early and late; and despite the characteristic and perhaps very slightly affected depreciation of the business of "reading books and giving judgment on them," which appears in *Pendennis* and other places, it is quite clear that he pursued that business for love as well as for money. Moreover, from first to last,—from his early and long uncollected "High-Jinkish" exploits in *Fraser* to the *Roundabout Papers*,—he produced critical work from which an anthology of the very finest critical quality, and by no means small in bulk, might be extracted with little pains and no little pleasure. If he "attains not unto the first three," it is I think only from the effect of the reaction or ebb that we note in this chapter, and from a certain deficiency in that catholic sureness which a critic of the highest kind can hardly lack. Nobody is obliged to like everything good; probably no one *can* like everything good. But, in case of disliking, the critic must be able either to give reasons (like those of Longinus in regard to the *Odyssey*) relatively, if not positively, satisfactory: or he must frankly admit that his objections are based upon something extra-literary, and that therefore, in strictness, he has no literary judgment to give.

Thackeray.

His one critical weakness

Now Thackeray does not do this. He was not, perhaps, very good at giving reasons at all: and he was specially affected by that confusion of literary and extra-literary considerations from which all times suffer, but from which his own time and party—the moderate Liberals of the mid-nineteenth century in England—suffered more than any time or party known to us. Practically we have his confession, in the famous and dramatically paradoxical sentence on Swift, that, though

[1] Since the text was written, full collections of his criticism, with many *anecdota*, have appeared in Messrs Macmillan's and the "Oxford" editions.

he is the greatest of the Humourist company, "I say we should hoot him." The literary critic who has "got salvation" knows that he must never do this — that whatever his dislike for the man — Milton, Racine, Swift, Pope, Rousseau, Byron, Wordsworth (I purposely mix up dislikes which are mine with those which are not)—he must not allow them to colour his judgment of the writer. *Gulliver* may be a terrible, humiliating, heart-crushing indictment, but nothing can prevent it from being a glorious book: and so on. Now Thackeray, by virtue of that quality of his, different sides of which have been—with equal lack of wisdom perhaps—labelled "cynicism" and "sentimentality," was wont to be very "peccant in this kind," and it, with some, though less, purely political or religious prejudice, and a little caprice, undoubtedly flawed his criticism.

and his excellence.

When, however, these outside disturbers kept quiet, as they very often did, Thackeray's criticism is astonishingly catholic and sound, and sometimes he was able to turn the disturbers themselves out. He had a most unhappy and Philistine dislike of the High Church movement. yet the passage in *Pendennis* on *The Christian Year* is one of the sacred places of sympathetic notice. The well-known *locus* in *The Newcomes*, as to the Colonel's horror at the new literary gods, shows how sound Thackeray's own faith in them was: yet he, least of all men, could be accused of forsaking the old. He had that generous appreciation of his own fellow-craftsmen by which novelists have been honourably distinguished from poets: though not all poets have been jealous, and though, from Richardson downwards, there have been very jealous novelists. If there were more criticism like the famous passage on Dumas in the *Roundabouts*, like great part of the solid *English Humourists*, like much elsewhere, our poor Goddess would not be liable to have her comeliness confounded with the ugliness of her personators, as is so often the case. And his is no promiscuous and undiscriminating generosity. He can "like nicely," and does.

Still, though he has sometimes escaped the disadvantages of his temperament, he has often succumbed to those of his time;

and what those disadvantages were cannot be better shown than by an instance to which we may now turn.

When, in writing a little book upon Mr Matthew Arnold,[1] the present writer spoke severely of the state of English criticism between 1830 and 1860, some protests were made, as though the stricture were an instance of that "unfairness to the last generation" which has been frequently noticed, and invariably deprecated and condemned here. I gave, on that occasion, some illustrative instances,[2] I may here add another and very remarkable one, which I had not at that time studied. In April 1849 there appeared in *Blackwood's Magazine* an article of some length on Tennyson's work, which at the time consisted of the revised and consolidated *Poems* of 1842 (still further castigated in the one-volume form, so familiar to the youth of my generation), and of *The Princess*. This article[3] is not in the least uncivil—"Maga" had now outgrown her hoydenish ways: but we do not find the maturer, yet hardly less attractive, graces of the *trentaine*. The writer proclaims himself blind and deaf at every moment. He misses—he positively blasphemes—the beauty of many things that Wilson had frankly welcomed. He selects for praise such second- or third-rate matter as *The Talking Oak*. *Claribel*, not Tennyson's greatest thing, but the very Tennyson in germ, "leaves as little impression on the living ear as it would on the sleeper beneath." The exquisite *Ode to Memory*, with all its dreamy loveliness, is "an utter failure throughout," it is a "mist" "coloured by no ray of beauty." But the critic is made most unhappy by the song "A spirit haunts the last year's bowers." It is "an odious piece of pedantry." Its admirable harmony, at once as delightful and as true to true English prosody as verse can be, extracts from him the remark, "What metre, Greek or Roman, Russian or Chinese, it was intended to imitate, we have no care to inquire: the man was writing English, and had no justifiable pretence for tortur-

Blackwood, *in* 1849, *on Tennyson.*

[1] Edinburgh, 1899, p. 59.

[2] Ibid., note, p. 10.

[3] It is all the more remarkable that the writer was "not the first comer." He was, I believe, William Smith, the author of *Thorndale* and other books much prized by good judges, a man of great talents, wide reading, and admirable character.

ing our ears with verse like this." The *Lady of Shalott* is "intolerable," "odious," "irritating," "an annoyance," "a caprice": anybody who likes it "must be far gone in dilettanteism." Refrains are "melancholy iterations." With a rather pleasing frankness the critic half confesses that he knows he ought to like the *Marianas*, but wholly declares that he does not. He likes the *Lotos-Eaters*, so that he cannot have been congenitally deprived of *all* the seven senses of Poetry; but he cannot even form an idea what "the horse with wings kept down by its heavy rider" means in the *Vision of Sin*, and he cannot away with the *Palace* and the *Dream*, now purged, let it be remembered, of their "balloons" and Groves-of-Blarney stanzas, and in their perfect beauty. "Giving himself away," in the fatal fashion of such censors, he does not merely in effect pronounce them both with rare exceptions "bad and unreadable," but selects the magnificent line—

"Throb through the ribbed stone"—

for special ridicule. "To hear one's own voice throbbing through the ribbed stone is a startling novelty in acoustics," which simply shows, not merely that he had never heard his own or any other voice singing under a vaulted roof, but that he had not the mite of imagination necessary for conceiving the effect. With *The Princess*, as less *pure* poetry—good as it is—he is less unhappy; but he is not at all comfortable there.

To do our critic justice, however, though it makes his case a still more leading one, he is not one of the too common carpers who string a reasonless "I don't like this" to a telltale "I can't understand that," until they can twist a ball (not of cowslips) to fling at a poet. He has, or thinks he has, a theory: and in some respects his theory is not a bad one. He admits that "the subtle play of imagination" may be "the most poetical part of a poem," that it may "constitute the difference between poetry and prose," which is good enough. But he thinks you may have too much of this good thing, that it may be "too much divorced from those sources of interest which affect all mankind"; and he thinks, further, that this divorce

has taken place, not merely in Tennyson, but in Keats and in Shelley. Yet, again, as has been indeed already made evident, he has not in the least learnt the secret of that prosodic freedom, slowly broadened down from precedent to precedent of early Middle English writers, and Chaucer, and the Balladists, and Spenser, and Shakespeare, and Milton, and Coleridge, which it is the glory of the nineteenth century to have perfected. And he detests the new poetic diction, aiming at the utmost reach of visual as well as musical appeal, which came with this freedom. His recoil from the "jingling rhythm" throws him with a shudder against the "resplendent gibberish." In other words, he is not at focus: he is outside. He can neither see nor hear: and therefore he cannot judge.

But others' eyes and ears were opening, though slowly, and with indistinct results, at first.

George Brimley.

I hardly know a book more interesting to the real student of real criticism than George Brimley's *Essays*.[1] That it gives us, with Matthew Arnold's earliest work, the first courses of the new temple of English Criticism is something, but its intrinsic attraction is its chief The writer was apparently able to devote his short but not unhappy life, without let or hindrance other than that of feeble health, to literature; he was unhampered by any distracting desire to create; he could judge and enjoy with that almost uncanny calmness which often results, in happy dispositions, from the beneficent effect of the *mal physique*, freed from the aggravation of the *mal moral*.[2] He has idols; but he breaks away from them, if he does not quite break them. He puts no others in their places, as Arnold did too often: and, like Dryden (though they had no other point of resemblance than in both being admirable critics, and both members of Trinity College, Cambridge), he never goes wrong without coming right, with a force and vehemence of leap only intensified by his recoil. In his best work, what should be the famous, and is, to those

[1] My copy is the 2nd ed. Mr W. G. Clark's preface to the 1st is dated "Ap. 1858," rather less than a year after Brimley's death.

[2] Cf. Chesterfield's profound remark to Mme de Mauconseil, on Christmas Day 1755: *Il me semble que le mal physique attendrit autant que le mal moral endurcit le cœur.*

who know it, the delightful, Essay on Tennyson, we have a thing profitable at once for example, for reproof, and for instruction, as few critical things are.

We find him at the opening a little joined to one idol, that apparently respectable, but infinitely false, god, the belief that the poet must somehow or other deal with modern life[1] Even from this point of view he will not give up Tennyson, but he apologises for him, and he colours nearly all his remarks on at least the early *Poems* by the apologies. He cannot shake himself quite free. He sees the beauty of *Claribel*. but he will not allow its beauty to be its sole duty. It "is not quite certain what the precise feeling of it is," and "no poem ought to admit of such a doubt." No music of verse, no pictorial power, "will enable a reader to care for such 'creatures of the fancy'" as Margaret or Eleanore, as the Sea Fairies, and many others. "*If* expression were the highest aim of poetry," *Mariana* would be consummate: but——[1] Mr Tennyson "moved in the centre of the most distinguished young men of the University," "yet his poems present faint evidences of this," strange to say! *The Miller's Daughter*, and *The Gardener's Daughter*, and *The May Queen* are dwelt on at great length, and with an evident feeling that here is something you can recommend to a practical friend who cannot embrace day-dreams. *Mariana in the South* should "connect itself more clearly with a person brought before the mind"—with a certificate of birth, let us say, and something about her parentage, and the bad man who left her, and the price of beans and garlic in the next village. *The Lady of Shalott* "eliminates all human interest." *Fatima*, justly admired, "has neither beginning, middle, or end." *The Palace of Art* has "no adequate *dramatic* presentation of the mode in which the great law of humanity works out its processes in the soul." [So lyric poets, we understand, are *not* entitled to speak lyrically: but must write drama!] And, greatest shock of all, *The Dream of Fair Women* is

His Essay on Tennyson.

[1] This idol had already had notice to quit. The Essay is of 1855, when it originally appeared in *Cambridge Essays* Matthew Arnold's admirable *Preface* is two years older.

not so much as mentioned. When Brimley wrote it had long shaken off its earlier crudities,—had attained its final symmetry. It was there, entire and perfect, from the exquisite opening, through the matchless blended shiftings of life and literature, woven into one passionate whole, to those last two stanzas which give the motto of Life itself from youth to age, the *raison d'être* of Heaven, the undying sting of Hell, the secret of the peace that grows on the soul through Purgatory. And the critic says nothing about it!

Yet he has justified his instinct—if not quite his cleared vision—from the first. Of *Claribel* itself, of the *Marianas*, of *The Lotos-Eaters*, of the *Palace*, he has given analytic appreciations so enthusiastic, and at the same time so just, so solidly thought, and so delicately phrased, that there is nothing like them in Mr Arnold (who was rather grudging of such things), and nothing superior to them anywhere.

There is a priceless wavering, a soul-saving "suppose it were true?" in that "If" (most virtuous of its kind!),—"*If* expression were the highest aim of poetry," nor do I think it fanciful to see in the blasphemy about music and painting *not* saving "creatures of the fancy," a vain protest against the conviction that they *do*. Where he can get his prejudice and his judgment to run in couples—as in regard to *Locksley Hall*—the car sweeps triumphantly from start to finish, out of all danger from the turning pillar. When he comes to *Maud* (which the folk who had the prejudice, but not the judgment, were blaspheming at the very moment at which he wrote), he turns on them with a vehemence almost inconsistent—but with the blessed inconsistency which is permissible—and lays it down plump and plain, that "it is well not to be frightened out of the enjoyment of fine poetry . . . by such epithets as morbid, hysterical, spasmodic." Most true, and it would be still better to add "beginning," "middle," "end," "not human," the neglect of acquaintance with the most distinguished young men of the university, the absence of dramatic presentation, and the rest of them, to the herd of bogies that should first be left to animate swine, and then be driven into the deep. Once, indeed, afterwards he half relapses, observing that there is

"incongruity" in *The Princess*. But his nerves have grown firmer from his long bath of pure poetry, and he agrees to make the best of it.

His other work.

This "Tennyson" essay is one of a hundred pages, though not very large ones: but the only other piece of length which has been preserved, a paper on "Wordsworth" not much shorter than the "Tennyson," is, as was perhaps natural, seeing that it was published immediately after the poet's death, mainly biographical, and so uninteresting: while the remaining contents of the volume are short reviews. The "Wordsworth" starts, however, with reasoned estimates of Byron, Scott, and Shelley, as foils to Wordsworth: and to these, remembering their time,[1] the very middle of the century, we turn with interest. The "Byron" and the "Scott" reward us but moderately: they are in the main "what he ought to have said,"—competent, well-balanced, true enough as far as they go, but showing no very individual grip. The Shelley, a better test, is far more satisfactory in the result. It is quite clear that Brimley sympathised neither with Shelley's religious views, nor with his politics, nor with his morals. He may be thought to be even positively unjust in saying that Shelley's "mind was ill-trained, and not well furnished with facts," for *intellectually* few poets have been better off in this respect. Yet, in spite of all this, he says, "with one exception a more glorious poet has not been given to the English nation," which once more shows how very much sounder he was on the subject of poetry than Arnold, and how little beginnings, and middles, and ends, with all their trumpery, really mattered to him. Among the shorter pieces, the attempts at abstract, or partly abstract, treatment in "Poetry and Criticism" and "The Angel in the House" (only part of which latter is actually devoted to its amiable but rather wool-gathering title-subject) are not conspicuously successful; they are, in fact, trial-essays, by a comparative novice, in an art the secrets of which had been almost lost for nearly a generation. But the attempt in "Poetry and Criticism" to gather up, squeeze out, and give

[1] The "Wordsworth" is some years earlier than the "Tennyson." It appeared in *Fraser* during the summer of 1851.

form to the Coleridgean vaguenesses (for that is very much what it comes to), has promise and germ. As for the smaller reviews, Mr Brimley had the good fortune to deal as a reviewer with Carlyle, Thackeray, and Dickens, as well as Bulwer and Kingsley, not to mention such different subjects as the *Noctes Ambrosianæ* and the *Philosophie Positive:* and the merit of coming out, with hardly a stain upon his character, from any one of these (in some cases very high) trials. We may think that he does not always go fully right; but he never goes utterly wrong. And when we think what sorrowful chances have awaited the collision of great books at their first appearance even with by no means little critics, the praise is not small.

His intrinsic and chronological importance.

Yet a sufficient study of the "Tennyson" essay should have quite prepared the expert reader for these minor successes. Brimley, as we have said, was only partially favoured by time, place, and circumstance, even putting health out of the question. He was heavily handicapped in that respect: and he had no time to work out his critical deliverance fully, and to justify it by abundant critical performance. But he has the root of the matter in him: and it throws out the flower of the matter in that refusal to be "frightened out of the enjoyment of fine poetry by epithets." When a man has once shown himself *ausus contemnere vana* in this way, when he has the initial taste which Brimley everywhere shows, and the institution of learning which he did not lack, it will go hard but he is a good critic *in posse* already, and harder if he is not a good one in such actuality as is allowed him. And this was well seen of George Brimley.

"Gyas and Cloanthus."

It is one of the penalties, late but heavy, of an attempt to take a kingdom (even one not of Heaven) by storm for the first time, that you have to "refuse" or "mask" not a few of its apparently strong places—and if their strength be more than apparent, the adventurer will not be conqueror. There are in English, as in other nineteenth-century literatures, many persons who addressed themselves more or less seriously to criticism, who obtained more or less name as critics, with whose works every well-read person is more or less acquainted, yet who must be so refused or masked

at the writer's peril of the reader's disappointment or disapproval. Many of them seemed to be pillars of the early and middle nineteenth-century reviews; from some of them, no doubt, some institution in criticism has been received by readers of all the three generations which have passed since the appearance of the earliest. It may seem intolerable *outrecuidance* to put Milman and Croker and Hayward, Sydney Smith and Senior and Helps, with others not even named, as it were "in the fourpenny box" of our stall. Yet it is unavoidable, and the stall-keeper must dare it, not merely—not even mainly—because he has no room to give them better display. Milman was at least thought by Byron a formidable enough critic to have the apocryphal crime of "killing John Keats" assigned to him by hypothesis: and his merits (not of the bravo kind) are no doubt much greater than the bad critics who, after Macaulay, depreciate his style, and the maladroit eulogists of his free thought, who would make him a sort of nineteenth-century Conyers Middleton, appear to think. But he has no critical credential, known to the present writer, that would give him substantive place here.[1] Croker was neither such a bad man nor such a bad writer as Macaulay would have had him to be: but the Keats article is a terrible sin, and the Tennyson one only in part excusable. Senior, before he became a glorified earwig, or, if this seem disrespectful, the father of all such as interview, was a sound, if not very gifted, reviewer, but little more: Hayward, a much cleverer and, above all, much more worldly-wise Isaac Disraeli, who made the most of being "in society" (see Thackeray), talked better than he wrote, but still wrote well, especially by the aid of *l'esprit des autres*. Of Sydney Smith earlier, and Sir Arthur Helps later, the fairest thing to say in our present context is, that neither held himself out as a literary critic at all. Sydney could give admirable accounts of books: but he nowhere shows, or pretends to, the slightest sense of literature. Helps, starting[2] a discussion on Fiction,—the very most interesting and most promising of all literary subjects

Milman, Croker, Hayward.

Sydney Smith, Senior, Helps

[1] He will reappear in the Appendix devoted to holders of the Oxford Chair of Poetry.

[2] In *Friends in Council.*

for a man of his time—a subject which was just equipped with material enough at hand, and not yet too much, neither novel to the point of danger nor stale to the point of desperation,—"keeps to the obvious," as one of his own characters acknowledges, in a fashion almost excusing the intrinsically silly reaction from obviousness, which distinguished the last quarter of the nineteenth century, and is now itself obviously stale. The influence of works of fiction is unbounded. The Duke of Marlborough took his history from Shakespeare. Fiction is good as creating sympathy. It is bad as leading us into dreamland. Real life is more real than fiction. Writers of fiction have great responsibility. In shorter formula, "We love our Novel with an N because it is Nice; we hate it because it is sometimes Naughty; we take it to the Osteria[1] of the Obvious, and treat it with an Olio of Obligingness and Objurgation." But Helps, in this very passage, tells us that he prefers life to literature, and no one can be a good critic who, *when he criticises*, does that: though he may be a very bad one, and yet make the other preference.

We must still extend this *numerus* a little in order to do that justice—unjust at the best—which is possible here, and which is yet not quite so futile and inadequate as some still more unjust judgments would have it. For the object of this History is to revive and keep before the eye of the reader the names, the critical position, and, if only by touches, the critical personality, of as many of those who have done good service to criticism in the past as may be possible. A little less wilfulness and exclusiveness of personal taste, or rather less opportunity of indulging it, would probably have made of Whitwell Elwin—who survived till the earlier portion of this book was published, but did his critical work long ago—a really great critic. Even as it is, his *Remains*[2] contain some of the best critical essays, not absolutely supreme, to be found among the enormous stores of the nineteenth century, especially on the most *English* Englishmen of letters during the eighteenth, such as Fielding and Johnson. A short life, avocations of business, and perhaps

Elwin, Lancaster, Hannay

[1] I have slipped from N to O: but it is only next door.

[2] London, 1902.

the absence of the pressure of professional literary occupation, prevented the work of Henry Lancaster[1] from being much more than a specimen: but his famous essay on Thackeray showed (and not alone) what he could do. On the other hand, the not always mischievous, though too often galling, yoke of the profession was not wanting to James Hannay. His literary work was directed into too many paths, some of them too much strewn with the thorns and beset with the briars of journalism. But there are very few books of the kind which unite a certain "popularity" in no invidious sense, and an adaptation for the general reader, with sound and keen criticism, as does his far too little known *Course of English Literature*;[2] while many of his scattered and all but lost essays show admirable insight.

Dallas.

To one remarkable critic, however, who, though a younger man than Mr Arnold, is on the whole of a Præ-Arnoldian type, and to whom justice, I think, has not usually been done, a little larger space must be given. I must admit that, having been disgusted at the time of the appearance of *The Gay Science*[3] by what I then thought its extremely silly, and now think its by no means judicious, title, I never read it until quite recently, and then found (of course) that Mr Dallas had said several of my things before me, though usually with a difference.[4] But I have not the least inclination to say *Pereat:* on the contrary, I should like to revive him. Fourteen years earlier than the date of his principal book, as a young man fresh from the influence of the Hamiltonian philosophy, and also, I think, imbued with not a little of Ruskinism, he had written a volume of *Poetics*,[5] which, though it does not come to very much, is a remarkable book, and a very remarkable one, if we consider its date—a year before Mr Arnold's *Preface*, and when Brimley

The Poetics.

[1] *Essays and Reviews*, London, 1876. The other papers—on Macaulay, Carlyle, Ruskin, George Eliot—are good, but not so good, and show that difficulty of the mid-century critic in "sticking to *literature*," which is the theme of this chapter.

[2] London, 1866.

[3] London, 1866.

[4] Of every one of them, however, I can most honestly and conscientiously say that I am sure I did not take it from him; and if we both took it from somebody else (to adopt the comfortable principles of Miss Teresa M'Whirter at the conclusion of *A Legend of the Rhine*), I do not know who the somebody else was.

[5] London, 1852.

and others were only waking up by fits, and starts, and relapses, to the necessity of a new criticism. Not that Dallas is on the right track: but he is on a track very different from that of most English critics since Coleridge. He revives, in an odd way, —odd, at least, till we remember the Philistinism of the First Exhibition period,—the Apologetic for Poetry; he establishes, rather in the old scholastic manner, the distinction between Poetry the principle and Poesy the embodiment: he talks about the "Law of Activity," the "Law of Harmony," and the like.

There is, for the time, not a little promise in this: and there is much more, as well as some, if not quite enough, perform-

The Gay Science.

ance, in the later book. *The Gay Science* (an adaptation, of course, of the Provençal name for Poetry itself) was originally intended to be in four volumes: but the reception of the two first was not such as to encourage the author—who had by this time engaged in journalism, and become a regular writer for *The Times*—to finish it. I cannot agree with the author of the article in the *D. N B*, that the cause of its ill-success was its "abstruseness": for really there is nothing difficult about it. On the contrary, it is, I should say, rather too much in the style of the leading article—facile, but a little "woolly." Its faults seem to lie partly in this, but more in the two facts that, in the first place, the author "embraces more than he can grasp"; and that, in the second, he has not kept pace with the revival of criticism, though he had in a manner anticipated it. He knows a good deal; and he not only sees the necessity of comparative criticism, but has a very shrewd notion of the difference between the true and the false Comparisons. Acuteness in perception and neatness in phrase appear pretty constantly: and he certainly makes good preparation for steering himself right, by deciding that Renaissance criticism is too verbal (he evidently did not know the whole of it, but is right so far); German too idealist; Modern generally too much lacking in system. Yet, when he comes to make his own start, he "but yaws neither." He is uncomfortable with Mr Arnold (who, by this time, had published not merely the *Preface* but the *Essays in Criticism*), and finds fault with him, more often wrongly than rightly.

Especially he shows himself quite at a loss to comprehend Sainte-Beuve, whom he, like some later persons, hardly thinks a critic at all.[1] He gets boldly into the "*psycho*logical coach," and books himself, as resolutely as any German, for the City of Abstraction. "The theory of imitation," we are told, "is now utterly exploded"—a remarkable instance of saying nearly the right thing in quite the wrong way. We travel arm-in-arm with "Imagination" and "The Hidden Soul" (which seems to be something like Unconscious Cerebration); we hear even more than from Mr Arnold about the "Play of Thought"; we have chapters on chapters about Pleasure—not the specially poetic pleasure, but pleasure in general. In short, we are here in the presence, not so much of what we have called "meta-critic" as of something that might almost better be called "*pro*critic"—altogether in the vestibule of critical inquiries proper. Of course it is fair to remember the two unwritten or unpublished volumes. But I venture very much to doubt, from a perusal of both his published works, whether Dallas would have ever thoroughly "collected" his method, or have directed it to that actual criticism of actual literature, of which, however (as of most things), there are fragments and essays in his work. The disturbing influences which, as we have seen, acted on so many of his contemporaries or immediate seniors acted differently on him, but they acted: and his literary "ideation" was, I think, too diffuse to make head completely against them. Yet he had real critical talent: and it is a pity that it has not had more adequate recognition.

But it is time to leave this part of the subject, only casting back among the elders, because each of these has "become a name,"—to John Foster,[2] and W. J. Fox,[3] Henry

[1] It is important to notice that he is not *hostile*, he is simply puzzled The great method, which emerges first in Dryden, and which Sainte Beuve perfected, of "shaking together" different literary examples, is still dark to him in practice, though, as has been said, he had a glimpse of its theory

[2] Foster's interest in literature—real, but very strongly coloured and conditioned by his moral and religious preoccupations—may be easily appraised by reading his Essays on "A Man Writing his Own Memoirs" and "The Epithet Romantic" in Bohn's Library.

[3] Fox has the credit of "discovering" Browning, but there were personal reasons here. Much more, of course, were there such in A. H

Rogers,[1] and the first Sir James Stephen, not even naming others of perhaps hardly less fame. And let us salute the man among these elders who, at first sight and frankly, could pronounce *The Lady of Shalott*, "except that the versification is less exquisite [it was much improved later], entitled to a place by the side of *The Ancient Mariner* and *Christabel*," who doubted whether "poetic imagery ever conveyed a more intense conception of a place and its inmate than in *Mariana*," and who justified his right to pronounce on individual poems by the two very remarkable articles on "What is Poetry?" and "The Two Kinds of Poetry." One remembers, with amused ruth, Charles Lamb's friend and his "What a pity that these fine ingenuous youths should grow up to be mere members of Parliament?" as one thinks of the Juvenilia and the Senilia of John Stuart Mill.[2]

Others: J. S. Mill.

Hallam's essay on Tennyson—a rather overrated thing.

[1] Rogers is even "mentioned in despatches"—that is, by Sainte-Beuve.

[2] See his *Early Essays* in Bohn's reprint. The criticism of certain romantic poets of the mid century would make an interesting excursus of the kind which I have indicated as (if it were possible) fit to be included in such a History as this is. Horne's *New Spirit of the Age* (1845), though exhibiting all the singular inadequacies, inequalities, and *inorganicisms* of the author of *Orion*, does not entirely deserve the severe contrast which Thackeray drew between it and its original as given by Hazlitt. Mrs Browning, who took some part in this, has left a substantive critical contribution in *The Greek Christian Poets and the English Poets*, in which again the weaknesses of the writer in poetry are interestingly compensated by weaknesses in criticism, but in which again also, and much more, "the critic whom every poet must [or should] contain" sometimes asserts himself not unsuccessfully. W. C. Roscoe, whose verse is at least interesting, and has been thought something more, is critically not negligible. But perhaps the most interesting document which would have to be treated in such an excursus is Sydney Dobell's *Nature of Poetry*, delivered as a lecture (it must have been something of a choke-pear for the audience) at Edinburgh in 1857. Here the author, though not *nominatim*, directly traverses Matthew Arnold's doctrine in the great Preface (see next chapter), by maintaining that a perfect poem *will be* the exhibition of a perfect mind, and, we may suppose, a less perfect but still defensible poem the exhibition of a less perfect mind—which principle, no doubt, is, in any case, the sole possible justification of *Festus* and of *Balder*. Others (especially Sir Henry Taylor) might be added, but these will probably suffice.

CHAPTER VIII.

ENGLISH CRITICISM FROM 1860-1900.

MATTHEW ARNOLD · ONE OF THE GREATER CRITICS—HIS POSITION DEFINED EARLY—THE 'PREFACE' OF 1853—ANALYSIS OF IT, AND INTERIM SUMMARY OF ITS GIST—CONTRAST WITH DRYDEN—CHAIR-WORK AT OXFORD, AND CONTRIBUTIONS TO PERIODICALS—'ON TRANSLATING HOMER'—"THE GRAND STYLE"—DISCUSSION OF IT—THE STUDY OF CELTIC LITERATURE—ITS ASSUMPTIONS—THE 'ESSAYS': THEIR CASE FOR CRITICISM—THEIR EXAMPLES THEREOF—THE LATEST WORK—THE INTRODUCTION TO WARD'S 'ENGLISH POETS'—"CRITICISM OF LIFE"—POETIC SUBJECT OR POETIC MOMENT—ARNOLD'S ACCOMPLISHMENT AND POSITION AS A CRITIC—THE CARLYLIANS—KINGSLEY—FROUDE—RUSKIN—G. H. LEWES—HIS 'PRINCIPLES OF SUCCESS IN LITERATURE'—HIS 'INNER LIFE OF ART'—BAGEHOT—R. H. HUTTON—HIS EVASIONS OF LITERARY CRITICISM—PATER—HIS FRANK HEDONISM—HIS "POLYTECHNY" AND HIS STYLE—HIS FORMULATION OF THE NEW CRITICAL ATTITUDE—'THE RENAISSANCE'—OBJECTIONS TO ITS PROCESS—IMPORTANCE OF 'MARIUS THE EPICUREAN'—'APPRECIATIONS' AND THE "GUARDIAN" ESSAYS—UNIVERSALITY OF HIS METHOD—J. A. SYMONDS—THOMSON ("B. V.")—WILLIAM MINTO—HIS BOOKS ON ENGLISH PROSE AND POETRY—H. D. TRAILL—HIS CRITICAL STRENGTH—ON STERNE AND COLERIDGE—ESSAYS ON FICTION—"THE FUTURE OF HUMOUR"—OTHERS: MANSEL, VENABLES, STEPHEN, LORD HOUGHTON, PATTISON, CHURCH, ETC.—PATMORE—EDMUND GURNEY—'THE POWER OF SOUND'—'TERTIUM QUID.'

Matthew Arnold one of the greater critics.

In coming to Mr Matthew Arnold we come again, but for the last time, to one of our chiefs of the greater clans of criticism. *Vixere fortes post* Mr Arnold; let us hope that *vivunt*. We have heard, more or less vaguely, of new schools of criticism since, in more countries than one or two, and an amiable enthusiasm has declared that the new gospels are real gospels, far truer

and better than any previously known. I am not myself, by any means, in general agreement—I am often in very particular disagreement—with Mr Arnold's critical canons, and (less often) with his individual judgments. But as I look back over European criticism for the years (approaching a century) which have passed since his birth, I cannot find one critic, born since that time, who can be ranked above or even with him in general critical quality and accomplishment. And, extending the view further over the vast expanse, from Aristotle to that birth-date, though I certainly find greater critics—critics very much greater in originality, greater in catholicity, perhaps greater in felicity of individual utterance—I yet find that he is of their race and lineage, free of their company, one of them, not to be scanted of any sizings that can be, by however unworthy a manciple, allotted to them.

His position defined early.

It was the way of some of these greater critics in Critical History, at this or that period of their career, to launch a kind of manifesto or confession, of which their other critical work is but, as it were, the application and amplification: while others have never done this, but have built up their critical temple, adding wing to wing and storey to storey, not seldom even deserting or ruining the earlier constructions. Mr Arnold, in practice as in principle, belonged to the first class, and he launched his own manifesto about as early as any man can be capable of forming a critical judgment which is not a mere adaptation of some one else's, or (a thing really quite as unoriginal) a flying-in-the-face of some one else's, or a mere spurt and splash of youthful self-sufficiency. You can be a bishop and a critic at thirty—not before (by wise external rule) in the former case; hardly before, according to laws of nature which man has unwisely omitted to codify for himself, in the latter. Mr Arnold was a little over thirty when, collecting such things as he chose to collect out of his earlier volumes of Poetry, and adding much to them, he published the collection with a Preface in October 1853. I doubt whether he ever wrote better, either in sense or in style;

and I am quite sure that, while some of the defects of his criticism, as it was to be, appear quite clearly in the paper, all the pith and moment of that criticism appear in germ and principle likewise.

The Preface of 1853.

In the interesting and important "Advertisement" which, eight months later, he prefixed to the second edition of this book, Mr Arnold himself summed up the lessons of the *Preface*, which followed it, under two main heads, —the insistence on the importance of the subject—the "great action"; and the further insistence on study of the ancients, with the specified object of correcting the great vice of our modern, and especially English, intellect—that it "is fantastic, and wants sanity." He thus, to some extent, justified the erection of these into his two first and great commandments—the table-headings, if not the full contents, of his creed and law. But, for our purpose, we must analyse the Preface itself rather more closely.

It opens with an account of the reasons which led the author to exclude *Empedocles*, not because the subject was "a Sicilian Greek," but from a consideration of the situation itself. This he condemns in a passage which contains a very great amount of critical truth, which is quite admirably expressed, and which really adds one to the not extensive list of critical axioms of the first class. Even here one may venture to doubt whether the supreme poet will not vindicate his omnipotence in treating *poetice*. But if the sentence were so qualified as to warn the poet that he will *hardly* succeed, it would be absolutely invulnerable or impregnable.

Analysis of it.

But why, he asks, does he dwell on this unimportant and private matter? Because he wishes particularly to disclaim any deference to the objection referred to above as to the choice of *ancient* subjects: to which he might have added (as the careful reader of the whole piece will soon perceive), because insistence on the character of the Subject was his critical being's very end and aim. In effect, he uses both these battle-horses in his assault upon

the opposite doctrine that the poet must "leave the exhausted past and fix his attention on the present."[1] It is needless to say that over his immediate antagonists he is completely victorious. Whatever the origin of the ignoble and inept fallacy concerned, this particular form of it was part of the special mid-nineteenth century heresy of "progress." But whether he unhorses and "baffles" it in the right way may be another question. *His* way is to dwell once more, and with something already of the famous Arnoldian iteration, on the paramount importance of the "action," on the vanity of the supposition that superior treatment will make up for subjective inferiority. And he then exposes himself dangerously by postulating the superior interest of "Achilles, Prometheus, Clytemnestra, Dido," to the personages of any modern poem, and, perhaps still more dangerously, by selecting as his modern poems *Hermann and Dorothea*, *Childe Harold*, *Jocelyn* [! ! !], and *The Excursion*. He may be said here to lose a stirrup at least: but on the whole he certainly establishes the point—too clear to need establishment—that the *date* of an action signifies nothing. While if the further statement that the action itself is all-important is disputable, it is his doctrine and hypothesis.

He is consistent with this doctrine when he goes on to argue that "the Greeks understood it far more clearly than we do"—that "they regarded the whole, we the parts"—that, while they kept the action uppermost, we prefer the expression. Not that they neglected expression—"on the contrary, they were . . . the masters of the *grand style*." Where they did not indulge in this, where they were bald or trivial, it was merely to let the majesty of the action stand forth without a veil. "Their theory and practice alike, the admirable treatise of Aristotle and the unrivalled works of their poets, exclaim with a thousand tongues, 'All depends upon the subject. Choose a fitting action, penetrate yourself with

[1] The immortality of critical error—the impossibility of quelling the Blatant Beast—to which we have alluded more than once, is again illustrated here. One might have thought that Mr Arnold had sufficiently crushed and concluded this fallacy. It has been seen again—in places where it should not have been—in these last few years.

the feeling of its situations; this done, everything else will follow.'"[1]

As a necessary consequence, they were "rigidly exacting" as to construction: *we* believe in "the brilliant things that arise under the poet's pen as he goes along." We refuse to ask for a "total impression": instead of requiring that the poet shall as far as possible efface himself, we even lay it down that "a true allegory of the state of one's own mind in a representative history is perhaps the highest thing one can attempt in the way of poetry." Against this Mr Arnold pronounces *Faust*—though the work of "the greatest poet of modern times, the greatest critic of all times"[2]—defective, because it is something like this. Next he deplores the want of a guide for a young writer, "a voice to prescribe to him the aim he should keep in view"—and, in default of it, insists once more on models.

The foremost of these models for the English writer is, of course, Shakespeare, of whom Mr Arnold speaks with becoming reverence, and of whom he had earned the right to speak by his magnificent sonnet years earlier. But his attitude towards Shakespeare, as a literary Bible, is guarded. Shakespeare chose subjects "than which the world could afford no better"; but his expression was *too* good—too "eminent and unrivalled," too fixing and seductive to the attention, so to draw it away from those other things which were "his excellences *as a poet*."[3] In leading writers to forget this, Shakespeare has done positive harm, and Keats's *Pot of Basil* is taken as an instance, whence the critic diverges to a long condemnation of this great but erring bard's "difficulty" of language, and returns to the doctrine that he is *not* safe as a model. The ancients are: though even in them there is some-

[1] This very generous assumption comes, I feel sure, from the blending of Wordsworth (*v. sup.*, on him) with Aristotle

[2] Mr Arnold never explicitly retracted this "pyramidal" exaggeration—it was not his way, but nearly the whole of his *French Critic on Goethe* is a transparent "hedge," a scarcely ambiguous palinode. For Dobell's contention, see note at end of last chapter.

[3] I think Mr Arnold, especially after italicising these words, should really have told us as a WHAT we are to think of the author of Shakespeare's greatest expressions.

thing narrow, something local and temporary. But there is so much that is not, and that is an antidote to modern banes, that we cannot too much cling to them as models. These, he adds at some length, the present age needs morally as much as artistically. He has himself tried, in the poems he is issuing, to obey his own doctrines: and he ends with the famous peroration imploring respect for Art, and pleading for the observance and preservation of "the wholesome regulative laws of Poetry," lest they be "condemned and cancelled by the influence of their eternal enemy, Caprice."

and interim summary of its gist.

Comment on this, beyond the remarks already made, had best be postponed till we can consider Mr Arnold's criticism as a whole. But to one thing we should draw attention, and that is, that here is a critic who knows what he means, and who means something not, directly, or as a whole, meant, or at least said, by any earlier critic. That "all depends on the subject" had been said often enough before. but it had not been said by any one who had the whole of literature before him, and the tendency — for half a century distinctly, for a full century more or less—had been to unsay or gainsay it. Further, the critic has combined with the older Neo-classic adoration of the "fable" something perhaps traceable, as hinted above, to the Wordsworthian horror of poetic diction, a sort of cult of baldness instead of beauty, and a distrust, if not horror, of "expression." In fact, though I do not believe that he in the least knew it, he is taking up a position of direct and, as it were, designed antagonism to Dryden's, in that remarkable preface to *An Evening's Love*, one of those in which he comes closest to the Spaniards, where he says plumply "the story is the least part," and declares that the important part is the workmanship — that *this* is the *poiesis*. It is hardly possible to state the "dependence"— in the old duelling sense—of the great quarrel of Poetics, and almost of Criticism, more clearly than is done in these two *Prefaces* by these two great poet-critics of the seventeenth and the nineteenth centuries in England,

Contrast with Dryden.

I do not think that there is any published evidence of the

time or of the circumstances at and in which Mr Arnold began contributing critical articles to periodicals. But his appointment (which must have been, at any rate to some extent, due to the *Preface* as well as to the *Poems*) to the Professorship of Poetry at Oxford in 1857 gave him a strong stimulus towards the development of his critical powers in reasoned form; while, shortly afterwards, the remarkable developments of the press, towards the end of the 'Fifties, which began by the institution of *Macmillan's* and the *Cornhill Magazine*, and continued through the establishment of a strongly literary and critical daily newspaper in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, to the multiplication of monthly reviews proper in the *Fortnightly*, *Contemporary*, and *Nineteenth Century*, supplied him with opportunities of communicating these studies to a public larger than his Oxford audience, and with a profitable and convenient intermediate stage between the lecture and the book. He was, however, always rather scrupulous about permitting his utterances the "third reading": and some of them (notably his Inaugural Address at Oxford) have still to be sought in the catacombs. But the matter of more than a decade's production, by which he chose to stand, is included in the three well-known volumes, *On Translating Homer* and *The Study of Celtic Literature* for the Oxford Lectures, and the famous *Essays in Criticism* for the more miscellaneous work, the last, however, being rounded off and worked up into a whole by its Preface, and by its two opening pieces, *The Function of Criticism in the Present Time* and *The Influence of Academies*.

Chair-work at Oxford, and contributions to periodicals.

In these three books the expression of critical attitude, displayed, as we have said, unmistakably in the *Preface* of 1853, is not only developed and varied into something as nearly approaching to a *Summa Criticismi* as was in Mr Arnold's not excessively systematic way, but furnished and illustrated by an extraordinarily interesting and sufficiently diversified body of critical applications in particular. Yet there is no divergence from the lines marked out in the Preface, nor is there to be found any such divergence—if divergence imply the least contradiction or inconsistency—in the work of the last decade

of his life, when he had dropped his ill-omened guerilla against dogma and miracles, and had returned to the Muses. He is as much a typical example of a critic consistent in consistency as Dryden is of one consistent in inconsistency: and it naturally requires less intelligence to comprehend him than appears to be the case in the other instance. In fact, he could never be misunderstood in general: though his extreme wilfulness, and his contempt of history, sometimes made him a little bewildering to the plain man in detail.

In discussing the first, and indeed all, of these, it is, of course, important to keep what is suitable for a History of Criticism apart from what would be suitable only for a monograph on Mr Arnold. Yet the idiosyncrasies of the greater critics are as much the subject of such a general history as their more abstract doctrines. We see, then, here something which was not difficult to discern, even in the more frugal and guarded expression of the *Preface*, and which, no doubt, is to some extent fostered and intensified by that freedom from the check of immediate contradiction or criticism which some have unkindly called the dangerous prerogative of preachers and professors. This something is the Arnoldian confidence — that quality which Mr Hutton, perhaps rather kindly, took for "sureness," and which, though strangely different in tone, is not so very different in actual nature from the other "sureness" (with a prefix) of Lord Macaulay. We may think that this confidence is certainly strengthened, and perhaps to some extent caused, by a habit of turning the blind eye on subjects of which the critic does not know very much, and inspecting very cursorily those which he does not much like. But we shall see that, right or wrong, partial or impartial, capricious or systematic as he may be, Mr Arnold applies himself to the actual appreciation of actual literature, and to the giving of reasons for his appreciation, in a way new, delightful, invaluable.

On Translating Homer.

The really important part or feature of the tractate for us is its famous handling of "the Grand Style." He had used this phrase, italicising it, in the *Preface* itself, had declared that the ancients were its "unapproached

"*The grand style.*"

masters," but he had not said much about it or attempted to define it. Here he makes it almost his chief battle-charger—presenting Homer, Dante, and Milton as the greatest masters of it, if not the only sure ones, denying any *regular* possession of it to Shakespeare, and going far to deny most other poets, from Tennyson down to Young, the possession of it at all. It was impossible that this enigmatic critical phrase, applied so provocatively, should not itself draw the fire of critics. He could not but reply to this in his "Last Words," but he had to make something of a confession and avoidance, with much sorrow, perhaps not without a very little anger. For those who asked "What *is* the Grand Style?" mockingly, he had no answer: they were to "die in their sins." To others he vouchsafed the answer that the grand style "arises in poetry when a noble nature, poetically gifted, treats with simplicity or severity a serious subject." Let us, with as much simplicity and seriousness, but with as little severity as may be, treat both the expression and the definition.

Discussion of it.

The expression itself—the origin of which, like that of some others in our special lexicon, is to be found in the criticism, not of literature, but of Art in the limited sense, and which was, I think, first made current in English by Sir Joshua Reynolds—is of course a vague one, and we must walk warily among its associations and suggestions. At one end it suggests, with advantage to itself and to us honest inquirers, the ὕψος of Longinus. At the other, it has perhaps a rather damaging suggestion of the French *style noble*, and a still more dangerous echo-hint of "grand*iose*." And Mr Arnold himself once (*Preface*, ed. 1853, p. xix) uses "grandiose," as, it is true, the Latins and the French have sometimes done, as equivalent to "grand." Coming, then, unsatisfied by these vaguenesses, to the definition, we shall perhaps think it permissible to strike out the first two members, as in the former case almost self-confessedly, in the second quite, superfluous. That the Grand Style in poetry will only arise when the stylist is poetically gifted scarcely requires even enunciation: that the nature which produces the grand style must be *pro tanto* and *pro hac vice* "noble,"

is also sun-clear. Something of the Longinian circularity in one point[1] seems to have infected Mr Arnold here. But with the rest of the definition preliminary and *prima facie* inquiry has no fault to find. Let us take it that the Grand Style in poetry is the treatment of a serious subject with simplicity or severity. Even to this a fresh demurrer arises, which may be partly, but cannot be wholly, overruled. Why this antithesis, this mutual exclusion, between "simplicity" and "severity"? "Severe simplicity" is a common, and is generally thought a just, phrase: at any rate, the two things are closely related. We may note this only — adding in Mr Arnold's favour that his special attribution of simplicity to Homer and severity to Milton would seem to indicate that by the latter word he means "gorgeousness *severely restrained*."

This, with such additional and applied lights as are provided by Mr Arnold's denunciation of *affectation* as fatal to the Grand Style, will give us some idea of what he wished to mean by the phrase. It is, in fact, a fresh formulation of the Classical restraint, definiteness, proportion, form, against the Romantic vague, the Romantic fantasy. This had been the lesson of the Preface, given after the preceptist manner. It is now the applied, illustrated, appreciative lesson of the *Lectures*. It is a doctrine like another: and, in its special form and plan, an easily comprehensible reaction from a reaction—in fact, the inevitable ebb after the equally inevitable flow. But when we begin to examine it (especially in comparison with its Longinian original) as a matter of theory, and with its own illustrations as a matter of practice, doubts and difficulties come thick upon us, and we may even feel under a sad necessity of "dying in our sins," just as Mr Carlyle thought that, at a certain period of his career, Ignatius Loyola "ought to have made up his mind to be damned."

To take the last first, it is difficult, on examining Mr Arnold's instances and his comments, in the most impartial and judicial manner possible, to resist the conclusion that his definition only really fits Dante, and that it was originally derived from the study of him. To that fixed star of first

[1] As to "Figures" and "Sublimity."

magnitude in poetry it *does* apply as true, as nothing but true, and perhaps even as the whole truth. Nobility, quintessential poetry, simplicity in at least some senses, severity and seriousness in almost all,—who will deny these things to the *Commedia?* But it is very difficult to think that it applies, in anything like the same coequal and coextensive fashion, to either Homer or Milton. There are points in which Homer touches Dante; there are points in which Dante touches Milton; but they are not the same points. It may, further, be very much doubted whether Mr Arnold has not greatly exaggerated both Homer's universal "simplicity" and his universal "seriousness." The ancients were certainly against him on the latter point. While one may feel not so much doubt as certainty that the application of "severity" to Milton —unless it means simply the absence of geniality and humour —is still more rash.

But when we look back to Longinus we shall find at least a hint of a much more serious defect than this. Why this unnecessary asceticism and grudging in the connotation of grandeur? why this tell-tale and self-accusing limitation further to a bare three poets, two of them, indeed, of the very greatest? Mr Arnold himself feels the difficulty presented by Shakespeare so strongly that he has to make, as it were, uncovenanted grand-style mercies for him. But that is only because you have simply to open almost any two pages out of three in Shakespeare, and the grand style smites you in the face, as God's glory smote St Stephen. *We* can afford, which shows our strength, to leave Shakespeare alone. Longinus of old has no such damaging fencing of the table of *his* Grand Style. The Greeks, it is known, thought little of Love as a subject: yet he admitted the sublimity of Sappho. And if he objected to the πλεκτάνην χειμάρροον of Æschylus, it was only because he thought it went too far. How much wiser is it, instead of fixing such arbitrary limits, to recognise that the Grand Style has infinite manifestations; that it may be found in poets who have it seldom as well as in those who have it often; that Herrick has it with

"In this world—the Isle of Dreams";

that Tennyson has it again and again; that Goethe has it in the final octet of *Faust;* that Heine and Hugo, and hundreds of others, down to quite minor poets in their one moment of rapturous union with the Muse, have it. How much wiser to recognise further that it is not limited to the simple or severe: whether it is to the serious is another question. For my part, I will not loose the fragile boat or incur the danger of the roof,—speaking in a Pickwickian-Horatian manner,—with any one who denies the grand style to Donne or to Dryden, to Spenser or to Shelley. The grand is the transcendent: and it is blasphemy against the Spirit of Poetry to limit the fashions and the conditions of transcendence.[1]

The other "chair"-book, *The Study of Celtic Literature*, is tempting in promise, but disappointing in performance. Much of it is not literary, and when it becomes so, there are difficulties. In the *Preface* itself, and in the *Homer*, Mr Arnold had sometimes been unjust or unsatisfactory on what he did not know or did not like—Mediæval literature, the Ballad, &c.,—but his remarks and his theories had been, in the main, solidly based upon what he did not know thoroughly and did appreciate—the Classics, Dante, Milton, Wordsworth. Here not Pallas, I think, but some anti-Pallas, has "invented a new thing." Whether Mr Arnold knew directly, and at first-hand, *any* Welsh, Breton, Cornish, Irish, or Scotch Gaelic, I do not know.[2] He certainly disclaims anything like extensive or accurate knowledge, and it is noticeable that (I think invariably) he quotes from translations, and only a few well-known translations. Moreover he, with his usual dislike and distrust of the historic method, fences with, or puts off, the inquiry what the dates of the *actual* specimens which we possess of this literature may be. Yet he proceeds to pick out (as if

The Study of Celtic Literature.

[1] The present writer has applied the gist of this argument on the grand style, in detail, to Milton (*Milton Memorial Lectures*, 1908), to Shakespeare (*English Association Essays and Studies*, 1910), and to Dante in a lecture before the Dante Society some years ago, which has not yet been printed.

[2] Those to the manner born or matriculated in it have generally been kind to him: but then he has given them rather considerable bribes.

directly acquainted with the literatures themselves, at dates which make the matter certain) divers characteristics of "melancholy," "natural magic," &c., in Celtic literature, and then, unhesitatingly and without proof of any kind, to assign the presence of these qualities, in writers like Shakespeare and Keats, where we have not the faintest evidence of Celtic *blood*, to Celtic influence.

Its assumptions.

Now, we may or may not deplore this proceeding; but we must disallow it. It is both curious and instructive that the neglect of history which accompanied the prevalence of Neo-classicism, and with which, when it was dispelled, Neo-classicism itself faded, should reappear in company with this *neotato*-classicism, this attempt to reconstruct the classic faith, taking in something, but a carefully limited something, of Romanticism. But the fact is certain: and, as has been said, we must disallow the proceeding. Whether melancholy, and natural magic, and the vague do strongly and especially, if not exclusively, appear in Celtic poetry, I do not deny, because I do not know; that Mr Arnold's evidence is not sufficient to establish their special if not exclusive prevalence, I deny, because I do know. That there is melancholy, natural magic, the vague in Shakespeare and in Keats, I admit, because I know; that Mr Arnold has any valid argument showing that their presence is due to Celtic influence, I do not admit, because I know that he has produced none. With bricks of ignorance and mortar of assumption you can build no critical house.

The Essays: their case for Criticism.

In that central citadel or canon of the subject, *Essays in Criticism*, this contraband element, this theory divorced from history, makes its appearance but too often: it can and need only be said, for instance, that Mr Arnold's estimate of the condition of French, and still more of German, literature in his own day, as compared with English, will not stand for five minutes the examination of any impartial judge, dates and books in hand. But the divorce is by no means so prominent—indeed most of the constituent essays were, if I mistake not, written before the Celtic Lectures were delivered. The book is so

much the best known of Mr Arnold's critical works—except perhaps the Preface to Mr Ward's *Poets*—that no elaborate analysis of it here can be necessary. Its own Preface is defiantly vivacious—and Vivacity, as we are often reminded, is apt to play her sober friend Criticism something like the tricks that Madge Wildfire played to Jeanie Deans. But it contains, in the very last words of its famous epiphonema to Oxford, an admission (in the phrase "this Queen of Romance") that Mr Arnold was anything but a classic *pur sang* The two first Essays, "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time" and the "Influence of Academies," take up, both in the vivacious and in the sober manner, the main line and strategy of the old *Preface* itself. We may, not merely with generosity but with justice, "write off" the, as has been said, historically false parallels with France and Germany which the writer brings in to support his case. That case itself is perfectly solid and admissible. Those who are qualified to judge — not perhaps a large number — will admit, whether they are for it or against it, that no nonsuit is possible, and perhaps that no final decision for it or against is possible either, except to the satisfaction of mere individual taste and opinion.

The case is, that the remedy for the supposed or supposable deficiencies of English literature is Criticism — that the business of Criticism is to discover the ideas upon which creative literature must rest—that there is not enough "play of mind" in England—that Criticism again is the attempt "to know the best that is known and thought in the world"—that foreign literature is specially valuable, simply because it is likely to give that in which native literature is lacking. These are the doctrines of the First Essay, mingled with much political-social application and not a little banter. The second takes them up and applies them afresh in the direction of extolling the institution of Academies, and contrasting the effects of that influence on French critics and the absence of it in English, very much to the disadvantage of the latter, especially Mr Palgrave. For Mr Arnold had adopted early in his professorial career, and never gave up, the very dubious

habit of enforcing his doctrine with "uses" of formally polite but extremely personal application.[1]

Now, this case or bundle of cases is, I have said, quite fairly and justly arguable. Even though I hope that the whole of this volume will have shown and show that Mr Arnold was quite wrong as to the general inferiority of English criticism, he was (as I have, not far back, taken the pains to show also) not quite wrong about the general criticism of his own youth and early manhood—of the criticism which he himself came to reform. Nor was he wrong in thinking that there is, in the uncultivated and unregenerate English mind, a sort of rebelliousness to sound critical principles. Very much of his main contention is perfectly good and sound: nor could he have urged any two things more universally and everlastingly profitable than the charge never to neglect criticism, and the charge always to compare literatures of other countries, literatures of other times, literatures free from the political-religious-social *diathesis* of the actual patient.

Their examples thereof.

It is generally acknowledged that the influence of Sainte-Beuve was an "infortune of Mart" or of Saturn, when it induced Mr Arnold to take his two first examples of this comparative study from interesting but unimportant people like the Guérins. But except persons determined to cavil, and those of whom the Judicious Poet remarks—

> "For what was there each cared no jot,
> But all were wroth with what was not"—

every one will admit that the rest of the seven—the "Heine," the "Pagan and Mediæval Religious Sentiment," the "Joubert," the "Spinoza," and the "M. Aurelius"—form a pentad of critical excellence, and brilliancy, and instruction, which can nowhere be exceeded. I, at least, should find it hard to match the

[1] He has been largely imitated in this, and I cannot help thinking that it is a pity. If a man is definitely and ostensibly "reviewing" another man's work, he has a perfect right, subject to the laws of good manners, to discuss him *quoad hoc*. But illustrations of general discourses by dragging in living persons seem to be forbidden by those laws as they apply in the literary province.

group in any other single volume of criticism. Idle that we may frequently smile or shake the head—that we must in some cases politely but peremptorily deny individual propositions! Unimportant that, perhaps even more by a certain natural perversity than by the usual and most uncritical tendency to depress something in order to exalt something else, English literature is, with special reference to the great generation of 1798-1834, unduly depreciated! These things every man can correct for himself. How many could make for themselves instances of comparative, appreciative, loosely but subtly judicial criticism as attractive, as stimulating, as graceful, as varied, and critically as excellent, being at the same time real examples of creative literature?

The latest work.

We are fortunately dispensed here from inquiring into the causes, or judging the results, of that avocation from literature, or at least literary criticism, which held Mr Arnold for exactly ten years, from 1867 to 1877. Nor will it be necessary (though it would be pleasant) to discuss in detail all the contributions of the slightly longer period which was left him, from his return to his proper task in the spring of 1877 with the article on M. Scherer's "Milton," to his sudden and lamented death in the spring of 1888. Just before that death he had published an article on Shelley, which (for all the heresy glanced at below) is one of the very best things he ever did; little less can be said of the Milton-Scherer paper eleven years earlier, and whenever he touched literature (which was fairly often) during the interval, he was almost always at a very high level. A good deal, though not quite all, of the ebullience of something not quite unlike flippancy, which had characterised his middle period, had frothed and bubbled itself away; his general critical views had matured without altering; and their application to fresh subjects, if it sometimes (as very notably in the case of Shelley) brought out their weakness, brought out much more fully their value and charm. The article on Mr Stopford Brooke's *Primer of English Literature*, the prefaces to the selected Lives of Johnson, to Wordsworth, to Byron, the papers in Mr Ward's *Poets* on Gray and Keats (postponing for a moment the more

important Introduction to that work as a whole), the literary part of the *Discourses in America*, and (though I should put this last quartette on a somewhat lower level) those on M. Scherer's Goethe, George Sand, Tolstoi, and Amiel, form a critical baggage, adding no doubt nothing (except in one case) to the critic's general Gospel or theory, but exemplifying his critical practice with delightful variety and charm.

The Introduction to Ward's English Poets.

The possible or actual exception, however, and the piece which contains it, require more individual notice. In the Introduction to Mr Ward's book, Mr Arnold devised no one really new thing, but he gathered up and focussed his lights afresh, and endeavoured to provide his disciples with an apparently new definition of poetry. He drove first at two wrong estimates thereof, his dislike of the second of which—the "personal" estimate—had been practically proclaimed from the very first, and may be allowed to be to a great extent justified, while his dislike of the first—the "historic" estimate—had always been clear to sharp-eyed students, though it lacked an equal justification. In fact, it is little more than a formulation of Mr Arnold's own impatience with the task—laborious enough, no doubt, and in parts ungrateful—of really mastering poetic, that is to say literary, history. Of course, *mere* age, *mere* priority, confers no interest of itself on anything. But to say —if we may avail ourselves of Gascoigne's instance—that the first discoverable person who compared a girl's lip to a cherry does not acquire, for that now unpermissible comparison, merit and interest, is not wise. To assume, on the other hand, some abstract standard of "high" poetry, below which time and relation will not give or enhance value, is still less wise. Portia, in a context of which Mr Arnold was justly fond, might have taught him that "nothing is good *without respect*," and that *no* "respect" is to be arbitrarily barred.

"Criticism of Life."

But even from the sweetest and wisest of doctors he would not, I fear, have taken the lesson. He is set to prove that we must only pay attention to "the best and principal things" as of old,—to class and mark these jealously, and to endeavour to discover their qualification.

You must not praise the *Chanson de Roland* or any early French poetry very highly, but you may praise Homer, Milton, and Dante without limit. Chaucer, not merely like Dryden and Pope, but like Burns and Shelley, has not "high seriousness." And poetry is expressly defined as "a criticism of life, under the conditions fixed for such a criticism by the laws of poetic truth and poetic beauty."

It is important (though very difficult) to keep undue repetition out of such a book as this, and we shall therefore, in regard to "high seriousness," merely refer the reader to what has been said above on the "grand style." And we shall cut down criticism of the definition as much as possible, to return to it presently. The defence of it once made, as "not a definition but an epigram," certainly lacks seriousness, whether high or low. The severest strictures made on Mr Arnold's levity would not have been misplaced had he offered an epigram here. Nor need we dwell on the perhaps inevitable, but certainly undeniable, "circularity" of the formula. The *jugulum* at which to aim is the use of the word "criticism" *at all*. Either the word is employed in some private jargon, or it has no business here. Mr Arnold's own gloss of the "application of ideas to life," gives it perhaps the doubtful benefit of the first supposition: but, either in this way or in others, does it very little good. *All* literature is the application of ideas to life: and to say that poetry is the application of ideas to life, under the conditions fixed for poetry, is simply a vain repetition.

Poetic Subject or Poetic Moment.

Yet insufficient, and to some moods almost *saugrenu*, as such a definition may seem at first sight, it is, calmly and critically considered, only a re-forming of the old line of battle. Once more, and for the last time formally, Mr Arnold is taking the field in favour of the doctrine of the Poetic *Subject*, as against what we may, perhaps, make a shift to call the "Doctrine of the Poetic *Moment*." It is somewhat surprising that, although this antinomy has been visible throughout the whole long chain of documents which I have been endeavouring to exhibit in order, no one, so far as I know, has ever fully brought it out, at

least on the one side. Mr Arnold—like all who agree with him, and all with whom he and they agree, or would have agreed, from Aristotle downwards—demands a subject of distinct and considerable magnitude, a disposition of no small elaborateness, a maintained and intense attitude, which is variously adumbrated by a large number of terms, down to "grand style" and "high seriousness." The others, who have fought (we must confess most irregularly and confusedly as a rule) under the flag which Patrizzi, himself half or wholly unknowing, was the first to fly, go back, or forward, or aside to the *Poetic Moment*—to the sudden transcendence and transfiguration—by "treating poetically," that is to say, by passionate interpretation, in articulate music—of *any* idea or image, *any* sensation or sentiment. They are perfectly ready to admit that he who has these moments most constantly and regularly under his command—he who can co-ordinate and arrange them most skilfully and most pleasingly—is the greatest poet, and that, on the other hand, one or two moments of poetry will hardly make a poet of any but infinitesimal and atomic greatness. But this is the difference of the poets, not of the poetry. Shakespeare is an infinitely great poet, and Langhorne an infinitesimally small one. Yet when Langhorne writes

> "Where longs to fall that rifted spire
> *As weary of the insulting air,*"[1]

he has in the italicised line a "poetic moment" which is, for its poetic quality, as free of the poetic Jerusalem as "We are such stuff," or the dying words of Cleopatra. He has hit "what it was so easy to miss," the passionate expression, in articulate music, unhit before, never to be poetically hit again save by accident, yet never to perish from the world of poetry. It is only a grain of gold ("fish-scale" gold, even, as the mining experts call their nearly impalpable specks), but it is gold: something that you can never degrade to silver, or copper, or pinchbeck.

[1] This pearl of eighteenth century minor poetry occurs in the 7th ("The Wallflower") of its author's *Fables of Flora* (Chalmers, xvi. 447). I think Scott's unequalled combination of memory and taste has used it somewhere as a motto.

To Mr Arnold this doctrine of the Poetic Moment, though he never seems to have quite realised it in its naked enormity (which, indeed, as I have said, has seldom been frankly, as here, unveiled), was from the first the Enemy. He attacked it, as we saw in his *Preface*, when he was young, and he fashions this *Introduction* so as to guard against it in his age. Yet it is curious that in his practice he sometimes goes perilously near to it. On his own showing, I cannot quite see, though I can see it perfectly well on mine, why even such a magnificent line as

"In la sua volontade e nostra pace"

should not only prove Dante's supremacy, but serve as an infallible touchstone for detecting the presence or absence of high poetic quality in other poetry. High poetic quality depends, we have been told, on the selection and arrangement of the subject. Dante, we know accidentally and from outside, *has* that selection and arrangement. But suppose he had not? The line itself can tell us nothing about them.

Arnold's accomplishment and position as a critic.

Nevertheless, as has been said so often, the side which a man may have taken in the everlasting and irreconcilable critical battle of judges by the arrangement, and judges by the result, hardly affects his place in Criticism as it should be allotted by a final Court of Appeal. How does he express for himself, and how does he promote in others, the intelligent appreciation, the conscious enjoyment of literature? That is the question: and few critics can meet this question more triumphantly than Mr Arnold. Like others, he can but give what he has. If you ask him for a clear, complete, resumed, and reasoned grasp of a man's accomplishment —for a definite placing of him in the literary atlas—he will not have much answer to give you. He does not pretend, and has never pretended, to give any. A certain want of logical and methodical aptitude, which may be suspected, a dislike of reading matter that did not interest him, which is pretty clear, and that dread and distrust of the "historic estimate," which he openly proclaimed, would have made this impossible. But we were warned at the very outset not to go to him for it.

And for acute, sensitive, inspired, and inspiring *remarks* on the man, or the work, or this and that part of work and man—attractively expressed, ingeniously co-ordinated, and redeemed from mere desultoriness by the constant presence of the general critical creed—no critic is his superior.

Nor are these his only "proofs"—his only "pieces in hand." He may be said—imperfectly Romantic, or even anti-Romantic, as he was—to have been the very first critic to urge the importance, the necessity, of that comparative criticism of different literatures, the half-blind working of which had helped to create, if it had not actually created, the Romantic movement. In England he was absolutely the first to do this systematically, and with something like—though not with complete—impartiality. The knowledge of Spanish and Italian poetry and romance, long very common with us, had died down in the first half of the nineteenth century, and had not been much used for critical purposes while it lasted. The *engouement* for French, of the late seventeenth and eighteenth, had reacted itself—in men as different as Coleridge, Landor, and De Quincey—into a depreciation which, if not "violently absurd," as Mr Arnold translates Rémusat's term of *saugrenu* applied to it, was certainly either crassly ignorant or violently unjust. German had, it is true, been exalted on the ruins of the popularity of the three Romance literatures; but it had been worshipped scarcely according to knowledge: and of the whole mediæval literature of Europe there was hardly any general critical appreciation. Mr Arnold himself, in fact, was still too much in the gall of bitterness here. It was imperative, if the Romantic and "result-judging" criticism was not to become a mere wilderness of ill-founded and partial individualisms, that this comparison should be established. It was equally imperative that it should be established, if Mr Arnold's own "*neotato*-classicism," as we have called it, was not to wizen and ossify like Neo-classicism itself. He was its first preacher with us: and there had not, to my knowledge, been any such definite preacher of it abroad, though the practice of Germany had implied and justified it from the first. And he was one of its most accomplished practitioners,—Lessing not being equal to

him in charm, and Sainte-Beuve a little his inferior in passion for the best things.

Yet another watch-word of his, sovereign for the time and new in most countries, which he constantly repeated (if, being human, he did not always fully observe it himself), was the caution against confounding literary and non-literary judgment. No one rejected the exaggeration of "Art for Art's sake *only*" more unhesitatingly; but no one oftener repeated the caution against letting the idols of the nation, the sect, the party interfere with the free play of Art herself, and of critical judgment on Art.

His services, therefore, to English Criticism, whether as a "preceptist" or as an actual craftsman, cannot possibly be overestimated. In the first respect he was, if not the absolute reformer,—these things, and all things, reform themselves under the guidance of the Gods and the Destinies, not of men,—the leader in reform, of the slovenly and disorganised condition into which Romantic criticism had fallen. In the second, the things which he had not, as well as those which he had, combined to give him a place among the very first. He had not the sublime and ever new-inspired inconsistency of Dryden. Dryden, in Mr Arnold's place, might have begun by cursing Shelley a little, but would have ended by blessing him all but wholly. He had not the robustness of Johnson; the supreme critical "reason" (as against understanding) of Coleridge, scarcely the exquisite, if fitful, appreciation of Lamb, or the full-blooded and passionate appreciation of Hazlitt. But he had an exacter knowledge than Dryden's; the fineness of his judgment shows finer beside Johnson's bluntness; he could not wool-gather like Coleridge; his range was far wider than Lamb's; his scholarship and his delicacy alike gave him an advantage over Hazlitt. Systematic without being hidebound; well-read (if not exactly learned) without pedantry; delicate and subtle, without weakness or dilettanteism; catholic without eclecticism; enthusiastic without indiscriminateness,—Mr Arnold is one of the best and most precious of teachers on his own side. And when, at those moments which are, but should not be, rare, the Goddess of Criticism descends, like Cambina and her lion-team, into the

lists, and with her Nepenthe makes men forget sides and sects in a common love of literature, then he is one of the best and most precious of critics.

Mr Arnold's criticism continued to be fresh and lively, without a touch of senility, or of failure to adapt itself to new conditions, till the day of his death: and when that evil day came, the nineteenth century had little more than a decade to run. On the other hand, though almost all his juniors were more or less affected by him, it cannot be exactly said that he founded any definite school, or started any by reaction from himself. The most remarkable approach to such a school that has been made since was made by Mr Pater, quite fifteen years before Mr Arnold died. No very special necessities of method, therefore, impose themselves upon us in regard to the classification of our remaining subjects in the English division: and we shall be safe in adopting a rough chronological order, taking first three very remarkable persons who—though contemporaries of Arnold—show in criticism as in other literature the influence of Carlyle.

The Carlylians.

The increasing disinclination to take the standpoint of pure literary criticism which we noticed in the master, and which characterised the second quarter of the century, naturally and inevitably reproduced itself in the three most brilliant of his disciples—Ruskin, Froude, and Kingsley—with interesting variants and developments according to the idiosyncrasy of the individual. There was, indeed, in them something which can hardly be said to have been in Carlyle at all—a weakness which his internal fire burnt out of him. This weakness, formulated most happily by an erratic person of genius whom I have alternately resolved to admit and decided to exclude here—Thomas Love Peacock,—is the principle that you "must take pleasure in the thing represented, before you can derive any from the representation."[1] Incidentally and indirectly, no doubt, *omnes eodem cogimur:* or at least there are very few who escape the suck of the whirlpool. But the declaration and formal acceptance of this principle is compara-

[1] *Gryll Grange*, chap. xiv.

tively modern: and it is one of the worst inheritances of that Patristic attitude which was referred to long ago.[1] It is indeed closely connected with the doctrine that "all depends upon the subject": but the Greeks were too deeply penetrated with æsthetic feeling to admit it openly, and, from the earliest times, philosophised on the attraction of *repulsive* subjects. It is indirectly excluded, likewise, by the stricter kinds of Neo-classic rule-criticism, which saw nothing to disapprove in such poems as the *Syphilis*. But it has, like other dubious spirits, been let loose by "the Anarchy." That you may and should "like what you like" is open to the twist of its correlative —that you may *dis*like what *you choose to* dislike.

Kingsley.

At any rate, all these three distinguished persons showed the Carlylian-Peacockian will-worship in their different ways, to an extent which makes them, as critics, little more than extremely interesting curiosities. Kingsley, the least strong, intellectually speaking, of the three, shows it strongly enough. His saying (reported, I think, by the late Mr Kegan Paul), when one of his children asked who and what was Heine, "A bad man, my dear, a bad man," is a specially interesting blend of the doctrine formulated by Peacock with the old Platonic-Patristic "the poet-is-a-*good man*" theory. Heine was not quite "a proper moral man" in his early years, certainly: though one might have thought that those later ones in the *Matraszen-Gruft* would have atoned in the eyes of the sternest inquisitor. But "bad" would have been a harsh term for him at any time. Still, it emphasises the speaker's inability to distinguish between morality and genius, between the man and the work. This inability was pretty universal with him, and it makes Kingsley's own work as criticism almost wholly untrustworthy, though often very

[1] This attitude was not quite universal. We find an interesting expression of more moderate opinion from St Basil, the pupil of Libanius, also the fellow-student of Julian, which can be introduced here with a reference to the excellent translation published, with Plutarch's *How to Read Poetry* (*u. sup.*, i. 140), by Professor Paulford of the University of Washington ("Yale Studies," No. xv.: New York, 1902). The Saint allows the study of the purer profane literature as a useful and ornamental *introduction* to higher things.

interesting and stimulating to readers who have the proper correctives and antidotes ready: it even (which is not so very common a thing) affects his praise nearly as much as his blame. You must be on your guard against it, when he extols *Euphues* and the *Fool of Quality*[1] as much as when he depreciates Shelley.

Froude.

There was less sentimental and ethical prejudice in Mr Froude than in his brother-in-law, but his political and, in a wide, not to say loose, sense philosophical, prejudices were even stronger, and he drew nearer to Carlyle than did either Kingsley or Ruskin in a certain want of *interest* in literature as literature.[2]

Mr Ruskin.

We reach, however, as every one will have anticipated, the furthest point of our "eccentric" in Mr Ruskin. His waywardness is indeed a point which needs no labouring, but it is never displayed more incalculably to the unwary, more calculably to those who have the clue in their hands, than in reference to his literary judgments. Injustice would be done to Rapin and Rymer if we did not give some of the enormous paradoxes and paralogisms to which he has committed himself in this way: but the very abundance of them is daunting, and fortunately his work is not so far from the hands of probable readers as the dustbin-catacombs where those poor old dead lie. "Indignation is a poetical feeling if excited by serious injury, but not if entertained on being cheated out of a small sum of money" You may admire the budding of a flower, but not a display of fireworks. Contrast the famous exposure of the "pathetic fallacy" with Scott's supposed freedom from it, and you will find some of the most exquisite *un*reasons in literature. The foam in Kingsley's song must not be "cruel," but the Greta may be "happy," simply because Ruskin does not mind finding fault with Kingsley, but has sworn to find no fault with Scott — perhaps also because he, very justly, likes sea-foam. Squire Western

[1] Not that he is wholly wrong in regard to either: while he does allow some of the almost unbelievable absurdities of Brooke's eccentric, though far from "unimportant," purpose-novel. But it is evident—and, indeed, confessed—that he is thinking of the ethical tone and spirit first, midmost, and almost last also.

[2] Not, again, that the *Short Studies* especially can be neglected, even from our point of view.

is not "a character," because Ruskin had determined that only persons "without a *fimetic* taint" can create character, and Fielding had a fimetic taint. And dramatic poetry "despises external circumstance" because Scott did *not* despise external circumstance, and explanation is wanted why he could not write a play. Whether, with the most delicious absurdity, he works out a parallel between a "fictile" Greek vase (which is also, one hears, "of the Madonna") and "fiction," or is very nearly going to worship a locomotive when it makes a nasty noise and convinces him of its diabolism, this same exquisite unreason is always at the helm. It very often, generally indeed, is committed in admiration of the right things; it is always delightful literature itself. But it never has the judicial quality, and therefore it is never Criticism.[1]

G. H. Lewes.

That George Henry Lewes had many of the qualities of the critic it would be mere foolish paradox to deny His *Goethe* and his *History* (if not) *of Philosophy* yet "of Philosophers" are sufficient proofs for any one to put in: and of his mastery of that element of criticism which goes to the making of an *impresario* the wonderful success with which he formed and trained his companion, George Eliot, is a still more convincing demonstration. I understand, also, that he had real merits as a dramatic critic. But his chief critical work, *The Principles of Success in Literature*,[2] betrays by its very title the presence of an element of *vulgarity* in him, which can indeed scarcely escape notice in other parts of his work, and which is by no means removed or neutralised by the quasi-philosophic tone of the work itself. Much may be forgiven to a man, born in the first quarter of the nineteenth century, when he uses the words "progress," "success," and the like: but not everything. Fame may be the

His Principles of Success in Literature.

[1] I have purposely taken all these examples from the *Selections*, where they will be easily found.

[2] The Essays comprising this, with their sequel and complement *The Inner Life of Art*, appeared in the *Fortnightly Review* (which Lewes edited) at its beginning in 1865, and have been usefully reprinted by Mr T. S. Knowlson (London, n. d.) I may observe that the cheap and useful collection (the "Scott Library") in which this reprint appears provides a large amount of other valuable critical matter.

last infirmity of noble minds; Success is but the first and last morbid appetite of the vulgar. And, as has been said, Lewes does not fully redeem his title by his text. There is plenty of common-sense and shrewdness. There is plenty of apparent and some real philosophy. Some, no doubt, will delight to be told that there are three Laws of Literature, that "the intellectual form is the Principle of Vision; the moral form the Principle of Sincerity; and the æsthetic form the Principle of Beauty," and then to have these various eggs tossed and caught, in deft arrangements, for some chapters.

Indeed, there be many truths in the book, and I would most carefully guard against the idea that Lewes knowingly and deliberately recommends a mere tradesman-like view of literature. On the contrary, he strongly protests against it: and writes about Sincerity with every appearance of being sincere.[1] But his view of Imagination is confessedly low, and almost returns to the Addisonian standpoint of "ideas furnished by sight" And when, with a rather rash hiatus, he promises[2] "*for the first time* to expound scientifically the Laws that constitute the Philosophy of Criticism," we listen even less hopefully and even more doubtfully than somebody did when he understood somebody else to say that he had killed the Devil. Lewes is not unsound on the subject of imitation of the classics. He has learnt from Coleridge, or from Wordsworth, or from De Quincey, that style is the *body* not the *dress* of thought: and much that he says about it is extremely shrewd and true. But when he comes to its actual Laws and gives them as Economy, Simplicity, Sequence, Climax, and Variety, the old not at all divine despair comes upon us. All these are well, but they are not Style's crown; they are only and hardly some of the balls and strawberry leaves of that crown. A sentence, or a paragraph, or a page may be economic, simple, sequacious, climacteric, and various, and not be good style. I am not sure that a great piece of style might not be produced to which, except by violence, no one of these epithets—I am sure that many such pieces could be produced to which not all—will apply. Once more the light and holy soul of liter-

[1] Chap. iii. p. 47 *sq.*, ed. cit. [2] Ibid., p. 118.

ature has wings to fly at suspicion of these bonds—and uses them.

Lewes's best critical work by far[1] is to be found in the Essay on *The Inner Life of Art*, where he handles, without ceremony and with crushing force, the strange old and new prudery about the connection of verse and poetry, declaring plumply that the one is the form of the other. But it is noticeable that this Essay is in the main merely a catena or chrestomathy of critical extracts, united by some useful review-work. On the whole, even after dismissing or allowing for any undue "nervous impression" created by the unlucky word "Success," it is not very possible to give him, as a critic, a position much higher than one corresponding to the position of Helps. Lewes is a Helps much unconventionalised and cosmopolitanised, not merely in externals. He is not only much more skilled in philosophical terminology, but he really knows more of what philosophy means. He has more, much more, care for literature. But the stamp of the Exhibition of 1851 is upon him also: and it is not for nothing that his favourite and most unreservedly praised models of style are drawn from Macaulay. I have no contempt for Macaulay's style myself: I have ventured in more places than one or two to stigmatise such contempt as entirely uncritical. But the *preference* of this style tells us much in this context, as the *preference* of champagne in another.

His Inner Life of Art.

The evils of dissipation of energy have been lamented by the grave and precise in all ages: and some have held that they are specially discoverable in the most modern times. It is very probable that Criticism may charge to this account the comparatively faint and scanty service done her by one who displayed so much faculty for that service as Walter Bagehot. A man whose vocations and avocations extend (as he himself says in a letter quoted by Mr Hutton) from hunting to banking, and from arranging Christmas festivities to editing the *Economist*, can have but

Bagehot.

[1] Excepting (largely) the exceptions already made, and also the huge mass of his unreprinted contributions to newspapers. *The Leader*, under his editorship, was a pioneer of improvement in reviewing.

odd moments for literature. Yet this man's odd moments were far from unprofitable. His essay on *Pure, Ornate, and Grotesque Art in Poetry* would deserve a place even in a not voluminous collection of the best and most notable of its kind. The title, of course, indicates Wordsworth, Tennyson, and Browning: and the paper itself may be said to have been one of the earliest frankly to estate and recognise Tennyson—the earliest of importance perhaps to estate and recognise Browning—among the leaders of mid-nineteenth century poetry. As such titles are wont to do, it somewhat overreaches itself, and certainly implies or suggests a confusion as to the meaning of "pure." If pure is to mean "unadorned," Wordsworth is most certainly not at his poetical best when he has most of the quality, but generally at his worst; if it means "sheer," "intense," "quintessential," his best of poetry has certainly no more of it than the best of either of the other two. The classification suggests, and the text confirms, a certain "popularity" in Bagehot's criticism. But it is popular criticism of the very best kind, and certainly not to be despised because it has something of mid-nineteenth century, and Macaulayan, materialism and lack of subtlety. This *derbhet* sometimes led him wrong, as in that very estimate of Gibbon which the same Mr Hutton praises, but oftener it contributed sense and sanity to his criticism. And there are not many better things in criticism than sanity and sense, especially when, as in Bagehot's case, they are combined with humour and with good-humour.[1]

R. H. Hutton.

The criticism of a critic just cited, the late Mr R. H. Hutton, affords opportunity for at least a glance at one of the most important general points connected with our subject—the general distaste for pure criticism, and the sort of relief which *l'homme sensuel moyen* seems to feel when the bitter cup is allayed and sweetened by sentimental, or political, or religious, or philosophical, or anthropological, or pantopragmatic adulteration. Mr Hutton's criticism was,

[1] The posthumous *Literary Studies*, and Mr Hutton's essay (*v.* ed. cit. on next paragraph), are the places for studying him. The study may result, without protest from me, in a high opinion of his criticism.

it is believed, by far the most popular of his day; the very respectable newspaper which he directed was once eulogised as "telling you what you *ought to* read, you know"—a phrase which might have awakened in a new Wordsworth thoughts too deep for tears or even for laughter.

His evasions of literary criticism.

The commentary on it is supplied by the two volumes of Mr Hutton's selected and collected *Essays*[1] These constantly deal with things and persons of the highest importance in literature; but they abstain with a sort of Pythagorean asceticism from the literary side of them. In his repeated dealings with Carlyle, it is always as a man, as a teacher, as a philosopher, as a politician, as a moralist, that he handles that sage—never directly, or at most rapidly and incidentally, as a writer. On Emerson he is a little more literary, but not much: and on him also he slips away as usual. Even with Poe, whom one might have thought literary or nothing, he contrives to elude us, till his judgment on the Poems suggests that *inability* to judge literature caused his refusal. Dickens, Amiel, Mr Arnold himself—the most widely differing persons and subjects—fail to tempt him into the literary open; and it is a curious text for the sermon for which we have here no room that he most nearly approaches the actual literary criticism of verse, not on Tennyson, not on "Poetry and Pessimism," not on Mr Shairp's *Aspects of Poetry*, but on Lord Houghton. He goes to the ant and is happy: with deans, and bishops, and archbishops, and cardinals he is ready to play their own game. But if Literature, as literature, makes any advances to him, he leaves his garment in her hands and flees for his life.

Pater.

To assert too positively that Mr Walter Pater was the most important English critic of the last generation of the nineteenth century—that he stands to that generation in a relation resembling those of Coleridge to the first, and Arnold to the latter part of the second—would no doubt cause grumbles. The Kingdom of Criticism has been of old compared to that of Poland, and perhaps there is no closer point of resemblance than the way in which critics, like

[1] 2 vols., London, 1894.

Polacks, cling to the *Nie pozwalam*, to the *liberum veto*. So, respecting this *jus Poloniæ*, let us say that those are fair reasons for advancing Mr Pater to such a position, while admitting that he is somewhat less than either of his forerunners.

His frank Hedonism.

His minority consists certainly not in faculty of expression, wherein he is the superior of both, nor in fineness of appreciation, in which he is at least the equal of either: but rather in a certain eclectic and composite character, a want of definite four-square originality, which has been remarkably and increasingly characteristic of the century itself In one point, indeed, he is almost entitled to the highest place, but his claim here rests rather on a frank avowal and formulation of what everybody had always more or less admitted, or by denying had admitted the acceptance of it by mankind at large—to wit, the *pleasure*-giving quality of literature. Even he, however, resolute Hedonist as he was, falters sometimes in this respect—is afraid of the plain doctrine that the test of goodness in literature is simply and solely the spurt of the match when soul of writer touches reader's soul, the light and the warmth that follow.

His polytechny and his style

In two other main peculiarities or properties of his—the, we will not say confusion but, deliberate blending of different arts in method and process, and the adoption (modifying it, of course, by his own genius) of the doctrine of the "single word,"—he is again more of a transmitter than of a kindler of the torch. The first proceeding had been set on foot by Lessing in the very act of deprecating and exposing clumsy and blind anticipations of it; the second was probably taken pretty straight from Flaubert. But in the combination of all three, in the supplements of mother-wit, and, above all, in the clothing of the whole with an extraordinarily sympathetic and powerful atmosphere of thought and style—in these things he stands quite alone, and nearly as much so in his formulation of that new critical attitude which we have seen in process of development ever since the Romantic uprising

The documents of his criticism are to be chiefly sought

in the *Studies in the History of the Renaissance*,[1] in parts of *Marius the Epicurean*, and, of course, in the volume of *Appreciations*, and the little collection of Essays reprinted from *The Guardian*.[2] The posthumous books are less to be depended on, in consequence of Mr Pater's very strong tendency to *cuver son vin*—to alter and digest and retouch. I do not know any place setting forth that view of criticism which I have myself always held more clearly than the Preface of the *Studies*. "To feel the virtue of the poet, or the painter, to disengage it, to set it forth,—these are the three stages of the critic's duty." The first (Mr Pater does not say this but we may) is a passion of pleasure, passing into an action of inquiry; the second is that action consummated; the third is the interpretation of the result to the world.

His formulation of the new critical attitude.

He never, I think, carried out his principles better than in his first book, in regard to *Aucassin et Nicolette*, to Michelangelo, to Du Bellay, as well as in parts of the "Pico" and "Winckelmann" papers. But the method is almost equally apparent and equally helpful in the more purely "fine art" pieces—the "Lionardo," the "Botticelli," the "Luca della Robbia." In that passage on the three Madonnas and the Saint Anne of Da Vinci, which I have always regarded as the triumph both of his style and of his method, the new doctrine (*not* the old) of *ut pictura poesis* comes out ten thousand strong for all its voluptuous softness. This is the way to judge Keats and Tennyson as well as Lionardo: nay, to judge poets of almost entirely different kinds, from Æschylus through Dante to Shakespeare. Expose mind and sense to them, like the plate of a camera: assist the reception of the impression by cunning lenses of comparison, and history, and hypothesis; shelter it with a cabinet of remembered reading and corroborative imagination; develop it by meditation, and print it off with the light of style:—there you have, in but a coarse and half-mechanical analogy, the process itself.

The Renaissance.

[1] I fully expect to be told by some critic that there is no such book, just as I once was told that Browning wrote no such poem as *James Lee*.

[2] Printed by Mr Gosse (London, 1896) privately: but I believe it has been included in the complete edition.

I fancy that objections to this proceeding take something like the following form: "In the first place, the thing is too effeminate, too patient, too submissive,—it substitutes a mere voluptuous enjoyment, and a dilettante examination into the causes thereof, for a virile summoning of the artist-culprit before the bar of Reason to give account of his deeds. In the second, it is too facile, too *fainéant*. In the third, it does not give sufficient advantage to the things which we like to call 'great.' The moments of pleasure are too much *atomised:* and though it may be admitted that some yield larger, intenser, more continuous supplies of moment than others, yet this is not sufficient. Lastly [this is probably always *subaud.*, but seldom uttered except by the hotter gospellers], *we* don't believe in these ecstatic moments, analysed and interpreted in tranquillity; we don't feel them, and we don't want to feel them, and you are a nasty hedonist if you do feel them."

Objections to its process.

Which protest could, no doubt, be amplified, could, with no doubt also, be supported to a certain extent. Nor is it (though he should placard frankly the fact that he agrees in the main with Mr Pater) exactly the business of the present historian to defend it at any length here, inasmuch as he is writing a history, not a "suasory" Let it only be hinted in passing that the exceptions just stated seem inconclusive—that the wanters of a sense cannot plead their want as an argument that no others have it; that the process has certainly given no despicable results; that it has seldom demonstrably failed as disastrously as the antecedent rule-system; and, most of all, that nothing can be falser than the charge of *fainéantise* and dilettanteism. Only as "the last corollary of many of an effort" can this critical skill also be attained and maintained.

At any rate, though, as often happens to a man, he became rather more of a preceptist and less of an impressionist afterwards, Mr Pater certainly exemplified this general theory and practice in a very notable manner. *Marius* is full of both: it is much more than the *Wilhelm Meister* of the New Criticism. It is this which gives the critical attitude of Flavian, the hero's friend

Importance of Marius the Epicurean.

and inspirer, the supposed author of the *Pervigilium*; this, which is the literary function of "Neo-Cyrenaicism" itself—the μονόχρονος ἡδονή, the integral atom, or moment of pleasure, being taken as the unit and reference-integer of literary value; this, which gives the adjustment *ad hoc* of the *Hermotimus*. The theory and the practice take their most solid, permanent, and important form in this most remarkable book, of which I find it hard to believe that the copy, "From the Author," which lies before me, reached me more than twenty years ago. The *Renaissance* holds the first blooms and promises of them, *Appreciations* and the *Guardian Essays* the later applications and developments; but the central gospel is here.

Appreciations *and the* "Guardian" *Essays.*

That the opening essays of the two later books happen to contain references to myself is a fact. But I fancy that this will not be the main interest of them to posterity, nor, strange as it may seem, is it their main interest to me.[1] The Essay on *Style* which opens the larger and more important book, is, I think, on the whole, the most valuable thing yet written on that much-written-about subject. It presents, indeed, as I have hinted, a certain appearance of "hedging," especially in the return to matter as the distinction between "good art" and "great art," which return, as easily rememberable and with a virtuous high sound in it, appears to have greatly comforted some good if not great souls. Certainly a pitcher of gold is in some senses greater than a pitcher of pewter of the same design, especially if you wish to dispose of it to Mr Polonius. A pewter amphora is again in some senses greater than a pewter cyathus. But it does not seem to me that this helps us much. How good, on the other hand, and how complete, is that improvement upon Coleridge's dictum, which makes Style consist in the adequate presentation of the writer's "sense of fact," and the criticism of the documents adduced! How valuable the whole, though we may notice as

[1] I have always wondered what made him think that I personally prefer plain to ornate prose. The contrary, if it were of any moment, happens to be the case, though I own I think, as even De Quincey thought, that the ornate styles are not styles of all work.

to the writer's selection of *prose* literature as the representative art of the nineteenth century, that this was *his* art, his in consummate measure, and that verse was not. Altogether, in short, a great paper,—a "furthest" in certain directions.

There is an interesting tender, or rather pilot-boat, to this Essay in the first of the *Guardian* Reviews on "English Literature," where the texts are the present writer's *Specimens*, Professor's Minto's *English Poets*, Mr Dobson's *Selections from Steele*, and one of Canon Ainger's many bits of yeoman's service to Lamb. The relation is repeated between the Wordsworth Essay in *Appreciations* and a Wordsworth review among the *Guardian* sheaf: while something not dissimilar, but even more intimate, exists between the "Coleridge" Essay and the introduction to that poet in Mr Ward's well-known book, which Introduction actually forms part of the Essay itself. In the two former cases, actual passages and phrases from the smaller, earlier, and less important work also appear in the larger and later. For Mr Pater—as was very well known, when more than forty years ago it was debated in Oxford whether he would ever publish anything at all, and as indeed might have been seen from his very first work, by any one with an eye, but with no personal knowledge—was in no sense a ready writer, and, least of all, anxious to write as he ran, that those who run might read. There have been critics who, without repeating themselves, and even, perhaps, with some useful additions and variations, could write half a dozen times on the same subject; and indeed most literary subjects admit of such writing. But such (we need not say frivolity but) flexibility was not in accordance with Mr Pater's temperament.

There is hardly one of the papers in either book (though some of the *Guardian* pieces are simple, yet quite honest and adequate reviews) that does not display that critical attitude which we have defined above, both directly and in relation to the subjects. The most interesting and important passages are those which reveal in the critic, or recognise in his authors, this attitude itself—as when we read of Amiel: "In Switzerland it is easy to be pleased with scenery. But the record of such pleasure becomes really worth while when, as happens

with A., we feel that there has been and, with success, an intellectual effort to get at the secret, the precise motive, of this pleasure—to define feeling." Indeed, I really do not know that "to define feeling" is not as good—it is certainly as short—a definition of at least a great part of the business of the critic as you can get. And so again of Lamb: "To feel strongly the charm of an old poet or moralist, . . . and then to interpret that charm, to convey it to others, . . . this is the way of his criticism."

It is certainly the way of Mr Pater's, and it is always good to walk with him in it—better, I venture to think, than to endeavour to follow him in his rarer and never quite successful attempts to lift himself off it, and flutter in the vague. Good, for instance, as is the Essay on "Æsthetic Poetry," it would have been far better if it had contented itself with being, in fact and in name, what it is in its best parts—a review of Mr William Morris.[1] This, however, was written very early, and before he had sent out his spies to the Promised Land in *The Renaissance* (and they had brought back mighty bunches of grapes!), still more before he had reached the Pisgah of *Marius*. Even here though, and naturally still more in the much later paper on Rossetti, he presents us, as he does almost everywhere, with admirable, sometimes with consummate, examples of "defined feeling" about Wordsworth and Coleridge, about Browning and Lamb, about Sir Thomas Browne (one of his most memorable things), about more modern persons—Mr Gosse, M. Fabre, M. Filon. Particularly precious are the three papers on Shakespeare. I have always wished that Mr Pater had given us more of them, as well as others on authors possessing more of what we may call the *positive* quality, than those whom he actually selected. It would, I think, speaking without impertinence, have done him some good: and it would, speaking with certainty, have done us a great deal. One may sometimes think that it was in his case (as in some others, though so few!) almost a pity that he was in a position to write mainly for amusement. But it is not likely that his

[1] Nor do I think the "Postcript" of *Appreciations*, where the writer "Arnoldises" somewhat, one of his best things, good as it is.

sequestered and sensitive genius could ever have done its best —if it could have done anything at all—at forced draught. So, as usual, things are probably better as they are.

Universality of his method.

What, however, is not probable but certain, and what is here of most importance, is that the Paterian method is co-extensive in possibility of application with the entire range of criticism—from the long and slow degustation and appreciation of a Dante or a Shakespeare to the rapidest adequate review of the most trivial and ephemeral of books. Feel; discover the source of feeling (or no-feeling, or disgust, as it will often be in the trivial cases); express the discovery so as to communicate the feeling: this can be done in every case. And if it cannot be done by every person, why, that is only equivalent to saying that it is not precisely possible for everybody to be a critic, which, again, is a particular case of a general proposition announced in choice Latin a long time ago, practically anticipated in choicer Greek long before, and no doubt perfectly well understood by wise persons of all nations and languages at any time back to the Twenty-third of October B.C 4004, or any other date which may be preferred thereto. Besides the objections before referred to, there may be others—such as that the critic's powers, even if he possesses them, will become callous by too much exercise,—an objection refuted by the fact, so often noticed, that there is hardly an instance of a man with real critical powers becoming a worse critic as he grew older, and many a one of his becoming a better. But, at any rate, this was Mr Pater's way of criticism: this had already been the way pursued, more or less darkling or in clear vision, by all modern critics—the way first definitely formulated, and, perhaps, allowing for bulk of work, most consistently pursued, by himself. And I have said—perhaps often enough—that I do not know a better.

J. A. Symonds.

Although the relation of "moon" to "sun," so often used as an image in literary history, will not work with pedantic exactness in relation to Mr J. A Symonds and the critic just mentioned,—for the moon is not many times more voluminous than the sun, and there are other

difficulties,—it applies to a certain extent. Both were literary Hedonists; both were strongly influenced by Greek and Italian. But Mr Symonds's mind, like his style, was very much more irregular and undisciplined than Mr Pater's (which had almost something of Neo-classic precision adjusting its Romantic luxuriance), and this want of discipline let him loose[1] into a loquacity which certainly deserved the Petronian epithet of *enormis*, and could sometimes hardly escape the companion one of *ventosa*. His treatise on *Blank Verse*,[2] interesting as it is, would give the enemy of the extremer "modern" criticism far too many occasions to blaspheme by its sheer critical antinomianism: and over all his extensive work, faults of excess of various kinds swarm. But beauties and merits are there in ample measure as well as faults: and in the literary parts of *The Renaissance in Italy* the author has endeavoured to put some restraint on himself, and has been rewarded for the sacrifice. From some little acquaintance with literary history, I think I may say that there is no better historical treatment of a foreign literature in English. One can never help wishing that the author had left half his actual subject untouched, and had completed the study of Italian literature.[3]

Thomson ("*B. V.*")

Not much need be said of the critical production—arrested, like the poetical, by causes unhappy but well known—of James Thomson "the Second," hardly "the Less," but most emphatically "the Other." It ought to have been good: and sometimes (especially under the unexpected and soothing shadow of *Cope's Tobacco Plant*) was so.[4] Thomson had much of the love, and some of the knowledge, required; his intellect (when allowed to be so) was clear and strong; he was, in more ways than one, of the type of those poets who have made some of the best critics, despite the alleged prodigiousness of the metamorphosis. But the good

[1] Especially in his numerous volumes of Essays and Studies, under various names

[2] London, 1895.

[3] A "pair" for Mr Symonds from the other University might be found in the late Mr Frederick Myers, who, with more philosophical and less artistic tendency, exhibited an equally *flamboyant* style

[4] Its chief monuments or repertories are *Essays and Phantasies* (London, 1881) and *Poems, Essays, and Fragments* (London, 1892).

seed was choked by many tares of monstrous and fatal growth. The least of these should have been (but perhaps was not) the necessity of working for a living, and not the necessity, but the provoked and accepted doom, of working for it mostly in obscure and unprofitable, not to say disreputable, places, imposed upon a temperament radically nervous, "impotent," in the Latin sense, and unresigned to facts. That temperament itself was a more dangerous obstacle: and the recalcitrance to religion which it was allowed to induce was one more dangerous still. There are no doubt many instances where rigid orthodoxy has proved baneful, even destructive, to a man's critical powers, or at any rate to his catholic exertion of them: but there are also many in which it has interfered little, if at all. On the other hand, I can hardly think of a case in which religious, and of very few in which political, heterodoxy has not made its partisans more or less hopelessly uncritical on those with whom they disagree. Nor could the peculiar character of Thomson's education and profession fail to react unfavourably on his criticism. It is hard to get rid of some ill effects of schoolmastering in any case; it must be nearly impossible, in the case of a proud and rather "ill-conditioned" man, who has not enjoyed either full liberal education or gentle breeding, and who is between the upper and nether millstone, as Thomson seems to have been, or at least felt himself, while he was a military schoolmaster. All these irons entered into a critical soul which might have been a fair one and brave: and we see the scars of them, and the cramp of them, too often.[1]

William Minto.

A journalist for one-half of his working life, and a professor —partly—of literature for the other, William Minto executed in both capacities a good deal of literary work: but his most noteworthy contribution[2] to our subject consisted in the two remarkable manuals of English literary history which, as quite a young man, he drew up.[3] To say

[1] On men like Shelley and Blake, of course, Thomson was free from most of his "Satans", and he speaks well on them.

[2] His *Defoe*, in the *English Men of Letters* Series, is not to be overlooked.

[3] *Manual of English Prose Literature* (Edinburgh, 1872); *Characteristics of English Poets, from Chaucer to Shirley* (Edinburgh, 1874).

that these manuals were, at the time of their publication, by far the best on the subject would be to say little: for there were hardly any good ones. Their praise can be more of a cheerfully positive, and less of a "rascally, comparative" character. They were both, but especially the *Poets from Chaucer to Shirley*, full of study, insight, originality, and grasp —where the author chose to indulge his genius. Their defects were defects which it requires genius indeed, or at least a very considerable share of audacity, to keep out of manuals of the kind. There is, perhaps, too much biography and too much mere abstract of contents—a thing which will never serve the student in lieu of reading, which will sometimes disastrously suggest to him that he need not read, and which must always curtail the space available for really useful guidance and critical illumination to him when he does. In the *Prose* there is something else. The book is constructed as a sort of enlarged *praxis* on a special pedagogic theory of style-teaching, that of the late Professor Bain: and is elaborately scheduled for the illustration of Qualities and Elements of Style, of Kinds of Composition There is no need to discuss how far the schedule itself is faulty or free from fault; it is unavoidable that rigid adjustment to it—or to any such—shall bring back those faults of the old Rhetoric on which we have already commented,[1] with others more faulty than themselves. For classical literature was very largely, if not wholly, constructed according to such schemes, and might be analysed with an eye on them: English literature had other inceptions and other issues. That Minto's excellent critical qualities do not disappear altogether behind the lattice-work of schedule-reference speaks not a little for them.

His books on English Prose and Poetry.

Few writers have lost more by the practice of anonymous journalism than the late Mr Traill. He engaged in it, and in periodical writing generally, from a period dating back almost to the time of his leaving Oxford,[2] and

H. D. Traill.

[1] *V. Hist. Crit.*, vol. I.

[2] I do not know whether he contributed to anything before that remarkable period *The Dark Blue*, which, during its short life in the earliest 'Seventies, had a staff not easily surpassable, and almost reminding one of the earlier English *London Magazine* and of the French *Globe*.

he had to do with it, I believe, till his death, the extraordinary quality of his work recommending him to any and every editor who knew his business. It was impossible, in reading any proof of his, be it on matters political, literary, or miscellaneous, not to think of Thackeray's phrase about George Warrington's articles, as to "the sense, the satire, and the scholarship" which characterised them. In the rather wide knowledge, which circumstances happened to give me, of writers for the press during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, I never knew his equal for combination of the three. For a great many years, however, chance, or choice, or demand, directed him chiefly to the most important, as it is thought, and the most paying, but the most exhausting and, as far as permanent results go, the most utterly thankless and evanescent division of journalism—political leader-writing, with actual attendance at "the House" during the Session. And this curtailed both his literary press-work and his opportunities of literary book-work. He did, however, a great deal of the former: and the labours of the much-abused but sometimes useful literary resurrection-men, who dig contributions out of their newspaper graves, could hardly be better bestowed than upon him. Fortunately, however, the literary side of his criticism—he was a critic of letters and life alike, born and bred, in prose and in verse, by temper and training, in heart and brain—remains in part of *The New Lucian*, in the admirable monographs on Sterne and Coleridge,[1] and in the collection of Essays[2] issued but a year or two before his death.

His critical strength.

In the three last-named volumes especially, his qualities as a critic are patent to any one with eyes. The two monographs are models of competence and grasp, but they are almost greater models of the combination of vigour and sanity. Both subjects are of the kind which used to tempt to cant, and which now tempts to paradox. To the first sin Mr Traill had no temptation—

On Sterne and Coleridge.

[1] Both in the *English Men of Letters*: The *Sterne* appeared in 1882; the *Coleridge* in 1884.

[2] *The New Fiction and other Essays on Literary Subjects* (London, 1897).

whatever fault might have been found with him, neither Pecksniffery nor Podsnappery was in the faintest degree his failing. But he might have been thought likely to be tempted, as some very clever men in our day have been, by the desire to fly in the face of the Philistine, and to flout the Family Man. There is no trace of any such beguilement—the moral currency is as little tampered with as it could have been by Johnson or by Southey, while there is no trace of the limitations of the one or of the slight Pharisaism of the other. And yet the literary judgment is entirely unaffected by this moral rectitude: the two do not trespass on each other's provinces by so much as a hair's-breadth.

Essays on Fiction.

The title-paper of the collected *Essays*, "The New Fiction," connects itself with several other pieces in the volume, "The Political Novel," "Samuel Richardson," "The Novel of Manners," and, to some extent, "The Future of Humour." Mr Traill was a particularly good critic of the most characteristic product of the nineteenth century: I doubt whether we have had a better. In poetry he seemed to me to sin a little, in one direction (just as, I know, I seemed to him to sin in the other), by insisting too much, in the antique fashion, on a general unity and purpose. He shows this, I think, here in the paper on "Matthew Arnold," who, indeed, himself could hardly have objected, for they were theoretically much at one on the point. But as to prose fiction he had no illusions, and his criticism of it is consummate. We have not a few instances of onslaughts upon corrupt developments of the art by critics great and small; but I do not think I know one to equal Mr Traill's demolition of the "*grime*-novel" of to-day or yesterday. His highest achievement, however, in a single piece, "*The Future of Humour*," is undoubtedly "The Future of Humour," which transcends mere reviewing, transcends the mere *causerie*, and unites the merits of both with those of the best kind of abstract critical discussion. One may say of it, without hesitation, *Ça restera;* it may be lost in the mass, now and then, but whenever a good critic comes across it he will restore it to its place. It is *about* a day, but not *of* or *for* it: it moves, and has its being, as do all masterpieces of art, small and great,

sub specie æternitatis. If it were not so idle, one could only sigh at thinking how many a leading article, how much journey-work in biography, one would give for Traill to be alive again, and to write such criticism as this.

Others: Mansel, Venables, Stephen, Lord Houghton, Pattison, Church, &c.

Others, great and small, we must once more sweep into the *numerus* named, or unnamed. Mr Traill himself—for they were both of St John's—may be said to have directly inherited the mantle of Dean Mansel in respect of critical wit and sense, though the Dean had only occasionally devoted these qualities, together with his great philosophical powers, and his admirable style, to pure literary criticism.[1] Of the immense critical exercise of Mr George Venables, a little lacking in flexibility, sympathy, and unction, but excellently sound and strong, no salvage, I think, has ever been published: and though a good deal is available from his yoke-fellow, Sir James Fitzjames Stephen,[2] this latter's tastes—as his father's had done before, though in a different direction—led him away from the purer literary criticism. Of three other persons, eminent in their several ways, more substantive notice may perhaps have been expected by many, and will certainly be demanded by some. But Lord Houghton's *Monographs*,[3] admirably written and extremely interesting to read, hardly present a sufficiently individual kind, or a sufficiently considerable bulk of matter, for a separate paragraph. Mr Mark Pattison's dealings with Milton and with Pope, as well as with the great seventeenth-century scholars, may seem more, and more imperatively, to knock for admission. As far as scholarship, in almost every sense of the word, is concerned, no critic can surpass him; but scholarship, though all but indispensable as the critic's *canvass*, needs much working upon, and over, to give the finished result. And Pattison's incurable reticence and recalcitrance—the temperament which requires the French words *réche* and *revéche*, if not even *rogue*, to label it—were rebel to the suppleness and *morigeration* which are required from all but mere scholastic critics. The happier stars or com-

[1] See his *Letters, Lectures, and Reviews*: London, 1873.

[2] Especially in *Horæ Sabbaticæ*.

[3] London, 1873.

plexion of his near contemporary, Dean Church, enabled him to do some admirable critical work on Dante, on Spenser, and on not a few others, which will be found in the *English Men of Letters*, in Mr Ward's *Poets*, in his own Collected *Essays*, and in separate books. Dr Church combined, with an excellent style, much scholarship and a judgment as sane as it was mild, nor did he allow the natural drift of his mind towards ethical and religious, rather than purely literary, considerations to draw him too much away from the latter.

Patmore.

Mr Coventry Patmore has been extolled to the skies by a coterie. But to the cool outsider his criticism, like his poetry, has somewhat too much the character of "diamondiferous rubbish,"—a phrase which, when applied to the poetry itself, did not, I am told, displease him. For though, in *Principle in Art*[1] and *Religio Poetæ*,[2] there may be a few things rich and rare, there is a very large surplusage of the *other* constituents of the mixture. The short articles of the first volume consist almost wholly of it, and might have been left in the columns of the daily paper in which they appeared with a great deal of advantage.[3] Indeed those on Keats, Shelley, Blake, and Rossetti, which unfortunately follow each other, make a four-in-hand good only for the knacker. Mr Patmore, when he wrote them, was too old to take the benefit of *no*-clergy, to be allowed the use of undergraduate paradox. And as, unfortunately, he was a craftsfellow, and a craftsfellow not very popular or highly valued with most people, his denigration is all the more awkward. A man who says that *The Burden of Nineveh* "might have been written by Southey" (and I do not undervalue Southey), must have an insensible spot somewhere in his critical body. A man who says that Blake's poetry, "with the exception of four or five pieces and a gleam here and there," is mere drivel, must be suffering from critical hemiplegia. There are better things in the other volume, and its worst faults are excesses of praise,

[1] London, 1889.

[2] London, 1893.

[3] I do not mean that they were rubbish there. Rubbish is only "matter in the wrong place," and what is rubbish in a book need by no means be rubbish in a newspaper.

always less disgusting, though not always less uncritical, than those of blame. But I am not here giving a full examination to Mr Patmore's criticism, I am only indicating why I do not here examine it, as I am perfectly ready to do at any moment in a proper place.

Edmund Gurney.

There were, I think, few English writers of the last quarter of the nineteenth century who showed more of the true critical *ethos* than the late Mr Edmund Gurney. I did not know Mr Gurney myself, but most of my friends did; a situation in which there is special danger (when the friends are complimentary) of the fate of Aristides for the other person. But the good things which were told me of Mr Gurney I find to be very much more than confirmed by his books, though, of course, I also find plenty to disagree with. The earlier of them, *The Power of Sound*,[1] is in the main musical; and I have generally found (though there are some capital exceptions) that *critics of poetry, or of literature generally, who start from much* musical knowledge, are profoundly unsatisfactory, inasmuch as they rarely appreciate the radical difference between musical music and poetical music. Even Mitford fails here. But Mr Gurney does not He was the first, or one of the first, I think, in English to enunciate formally the great truth that "the setting includes a new substance"—meaning not merely the technical music-setting of the composer, but that "sound accompaniment" which, in all poetry more or less, and in English poetry of the nineteenth century especially, gives a bonus, adds a *panache*, to the meaning.

The Power of sound.

He was right too, I have not the slightest doubt, in laying it down that "metrical rhythm is imposed upon, not latent in, speech", and he went right, where too many scholars of high repute have gone wrong, in seeing that the much-decried English scansion-pronunciation of Latin almost certainly brings out *to an English ear* the effect on a Latin one, better than any conjectured attempt to mimic what might have been the Latin pronunciation itself. I was delighted to find that he, too, had fixed upon Tennyson's "Fair is her cottage" (his is not quite my view, and perhaps we were both guided by a re-

[1] London, 1880.

ported speech of Mr Spedding's) as almost the *ne plus ultra* of "superadded" audible and visual effect combined. And he is well worth reading on certain "illusions" of Lessing's.

The literary part of *The Power of Sound* is, however, if not accidental, incidental mainly: not a few of the papers in the second volume of *Tertium Quid*[1] deal with literature pure and simple. They are to some extent injured by the fact that many, if not most of them, are merely strokes, or parries, or *ripostes*, in particular duels or *mêlées* on dependences of the moment. And, as I have pointed out in reference to certain famous altercations of the past, these critical squabbles seem to me almost invariably to darken counsel—first, by leading the disputants away from the true points, and secondly, by inducing them to mix in their pleadings all sorts of flimsy, ephemeral, and worthless matter. Not the point, but what Jones or Brown has said about the point, becomes the object of the writer's attention; he wants to score off Brown or Jones, not to score for the truth So when Mr Gurney contended with the late Mr Hueffer—another literary-musical critic, who did *not*, as Mr Gurney did, escape the dangers of the double employ—when he contributed not so much a *tertium* as a *quartum quid* to the triangular duel of Mr Arnold, Mr Austin, Mr Swinburne about Byron—he did not always say what is still worth reading. And he makes one or two odd blunders, such as that the French are blind to Wordsworth, whereas Wordsworth's influence on Sainte-Beuve, to name nobody else,[2] was very great. But he is always sensible,[3] and he always has that double soundness on the passionate side of poetry and on the peculiar appeal of its form, which is so rare and so distinctive of the good critic.

Tertium Quid.

These qualities should, of course, appear in his essay on the "Appreciation of Poetry";[4] and they do. It is, however, perhaps well to note that, while quite sound on the point that there is a right as well as a wrong comparison, he, like

[1] 2 vols., London, 1887.

[2] Such as even Gautier.

[3] This sensibleness, no doubt, ought always to characterise the "Tertium Quid" or "cross-bench" mind. It is equally indubitable that it most commonly does not.

[4] *T. Q.*, vol. ii.

others, hardly escapes the further danger of "confusing the confusion"—of taking what is really the right comparison for what is really the wrong. The comparison which disapproves one thing because it is unlike another is wrong, not the comparison which is used to bring out a fault, though the unlikeness is not assigned as the reason of the fault at all. But I am here slipping from history to doctrine on this particular point. I think Mr Gurney, right in the main, might have been still *righter*: but in general I am sure that he had admirable critical qualities, and I only wish he had chosen, or had been forced, to use them more fully and frequently.[1]

[1] I do not take special notice of R. L. Stevenson here, because his criticism, in any formal shape, belongs mainly to the earlier and tentative stage of his work, and never, to my fancy, had much fixity or grip, interesting and stimulating as it is. I ventured to tell him, when I met him first, after the appearance of *The New Arabian Nights* in *London*, that *here* was Apollo waiting for him, not there: and I hold to the view Others, such as Mr Henley (with whom also I rowed in that galley—a tight and saucy one, if not exactly a *galère capitaine*), Mr Robert Buchanan, Sir Leslie Stephen, Prof Bain, have passed away too recently, and yet others must fall into the *numerus*.

CHAPTER IV.

LATER GERMAN CRITICISM.

HEINE: DECEPTIVENESS OF HIS CRITICISM — IN THE 'ROMANTISCHE SCHULE,' AND ELSEWHERE—THE QUALITIES AND DELIGHTS OF IT—SCHOPENHAUER—VIVIDNESS AND ORIGINALITY OF HIS CRITICAL OBSERVATION—'DIE WELT ALS WILLE,' ETC.—GRILLPARZER—HIS MOTTO IN CRITICISM—HIS RESULTS IN APHORISM, AND IN INDIVIDUAL JUDGMENT—A CRITIC OF LIMITATIONS: BUT A CRITIC—CARRIÈRE: HIS 'ÆSTHETIK'—LATER GERMAN SHAKESPEARE-CRITICS—GERVINUS: HIS "GERMAN POETRY"—ON BÜRGER—THE SHAKESPEARE-HERETICS: RÜMELIN—FREYTAG—HILLEBRAND AND COSMOPOLITAN CRITICISM—NIETZSCHE—'ZARATHUSTRA,' THE 'BIRTH OF TRAGEDY,' AND 'DER FALL WAGNER'—'UNZEITGEMASSE BETRACHTUNGEN'—'LA GAYA SCIENZA'—'JENSEITS VON GUT UND BÖSE,' ETC.—'GÖTZEN-DÄMMERUNG'—HIS GENERAL CRITICAL POSITION.

THE volume of critical writing in Germany since Goethe's death, and the deaths of those younger contemporaries of his, like Tieck and A. W. Schlegel, who were mentioned in our last chapter on the subject,[1] has been, of course, very great. The unceasing literary and scientific industry of the nation (with, in particular, the habit of the doctoral thesis forming almost an obligatory part of the regular education of any man pretending to culture) has made books of more or less critical intent and content as the sands of the sea. Yet the determination of the national critical temperament towards abstract æsthetic, or towards the most rudimentary and literal duties of *Quellenforschung*, of tabulation of rhyme and word-form, and the like, together with the custom (most fatal of all those encouraged by the thesis habit) of constantly "shoddying-up" former in-

[1] Bk. VIII.

quiries into fresher form, has prevented much of the very best kind of work from being done. If it were not for Heine, Schopenhauer, and one other who may come more as a surprise, in the earlier part, and the singular, erratic, and mainly wasted genius of Nietzsche in the later, this chapter would cut a very rueful figure beside most others in the book. Nor was any one of these primarily a literary critic.[1]

Heine: deceptiveness of his criticism.

Heinrich Heine[2] did many wonderful and many delightful things; but though he certainly did many things more delightful, I do not know that he ever did anything more wonderful than in making *Die Romantische Schule* persuade divers folk that he, the author of the *Nord-See* in his morning, the author of *Buch der Lieder* when the night had almost fallen, was anything but a Romantic himself. This curious achievement shows the dangers that wait upon those who peruse his criticism. If they cannot remember that a man very frequently blasphemes, in jest or temper, what he loves and adores, if they have not graven on their souls Lamb's lines which culminate in

"Not that she is truly so"—

they had much better not read Heine at all. For he will lead them into many foolish and hurtful errors, and direct them, as by his own account he actually did certain poor people in his impish days, to the sign of the Stone Jug as the most comfortable and respectable hotel in Gottingen.[3]

In the Romantische Schule, and elsewhere.

To put at once out of controversy what ought never to have been in it, let any one compare the famous passage or passages in *The Romantic School*[4] about the Schlegels, with all their fantastic and contemptuous satire, and the serious passage about them in the much less well-known article on Menzel.[5] Nay, let any man accustomed to sift evidence compare the more serious part of

[1] In accordance with the absolute frankness which I have imposed upon myself, I shall confess here that my knowledge of the most modern German literature is much less complete than my knowledge of French and English.

[2] I use the Cotta ed., in 13 vols.

[3] The passage in the opening of the *Reisebilder* ought to be sufficiently well known.

[4] Ed cit., vii. 172 and 215.

[5] *Vermischte Schriften*, xii. 175.

the "Romantic School" passages themselves with the less serious ones, and he will not have much doubt left on the manner. Heine was not only one of those persons who "cannot get enough fighting," but one of those who always prefer the most fantastic, the most unconventional, I fear one must in some cases say the most unsportsmanlike, tactics and methods. He would have liked the *savate* better than the formal rules of the English ring, with their pruderies about hitting below the belt and using your feet: and I think his favourite weapon would have been that ingenious Irish implement the Gae-Bulg, with which the great Cuchullain slew somebody else nearly as great whose name abides not with me—a short, many-barbed harpoon which you kicked from between your toes upwards, into the under and unprotected part of the opponent's stomach. The Middle Ages were actually the most representative times of Christian literature: and had been made even too much of as such by the school he was attacking. This offended his Judaism, that equally passionate and unpractical form of religion. He knew—it is one of his great critical deliverances—that if the Romantic is not always the mediæval, the mediæval is almost always the Romantic. And so at times there was no mercy for mediævalism and Romanticism. At other times he went and wrote, or had already written, *Don Ramiro* and *Das Liedchen von der Reue*, and *Mein süsses Lieb, wenn du im Grab*, and *Die alten bösen Lieder*, and *Ich bin die Prinzessin Ilse*, and the best things in the *Nord-See* itself, and the nineteenth chapter of *Atta Troll*, and nearly the whole of the *Romancero*, and *Bimini*!

The qualities and delights of it.

With such a man the critical letter killeth, unless you crush the snake on the wound, and, as the scientific people say now (justifying, like all real new wisdom, the wisdom of old), set free the antidote which the snake's own blood contains for its own safety against its venom. Never was any so liberal of this antidote, without even the trouble of crushing, so easy to charm, so *self-charming*, as Heine. As he says himself,[1] "the laughter sticks in his throat," too often and too evidently: and all but

[1] x. 225.

the dullest ears should hear the sob that chokes it. But, unfortunately, there are ears in this world that *are* dull of hearing; there are even several of them. And for these, as a critic, Heine is not.[1]

For others he is perhaps the chief, and certainly one of the earliest, of those who have discovered that the Goddess of Criticism is really all the different Muses in turn, and that she can be Thalia as well as Clio. There is still an idea that the critic ought to be very serious: and this Heine certainly was not—at least consecutively—while he was not even quite master of his own seriousness when he had it. There is, for an Englishman, no more agreeable spectacle of the kind than the delightful struggle of Shakespeareolatry and Anglophobia in *Shakespeare's Madchen und Frauen*.[2] All the Victor Hugo passages[3] should be carefully compared, remembering of course that the half of Hugo had not been told to Heine. So should all the Goethe pieces,[4] remembering, again, the interview, when the younger poet could find nothing to say to the elder but that the wayside plums between Jena and Weimar were good. Read him on Hoffmann and Novalis,[5] and remember that it is not exactly everybody—not even every Heine (if indeed there could be more Heines than one)—that can appreciate Novalis *and* Hoffmann together. In fact read him everywhere: but whenever you begin to read him, remember two little sentences of his, and if you cannot understand and enjoy them, shut the book. The one is that[6] about the orange-trees at Sans-Souci whereof "every one has its number, like a contributor to Brockhaus's *Konversationsblatte*." The other is the pronouncement that "without the Will of the Lord no sparrow falls from the housetop, and Government-Councillor Karl Streckfuss makes no verse." These will serve as useful tuning-forks, and they are not difficult to carry about and use.

In fine, Heine is a dangerous model, no doubt; yet even as a model he gave something to Criticism which it had not

[1] They should specially not read him on Börne.

[2] Vol. iv., ed cit

[3] The chief are at iv. 230 and x. 250

[4] Especially vii. 185 *sq.*

[5] vii. 239 *sq.*

[6] x. 216.

possessed before, which even Voltaire was unable to give it, because *his* laughter was too far removed from tears. Heine's humour too often turned to the humoursome: but it was always present. And Humour is to the critic very nearly what Unction is to the preacher, in its virtue as well as in its danger. Moreover if he could certainly hate he could as certainly love—could not help loving. And when you find Love and Humour together, they and you are not far from the critical Kingdom of Heaven.[1]

Schopenhauer.

The critical work of Schopenhauer[2] is partly to be found in his great book, but it there assumes forms which are not of those with which we chiefly busy ourselves, while the critical sections of the *Parerga und Paralipomena*[3] are ours—"stock, lock, and barrel"—a familiar metaphor which ceases to be hackneyed in face of the peculiar combativeness of Schopenhauer's thought and style They have all the refreshing quality of audacious originality and crisp phrase,[4] and they have perhaps less than is the case elsewhere the perverseness—in fact, the mere ill-temper—which was the result, partly of his dreary creed, partly of the injustice with which he considered himself to be treated by the *Verdammte Race*.

In these latter moods he is sometimes very amusing, as where he speaks of "a disgusting jargon like the French,"[5] or whenever he mentions Fichte, Schelling, or Hegel, but in them few men are critical, and Schopenhauer is certainly not

[1] An excellent subject for one of those D.Litt. theses by which we are at last going to put ourselves on the level of Germany (to the satisfaction of persons who write about Education) would be "The *Reisebilder* considered as an Allegory of Criticism, with some remarks on their excursions into Category."

[2] Ed. Cotta. I have not yet worked with the newer, and it is said better, ed. of Reclam.

[3] Vols. 8-11 of the Cotta ed. It is from these that the material of *Schopenhauer's Art of Literature*, translated by Mr Bailey Saunders (London, 1891), is taken. The excellence of Mr Saunders's version is a matter of common consent. I am not quite so certain about his reconstitution of contexts, which is sometimes rather too much on a par with the taxidermic exploits of the late Mr Waterton; and he has left out some piquant things. But the advantage of opening such precious matter to merely English readers not only excuses this but makes excuse unnecessary.

[4] Has any other German ever written quite such good prose as Schopenhauer's?

[5] *P. und P.*, § 320, ed. cit., xi. 251.

one of the few. One might make a not uninteresting critical postil or *annotatiuncula* on the enthusiasm of this pessimist for Scott: but it would be a slight divagation. Read all that he has to say on Style;[1] it is the best thing, I think, that has ever been written on that subject in German, and one of the best things ever written in any language. It is conspicuously free from the old jest (repeated after Diderot on Beccaria so often) that there is nothing of his subject in his treatment; and we may forgive him for denouncing Parenthesis, when we remember the misconduct of the Germans towards that delightfullest of Figures. Among his numerous judgments, of more wisdom than mercy, none is better suited for these times (in which the evil, bad in his own, has grown worse) than his condemnation of the idea that "the last work is always the best," that "what is written later is always an improvement on what was written before."[2] Nor is Schopenhauer's anathema on reading pure and simple too strong, if it be taken with the grain of salt always necessary as seasoning to his strong meat —which grain is in this place the addition, "what is not worth reading, and what is merely *new*."[3]

Vividness and originality of his critical observation.

Nor (as though he could leave no literary fault of his and our time untranshxed) does he spare the labour lost on biography and inquiry into originals and the like—"the analysing," as he calls it, "of clay and paint instead of admiring the shape and colour of the vase."[4] No critic, who is not very uncertain of himself, need be annoyed by the characteristic observation on the critical faculty, "there is *for the most part* no such thing."[5] For each of us may flatter himself

[1] In chap. xxiii. of *P und P.*, "Über Schriftstellerei und Stil." Mr Bailey Saunders isolates the Style part.

[2] *P. und P.*, § 384; *Art. of Lit.*, p. 6.

[3] See chap. xxii. *Selbstdenken.* Schopenhauer's maxim, "Reading is a mere *succedaneum* ("Surrogat") for thinking oneself," at once shows what he means, and invites the reply, "Yes: but a man who knows how to read always makes his reading the seed of his thought"

[4] § 287. *Art. of Lit.*, p. 11.

[5] § 244. *Art of Lit.* composes its section "on Criticism" of part of this context and another. The whole of the original chapter xx., Über Urtheil, Kritik, Beifall und Ruhren," is important, though the writer's own soreness betrays itself, as usual, rather too much.

that he is the exception, and need have no doubt about the rule. And, as a matter of fact, Schopenhauer proceeds to show that there *is* a critical faculty, and that he knows very well what it is, and that he has it. If he condemns comparison, it is only what we have so often called the wrong comparison; he lays the very strongest emphasis on the Golden Rule of Criticism—that a poet, or any writer, is to be judged by his best things. On the old subject of the value of immediate and popular recognition, he is perhaps too interested a judge: and there is also evident temper in his exhortation to critics to "scourge mercilessly," his doctrine that "Politeness in criticism is injurious." As the world goes, the critic who accepts it as his first duty to scourge mercilessly, to neglect politeness, is quite as likely to scourge the few good books as the many bad, and will certainly do *himself* irreparable harm. So, also, while recognising the nobility of much that Schopenhauer has written on genius,[1] we shall perhaps think that his encomia on arrogance and his disapproval of modesty are slightly unnecessary. Let us, at any rate, first light our largest lantern, and go out in the brightest day our climate allows, to find these modest men.

In the æsthetic section,[2] main and appended, of his great book itself, Schopenhauer concerns us less. It may be quite true[3] that the subjective part of æsthetic pleasure is delight in perceptive knowledge, independent of Will; and the bass may be "the lowest grade of the objectification" of the said Will. But according to the views, perhaps wrongly but constantly maintained in this book, positions of this kind have nothing to do with the discovery or the defence of any concrete critical judgment whatsoever. We find of course—as we must find in any man of Schopenhauer's powerful intellect and wide knowledge—divers interesting *aperçus*, not always or often conditioned by a tame consistency. Thus[4] he dislikes rhyme altogether, but sees, as not everybody since has seen, and as comparatively few

Die Welt als Wille, &c.

[1] For the origin of the section thus headed in *Art. of Lit.*, see back to chap. iii. of this part of *P. and P.*

[2] Book III. and App.

[3] § 39.

[4] App. on Poetry.

had seen before him, the beauty of rhymed Mediæval Latin. The passage on the sublimity of silence and solitude is an extremely fine one: and if his general quarrel with the world puts him in an unnecessary temper with minor poets,[1] it is interesting to compare his attack on them with Castelvetro's.[2] It would be very interesting, too, to compare and connect his views on Poetry with his very celebrated opinions on Love: but *non nostrum est.*[3] And it is only when Schopenhauer touches ethics that he is disputable; on æsthetic questions in the applied sense he seldom goes wrong, and is always stimulating and original to the highest degree.

Grillparzer.

Our "surprise" is the Austrian poet, Grillparzer.[4] I am told by persons who know more about that matter than I do, that Grillparzer was a remarkable playwright; I am sure that he is a remarkable critic Four volumes of his Works are devoted to this subject, and nearly the whole of one of them[5] is occupied by critical *pensées* and aphorisms of the kind in which Joubert is the great master. Grillparzer is not the equal of the Frenchman, nor has he the depth of his countryman Novalis. but his critical matter is more abundant than the latter's, and it is of a rather more practical kind. He seems, at all times of his long life, to have practised, and he has explicitly preached, what I myself believe to be certainly the most excellent if not the only excellent way of criticism. The delivery unto Satan of all theory, which I have put in the forefront of this Book, is of course intentionally hyperbolical: yet what he puts in the forefront of his own is quite sober. "My plan in these annotations is, without any regard to system, to write down on each subject what seems to me to flow out of its own

His motto in criticism.

[1] § 51. [2] *V sup*, ii 86.

[3] One could develop, with special relevance, the philosopher's peremptory limitation of the attractive season of womankind to the time between the ages of eighteen and eight-and-twenty: and his positive anathema on the *retroussé* nose. It is astonishing how this feature disturbs critics! Cf. Lessing, Alison, Carrière, &c.

[4] Ed Cotta, Works, vols. xv.-xviii. The two vols. of *Letters* and *Pocket-books* with which this edition has been reinforced since I wrote the text, add very much to our knowledge of Grillparzer's personality, and something to that of his critical position: but need change nothing in the estimate above given

[5] Vol. xv.

nature. The resultant contradictions will either finally clear themselves away, or, being irremovable, will show me that no system is possible." I am by no means sure that this was not the practice of Aristotle; it pretty certainly was that of Longinus; I have endeavoured to show that, pursued as it was by Dryden all through his literary life, it made him a very great critic; and it was to no very small extent (though in his case it was hampered and broken into by his fatal inconsecutiveness) the method also of Coleridge. Grillparzer had not the genius of these men: but he seems to have pursued his own method faithfully for some fifty or sixty years, and the result is some mediate axioms of very considerable weight, and a large body of individual judgments which are at least of interest.

His results in aphorism,

The former are perhaps the better. He has even attempts at the definition of Beauty, which are as good as another's, holding *that the Beautiful not merely gives satisfaction* and appeasement to the sensual part in us, but also lifts up the soul[1] This, at least, escapes the witty judgment of Burke quoted above, after Schlegel. He has the combined boldness and good sense[2] to see and say that "Sense *is* prose"—to cry woe on the poetry that can be fully explained by the understanding. He has dealt a swashing blow[3] at a terribly large part of ancient and modern criticism in the words, "Pottering, ["Schlendrian,"] and Pedantry in Art always *delight in judging* by Kinds—approving this and denouncing that. But an open Art-sense knows no Kinds: only individuals." He is interesting and distinctly original on Dilettanteism:[4] stigmatises in women (I fear he might have added not a few men) the "inability to admire what you do not wholly approve,"[5] and says plumply,[6] *Klassisch ist fehlerfrei*, a proposition which begs the question as little as any on a question that is always begged.

Nearly all his aphorisms on poetry and prose blend neatness and adequacy well, as this:[7] "Prose and Poetry are like

[1] xv. 24. The "peace" of Boccaccio and the "peace" of Dante combined!
[2] Ibid.
[3] xv. 27.
[4] xv. 35-45.
[5] P. 40.
[6] P. 49.
[7] P. 58.

a journey and a walk. The object of the journey lies at its end: of the walk, in the walking." Nay, he is blunter still, and to some people perhaps quite shocking, in comparing the two to eating and drinking.[1] A text for a weighty critical sermon might, I think, be found in an aphorism of his,[2] which is not easy to translate into English without periphrasis: and though he does not often venture upon the complicatedly figurative, there is another[3] about Islands which I wish Mr Arnold had known, that he might have given us a pendant to *Isolation*. In fact, in these meditations of his, Grillparzer, though never pretentiously Delphic, is always for thoughts.

and in individual judgment.

The very large body[4] of individual judgments on literature, ancient and modern, with which he supports these, and from which, in part no doubt, he drew them, is, on the whole though not wholly, a little inferior. But we can see the reason for this inferiority where it exists, and even then it does not make him worthless. He has somewhat imperfect sympathies. On Shakespeare's Sonnets[5] he is not much better than Hallam; his single judgment on Heine,[6] though studiously moderate, might almost be called studiously inadequate: and in talking of Friedrich Schlegel he cannot forget the author of *Lucinde*, or that when they once met at Naples, the future mystic and Neo-Catholic ate too much, drank too much, and talked too greasily. This, considering that he himself can admire *The Custom of the Country*, seems a little hard.

A critic of limitations: but a critic.

Grillparzer is, in fact, one of those critics in exploring whose region one gets to be familiar with certain danger-signals which are not always signals of danger only. As a practised playwright he speaks with special interest on Shakespeare, and he has given us judg-

[1] P. 62, and elsewhere.

[2] xv. 163. "Die Betrachtung tödtet, weil sie die Persönlichkeit aufhebt: die Bemerkung erfrischt, denn sie erregt und unterstutzt die Thatigkeit." "Consideration" and "Observation" come nearest: but they are not fully adequate.

[3] P. 176.

[4] Filling the other three vols.

[5] xvi. 158.

[6] xviii. 97, 98. There is, not a judgment, but a curious mixture of compliment and fling on him, at p. 130, on which *v. inf.*

ments on other dramatists, which have not less. His appreciation, by no means indiscriminate, of Beaumont and Fletcher[1] is specially noteworthy, and he has a whole volume on the Spanish Drama. I do not know whether any of our modern Byron-worshippers are acquainted with his estimate[2] of their idol, whom he fully accepts as "the second greatest English poet," but of whom he gives an idea quite different from the average Continental one. As a dramatist once more, and a man with dramatic ideas, he is extremely hard on Lessing,[3] but I do not know an admiring critic of Goethe who is much better[4] on that difficult person. We know that he will not appreciate Walther von der Vogelweide, though he has no strong anti-mediæval prejudice as such; and he does not.[5] Finally, let me give, as remarkable, his coupling of Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* and A. W. Schlegel's *Lectures on Drama* as "two of the most mischievous books of modern times for an inexperienced understanding." I am not satisfied with his calling Tieck a "chattering noodle" ("Fasler"), but at any rate he calls Gervinus "absurd." He returns again and again to the charge against this latter egregious person, who is still quoted by the compilers of Shakespeare Hand-books and the writers of examination papers. If I had any need of pardoning (which I have not, since I understand them) his remarks on Walther, on the Sonnets, and on Heine, I would do it at once for the exclamation, "Du lieber Himmel!" which he, a German, makes on Gervinus's most famous boast that "the English have left it to us Germans to do full justice to their Shakespeare," and for his explosion at the methods by which "*bis aufs Blut* wird alles erklart."[6]

In short, I strongly recommend Grillparzer, about whom I have seen very little in English, to study at the hands of those Englishmen who take an interest in criticism. A very considerable man of letters himself, he seems to have never,

[1] xvi. 175.
[2] xvi. 185.
[3] xviii. 41.
[4] xviii. 47-74.
[5] xviii. 86. Grillparzer evidently did not care much for "woodnotes."
[6] See xviii. 12-24, and other places in the index of that volume.

in the course of his long life, lost interest in the work of others. He had some natural limitations, and they appear to have been further tightened by his playwrightship and by the influence of Joseph Schreyvogel, a sort of Austrian Nisard, of whom I do not know much.[1] But the quotations and account which I have given will, I think, show that he had no small root of the critical matter in him, and that in more than one or two instances he enunciated *and observed* critical truths which are not exactly the stereotyped headings of the critical copybook.

It is not necessary here, after what has been said repeatedly before, to enter into any apology for not discussing the abstract Æsthetic of the German nineteenth century. Even Hegel, though he is tempting, must be omitted; for, as an authority of unsuspected competence[2] observes with some naïveté on this very point, "it is undoubtedly difficult to get a net result out of Hegel," and it is with net results that we are concerned. But a disciple of his may be usefully discussed with reference to the more general sides of the matter.

Carrière: his Æsthetik.

The *Æsthetik*[3] of Moritz Carrière is a sort of object-lesson on its subject. The praises which have been bestowed on its style are quite justified: there is no German book of the kind known to me that is pleasanter to read. Its learning and its arrangement are all that can be desired. And yet, as one reads it, the old reflections on *The Elements of Criticism* arise (with a difference of course) once more. The impressions produced are rather those of a long course of elegant sermons, with æsthetic substituted for theology, than of anything else. Here you may read that women are smaller than men; that "as the noses of children are small and stumpy, a *retrousse* nose in the adult indicates

[1] See Scherer's *History of German Literature* under this name. Grillparzer himself, at Schreyvogel's death, regrets (xviii. 130) the loss of his literary opinion, and says that there is no one left in Germany with whom he could talk in the same way "except perhaps Heine, if he were not intrinsically a scurvy *patronus*."

[2] Mr Bosanquet.

[3] 2 vols., Leipzig, 1859. Its constant and ingenious *illustration*, and the substantive importance given to Poetic, are its claims to admission here.

want of development, though with elegant culture [of the feature or the person?] it may be naïve and roguish"; that dilettanti are always plagiarists. The conclusion of the second volume, to the extent of nearly two hundred pages, is devoted to Poetry, and is very good reading. Sometimes whole pages are neatly woven of agreeable poetical citations, or of dicta from more or less important persons,—"Schiller says," "Goethe observes," and so on. We learn further how Music "presents the idea as the principle and measure of the movement of life, and connects the beauty of that which is to come with that of what is"—like, say, a dinner-bell when one is talking to an agreeable person in a pretty drawing-room. Observe that Herr Carrière is neither quack nor twaddler; he does really feel the beauties about which he is talking. Such a passage as that at the foot of p. 457, vol. ii., and the top of the next, on Homer's method of bringing scenes and figures before us, is real criticism of a valuable kind,—not more, it is true, than a corollary of Lessing's propositions, but worth adding to them, for all that. I know hardly anything more shrewdly and amusingly adjusted, as a sort of æstheticised "Rhetoric" of the Hermogenean type, than the remarks and illustrations about Figures, from that of the orator who said, "Let us burn our ships and launch out boldly into the open sea," onwards. The attempts to connect different metres with distinctive mental effects, or with separate classes of subject, are again most ingenious. His defence of the rhymes of the *Nibelungenlied* against the characteristic criticism of Gervinus is admirable. In fact, the book is almost everywhere, as Mr Weller would say, "wery pretty."

Only—as we have so often been constrained to add in dealing with critics, from the Greek Rhetoricians downwards—how much better employed would this erudition, this taste, this ingenious adjustment of exposition to example, have been upon individual and complete poems, books, writers! These pieces, these selected examples, are after all only branches torn from the living trunk, mutilated things, wanting their context almost always to give them full beauty and their own beauty. But this is not the worst: for at least on the doctrine of the Poetic Moment they will sometimes give that moment. But they are

produced, not to give it but to exemplify a presumed classification and analysis of the manner of its giving. They have to yield a formula: and insensibly, inevitably, the heresy will grow upon the reader, that the formula will yield *them*. It is as if some diabolical physiologist took Helen from the arms of Paris or of Faustus, extracted her eyes, or tore off her hair, or drew ounces of the half-divine blood from her veins, dissected and analysed them, and said, "Gentlemen, this dissection reconstituted, this analysis 'made up,' will give you what is required to make you immortal." But, alas! it will not. And the fact is, that *no* explanation of the manner in which the literary delight is produced is ever general or true of any but the individual instance. That delight is never the same twice running: these stars always have some, it may be infinitesimal, but discernible and individualising, glory. Yet Herr Carrière is a craftsmanlike and entertaining demonstrator of the Undemonstrable.

Later German Shakespeare-critics.

The performances of the later German Shakespeare-critics are so much better known in England than almost any other part of the literature of the subject that it seems unnecessary to devote much of our rapidly disappearing space to them. Gervinus, Delius, Ulrici, Elze, have all been translated, quoted, and so forth, with the curious deference to foreign opinion in matters of taste, which has so oddly accompanied English stiff-neckedness in general. I am bound to say that I think not much of any of these pundits;[1] and least of all of their great Panjandrum Gervinus. His critical quality, however, may be for our purpose better gauged by taking his large work on German Poetry.[2] It is an estimable book enough; the author often says what he ought to have said, and does not very often or very outrageously say

Gervinus: his German Poetry.

[1] Of course they have their merits, and have had their uses. In material criticism often; in textual criticism sometimes; in merely *dramatic* criticism not seldom, they are useful to those who want these things. But then, as Mr Locker's immortal friend at the "Travellers" said about the company next door, "One *doesn't* want them, you know," or, rather, one wants something else and something more.

[2] I use the Leipsic ed., 5 vols., 1871-74.

what he should not. But the faults of his Shakespeare-criticism—platitude, verbiage, attention to the unnecessary, and avoidance of the heart and root of the matter, the quality of Shakespeare as an English poet, mark this also. Take persons most diverse in character, time, what you will—take Walther von der Vogelweide, Hans Sachs, Opitz, Novalis, for instance—and read his verdicts on them. You will find that in the first place he hardly ever quotes or appreciates a *phrase*—in itself a tell-tale, and damagingly tell-tale, abstinence. But you will also find, in compensation for this reticence, a flood of general remark, (false) comparison, see-saw antithesis, and the like. By no means his worst judgment, but a most characteristic one, is that on Bürger, which I may partly translate, partly summarise, from the original:[1]—

On Bürger.

"Burger then appears to us as at once a pathological and a critical poet, a poet of Nature and of Art, a poet of the people and of Love. He belongs at once to the school of the North and to that of the South, relies at once on sensations and reflections. His nature-painting is apparently dashed on with a big brush, but it is careful in detail. There is in him a fight of the Universal and the Particular, of Art and Nature, of Endowment and Facility, of Poetry and Platitude."

I do not know how many readers will sympathise with, or even understand, the kind of rage which, I confess it, such criticism as this excites in my mind. It is not exactly false criticism; on the contrary, it is rather true. But its truth has nothing vital, nothing germinal, nothing specially appropriate to the subject in it: and if there can be said to be anything specially appropriate to the writer, it is only matter for an unfavourable judgment of him. Any man, with a good deal of reading and a little practice, can string tic-tac antitheses of this kind, made up of critical commonplaces and terminology, together for pages. No man, from anything of the kind, could grasp the real *differentia* of Bürger—the fact that he was one of the first to make, in poetry, an almost convulsive attempt to get out of the conventional by attempting the supernatural.

[1] v. 87.

In all these German Shakespeare-critics, moreover, the fault (which we have noticed even in Goethe) reappears, that they are criticising, not Shakespeare, but the translation of Shakespeare; that while they have plenty to say about the plot, and the "points in Hamlet's soul," and even sometimes the text in its lower aspects, the other and over-soul, the essence, the poetry, of Shakespeare not merely escapes, but apparently fails to interest or occupy them at all. On the accidents, the unnecessary things, they are voluble "The rest is silence"—to expand which text in its present bearing were an insult.

The Shakespeare-heretics: Rümelin.

A word or two, however, may be given to the arch-heretic in this division—the interesting Herr Rumelin.[1] I find, in relation to this subject, a MS note, of no matter what author, which may deserve quotation, despite the impropriety of its phraseology: "*Asinus Rumelinus.* Asinity much invited by precedent asinity on the other side." And really there is something in this. It is not merely that Herr Rumelin's essay sets forth his thoughts as those *eines Realisten*, and thus declares its author a reactionary partisan against Idealism and Romanticism. By a quaint, but not uncommon, "suck of the current" he has adopted not a few of the fallacies of the school he combats. It is *their* Shakespeare, not the Shakespeare of Shakespeare and eternity, that he is belittling. We have seen how a sensible German like Grillparzer treated Gervinus's boast about Germany as Shakespeare's prophet. Rumelin's demonstration that Shakespeare was forgotten in England for 150 years is only this same boast altered a little. It is, as every child ought to know now, and as I shall not here waste time in proving, an absolute falsehood: but it could be of no importance to the true critic if it were true. Gold scarcely ceases to be gold during the time that it is, or because it is, *irrepertum*: and perhaps the only thing that retains the slightest interest in this part of Herr

[1] *Shakespeare-studien*: Stuttgart, 1866. One of M. Scherer's best short criticisms is devoted to this book (*Études*, vol. vi., translated by the present writer in *Essays on English Literature*, by E. Scherer: London, 1891) But the original deserves reading. It is not much against it that the author relied on forgeries to some extent. The religion of "the document" almost necessarily passes into the superstition of the forgery.

Rümelin's examination is his use of the argument that Bacon does not mention Shakespeare—a fertile source since of the finest mare's-nests. But the Essay is a really interesting one, and might have done—though I do not know that it has done—much good to the chatterers about Shakespeare. The Southampton chatter, the chatter about the greatness of the Elizabethan period in connection with politics, &c., the chatter of Gervinus, the chatter of the Romantics—against all these Rümelin directs an anti-criticism, easy enough and sometimes not ineffective. As a Realist he does not (we can easily see why) like the character-play. As a Preceptist, he holds that Tragedy must not individualise, and that scarcely one of Shakespeare's dramas contains a *wohlgefügte pragmatische denkbare Handlung*. As a mid-nineteenth century Liberal he is pained to find that Shakespeare was a Royalist and an aristocrat of the purest water. Comparing Shakespeare and Goethe (for there is much mere Chauvinism in Rumelin), he finds that the one "flashes on things like a rocket or a blue light," while the other "shows them in a clear mirror" But after all he admits "the joy in the poet." So perhaps this poor heretic was not quite so far from the Kingdom of Heaven as Gervinus and Ulrici, for in reading them you are seldom invited to consider "the joy in the poet"—the Poetic Moment—at all.

We may conclude this chapter with notices of three later German critics, who are, in different ways, interesting and characteristic—the novelist Freytag, the cosmopolitan polygrapher, Karl Hillebrand; and the greatest, if the maddest, man of letters of modern Germany—Nietzsche.

Freytag.

For the first, Gustav Freytag's *Technik des Dramas*[1] could hardly lack mention here as the principal contribution to criticism of the chief novelist of Germany during the later nineteenth century, and as itself one of the main contributions to a division of our subject which comes direct from one of the main fountainheads, the *Poetics* of Aristotle. Freytag, however,—and the explicitness of his title bars any complaint on the subject,—occupies himself almost wholly

[1] Vol. xiv. of his *Works* (Leipzig, 1887). The Preface is dated 1863.

with the *theatrical* side of the matter—such questions as that of verse or prose and the like being relegated to the close, and very briefly handled. Had he written three hundred years earlier we should have had more room for him. As it is, the chief thing noticeable, and that not favourably, is his adoption of that Goethean utilitarianism which we have stigmatised before. He says nothing, he tells us, about French classical drama or the drama of Spain, because "we have nothing more to learn and nothing to fear from them." That, it need scarcely be said, is complete heresy according to the view of criticism maintained in this book. What you have to "fear" hardly in any case matters; and you have always something to learn.

Hillebrand and cosmopolitan Criticism.

Karl, or, as he sometimes called himself, Carl, Hillebrand is an interesting figure, and withal a typical one. He invented, I think, a useful word—"xenomania" or *Fremdensucht* —which was very proper for the nineteenth century: he attracted the notice, in his own country, of such a formidable and considerable person as the young Nietzsche; he wrote in several languages and lived in more countries, especially England and Italy. There was a time, which I can remember very well, when he "seemed to be a pillar." But I am not so sure that he was one. He prided himself on his cosmopolitanism: and one of his best-known pieces, addressed to the editor of *The Nineteenth Century* and reprinted in the great collection of his miscellaneous works, entitled *Zeiten Völker und Menschen*,[1] deals with the presence of *Fremdensucht* and insularity combined in Englishmen. We were, thought Herr Hillebrand some twenty or five-and-twenty years since, interesting ourselves in Continental matters at last, but we were not doing it in the right way. Frenchmen thought we interested ourselves too promiscuously in their men and matters; so did Germans. We put [*did* we?] Mérimée and Octave Feuillet on a level; Rachel and Madame Sarah Bernhardt. We distressed Herr Hillebrand's cosmopolitanism and his particularism equally.

[1] 7 vols., Berlin, 1874-85. There is a newer edition, I believe. As long ago as 1868 he had published, in French and at Paris, a volume of *Etudes Historiques et Littéraires*, and he did much else.

This is a sufficiently interesting and distinct point of view to have a few words here, especially as it has been often taken since. I venture to disagree with it *in toto*. It is very well, if your sight is weak, to have the best spectacles adjusted to it that art can adjust. But you will very seldom better your sight by taking somebody else's spectacles; and if you borrow the spectacles of several other people and combine or frequently substitute them, you will very soon see "men as trees walking." To the process of having spectacles made for yourself corresponds that of studying foreign literatures as widely as possible and as carefully as possible, the process of adopting French points of view of Frenchmen, German of Germans, and the like, answers, I think, to the other There is a wrong interpretation of *Sportam nactus es*, but also a right. And I think Herr Hillebrand's own results bear out what I have said. His critical work is very extensive; it had much, and still has some, interest. It is the work of a man of certainly more than average cleverness and of much more than average information; of a man with a really fair knowledge of literature and more than a fair knowledge of institutions, customs, national *mores* generally. Herr Hillebrand would never have made some, or many, of the little slips at which we laugh so much in other people, and at which other people laugh in us. But his cosmopolitanism, I think, eviscerated and emasculated his genius In re-reading essays of his which I have read before, I have found them faded, tame, "fashionless"; in reading others for the first time they produce the same effect without the contrast. The satirist was justified in making fun of the "temptations To belong to other nations"; but, in a sense of which Mr Gilbert was not thinking, and of which I doubt his making fun, it is to credit and to advantage that an Englishman shall remain an Englishman, a German a German, and so forth. There is a moral in the story of Antæus.

Not that there is not in Hillebrand work still interesting (though it is usually rather too contemporary as well as too cosmopolitan) when he is dealing with Fielding and Sterne and Milton, and Machiavelli and Rabelais and Tasso, as well as

when he is dealing with Doudan and Renan and Taine. He was for an age: but for rather a short one. And one of his papers is an awful example. It is entitled *Delirium Tremens*, and it characterises the work with which it deals as a "distressing aberration." That work is analysed with considerable skill, and the article contains some shrewd remarks, notably one on the invariable tendency towards "charcoal-burner" faith of some kind even in the most free-thinking Frenchman. Hillebrand's strength lay in things of this kind. But the instance shows where his strength did not lie, and that this was in the direction of literary criticism. For this "distressing aberration," this effect of *delirium tremens*, is one of the capital imaginative works of the later nineteenth century—the *Tentation de Saint-Antoine* of Gustave Flaubert.

Nietzsche.

Nietzsche's criticism[1] is, on the one hand, very much what might be expected by any one who might have managed (it would be difficult) to read only that part of his work which does not contain it, and on the other throws a very useful amount of additional light on his general mental attitude. Himself a remarkable artist from the purely literary side—the best modern German prose-writer by far, with Heine and Schopenhauer—he cannot help paying literary art the same compliment which he pays to some other things, that, not exactly of believing and trembling, but of acknowledging as he blasphemes. He blasphemes, of course, pretty freely: take away blasphemy, parody, and that particular kind of borrowing which thinks to disguise itself by inserting or extracting "nots," and there is not much of Nietzsche left but form. The mere headings of *Also Sprach Zarathustra* will guide the laziest to his ultimate opinions upon poetry and other things. At the beginning, the *Birth of Tragedy* (1871)

[1] His Works are now obtainable in several forms, there being two *complete* editions (Leipsig, n. d.), which give all the work published during his lifetime, in 8 vols., and a still lengthening tail of *Remains* (7 vols. up to 1904), and several others of separate works. Writing on him has been exceedingly copious, "he has become a name": but there is probably no sounder and fairer contribution to the *Un-Nietzschung* of Nietzsche, from a portent into an intelligible phenomenon, than Professor Pringle-Pattison's Essay in the 2nd ed. of *Man's Place in the Cosmos* (Edinburgh, 1902).

is, despite its title, hardly literary at all; its theory of an orgiastic hyperanthropic Dionysus-cult superseding the calm "Apollonian" Epic, and itself superseded by the corrupting philosophy of Socrates, being entirely philosophic (or philomoric). Later, the onslaught on Wagner is very literary, and consists, in fact, of a violent—of a frantic—protest against the tendencies of Romanticism, of which he quite correctly sees that Wagner is, with whatever differences, a musical exponent, and against "literary" music itself. Perhaps there never was a hostile contention which the other side could accept with such alacrity as Nietzsche's approximation[1] of Wagner and Victor Hugo. They *are* extremely alike in merits as in faults, and the recognition of the twinship is a point in favour of Nietzsche's critical power, whatever his dislike of it may be.

Zarathustra, the Birth of Tragedy, and Der Fall Wagner.

To attend more heedfully to chronological order—the four remarkable essays of the *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen*, which, early as they are (1873-76), are perhaps the last things in which Nietzsche displayed himself as entirely *compos mentis*, are close to our subject throughout,[2] and not seldom openly deal with it. The tremendous castigation administered to the "Culture-Philistinism" of Strauss—a document very fit to be registered as an abiding corrective to the hymns of our German-praisers, from Mr Arnold to Mr Haldane, and all who shall follow—is sometimes directly, and always in spirit, literary-critical. The unfriendly attitude of the next paper to the Study of History may seem less so, for, as we have seen, literary criticism without literary history is almost hopeless. But here Nietzsche's as yet unformulated, but certainly conceived, aspirations towards a future that was to be quite different from the past, probably come in, and he was entitled to regard with suspicion, and to meet with protest, the "dry-as-dust" character of German history-study. The enthusiastic encomia on

Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen.

[1] *Der Fall Wagner*, p. 36 and elsewhere.

[2] I was pleased, in reading Nietzsche, after I had written the section above on Grillparzer, and when I had already assigned Hillebrand's place here, to find him frequently quoting the Austrian dramatist with respect, and definitely selecting the other as the representative German critic of his time.

Schopenhauer and Wagner are again as constantly literary in character as the subsequent denials of both.

If the similarity of title in Nietzsche's *La Gaya Scienza* ("Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft") and in Mr Dallas's above-mentioned book should awake expectations of criticism in anybody, he will be at first grievously disappointed, for, except an anticipation of a later fling at Seneca,[1] he will, for a long time, find nothing at all of the kind. But he will make a very great mistake if he throws the book aside. The aphoristic manner, or rather the manner of detached notes, like Ben Jonson's in the *Discoveries*, which Nietzsche had now adopted, makes it unsafe to conclude from any one page, or even from a considerable sequence of pages, what will meet us when we turn the next. In the middle, and again towards the end, we come upon "pockets" of our ore. From § 82 onwards, on the opposition of *esprit* to the Greek temper, on translation, on the origin of Poetry, we find many noteworthy things, leading up to a formal note on "Prose and Poetry," wherein is the selection of Leopardi, Mérimée, Emerson, and Landor as the prose masters of the nineteenth century proper. Here Mérimée's scorn and Landor's pride may have had something to do with Nietzsche's admiration: but they cannot be said to usurp their places I am not Italian scholar enough to give an opinion on Leopardi's claim. Emerson, some may think, while not denying his merits, "a little over-parted." I should venture to substitute Schopenhauer, if not Nietzsche himself.[2] And after this we at last come on the long missing passage on Shakespeare, only to find, as perhaps some may have been very well prepared to find, that Shakespeare is not treated as a poet at all, but as the author of *Hamlet* and the creator of—Brutus! Nietzsche, as most people should know, had a great idea of the Romans, thought them *vornehm*, and the nearest approaches in history to the *Uebermensch*; but his special selection of Brutus is

La Gaya Scienza.

[1] *V. inf.* The two books which preceded this, *Menschliches Allzumenschliches* and *Morgenröthe*, are also almost purely ethical, though the extensive handling of moral philosophers in the past is necessarily literary too.

[2] It would be improper to dwell on this point here. I hope to do more justice to Nietzsche's purely literary side elsewhere.

very curious, though fortunately out of our range. The other pocket of the book comes long afterwards, and quite toward the end, where we get interesting things on modern German philosophers, "learned books and literature," and the all-important question, "Was ist Romantik?" Here, however, Nietzsche goes off on Apollo and Dionysus as of old.

Jenseits von Gut und Bose, &c.

The late and already somewhat half-sane *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*, with its still later and still more fatally symptomatic continuation the *Genealogie der Moral* (1887), devotes itself mainly to non-literary exercises of Nietzsche's general topsyturvyfication.[1] But there are passages which at any rate come close to literature. Such are the curious remarks on Galiani, Aristophanes, Petronius, together with some on Plato and Lessing, in §§ 26-28 of *Jenseits;* those on certain Germans of the great age, from Goethe himself downwards, in § 247, very specially those on German style and speech, in § 250; and the quaint attack on English philosophy in § 255. It may be not improperly observed here, in connection with Nietzsche's Anglophobia, that besides what was, as in the case of "der Alte Zauberer" (Wagner), a sufficient cause of hate, the fact that he had once been rather directed by and indebted to English thinkers,[2] there were others. He paid us the compliment of believing England to be the European stronghold of Christianity and Morality, and seems to have known very little directly about us.

The great critical "place" in Nietzsche, however, as far as I have read him (for I have not yet had time to explore the "rubbish-heaps raked together by abject adorers," as a very

[1] This word has been objected to by precisians. But it has the authority of Thackeray: and if it had none, it is exactly the word wanted for a certain flagrant quality of the latest nineteenth century, and more especially for the *ethos* of Nietzsche. With all his originality in form, he is simply parasitic in fact. He can only deny and pervert and "topsyturvify" the established and accepted. The *Uebermensch* himself is much more an "*Un*-mensch," who is not to be God but an un God. And the philosopher's famous syllogism, "There cannot be a God, or why am *I* not one if there is?" amounts simply to a turning topsyturvy of the much sounder and in fact unanswerable argument, "There must be a God; for *I* am not one."

[2] Even later his alleged doctrine of "Recurrence"—not his most repugnant to poetry, or philosophy, or religion itself—was only an echo of the carpenter in *Peter Simple!*

competent authority once described them to me, of the *Nachgelassene Werke*) is the *Götzen-Dämmerung* (1889), his last publication before the prison-house closed. Nowhere is the Ishmaelite character, which reveals itself pathetically in the *Zarathustra*, so petulantly present. The very first paragraph batches together as "Meine Unmöglichen," with a scornful tag to each tail, Seneca, Rousseau, Schiller, Dante, Kant, Hugo, Liszt, George Sand, Michelet, Carlyle, Mill, the Goncourts, and Zola—a somewhat heterogeneous company who receive some recruits in the amplifications of their judgments that follow. A hasty judge, who could not apply the system of ruthless toleration which has been applied in this book, might of course disable Nietzsche altogether on some of them. To say that Dante is "a hyena who makes poetry in graves" is, *mutatis mutandis*, no more and no less critical than to say that Nietzsche is a Bedlamite who sets his Bedlam on fire and sings and dances on the blazing walls. Here the source of uncritical blindness is obvious: and the explanation is renewed in the cases of Mill, George Sand, and one of the later additions, Renan. But the objection to Mill's "*offensive* clearness,"[1] to George Sand as "the milch-cow of beautiful style," to Renan's "nerve-dissolvingness,"[2] are really literary objections, and, as some may think, not unjust ones.

Götzen-Dämmerung.

Very interesting is his intense hatred of Sainte-Beuve for his "femininity," his Romanticism (which Nietzsche does not, like some people, mistake), and (as he lets us see, with his usual naïveté) his critical power. His wrath with George Eliot for trying to retain Christian morality, after giving up Christian faith, is less literary. But, on the whole, Nietzsche's criticism, such as it is, hangs very well together and is characteristic enough, even where it may seem inconsistent. It has the special bents of the lover of *Rausch*, of the anti-crusader to whom, not as in the case of his much-admired Beyle,[3] the

[1] *Beleidigende Klarheit.*

[2] *Ein Gesst der entnervt.*

[3] He somewhere speaks of Stendhal and Dostoieffsky as his "two great discoveries." A curious fling by implication at Baudelaire means, *I think, only* that Baudelaire had the impudence to admire Wagner.

Christian Hell, but the Christian Heaven, is something that leaves him no peace or patience, with the general drift which we have seen in German criticism, to fix on extra-literary points. A whole study might be made of his attitude to Goethe, whom he welcomes, salutes, almost adores as a fellow anti-crusader, as an example of *vornehm* selfishness and unsentiment, while he is never tired of bringing in some of Goethe's greatest things, notably the ends of both parts of *Faust*, for his favourite end-of-the-nineteenth-century trick of parody-reversal.

His general critical position.

On the whole, therefore, we may call Nietzsche a contributor of extraordinarily interesting things to our history, and in some ways a literary critic *in potentia*, such as Germany has hardly given us save in the case of Novalis. But here, as elsewhere, his gifts of potency were marred by the *impotency*, the reckless, uncontrolled, uncontrollable flux and reflux of mood and temper, which distinguished him ever more and more. We have not required—we have seen that it is ridiculous to require—a rigid consistency, a development only in one straight line, from the critic. He may, he must, learn, branch out, even sometimes retrace his steps in a moderate degree. But when we find, with but a few years between the judgments, of Schopenhauer, that he is "a great educator," a sort of intellectual Joshua to the German Israel, and that he is a "common smasher or debaser of the currency";[1] of Wagner that he is a hierophant, a master of masters, the "Alexander Magnus" of music, and that he is an "old sorcerer," a "modern Cagliostro," a "seducer and poisoner of Art," we can but shake our heads. No man can go through such revolutions as these and remain a critic, if he ever was one. That in some ways Criticism has seen no nobler mind, no stronger or keener faculty, overthrown and lost to her, is, I think, true enough: but of the overthrow and the loss I can entertain no doubt.

[1] *Falschmünzer.*

CHAPTER V.

REVIVALS AND COMMENCEMENTS.

LIMITATIONS OF THIS CHAPTER—SPAIN—ITALY—DE SANCTIS—CHARACTER OF HIS WORK—SWITZERLAND—VINET—SAINTE-BEUVE ON HIM—HIS CRITICISM OF CHATEAUBRIAND AND HUGO—HIS GENERAL QUALITY—AMIEL. GREAT INTEREST OF HIS CRITICAL IMPRESSIONS—EXAMPLES THEREOF—THE PITY OF IT.

SOMETHING apologetic has to be said, also, in regard to this present chapter. It is confessedly inadequate as a History, in each individual case, of the critical performances of European countries, other than England, France, and Germany; it is perhaps not so inadequate as a constituent of the present work That the writer does not pretend to any such acquaintance with these performances as he may, he believes, claim with the others, may seem a rather damning plea: yet perhaps it is not so. For it is for the other side to show that such acquaintance was necessarily incumbent on him, and that, not possessing it, he was bound to postpone the setting forth of what he had to say until the acquisition was accomplished. I acknowledge that I am not of this opinion. In some cases, as we shall see, the critical achievements now under consideration are almost demonstrably unimportant to the general history of Criticism as yet: and in all it may, I think, be fairly contended that they are for the present negligible. For the present, no doubt, only. There probably will come a time when such a new-comer as Russian will extend to European criticism the influence which it has already begun to exercise on European literature, and

Limitations of this chapter.

when older literatures, like Spanish, Italian, Dutch, and the Scandinavian varieties, will reassert, or assert for the first time, their position. But they have hardly done so yet, save in the case of those who, like Dr Brandes, are not of our competence, as living.

Spain.

The most remarkable of the confessions of this with which I am acquainted is given by the part relating to our present subject, of that work, so freely used, and so necessarily praised, in the last volume, the *Historia de las ideas estéticas en España* of Señor Menéndez y Pelayo. This consists of three substantial volumes, or about a third of the whole work. Yet it is hardly too much to say that it is solely concerned with æsthetic ideas *out of* Spain—that it is an account of the general course of European, not of the particular course of Spanish, criticism. The foreigner and the general historian can hardly be blamed for not attempting what the native and the specialist declines If, indeed, we were concerned with living writers, Señor Menéndez himself and others would give us most satisfactory occupation: but we are not.

Italy.

The case of Italy is rather different. Here also there are notable critical names with which our scheme precludes us from dealing, but here native enterprise has not "confessed and avoided." I do not know anything, in any other language, like the very remarkable *Antologia della Nostra Critica Moderna* of Signor Luigi Morandi:[1] and I certainly do not know of any such testimony to the existing critical interests of another country as the fact that sixteen editions of it appear to have been sold in little more than as many years. Yet this very book justifies our refusal. Signor Morandi has not hesitated to "throw back," not merely to Manzoni, who was born fifteen years within the eighteenth century, but even to Baretti, whose whole life was comprised therein, and who was born in the year in which Addison died. Yet by far the larger number of his contributors are living. They have already done much to make good the claim of their country, if not to that pride of critical place which she held in the sixteenth century, at any rate to a place far higher than she could claim in the seven-

[1] 16th ed, pp. x, 756 (Città di Castello, 1902).

teenth and eighteenth: and they are likely to go farther yet. For Italy, never quite neglectful of the glories of her older literature, has of late turned to their study with a will; and in this turning, as we have seen, lies the one and certain way to a critical Renaissance.[1]

De Sanctis.

We must, however, give some special mention to one writer who is very remarkable in himself, and who is generally admitted to have been, as far as in one man lay, the author, or at least encourager, and guide of this renewed attention to criticism in Italy. Francesco de Sanctis is undoubtedly a very interesting person. To us his interest does not lie—to the same extent as it may to others—in the coincidence of his time and his efforts with the new struggle for, and attainment of, political unity: but we can cheerfully allow a place for this. Italy wanted to do for and by herself, in criticism as elsewhere, and he came to show her how so to do. But from our point of view his critical character is interesting somewhat differently, and somewhat differently explicable. He obviously, like Mr Arnold in England, like others elsewhere, was determined towards criticism by the influence of the French Romantics, especially Sainte-Beuve. But he blended with the general characteristics of this criticism not so much Mr Arnold's specially literary devotion to

[1] One famous person may be noted exceptionally. A critic who held political and other views contrary to Mazzini's, and who thought (as too many critics have apparently thought) that it is lawful to wreak vengeance in the literary sphere for sins committed elsewhere, would have a considerable opportunity with Mazzini himself, as a critic. He has written not a little apparently of the kind, and about very important persons — Dante, Goethe, Byron, Mr Carlyle, papers on all of whom will be found in Mr William Clarke's useful English edition of Mazzini's selected Essays (London, n. d.) He has said things for which, if one were a Veuillot, one could, in Veuillot's own phrase, "promise him sensations" But this is not *our* way. One soon sees (in fact, I think, he frankly confesses it in more than one place) that the writer is not thinking of these great writers as writers at all, nor of their books as books. He is thinking of their relation, actual or by ingenuity representable, towards his ideal of "Collective Humanity," and he is talking, as he is thinking, of nothing else. We have nothing here to do with Collective Humanity, but much with the Humanities, which are different: and so he escapes our jurisdiction. Perhaps a good many more modern Italians would do the same, that influence of Vico, which we noted in Signor Croce, being very strong in them.

the greater gods of ancient and modern times, not so much Sainte-Beuve's own irresistible attraction to the character, the manners, and so forth of his subjects—as the old Italian addiction, already revived and redirected by Vico, towards philosophising. In the first Essay of his most famous, influential, and characteristic book[1] he cannot write more than a few lines without flinging his disciple neck and heels into the ocean with the question, as a chief one of Literature, "What is the destiny of the human generations?" A momentous question certainly: but one which concerns literature only as it concerns everything else from theology to therapeutics, and perhaps a little less than it concerns most of them. But this opens the old truceless war, and we must turn away from it. Let me only suggest that De Sanctis is a little unfair to the ancients when he says in the same essay that "the sense of Life begins to reveal itself in Shakespeare." Many a dialogue and many a chorus, many an oration and many a historic passage, will rise up in judgment against him for this, at the great day of critical account.

Character of his work.

We must not, however, be too severe on him; for a certain southern tendency to hyperbole is not one of his least engaging characteristics. He shows himself of the nineteenth-century in general, and of the tribe of Sainte-Beuve in particular, by being almost nothing if not an essayist. They complain of his *History of Italian Literature* that, good as it is, it is too much of a bundle of Essays; his two best-known works, *Saggi Critici*[2] and *Nuovi Saggi*,[3] do not pretend to be anything else. The latter is chiefly devoted to Italian subjects, for De Sanctis was deeply imbued with a generous cult of his own noble literature, which is one of the best features of the Italians. The *Saggi Critici* is more miscellaneous, and so more representative. I do not know his work quite exhaustively enough to be certain how much he knew of English; but it is rather noteworthy that in dealing with Beatrice Cenci his reference to Shelley is exceedingly slight, and might almost be called perfunctory. On the other hand, he has an interesting (first

[1] *Saggi Critici, v. inf.*
[2] Naples (2nd ed.), 1869.
[3] Naples, 1872.

hand?) comparison between "Machbet" and Wallenstein. But French literature, and especially contemporary French literature, seems to have interested him most. He has a very vigorous and successful defence of Hugo's Triboulet against Saint-Marc Girardin, and what seems to me the best, and the most characteristic, of all his essays is one on the *Contemplations*, where two distinct and rather opposite currents of thought and sentiment clash and ripple in the most refreshing manner. Nowhere is there a better example of that generous hyperbolical rhetoric which has been glanced at: no one has given a more amiable exhibition of that *petite fièvre cérébrale* which has been noticed more than once, and which the great Frenchman excites in all fit minds. But while the critical De Sanctis applauds and revels, the philosophical De Sanctis has qualms. Is not (here we have an echo of Planche) Hugo's art more musical than poetical? Poetry must have "a clear silver" sound. No sound can give you *any* idea: where we have Mr John Morley's sad heresy about the "vernal wood" anticipated So once more the *besoin de philosopher* did a little spoil De Sanctis, and has continued, let us say, not quite to improve his countrymen and disciples. But he did a great, an effectual, and to this day an enduring and admirable work: and even Italy, high as is the standard which she has set her children, is justified also of this her child.

Switzerland.

The accounts which I could give of nineteenth-century criticism in most other nations would be second-hand, would have to be meagre, and, for the reasons just given, as well as others to be added at the end of this chapter, would be almost superfluous; but there is one—the smallest of all—which cannot be quite passed by. Switzerland, from geographical situation and linguistic and racial circumstance, has always been exposed to whatever literary influences were felt in each and all of her three great neighbours: and her contributions to the literature of Europe, stimulated thereby, have always been more than respectable. We have somewhat unceremoniously classed not a few of the authors of these contributions according to language rather than to strict

nationality. But the literary activity of the Swiss—chiefly in French, but *as* Swiss—has been particularly great and particularly critical during the nineteenth century: and we may give some space to two[1] famous examples of it, one in the earlier, one in the later, division of the period—to Vinet and to Amiel.

Vinet.

Alexandre Vinet was not a long-lived man, scarcely completing his half-century. But from a very early age he was a teacher of literature, and though he devoted part of his energies to theology and other subjects, he was always, in a manner, a critic in his heart. His *Chrestomathie Française*,[2] arranged when he was little past thirty, was one of the earliest books of the kind, and is still one of the best, as far as its time would let it be: and his *History of Eighteenth Century French Literature*[3] is, and will remain, a minor Classic. But perhaps no book of his affords better occasion for criticising his criticism than the posthumous collection of his *Études sur la Littérature Française au XIXme Siècle*.[4]

Sainte-Beuve on him.

Vinet was (to give a choice of metaphors) dubbed Knight-Critic, or admitted of the Academy of Universal Criticism, at the hands of Sainte-Beuve himself—the Grand-master of Order and Academy alike—in an article written in 1837, and at present contained in the first thirty pages or so of the *Portraits Contemporains*, vol. iii. It is written in a more patronising tone, with more meticulousness of detail, and with less easy mastery of method, than it would have been as a *Causerie*, a dozen or two dozen years later; but it is very flattering on the whole, and well enough deserved. The Master's sword, however, as usual, in the process of dubbing, finds out, lightly but unerringly, the joints of the neophyte's harness. "Les idées morales, religieuses, chrétiennes, eurent toujours le pas dans son esprit sur les opinions purement littéraires." This is the same peculiarity

[1] Simondi—French-writing, Swiss-born, Italian by origin—may seem to claim admission, if only for his *Littératures du Midi*: but I think not.

[2] 3 vols., Bâle, 1829-30.

[3] 2 vols., Paris, 1851.

[4] 2nd ed., 3 vols., Paris, 1857.

which, with a difference, afterwards distinguished Vinet's compatriot, M. Scherer: and it is very noticeable in the book which we have selected for comment. The gown and bands of the Protestant pastor are perpetually hampering the critic's step and gesture, and flopping up into his eyes. He admires Chateaubriand,[1] but he is constantly stopping to tell him how sad it is that he should confuse Popish superstition with Christian verity. He admires Victor Hugo[2]—he does him indeed much more justice than one might have expected, and than remarks on Vinet himself would sometimes lead the second-hand reader to think. But he is made unhappy as a man by Hugo's art-for-art's-sake attitude, by his early royalism, by his later anti-Christianity or non-Christianity: while as a professor he is shocked by single-syllable lines, by audacious metaphors (yet he himself finely says somewhere that "only one poet has a greater range of metaphor than Hugo, and that is Humanity itself"), by some real enormities and more escapades of bravado. One is sometimes tempted to laugh at such things as his review of *Les Burgraves*,[3] with its tone of half-puzzled seriousness, till one comes again to such excellent points as the remark that "Hugo is sometimes mistakable for a parody of Hugo."

His criticism of Chateaubriand and Hugo.

On the whole, however, I confess that I find Vinet rather estimable than enjoyable. He is distinctly *lourd*, though it would be unjust and inaccurate to call him by the dictionary equivalent of that term in English. He carries his Chair too much with him,[4] and seems to think it necessary to set it down with an effort, and formally establish himself in it, before he makes any deliverance. I do not—I think I may at this eleventh hour ask my readers if I have

His general quality.

[1] A very large part (about two-thirds) of the 1st volume is occupied by Chateaubriand.

[2] Lamartine (with whom Vinet is, of course, more *comfortable*) and Hugo have about three-fourths of the 2nd vol. between them. In this and the 3rd, Béranger, Delavigne, Sainte-Beuve, Quinet, Michelet, and many others, figure.

[3] ii. 387-412.

[4] It is fair to say that much of his work, being posthumously published, is lecture, and might, if he had lived, have been worked up by him into a better form.

not justified this claim to impartiality—object to him because he is what he calls a spiritualist in art, or because, against my own views, he pronounces[1] that there can be no such thing as "pure" literature. I could produce from him a very large number of acute and true critical *aperçus*, like those above cited. He is never merely trivial or negligible: I do not think that he was in the least indifferent about literature. But he seems to me to leave his reader indifferent. His critical method has none of that *maestria* which carries one away, and only sets one down again when it chooses to relax its grip. There is no stimulus in Vinet, such as we find after widely different fashions in Sainte-Beuve himself and in Planche, in Saint-Victor and in Taine—nay, even in M. Scherer. There is neither persuasion nor provocation in him: he disposes you neither to follow nor to fight.

Amiel: great interest of his critical impressions.

Of the famous and much-discussed work of Henri François Amiel,[2] we are fortunately concerned only with the literary criticism, the value of which Mr Arnold duly saw, though, in deference to other persons, perhaps, he did not pay so much attention thereto as to some other matters. This literary criticism is of great interest, and I may as well say at once that I think M. Scherer did not do it justice[3] when he said of his friend that "en littérature, il reculait devant une œuvre." He could not here mean, what is true, that Amiel's timid and half-despairing nature recoiled before the completion of a work, for he makes it a parallel with his recoiling before avowal in love, and quotes his own words about his difficulty in "enjoying naïvely and simply." Undoubtedly this "moral eunuchism" (for it is impossible not to think of the famous passage in *Peter Bell the Third*) is to be laid to Amiel's charge too often; but I think conspicuously *not* in his presentments and judgments of literature. He is here far more healthy and far more natural than

[1] In the article on Saint-Marc Girardin, which concludes the third volume.

[2] 6th ed., 2 vols., Geneva, 1901.

[3] Nor can I recognise his description of Amiel's treatment of a literary subject at p. xix of the Introduction—"Il l'embrasse, mais au dehors." Alas! the Lucretian *nequicquam* comes in here again: but I should say that few men's critical embraces were more intimate than Amiel's, brief as they are

anywhere else. Indeed, he is sometimes so very little sicklied over with any pale cast that he frankly and naïvely records his changes of impression about the same book as he reads. These changes are, in tolerably active and sensitive natures, so rapid and curious that some practised reviewers have made it a principle, whenever they can, first to read the book they are reviewing through, with as little interruption as possible, lest the "plate" shift or change; and, secondly, never to review it on the same day on which they read it, that the impressions may have time to blend and harmonise. The most interesting, perhaps, of Amiel's records of experience in this kind is the group of impressions of Eugénie de Guérin, which occur together in the *Journal* at vol. i. p. 197. He reads and re-reads her on successive September days in 1864, and reads her once more in the middle of October. The first impression (which maintains itself for the two days) is altogether one of enthusiasm, not merely in regard to the sentimental side, the *impression nostalgique*, &c., but with a delighted recognition of *verve*, *élan*, greatness of soul in this "Sévigné des Champs" [Notre Dame des Rochers will forgive!]. After the month's interval he does not recant: but finds a rather less charming side as well. Eugénie's existence is at once "too empty and too confined": he wants "more air and space." Now both these impressions are genuine and vivid: and, what is more, they are both frankly taken and expressed, without any gaucherie or "feeling faint," any "touching the hem of the shift," and daring no more.

And this character of at least relative vivacity—of ease and power in enjoyment—generally distinguishes, as it seems to me, the literary entries, which have far less of what some have called the *ton amiellenx* about them than any others. The description of the style of Montesquieu[1] is quite admirably true and fresh: and if that of Joubert[2] is open to more exception, it is precisely because Amiel is mixing up Joubert's utterances as a literary critic and his utterances as a philosopher, &c., too much; because he is not keeping his own saner organ of judgment mainly at work. The fastidious and

Examples therefrom.

[1] i. 12. [2] i. 17.

morbid side does show itself in that on Rousseau, which follows immediately: but this we should expect. On Vinet,[1] though too complimentary, as was for a dozen reasons almost inevitable, he shows extraordinary acuteness and *finesse*, as also on Sismondi.[2] If he is less satisfactory on Chateaubriand, we can again explain it, and he does justice to *René*. The apology for Quinet[3] is as judicious as it is sympathetic: and I know few more curious and interesting companion passages in criticism than those on Hugo and Lamartine earlier, on Corneille and Hugo later, which occur almost together in the book, though there was some time between the composition of them.[4]

In the first of these, the juxtaposition of the citations from *Les Châtiments* and *Jocelyn* is a stroke of genius; in the latter batch, though it is quite clear that the judge does not completely like either the author of *Polyeucte* or the author of *Les Misérables*, the indication of characteristics is even greater in another way, because more elaborated and responsible. On M. Cherbuliez[5] Amiel is again of the first interest, because the slight over-valuation of compatriotism on the small scale is balanced by a distinct antagonism of "nervous impression." And we have even a more curious "place" in the notice of *John Halifax*,[6] which is the last of our passages in the first volume. Here Amiel's starting-point is a vain imagination—the usual misjudgment of things English, by a man who does not know England—but the use made of it is singularly good. The second volume gives us another invaluable pair on the most antecedently *not* to be paired of writers, About and Lotze—who nevertheless bring out between them the remarkable powers of Amiel's mind-camera. The summer of 1869 supplies more documents on Lamennais, Heine (inadequate this latter, but again necessarily), and Renan, with admirable obituary remarks to follow on Sainte-Beuve. One side of Taine—the side up to the date almost solely in evidence—

[1] i. 69. [2] i. 129.

[3] The *entrefilet* of the 7th of November 1862 on *la critique indifférente*, though it quite certainly is not meant wholly or even mainly for literary criticism, should not be missed.

[4] i. 167, April 24, 1862; and i. 176-183, January 8 and 13, April 8, 1863.

[5] i. 194; ii. 219. [6] i. 229.

comes out two years afterwards,[1] and the remaining references that I have are so numerous that I fear they, or rather some of them only, must be collected in a note.[2]

The pity of it.

We must, however, in order to take an accurate and complete view of Amiel as a critic, and not merely of Amiel's occasional criticisms, remember that these *aperçus*, brilliant as they are, are scattered over more than thirty years, and that they form, as it were, the lucid intervals in a lifelong night of moping, the islets far scattered and estranged from another, amid the *nigras undas lethargi*. That the man who wrote them was, at the time of writing, almost invariably a sane, mentally active, "moderately cheerful" being, is, I think, absolutely beyond question; that he might, if he had chosen to write more and to give himself more freely to that which comes before the writing, have freed himself to a great extent from his Melancholia, I have no doubt. Escape from that dread yet sweet enchantress—that serpent not of old Nile but of the older Ocean that flows round the world—no man can wholly who has been born of her servants, probably no such man would ever wish to do so. But there are two gates of partial and temporary emancipation—the Gate of Humour and the Gate of Study—which she usually permits to stand open, and through which men may pass, lest her sway become tyranny. That of Humour was apparently barred to Amiel: the other evidently was not. But he would very rarely use it. We know that he had many opportunities of contributing to critical journals, and that he would not take them, but fled back to Maya and the Great Wheel. Here the other, the more popular, the more irritating, side of him comes in.

But I can see no *pose* whatever in the literary entries. On the contrary, their freshness and spontaneity make a very remarkable contrast to almost all the rest of the book, ex-

[1] II. 110.

[2] On German "vulgarity," p. 112 (with which an acute passage on Goethe at p. 120 should be compared); on the two posteasses, Louisa Siefert and Mme. Ackermann (141 and 174); a valiant promulgation of the truth that most fear to speak, "There is no Progress" (167); notes on M. Coppée (200); Hugo again (228), La Fontaine (232); Laprade (280); Standhal (286).

cept perhaps a few of the Nature-passages. Still, they *are* "intervals and islets" only — there is a singular want of connection between them. Amiel seems seldom or never to have troubled himself in the least about taking any connected views of literature: he seldom or never extends the remarkable comparative power which he shows in his various companion sketches. And, further, I am not certain that if he had attempted regular studies or *causeries* they would have been good—that he would not have maundered off into the vague instead of giving grasped views and judgments. This, however, no one can decide. What remains positive and proved is, first, that his intellect never shows to greater advantage than in his literary passages.

Sed hæc hactenus. I believe honestly, and not as a subterfuge to cover pusillanimity or laziness, that if I were to give here an examination of notable critics during the nineteenth century from every nation and country in Europe, I should not really advance the survey of criticism which we now possess in the very least. Until a time so recent that it falls out of our consideration, all these countries and nations have most certainly been following—until, perhaps, one which is not recent but still to come, they seem likely to follow, the same course which the Three First have pursued before them, and in most, if not in all cases, have followed their leaders in a more definite order of sequence still. All, about the second or third decade of the century, devoured Scott and Byron; all, a little (or more than a little) later, reinforced our influence by that of the French Romantic movement; most, earlier or later, devoted themselves to that German literature which had in a sense preceded ours, as it certainly had the French. In all, the Romantic leaven worked itself out, under the conditions of the literature and the individual, to spirit, or wine, or vinegar, as the case might be. In all, "Realism" and "Naturalism," "Decadence" and "Preciousness," showed themselves, as similar things have shown themselves many a time before, in the merry-go-round of history and of literature. Quite lately,

in some—Russian, Norwegian, Belgian, *que-sais-je ?*—signs of secondary fermentation have been shown, which have greatly impressed some observers. But it is as yet much too early to take serious critical account of them.

And so the long journey—the tale of length also, which recounts it—may, if it actually must not, end with a few general observations of summary and reflection, to correspond to those which we have interspersed before.

CONCLUSION

CONCLUSION.

§ I. THE PRESENT STATE OF CRITICISM.

§ II. THE CONCLUSION OF THE WHOLE MATTER.

I.

In a letter (written on what was to prove his deathbed) which I received from my friend of nearly forty years, the late Bishop of London, in reference to the first volume of this work, he said he had often wished it possible to begin books of the kind at the end, and write backward, so as at once to engage the interest of the reader on matter more or less known to him, and to lead him on to the unknown by easy stages, instead of plunging him into a bath of strange matter. I nearly always found in Creighton's utterances—from the time when we used to outwatch the Bear in certain lofty rooms looking over Merton Meadow, and the Broad Walk, and the river, towards the full of the moon—a *Hinterland* as well as a foreground of meaning. And in this case, no doubt, the advantage of such a topsyturvyfication, if it were practicable, would not be confined to the reader. It is almost as important to the writer that he should not lose himself too much in "origins"—that he should keep fruit as well as root in view—nay, that, if possible, he should have a sort of Alcinous' garden of the subject before him, with its various developments simultaneously present. I hope, indeed, that I have not quite failed, as it is, to accomplish something of this tregetour-work for my own benefit and the reader's. Yet even "beginning at the end" would have had its dangers, for in no part of the

book is what we have sometimes called a "horizontal" view more necessary, or more apparently hard to maintain, than in this present. The immense mass of material which has to be selected or rejected is an obvious difficulty: and the certainty that, as readers in the earlier part have grumbled at too extensive treatment of matters of which they knew nothing, so in this later they will grumble at too curt treatment of what they do know and expect to be treated fully—is equally obvious. But these are not really formidable dragons or lions. To grapple with the first is the plain and *prima facie* business of the adventure, and to the second the adventurer must make up his mind.

But the knight's worst foes now, as of old, are not lions or dragons, but treacherous and deluding enchanters and enchantresses, taking advantage of his own weakness. And the difficulty of keeping a steady, achromatic, comparative estimate of the criticism of to-day and of yesterday is in this instance Archimago and Duessa at once. We have seen, again and again, during the progress of our history, how at one time—a long time ago for the most part—Criticism has been entirely bewitched by the idea of a Golden Age, when all poets were sacred and all critics gave just judgment: how, at another, a confidence, bland or pert as the case might be, has existed (and exists) that we are much wiser than our fathers. Above all, we have seen repeatedly that constant and most dangerous delusion that the fashion which has just ceased to be fashionable is a specially bad and foolish one, with its concomitant and equally unreasonable but rather less dangerous opposite, that the fashion that *is* in is the foolishest and feeblest of all fashions. With these things we have hitherto had to cope only at long bowls, so that it has been comparatively easy to keep a critical head. We are now at closest grapple with them: and while it cannot but be difficult to escape or to conquer, it will be wellnigh impossible not to seem captured or vanquished to spectators who have themselves not fully purged their eyes with the necessary euphrasy and rue.

From these same dangers, however, the very fact of having steadily worked through the history from the beginning, yet

with an abiding memory of the end, should be something of a safeguard for writer and reader alike. We have seen how justly Mr Rigmarole might pronounce all times "pretty much like our own" in respect of the faults and dangers of criticism, though this time might incline to that danger and that to this. If one—even one—lesson has emerged, it must have been that to select the favourite critical fancy of *any* time as the *unum necessarium* is fatal—or redeemed only by the completeness with which such a selection, when faithfully carried out, demonstrates its own futility. Yet we have seen also that the criticism of no time is wholly idle or wholly negligible—that the older periods and the older men are no "shadows," but almost more real, because more original, than the newer—that each and all have lessons, from the times of prim and strictly limited knowledge to the times of swaggering and nearly unlimited ignorance. And we should not be quite unable to apply these.[1]

In the preceding Book we have surveyed, in most cases virtually and in some actually, to the end of the Nineteenth century, the latest stage or stages of that modified and modernised criticism, the rise of which was traced in the first Book of the present volume, and its victorious establishment in the second. We have seen how—owing partly, no doubt, to the mere general law of flux and reflux, but partly, and perhaps mainly, to the enlarged study of literature, and the breaking down, in connection with this, of the Neo-classic standards and methods,—judging *a posteriori*, or, as Johnson, prophesying and protesting, called it, "by the event," came to take the place of judging *a priori*, or by the rule That in many cases the new critics would not themselves have admitted this description of their innovations we have not attempted to deny or disguise: but we have not been able to agree with them. We have, however, seen also that to satisfy the craving for generalities and for "pushing ignorance further back," new preceptist

[1] It does not seem necessary to follow the lines of the earlier Interchapters by summarising distributively the critical results of the period in different countries and phases. The very indefiniteness of the whole establishes a community which can be generally pointed out.

systems, in no small number, and sometimes of great pretensions and no small complexity, have been advanced, and that the new subject of "Æsthetics"—in itself little more than a somewhat disorderly generic name for these systems—has obtained considerable recognition. But no one of these has, nor have all of them together, attained anything like that position of acknowledgment, "establishment," and authority which was enjoyed by the Neo-classic faith: and we have seen that some of the straitest doctrinaires have condescended, while the general herd of critics have frankly preferred, to judge authors as they found them.

That the results have been in many ways satisfactory, it seems impossible for any one but the extremest of partisans to deny. The last and worst fault of any state, political or other, that of "decreeing injustice by a law," has been almost entirely removed (at least as a general reproach) from the state of Criticism. That a work of art is entitled to be judged on its own merits or demerits, and not according as its specification does or does not happen to be previously entered and approved in an official schedule—this surely cannot but seem a gain to every one not absolutely blinded by prejudice. Nor is it the only point which ought to unite all reasonable suffrages. By the almost necessary working of the new system, the *personnel* of Criticism has been enlarged, improved, strengthened in a most remarkable degree. The old opposition of the poet and the critic has ceased to exist. It is true indeed that, as we have seen, it never existed as an absolute law; but it was a prevailing one, and it deprived criticism of some of its most qualified recruits, or made them, if they joined, inconsistent, like Lope, and Dryden, and Johnson. Nay, Coleridge himself could hardly have been the critic he was under the older dispensation, much less those other poets, many and of many countries, who have enriched the treasury of a Goddess once thought to be the poet's deadliest foe.

Yet, again, putting the contributions of poets, as poets, on one side, the general literary harvest of the kind has been undoubtedly more abundant, and in its choicer growths more varied, more delightful, even more instructive. A collection

of the best critical results of the last century only, and only in English, would certainly yield to no similar book that could be compiled from the records of any other period, even of much greater length. From the early triumphs of Coleridge and Hazlitt, through the whole critical production of Matthew Arnold, to the work of writers unnecessary to enumerate, because all possible enumeration would almost necessarily be an injustice, you might collect—not a volume, not half a dozen, but a small, and not so very small, library, of which you could not merely say "Here be truths," but "Here is reading which any person of ordinary intelligence and education will find nearly, if not quite, as delightful as he can find in any other department of *belles lettres*, except the very highest triumphs of prose and poetic Fiction itself."

Now, the removal of the reproach of injustice, the removal of the reproach of dulness, these are surely good and even great things: while better, and greater still, is the at least possible institution of a new Priesthood of Literature, disinterested, teaching the world really to read, enabling it to understand and enjoy, justifying the God and the Muse to Men.

This is a fair vision; so fair, perhaps, that it may seem to be, like others, made of nothing more solid than "golden air." That would be perhaps excessive, for, as has been pointed out above, the positive gains under this New Dispensation, both of good criticism produced and of good literature freed from arbitrary persecution, have been very great. But, as we foreshadowed in the Interchapter at the end of the last volume, there is another side to the account, a side not to be ignored. If Buddha and Mr Arnold be right, and if "Fixity" be "a sign of the Law"—then most assuredly Modern Criticism is not merely lawless, but frankly and wilfully antinomian. It is rare to find two critics of competence liking just the same things; it is rarer still to find them liking the same things for the same reason. And so it happens that the catholic ideal which this New Criticism seemed likely to establish is just as far off, and just as frequently neglected or even outraged, as in the old days of strict sectarianism, and without the same excuse. The eighteenth-century critic could render a reason,

pro tanto valid, for patronising Chaucer, and taking exceptions even to Milton, because neither was like Dryden. But the critic of to-day who belittles Dryden because he is not like Chaucer or Milton is utterly without excuse:—and yet he is to be found, and found in high places. If (as in another case) critics were to be for a single day what they ought to be, the world would no doubt be converted; but there certainly does not appear to be much more chance of this in the one case than in the other.

And so the enemy—who is sometimes a friendly enemy enough—has not the slightest difficulty in blaspheming,—in asking whether the criterion of pleasure does not leave the fatal difficulty: "Yes: but pleasure *to whom?*"; in demanding some test which the simple can apply; in reproaching "Romantic" critics with faction and will-worship, with inconsistency and anarchy. Nor perhaps is there any better shift than the old Pantagruelian one—*to passer outre*. There *are* these objections to the modern way of criticism: and probably they can never be got rid of or validly gainsaid. But there is something beyond them, which can be reached in spite of them, and which is worth the reaching.

This something is the comprehensive and catholic possession of literature—all literature and all that is good in all—which has for the first time become possible and legitimate. From Aristotle to La Harpe—even to one of the two Matthew Arnolds—the covenant of criticism was strictly similar to that of the Jewish Law,—it was a perpetual "Thou shalt not do this," or "Thou shalt do this only in such and such a specified way." There might be some reason for all the commandments, and excellent reason for some; but these reasons were never in themselves immortal, and they constantly tended to constitute a mortal and mortifying Letter. The mischief of this has been shown in the larger *History* generally, here as regards English, and there is no need to spend more time on it. Nor is it necessary even to argue that in the region of Art such a Law entirely lacks the justification which it may have in the region of Morals.

But it may fairly be asked, How do you propose to define

any principles for your New Critic? And the answers are ready, one in Hellenic, one in Hebraic phraseology. The definition shall be couched as the man of understanding would define it: and if any will do the works of the New Criticism he shall know the doctrine thereof. Nor are the works themselves hard to set forth. He must read, and, as far as possible, read everything—that is the first and great commandment. If he omits one period of a literature, even one author of some real, if ever so little, importance in a period, he runs the risk of putting his view of the rest out of focus; if he fails to take at least some account of other literatures as well, his state will be nearly as perilous. Secondly, he must constantly compare books, authors, literatures indeed, to see in what each differs from each, but never in order to dislike one because it is not the other. Thirdly, he must, as far as he possibly can, divest himself of any idea of what a book *ought to be*, until he has seen what it is. In other words, and to revert to the old simile, the plate to which he exposes the object cannot be too carefully prepared and sensitised, so that it may take the exactest possible reflection: but it cannot also be too carefully protected from even the minutest line, shadow, dot, that may affect or predetermine the impression in the very slightest degree.

To carry this out is, of course, difficult; to carry it out in perfection is, no doubt, impossible. But I believe that it can be done in some measure, and could be done, if men would take criticism both seriously and faithfully, better and better —by those, at least, who start with a certain favourable disposition and talent for the exercise, and who submit this disposition to a suitable training in ancient and modern literature. And by such endeavours, some nearer approach to the "Fair Vision" must surely be probable than was even possible by the older system of schedule and precept, under which even a new masterpiece of genius, which somehow or other "forced the consign" and established itself, became a mischief, because it introduced a new prohibitive and exclusive pattern. I have said more than once that, according to the common law of flux and reflux—the Revolution which those may accept

who are profoundly sceptical of Evolution—some return, not to the old Neo-classicism, but to some more dogmatic and less æsthetic criticism than we have seen for the last three generations, may be expected, and that there have been not a few signs of its arrival. But this is a History, not a Prophecy, and sufficient to the day is the evil thereof. Perhaps even the good is not quite so insufficient as the day itself, "chagrined at whatsoe'er *it* is," may be apt to suppose.

II.

"Who would has heard Sordello's story told."

In these three volumes an endeavour has been made to fulfil the pledge given at their beginning, and to set before the reader, in a plain tale, what men have actually done, said, and thought in Criticism of Literature, in Judging of Authors. We have seen how the art grew up, like so many other arts, as a sort of *parergon*, as a corollary upon the strictly practical study of Rhetoric for the purpose of the orator: and how it was long held in a sort of subjection to this *techne*, which, if not exactly a *techne banausos*, certainly must rank far below the study and the fruition of the whole of literature. We have seen how, in the times called ancient, it never got wholly free from this inferior position; how, in the times called mediæval, it hardly showed any signs of life; how it revived with the general new birth, and what have been its fortunes since. There can be no need to pad this already stout volume with abstracts of our Interchapters. The story of Criticism is actually before the reader, and if he will not take it now, that it is at last given to him, because there is wanting something that is not the story, I cannot help it. No doubt there are some, perhaps there are many, who honestly and impartially think the story not worth giving, think it a story of something, at best a superfluity, generally a failure, at worst a nuisance, redeemable and excusable only (if then) by being made to serve as illustration of some philosophic theory. But I have said often enough and positively enough, though I trust not too contumaciously, that I do not think so.

And even if the record seem too often a record of failure and mistake, there is a cheerful side to this also. Most of the dangers of criticism, as this long survey must have sufficiently taught those who care to learn, are comfortably and reassuringly (if from another point of view despairingly) old. We know they will come, and we know they will go, whether in our time or in another we cannot say, but it does not much matter.

"The Whole man idly boasts to find," no doubt. Not many have even attempted to do it; few who have attempted it have succeeded in that comparatively initial and rudimentary adventure which consists in justly finding the parts. But Criticism is, after all, an attempt, however faulty and failing, however wandering and purblind, to do both the one and the other. No Muse, or handmaid of the Muses (let it be freely confessed) has been less often justified of her children: none has had so many good-for-nothings for sons. Of hardly any have some children had such disgusting, such patent, such intolerable faults. The purblind theorist who mistakes the passport for the person, and who will not admit without passport the veriest angel, the acrid pedant who will allow no one whom he dislikes to write well, and no one at all to write on any subject that he himself has written on, or would like to write on, who dwells on dates and commas, who garbles out and foists in, whose learning may be easily exaggerated but whose taste and judgment cannot be, because they do not exist;—these are the too often justified patterns of the critic to many minds. The whole record of critical result, which we have so laboriously arranged and developed, is a record of mistake and of misdoing, of half-truths and nearly whole errors.

So say they, and so let them say: things have been said less truly. But, once more, all this is no more Criticism itself than the crimes and the faults of men are Humanity in its true and eternal idea. Criticism is the endeavour to find, to know, to love, to recommend, not only the best, but all the good, that has been known and thought and written in the world. If its corruption be specially detestable, its

perfection is only the more amiable and consummate. And the record of the quest, while it is not quite the record of the quest for other Eldorados—while it has some gains to yield, some moments of adeption, some instances of those who did not fail—should surely have some interest even for the general: it should more surely have much for those few but not unworthy, faint yet pursuing, who would rather persevere in the search for the unattainable than rust in acquiescence and defeat.

For to him who has once attained, who has once even comprehended, the *ethos* of true criticism, and perhaps to him only, the curse which Mr Browning has put in one of his noblest and most poetic passages does not apply. To him the "one fair, good, wise thing" that he has once grasped remains for ever as he has grasped it—*if* he has grasped it at first. Not twenty, not forty years, make any difference. What has been, has been and remains. *If it is not so*, if there is palling and blunting, then it is quite certain either that the object was unworthy or that the subject did not really, truly, critically embrace it—that he was following some will-o'-the-wisp of fancy on the one hand, some baffling wind of doctrine on the other, and was not wholly, in brain and soul, under the real inspiration of the Muse. That this adeption and fruition of literature is to a certain extent innate may be true: that it is both idle and flagitious to simulate it if it does not exist, is true. But it can certainly be cultivated where it exists, and it probably in all cases requires cultivation in order that it may be perfect. In any fair state of development it is its own exceeding great reward,—a possession of the most precious that man can have. And the practical value of the Art of Criticism, and of the History of Criticism (which, as in other cases, is merely the exposition of the art in practice), is that it can and does assist this development; that by pointing out past errors it prevents interference with enjoyment; that it shows how to grasp and how to enjoy; that it helps the ear to listen when the horns of Elfland blow.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX I.

THE OXFORD CHAIR OF POETRY.

THE HOLDERS—EIGHTEENTH CENTURY MINORS—LOWTH—HURDIS—THE RALLY: COPLESTON — CONYBEARE — MILMAN — KEBLE — THE 'OCCASIONAL [ENGLISH] PAPERS'—THE 'PRELECTIONS'—GARBETT — CLAUGHTON — DOYLE — SHAIRP—PALGRAVE—"SALUTANTUR VIVI."

(I have thought this sketch worth giving, partly as an example of the kind of excursus which might be appended, perhaps not without some advantage, and certainly in some numbers, to this History. But I give it also because it illustrates—in a manner which cannot be elsewhere paralleled at all in our own country, and to which I know no Continental parallel—by a continuous and unbroken chain of instances and applications, the course of European as well as English theory, practice, and taste in Criticism, from a period when the Neo-classic creed was still in at least apparently fullest flourishing, through nearly two whole centuries, to what, in the eye of history, is the present moment. The enforced vacation of the Chair after a single decade at most, and its filling by popular election, and not by the choice of an individual or a board, add to its representative character: and the usual publication of at least some of the results, in each case, makes that character almost uniquely discoverable in its continuity, while even the change of vehicles from Latin to English is not without its importance. There is no room here—and it would perhaps be unnecessary in any case—to anticipate the easy labour of summarising its lessons. But I think they may be said to emphasise the warning—frequently given or hinted already—that the result of the altered conditions and laws of criticism is not clear gain. No part of Mr Arnold's best critical work was, I think, done for the Chair; and I should myself be inclined to select, as the best work actually done for it, that of Keble, who represents the combination of the old Classical-Preceptist tradition, with something of the new comparison and free expatiation, as well as very much of the purely appreciative tendency.)

The holders.

This Chair—founded by Henry Birkhead, D.C.L., a Trinity man, a Fellow of All Souls, and a member of the Inner Temple—began its operations in 1708, the conditions of its tenure (which have only recently been altered) providing for a first holding of five years, a single renewal for the same period, and a sort of rotation, in the sense that the same college could not supply two successive occupants. The actual incumbents have been: 1708-18, Trapp; 1718-28, Thomas Warton the elder; 1728-38, Spence; 1738-41, John Whitf(i)eld; 1741-51 (the most distinguished name

as yet), Lowth; 1751-56, William Hawkins; 1756-66, Thomas Warton the younger; 1766-76, Benjamin Wheeler; 1776-83, Randolph; 1783-93, Holmes; 1793 to 1802, Hurdis. With the nineteenth century a brighter order begins, all but one or two of the Professors having made their mark out of the Chair as well as in it. They were: Copleston, 1802-12; Conybeare, 1812-21; Milman, 1821-31; Keble, 1831-42; Garbett (the dark star of this group, but, as we shall see, not quite lightless), 1842-52; Claughton, 1852-57; Matthew Arnold, 1857-67; Sir Francis Doyle, 1867-77; Principal Shairp, 1877-87; Mr Palgrave, 1887-95; while of living occupants Mr Courthope resigned the Chair after a single tenure; and his successors have undergone a statutory limitation to this term.

Eighteenth century minors.

Of these, Trapp, Spence, the younger Warton, and Arnold have received notice in the text, which would have been theirs had they never held the Chair. The lucubrations of the first held for some time an honourable place as an accepted handbook on the subject. Spence, profiting by the almost Elysian tolerance of his sensible century, and finding that neither residence nor lecturing was insisted on, seems to have resided very little, and to have lectured hardly or not at all. Tom Warton the younger, whose *History* would have dignified any *cathedra*, appears to have devoted himself during his actual tenure entirely to the classics, and never to have published any of his lectures except one on Theocritus. His father, in the interval between the respectable labours of Trapp and the philosophical silence of Spence, had earned no golden opinions, and though the repeated attacks of Amherst in *Terræ Filius* may have been due partly to political rancour, and partly to that ingenious and unlucky person's incorrigible Ishmaelitism, it seems to have been admitted that the Professor's understanding and erudition lay very open to criticism, and that his elocution and manner were not such as could shield them. Of Whitfield, Hawkins, Wheeler, Randolph, and Holmes, what I have been able to gather may best be set in a note.[1] The first person to make any real figure in and for the Chair

[1] Of Whitfield (or Whit*feld*, as some write) I have found nothing but that he wrote some Latin verses on William the Third. The second volume of William Hawkins's *Tracts* (1758) contains, besides a ridiculous tragedy, *Henry and Rosamond*, an *Essay on Drama*, principally occupied by carpings at Mason's *Elfrida*, and some Letters on Pope's Commentary on Homer—both very small critical beer. About Wheeler I find less even than about Whitfield. The piety of his son published—long after date and in our own times—1870—the *Prælections* of John Randolph, a man who, besides holding several other professorships at Oxford, attained to eminence in the Church, and died Bishop of London in 1813. They are very sober and respectable. There is in poetry a *non contemnenda proprietas quod imitando præcipiat*; and the warning, *non aliunde artis suæ rudimenta desumet Criticus nisi ex sanæ Logices præceptis*, might with advantage have been observed oftener than it has been. But Randolph sticks in the bark and the letter. Holmes, a poet after a fashion, a theologian, and what not, seems to have written more freely on anything than on criticism.

was the author of *De Sacra Poesi Hebræorum*, which at once attained not merely an English but a European reputation.

Lowth.

To discuss the Hebrew scholarship of this famous book (which was first published in 1753, and repeatedly reprinted, revised, translated, attacked, defended) would be wholly out of place here, even if the writer had not almost wholly forgotten the little Hebrew he learnt at school. It is still, I believe —even by specialists with no general knowledge of literature— admitted to have been epoch-making in its insistence on the parallelism of Hebrew poetry. But to those who take the historical view of literature and of criticism its place is secure quite apart from this. Not merely in the Renaissance, but in the Middle and even the Dark Ages, the matter of the Bible had been used to parallel and illustrate rhetorical and literary doctrines and rules. But Lowth was almost the first to treat its poetical forms from something like the standpoint of sound comparative literary criticism.[1] Now this, as the whole tenor of our book has gone to contend, was the chief and principal thing that had to be done. If we have any advantage over the men of old, it is that we (or some of us) have at last mastered the fact that one literature or one language cannot *prescribe* anything to another, but that it may *teach* much. And this new instance of a literature—unique in special claims to reverence, unique likewise in the fact that in its best examples it could owe nothing to those Greeks and Romans who have so beneficently but so tyrannously influenced all the modern tongues—was invaluable in its quality and almost incalculable in its moment. That Lowth's exposition resulted directly or indirectly in not a little maladroit *imitation* of Hebrew poetry was not his fault; his critical lesson was wholly good.

Hurdis.

Hurdis, a person now very much forgotten, had his day of interest and of something like position. He is not unfrequently quoted by writers, especially by Southey, of the great period of 1800-1830, which he a little preceded, and he has the honour—rare for so recent a writer—of a whole article[2] on his poems in the *Retrospective Review*. As a poet he was mainly an imitator of his friend Cowper—a fact which, with the title of his chief work, *The Village Curate*, will give intending or declining readers a sufficiently exact idea of what they are undertaking or relinquishing. Easy blank verse, abundant and often not infelicitous description, and unexceptionable though slightly copybook sentiments,[3] form his

[1] He complies with the requirements of method and fashion by dealing *generally* with the End and Usefulness of Poetry, its Kinds and so forth. But all this we have had a thousand times. What we have here specially is a comparison, and a new comparison.

[2] Vol. i. p. 57 sq.

[3] Southey, himself a proper moral man in all conscience, but a sensible one withal, somewhere remarks, "said well but not wisely" on Hurdis's

"Give me the steed
Whose generous efforts bore the prize away,
I care not for his grandsire or his dam"

A mild echo of the revolutionary period!

poetic or versifying staple. As a critic I regret to find that my note on him is "Chatter": and I do not know anything of his that makes me, on reflection, think this unjust.

The rally: Copleston.

I should be half afraid that the interest which I feel in the next set of Prælections, those of Edward Copleston,—"*the* Provost," as he anticipated Hawkins in being to Oxford men, even not of his own college of Oriel,—might be set down to that *boulimia* or morbid appetite for critical writings of which I have been accused, if I had not at hand a very potent compurgator. Keble, it is true, was a personal friend of Copleston's. But he was not at all the man to let personal friendship, any more than personal enmity, bias his judgment; and he was admirably qualified to judge. Yet he says deliberately[1] that the book "is by far the most distinct, and the richest in matter, of any which it has fallen to our lot to read on the subject." I cannot myself go quite so far as that, and I doubt whether Keble himself would have gone so far when, twenty years later, he wrote his own exquisite Lectures; but I can go a long way towards it.

The future Provost and Bishop has, indeed, other critical proofs on which to rely,[2]—the famous and excellent "Advice to a Young Reviewer," which I fear is just as much needed, and just as little heeded, as it was a hundred years ago, the admirable smashing of the *Edinburgh's* attack on Oxford, and other matters,—but the *Prælections*[3] are the chief and principal thing. Keble insisted that they ought to be Englished, but I am not so sure. They form one of the *severest* critical treatises with which I am acquainted; and some of the features of this severity would, I think, appear positively uninviting in English dress, while they consistently and perfectly suit the toga and the sandal. But I must explain a little more fully in what this "severity" consists; for the word is ambiguous. I do not mean that Copleston rejects Pleasure as the end of Poetry; for, on the contrary, he writes *Delectare* boldly on his shield, and omits *prodesse* save as an indirect consequence. I do not mean that he is a very Draconic critic of particulars, though he can speak his mind trenchantly enough.[4] Nor do I mean that he is a very abstract writer; for every page is strewn with concrete illustrations, very well selected, and, for the most part, un-hackneyed.

His severity is rather of the ascetic and "methodist" kind; he resembles nothing so much as a preceptist of the school of Hermogenes, who should have discarded triviality, and risen to very nearly the weight and substance of Aristotle. At the very begin-

[1] In a review in the *British Critic* (1814), reprinted in *Papers and Reviews*, Oxford and London, 1877.

[2] See the *Remains*, edited by his son. London, 1871.

[3] First published at the end of his tenure in 1813. My copy is the 2nd ed., Oxford, 1828.

[4] See remarks on Trapp, pp. 6 and 7, ed. cit.

ning he makes a statute for himself, to cite no literature but Greek and Latin, and to use no language but these. And he never breaks either rule; for though, on rare occasions, he refers to English writers —Shakespeare, Milton, Dryden, Burke, Reynolds[1]—it is a reference only, to books, or poems, or passages, never a citation. And in the second place his method is throughout—constant as is his use of the actual poetic object-lesson—to proceed by general categories, not of poetic kinds (he shuns that ancient and now well-beaconed quicksand[2]) but of qualities, constituents, means. His whole book, after a brief definition or apology for not defining, is distributed under four parts,—Of Imitation, Of the Emotions, Of Imagination (Phantasia), and Of Judgment,—though he never reached the fourth,[3] owing to his tenure of the Chair coming to an end. After a pretty full discussion of the nature and subject of Imitation, he makes his link with his next subject by dwelling on the *Imitatio morum*, and so of the Passions themselves. In this part a very large share is given to the subject of *Sententiæ*—"sentiments," as Keble translates it, though, as I have pointed out formerly,[4] no single translation of the word is at all satisfactory. The section on Imagination is very interesting. Copleston is at a sort of middle stage between the restricted Addisonian and the wide Philostratean-Shakespearean-Coleridgean interpretation of the word. He expressly admits that other senses besides sight can supply the material of *Phantasia;* but his examples are mainly drawn from material which *is* furnished by the sight, and his inclusions of Allegory, Mythology, &c., with other things, sometimes smack of an insufficient discrimination between Imagination and Fancy. Indeed the fact that he is Pre-Coleridgean helps to give him his interest.

Keble mildly complains that Copleston does not make use of that doctrine of Association which he himself, writing so early, had perhaps adopted, not from Coleridge but direct from Hartley. We have, in our day, seen this doctrine worked to death and sent to the knacker's in philosophy generally; but there is no doubt that it can never be neglected in poetry, being, perhaps, the most universal (though by no means *the* universal) means of approach to the sources of the poetic pleasure. It does not, however, seem to me that Copleston intended to mount so high, or go so far back: his aim was, I think, more rhetorical, according to a special fashion, than metacritical. But his mediate axioms are numerous and often very informing: and his illustrations, as has been said, abundant, really illustrative, and singularly recreative. He lays most Latin and

[1] *V.* pp. 187, 197, 390, 229, 177.

[2] Keble, however, was right in specifying the chief exception—the admirable prolection on *Epitaphs* (No. 27, p. 340).

[3] This is all the more tantalising in that his definition of *Judicium* in *Prael.* 2 seems to promise nothing less than an inquiry into the critical and appreciative faculty as regards Poetry.

[4] *Hist. Crit.*, vol. i.

many Greek poets under contribution; but some of his most effective examples are drawn from a poet whom he does not critically overvalue, but who has no doubt been, as a rule, critically undervalued, and for whom he himself evidently had a discriminating affection—that is to say, Claudian.

On the whole, the appearance of a book of this scope and scheme, at the very junction of the centuries and the 'isms, Classic and Romantic, is of singular interest. Until intelligent study of the Higher Rhetoric—reformed, adjusted, and extended—has been reintroduced, such another will not come. But such another might come with very great advantage, and would supply a very important *tertium quid* to the mere Æsthetics and to the sheer Impressionism between which Criticism has too often divided itself.

There is almost as much significance in Copleston's successor, though it is a significance of a different kind. For J. J. Conybeare was the first Professor of Poetry to bestow attention on Anglo-Saxon (Warton, even in his *History*, had not gone, with any knowledge, beyond Middle English), and so to complete the survey of all English Literature. Before his appointment he had held, as its first occupant, the chair of Anglo Saxon itself; and while Professor of Poetry he was a country parson. He died suddenly and comparatively young, and his remarkable *Illustrations of Anglo-Saxon Poetry*[1] were published after his death by his brother, who is actually responsible for a good part of its matter, so that the book is a composite one. It is thus mainly in its general significance—for Conybeare's Prælections as Professor were not, so far as I know, published—that it is valuable for us. But the value thus given is unmistakable. Conybeare's individual judgments and *aperçus* are always interesting, and often acute; but his real importance lies in the fact that he was almost the first—though Mitford, after Ellis, had attempted the thing as an outsider—to move back the focussing-point sufficiently to get *all* English Literature under view. Nothing could serve more effectually to break up the false standing-ground of the eighteenth century.

Conybeare.

A curious but perhaps not surprising thing about Milman's Professorship is that it aroused the ire of an undergraduate poet of the rarest though of the most eccentric type—namely, Beddoes. If Milman really did "denounce" *Death's Jest-Book*,[2] it is a pity that his lectures were (so far as I know)

Milman.

[1] London, 1826.

[2] See Beddoes' *Letters* (ed. Gosse, London, 1894), p. 68: "Mr Milman (our poetry professor) has made me quite unfashionable here by denouncing me as one of a 'villainous school.'" These Letters are crammed with matter of literary and critical interest. I was much tempted to give them a place in the text as illustrating the critical opinions of a person in whom great wits and madness were rather blended than allied; in the transition generation—the *mezzanine* floor—of 1800-1830.

never printed, or at least collected, for there might have been more such things of the fatally interesting kind which establishes the rule that Professors should not deal, in their lectures, with contemporary literature. It was certainly unlucky for a man to begin by objecting in one official capacity to *Death's Jest-Book*, and to end by objecting in another to Stevens's Wellington Monument. And that Milman had generally the character of a harsh and donnish critic is obvious, from Byron's well-known suggestion of him as a possible candidate for the authorship of the *Quarterly* article on Keats, though the rhyme of "kill man" may have had something to do with this. If he wrote much literary criticism we have little of it in the volume of *Essays* which his son published, after his death, in 1870. Even on Erasmus—surely a tempting subject—he manages to be as little literary as is possible, and rather less than one might have thought to be; and his much better-known *Histories* are not more so.

Ignorance may sneer, but Knowledge will not even smile, at the dictum that not the least critical genius that ever adorned the Oxford Chair was possessed by John Keble. There is some faint excuse for Ignorance. The actual *Prælections*[1] of the author of *The Christian Year*, being Latin, are not read: his chief English critical works,[2] though collected not so very long ago, were collected too late to catch that flood-tide, in their own sense, which is unfortunately, as a rule, needed to land critical works out of reach of the ordinary ebb. Moreover, there is no question but Keble requires "allowance"; and the allowance which he requires is too often of the kind least freely granted in the present day. If we have anywhere (I hope we have) a man as holy as Keble, and as learned, and as acute, he will hardly express the horror at Scott's occasional use of strong language which Keble expresses.[3] Our historic sense, and our illegitimate advantage of perspective, have at least taught us that to quarrel with Scott again, for not being "Catholic" enough, is almost to quarrel with Moses for not having actually led the children of Israel into Palestine. And no man, as honest as Keble was, would now echo that other accusation against the great magician (whom, remember, Keble almost adored, and of whom he thought far more highly as a poet than many good men do now) of tolerating intemperance; though some might feign it to suit a popular cant.

Keble.

But in all these respects it is perfectly easy for those who have once schooled themselves to this apparently but not really difficult matter, to make the necessary allowance.[4] And then, even in the

[1] *Prælectiones Academicæ Oxonii habitæ annis* 1832-41 Oxford, 1844. 2 vols., but continuously paged

[2] *Occasional Papers and Reviews*, by John Keble, M.A. Oxford and London, 1877

[3] *Occ. Pap.*, p. 62.

[4] 'The place most perilously aleatory is the fling in *Occ. Pap.*, p. 87, at "Mr Leigh Hunt *and his miserable followers*."'

English critical Essays — the "Scott," the "Sacred Poetry," the "Unpublished Letters of Warburton," and the "Copleston"—*verus incessus patet criticus.*

His general attitude to poetic criticism (he meddled little with any other) is extremely interesting. His classical training impelled him towards the "subject" theory, and the fact that his two great idols in modern English poetry were Scott and Wordsworth was not likely to hold him back. He has even drifted towards a weir, pretty clearly, one would think, marked "Danger!" by asking whether readers do not feel the attraction of Scott's novels to be as great as, and practically identical with, that of his poems. But no "classic" could possibly have framed the definition of poetry which he puts at the outset[1] of the Scott Essay as "The indirect expression in words, most appropriately in metrical words, of some overpowering emotion, or ruling taste, or feeling, the direct indulgence whereof is somehow repressed." Everybody will see what this owes to Wordsworth; everybody should see how it is glossed and amplified—in a non-Wordsworthian or an extra-Wordsworthian sense. We meet the pure critical Keble again, in his enthusiastic adoption of Copleston's preference for "Delight" (putting Instruction politely in the pocket) as the poetic criterion.[2] And his defence of Sacred Poetry, however interested it may seem to be, coming from him, is one of the capital essays of English criticism. He makes mince-meat of Johnson, and he takes by anticipation a good deal of the brilliancy out of his brilliant successor, Mr Arnold, on this subject. The passage, short but substantial,[3] on Spenser in this is one of the very best to be found on that critic of critics (as by an easily intelligible play he might be said to be) as well as poet of poets. Spenser always finds out a bad critic—he tries good ones at their highest.

The Occasional [English] Papers.

Still the *Prælections* themselves must, of course, always be Keble's own touchstone, or rather his ground and matter of assay. And he comes out well. The dedication (a model of stately enthusiasm) to Wordsworth as *non solum dulcissimæ poeseos verum etiam divinæ veritatis antistes*, strikes the key-note of the whole. But it may be surprising to some to find how "broad" Keble is, in spite of his inflexible morality and his uncompromising churchmanship. He was kept right partly, no doubt, by holding fast as a matter of theory to the "Delight" test—pure and virtuous delight, of course, but still delight, first of all and most of all. But mere theory would have availed him little without the poetic spirit, which everywhere in him translates itself into the critical, and almost as little without the wide and (whether deliberately so or not) comparative reading of ancient and modern verse

The Prælections.

[1] *Occ. Pap.*, p. 6. [2] Ibid., p. 150. [3] Ibid., pp. 96-102.

which he displays. His general definition of Poetry here is slightly different from that given above, as was indeed required by his subject and object. He presents it—at once refining and enlarging upon part of the Aristotelian one of Tragedy, and neutralising the *vinum dæmonum* notion at once,—as *subsidium benigni numinis*, the medicinal aid given by God to subdue, soften, and sanctify Passion. But his working out—necessarily, in its main lines, obvious but interesting to contrast with his successor Mr Arnold's undogmatised and secularised application of the same idea—is less interesting to us in itself than the *aperçus* on different poets, ancient and modern, to which it gives rise. Few pages deserve to be skipped by the student: even technical discussion of the *tenuis et arguta* kind, as he modestly calls it, becomes alive under his hand on such subjects as the connection of Poetry and Irony (*Præl* v.) But there is a still higher interest in such things as the contrast, in the same Prælection, of the undeviating self-consistency of Spenser in all his work, the bewildering apparent lack of central unity in Shakespeare with its resolution, and the actual inconsistency of Dryden. All the Homeric studies deserve reading, the discussion of the *Odyssey* in *Præl.* xi. being especially noteworthy, with its culmination in a delightful phrase[1] about Nausicaa which ought to be generally known. Particularly wise and particularly interesting is the treatment of "Imitation" (the lower imitation) in *Præl.* xvi., where those who are of our mystery will not fail to compare the passage with Vida. How comfortable is it to find a poet-critic, so uncompromising on dignity of subject, who can yet admit, and that with not the faintest grudging, that it "is incredible how mightily the hidden fire is roused by single words or clauses—nay, by the sound of mere syllables, that strike the ear at a happy nick of time."[2] This is almost "the doctrine of the Poetic Moment" itself, though we must not urge it too far, and though it is brought in apropos of the suggestiveness *to poets* of antecedent poetic work. It is still sovereign against a still prevailing heresy. The abundant treatment of Æschylus[3] is also to be carefully noted; for, as we have observed, that mighty poet had been almost neglected during the Neo-classic period.

The second score of Lectures is still technically devoted to the ancients, especially Pindar, the second and third Tragedians, Theocritus, Lucretius, Virgil, and Horace, but references to the moderns, not very rare in the first volume, become still more frequent here, and are sometimes, as those to Spenser and Bunyan in the matter of allegory,[4] and the contrast of Jason and Macduff as bewailing

[1] Rapin accused her of "forgetting her modesty." Keble says of her: "Cujus persona nihil usquam aut verecundius habet aut pudentius veteram Poesis" (i. 195).

[2] *Præl. Ac.*, p. 281.

[3] It occupies seven Prælections (xvii. xxiii.) and some 200 pages.

[4] ii. 415.

their children,[1] very notable. On his narrower subject, the judgment of Sophocles in *Præl.* xxviii. is singularly weighty; and I should like to have heard Mr Matthew Arnold answer on behalf of his favourite. The comparative tameness, and the want of variety and range, which some (not all, of course) feel in the "singer and child of sweet Colonos" are here put with authority by one whom no one could accuse of *Sturm und Drang* preferences, or of an undisciplined thirst for novelty. Only on Theocritus, perhaps, does Morality sit *in banco* with Taste to a rather disastrous effect, and the fact is curiously explicable. His disapproval of Scott's strong language, and his want of ecclesiastical-mindedness, and his lenity to liquor, had not blinded Keble in the least to Scott's poetry; he had admitted the charitable and comfortable old plea of "time, not man," in favour of certain peccadilloes of Shakespeare; he is, in fact, nowhere squeamish to silliness. But he cannot pardon Theocritus for the *Oaristys* and such things, simply because the new Wordsworthian nature-worship in him is wounded and shocked *insanabiliter*. "Like Aristophanes," he says, "like Catullus, like Horace, Theocritus betakes himself to the streams and the woods, not to seek rest for a weary mind, but as provocatives for a lustful one."[2] This new "sin against the Spirit" is most interesting.

On the other hand, this very nature-worship keeps his balance, where we might have thought he would lose it, on the subject of Lucretius. He contrasts the comparative triviality and childishness of Virgil, agreeable enough as it is, in regard to nature, with the mystic majesty of his great predecessor. The charges of atheism and indecency trouble him very little:[3] the intense earnestness, the lofty delight in clouds and forests and the vague, the likeness to Æschylus and Dante—all these things he fixes on, and delights in. I wish he had written more on Dante himself; what he has[4] is admirable.

As to Virgil in person, though sensible enough of his merits, he says things which would have elicited the choicest combinations of Scaligerian Billingsgate; and brings out, in a way striking and I think rather novel, the *permolestum*, the "serious irritation" caused by the fact that Virgil either could not or would not give Æneas any character at all, and that you feel sometimes inclined to think that he never himself had any clear idea what sort of a real man his hero was. This exaltation of the Character above the Action is very noteworthy.

[1] ii. 586.

[2] ii. 641. He has a liking for Horace; but objects to him (not quite unreasonably) as *sordidior quodam* in his Epicureanism, when you compare him with Lucretius.

[3] He allows him, as well as Byron and Shelley, the plea of *vis compos* in certain respects.

[4] ii. 678 *sq.* and elsewhere.

But, in fact, Keble always is noteworthy, and more. Mere moderns may dismiss him, with or without a reading, as a mill horse treader of academic rounds. He is nothing so little. He is, in fact, almost the first representative of the Romantic movement who has applied its spirit to the consecrated subjects of study; and he has shown, unfortunately to too limited a circle, how fresh, how interesting, how inspiring the results of this and of the true comparison of ancient and modern may be.[1] Literary criticism—indeed literature itself as such—was with him, it is true, only a by-work, hardly more than a pastime. But had it been otherwise, he would, I think, twenty years before Arnold, have given us the results of a more thorough scholarship, a reading certainly not less wide, a taste nearly as delicate and catholic, a broader theory, and a much greater freedom from mere crotchet and caprice.

Garbett.

I am not quite so well acquainted with the whole work of Keble's successor Garbett.[2] Elected as he was, by the anti-Tractarian reaction, against the apparently far superior claims of Isaac Williams, his appointment has generally been regarded as a job; and I had to divest myself of prejudice in reading him. He has indeed nothing of his predecessor's serene scholarship, and little of his clear and clean taste. His form puts him at a special disadvantage. Instead of Keble's pure and flowing Latinity, you find an awkward dialect, peppered after the fashion of Cicero's letters with Greek words, peppered still more highly with notes of exclamation, and, worst of all, full of words, and clauses, and even whole sentences, in capitals, to the destruction of all repose and dignity. He seems to have simply printed each Prælection as he gave it (the pagings are independent), and then to have batched them together without revision in volume form.[3] But one cannot read far or fairly without perceiving that, either before his election or after it, Garbett had taken the pains to qualify by a serious study of antecedent criticism—a study, it may be added, of which there is hardly any trace in Keble. Garbett devotes especial attention to Longinus and Dryden, and though I do not (as I have formerly hinted)[4] agree with him in regard to either,[5]

[1] I pass, as needless to dwell on at length, the excellence of his style and expression in these lectures. "So acute in remark, so beautiful in language," as Newman says in the letter printed in *Dec. Pap.*, p. xii *sq.*

[2] My only *possession* is *De Re Critica Prælectiones*. Oxford, 1847.

[3] My copy, which is "from the author" to some one unknown, has not a few pen-corrections, apparently in his own hand.

[4] Vol. ii. p. 372.

[5] It is particularly unfortunate that he has endeavoured to construct a theory of Longinus as a statesman-critic, comparing him with Burke. I have already said that I do not think the identification of the author of the book with Zenobia's prime minister in the least disproved or (with the materials at present at disposal) disprovable but it certainly is not proved to the point of serving as basis to such a theory.

it is beyond all doubt that he had made a distinct and original attempt to grasp both as critics. He deals with Horace, of course; but it is noteworthy that he has again aimed at a systematic and fresh view, taking Horace as the master of "Art Poetic," and comparing Boileau, &c. He has an abundant discussion of Scaliger, whom he takes as third type and (rightly) as the father of classical French criticism, while Dryden gives him his fourth. He knows the Germans—not merely Lessing and Goethe, but Kant; and whatever the failures in his execution, he can "satisfy the examiners" not merely from the point of view of those who demand acquaintance with the history and literature of the subject, but from that of those who postpone everything to what they think philosophy. He refers to the climatic view of literature,[1] constantly combines historical and literary considerations, and is altogether a "modern." As has been said, I disagree with him more often than I agree; but I do not think there can be any serious denial of the fact that he was worthy of the Chair and of a place here.

Claughton.

The tenure of his successor Claughton, afterwards Bishop, was but for a single term; and he seems to have left little memorial of it except a remarkably elegant Latin address on the appointment of Lord Derby as Chancellor. Elegance, indeed, was Claughton's characteristic as an orator,[2] but I should not imagine that he had much strength or very wide or keen literary knowledge and enthusiasm. Of Mr Arnold we have spoken.

Doyle.

There were foolish folk, not without some excuse of ignorance (if that ever *be* an excuse) for their foolishness, who grumbled or scoffed when he was followed by Sir Francis Doyle. There had been some hopes of Browning, which had been foiled—if by nothing else—by the discovery that an Honorary M.A. degree was not a qualification; and it must be owned that curiosity to see what Browning would do *in* prose *on* poetry was highly legitimate. Moreover, the younger generation was busy with Mr Swinburne and Mr Morris, who had not turned Tennyson and Browning himself out, and they knew little of Sir Francis. Better informed persons, however, reported of him as of an Oxford man of the best old type of "scholar and gentleman," a person of very shrewd wits, of probably greater practical experience than any Professor of Poetry had ever had, and the author of certain things like "The Red Thread of Honour" and "The Private of the Buffs," which,

[1] With reference to Schlegel and Madame de Staël.

[2] His sermons have been disrespectfully spoken of; but I think unjustly. I heard them myself in pretty close juxtaposition with those of Pusey and Wilberforce, and even with the, in both senses, rare discourses of Mansel. In vigour and body they were nowhere beside any of these; but they could fairly hold their own in the softer ways of style.

in their own peculiar style and division, were poetry *sans phrase*. The report was justified by the new Professor's Lectures.[1] They are frankly exoteric; but they are saved by scholarship from the charge of ever being popular in the bad sense. They adopt as frankly, and carry a little farther, that plan of making the lectures, if not exactly reviews of particular books new and old, at any rate *causeries* hung on particular texts and pegs, which the vernacularisation of the Chair had made inevitable, and to which Matthew Arnold himself had inclined gladly enough. They are, though not in the least degree slipshod or slovenly, quite conversational in style. But they deserve, I think, no mean place among the documents of the Chair. Their easy, well-bred common-sense, kept from being really Philistine (which epithet Sir Francis good-humouredly accepted), not merely by their good breeding, but by the aforesaid scholarship, by natural acuteness, and by an intense unaffected love for poetry, might not be a good staple. But if the electors could manage to let it come round again, as an exception, once in a generation or so, it would be well, and better than well.

Shairp.

Of Principal Shairp so many good men have said so many good things that it is almost unnecessary to add, in this special place and context, the praise (which can be given ungrudgingly) that he has always, in his critical work, had before him good intentions and high ideals. Much further addition, I fear, cannot be made. When I read his question, "Did not Shakespeare hate and despise Iago and Edmund?"[2] when I remember how Shakespeare himself put in the mouth of the one—

> "I bleed, sir, but not killed";

in the mouth of the other—

> "The wheel is come full circle; I am here";

and—

> "Yet Edmund was beloved,"

I own I sympathise with an unconventional and unsophisticated soul who, once reading this same utterance of Mr Shairp's, rose, strode about the room, and sitting down, ejaculated, "What are you to do? What are you to say? Where are you to go? when a Professor of Poetry, uttering such things in Oxford, is not taken out, and stoned or burnt forthwith, between Balliol and the *Randolph*?" And there is an only less dreadful passage[3] of miscomprehension on the magnificent close of Tennyson's "Love and

[1] First Series (comprising the "Inaugural," with two others on "Provincial Poetry" and *The Dream of Gerontius*), London, 1869. A second appeared in 1877.

[2] *Aspects of Poetry* (London, 1881), p. 30.

[3] Ibid., p. 157.

Duty"—one of the greatest examples of the difficult "*Versöhnung* close," the reconciliation of art, the relapse into peace.

But the lesson of criticism is a lesson of tolerance. A complete and careful perusal of Mr Shairp's *Aspects of Poetry*, and of his other books, will indeed show that the *apices* of criticism, whether historical, or appreciative, or even philosophical, were beyond his climb. He shows that constant necessity or temptation of engaging in comment—eulogistic or controversial—upon the *ephemera critica* of the time, which has been one of the worst results of the change of the lectures from Latin to English. You could not, in the stately old vehicle, do more than occasionally decline upon such a lower level as this. Mr Shairp is always citing and fencing with (or extolling reviewer-fashion) Arnold or Bagehot, Hutton or Myers. *Quotidiana quotidie moriuntur*, and, though no doubt it saves much trouble to Professors if they can take out of a newspaper or a review, or even a recent book, on their way to Oxford, a text for an hour's sermon, their state *sub specie æternitatis* is far from the more gracious. Oxford is constantly making new statutes now; I think one forbidding any citation from this Chair of critical or creative literature less than thirty years old would not be bad.

More happy, if not always more critical, were his dealings with things Scottish, where sympathy lifted him out of the peddling, and transformed the parochial. On Burns (even though there must have been searchings of heart there) he could sometimes, though by no means always, speak excellently; on Scott superexcellently; on Wordsworth almost as well; on the Highland poets (if we do not forget our salt-cellar) best of all, because he spoke with knowledge and not as Mr Arnold. His work is always amiable, often admirable: I wish I could say that it is always or often critical.

The great achievement of Mr Shairp's successor, Francis Turner Palgrave, in regard to literary criticism, is an indirect one, and had been mostly done years and decades before he was elected to the Chair. Little indeed, though something, was given to the world as the direct result of his professorial work.[1] As an actual critic or reviewer, Palgrave was no doubt distinguished not over-favourably by that tendency to "splash" and *tapage* of manner which he shared with Kinglake and some other writers of the mid-nineteenth century, and which has been recently revived. But his real taste was in a manner warranted by his friendships; and his friendships must almost have kept him right if he had had less taste. He may have profited largely by these friendships

Palgrave.

[1] *Landscape in Poetry* (1897) was, unless I mistake, the chief, if not the only, collection of lectures.

in the composition of the two parts of that really *Golden Treasury*, which, if it does not achieve the impossible in giving everybody what he wants, all that he wants, and nothing that he does not want, is by general confession the most successful attempt in a quite appallingly difficult kind. The second part, which has of course been the most criticised, seems to me even more remarkable than the first, as showing an almost complete freedom from one easily besetting sin, the tendency not to relish styles that have come in since the critic "commenced" in criticism.

Salutantur vivi.

Of Mr Courthope and his successors in the Chair we are happily precluded from speaking critically. May the bar not soon be lifted!

APPENDIX II.

AMERICAN CRITICISM.

AN ATTEMPT IN OUTLINE ONLY — ITS DIFFICULTIES — THE EARLY STAGES — THE ORIGINS AND PIONEERS — TICKNOR — LONGFELLOW — EMERSON — POE — LOWELL: HIS GENERAL POSITION — 'AMONG MY BOOKS' — 'MY STUDY WINDOWS' — 'ESSAYS ON THE ENGLISH POETS' — LAST ESSAYS — O. W. HOLMES — THE WHOLE DUTY OF CRITICS STATED BY HIM *IN ALIA MATERIA* — WHITMAN AND THE "DEMOCRATIC" IDEAL — MARGARET FULLER — RIPLEY — WHIPPLE — LANIER.

An attempt in outline only.

I am very well aware of the arguments which may be advanced against attempting to extend our survey of criticism across the Atlantic. I at least do not undervalue the apparently formal, but in truth real, objection that we have undertaken *European* criticism only: while I appreciate the opposite demur, that the space of an appendix is as uncomplimentary and as uncomplemental as total exclusion would be. But after having taken counsel of more than one American friend, by no means specially Anglophile in temper, I found that, apparently, the inclusion even in this form would be at least sometimes taken in the spirit in which it is meant, while on the other hand I had myself felt very strongly the disadvantage of excluding such a critic as Mr Lowell, who has all the characteristics of the best of our own with an inviting *differentia*. The bursting-point, however, of this volume is pretty nearly reached; and I must again observe that there is no invidious intention in the proportion of the notice. I have endeavoured to allot to Mr Lowell himself a space (allowing for differences of scale and type) not, I think, unfair in proportion to his English fellows; others I have had to survey more in summary. But I hope that the whole may at any rate provide a not inadequate outline-sketch of the subject; and in this hope I submit it, not merely to English readers, but to those still more nearly concerned, from some of whom this book has received attention at once of the most candid (in the better pre-Sheridanian sense of that word) and of the most searchingly

Its difficulties.

The difficulties of the task are complicated by the necessity, according to our plan, of omitting living writers. The history of American criticism appears, even more than that of other departments of literature, to be very mainly a history of the present, and I could write *ex abundanti* on that. The "middle distance" is also well provided. But the origins are singularly obscure, and appear to be regarded with neither pride nor interest by Americans themselves. When I thought of this excursus first, some years ago, I was referred by an American friend to two articles[1] which had appeared not long before in *The International Monthly* on "American Literary Criticism and the Doctrine of Evolution." The title gave me some forebodings in its doubleness; yet this might be interpreted favourably, for how can you treat the "evolution" of a subject without treating its history? I found, however, that the author, though his papers lacked neither thought nor style, was wholly occupied with the doctrine of evolutionary criticism generally, as against judicial and appreciative; and that he did not even propose to meddle with the history of his subject save by occasional allusion The histories of American literature have afforded me something more, but not much.

The early stages.

I do not mention this in any spirit of fault-finding, for few people are less likely than myself to need reminding that in literary and critical history, as elsewhere, you cannot make bricks without straw, and still less without clay. There was, and there could be, little attempt at important criticism in "colonial" times, and the immense material expansion of the earlier Republican period was very little more favourable to it than the quiescence and dependence of the Monarchical[2]

The definite entrance of the United States into the society of nations, after the second war with England and the settlement of Europe by the final suppression of Napoleon, as necessarily brought

[1] Vol. ii., Nos. 1 and 2, July and August 1900 (Burlington, Vt.) The author is Mr W. M Payne.

[2] In the colonial period not even the untiring industry and the microscopic enthusiasm of Professor Tyler have discovered anything critical. Mr Charles F. Richardson in *American Literature, 1607-1885* (New York and London: Putnams, 1887), i. 396, says plumply, "Criticism did not exist in this country during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, nor did it make much showing until the nineteenth century was well advanced." There is far less of it, for instance, in Washington Irving than one might expect. Perhaps some may think that an exception ought to be made for Channing But his Essay on Milton, which is the chief critical thing of his known to me, produces that sense of bafflement which, if I remember rightly, Renan expresses in regard to him on other grounds: "We are aware that it is objected to poetry that it gives wrong views of life. . . ." "We gaze on Satan with an awe not unmixed with mysterious pleasure. . . ." &c, &c With such matter we have known how to deal in the sixteenth, the seventeenth, the eighteenth century, in the nineteenth it loses significance.

with it the organisation of critical as of other employment for the intellect. There is something agreeably Arcadian in the idea of Longfellow, a boy of nineteen, being sent to Europe by the trustees of his college to qualify himself for a Chair of Literature; but the fact is no more and no less creditable to these functionaries than it is symbolic of the new tendencies of the time. Still, Longfellow was not actually the apostle of comparative and extensive criticism in America. Ticknor, his elder by eighteen years, had, partly no doubt by this very fact of the admission of his country to the full franchise of nations, been induced to give up the study and practice of the law, and to devote himself to literature, in the very year of Waterloo itself. And he too, after a sojourn in Europe, became, some years before his fellow at Bowdoin, Professor of Modern Languages and Belles Lettres at Harvard. Emerson, born between the two, was a little later in treading the same road than either, but he trod it; and his visit to Europe, in 1833, determined the critical writings and lectures which followed.

The origins and pioneers.

These three I should take to be the founders of American criticism of the adult and accomplished kind, and they represent it, interestingly enough, in three different ways. It is true that no one of them is first of all a critic, or even, as Mr Lowell was afterwards, a critic in power at least equal to that of any other of his qualities. But this was only in the nature of things.

It is not merely because Ticknor's lifework was a literary history that one may call him first of all a literary historian. The fact that the *History of Spanish Literature*, more than fifty years after its publication, and nearly seventy after its inception, although the interval has been one of the fiercest in pursuing, and one of the most voluminous in recording, literary explorations, retains, and is likely to retain, its position not merely as a classic, but as an authority, shows some pre-established harmony between writer and task. Yet, though the provinces of the literary historian and the critic overlap to a very large extent,—though the historian who is not a critic must be a mere reference-monger, and the critic who is not a historian a mere bellettrist,—yet there are skirts and fringes of each province which are not necessarily part of the other. Ticknor is rather less of a critic than he is of a historian—his grouping of facts, his investigation and statement of them, his perception of origins and connections, are all a little superior to his appreciation pure and simple. Yet there are few who can afford to look down on him in this latter respect; and as historical critic and critical historian I do not know where to look for his superior, while I should have very soon done looking for his equals.

Ticknor.

Longfellow (for it will be convenient to take Emerson last) shows

us, as a matter of course, a different critical phase. He never, so far as I know, wrote any connected study of literature, and I do not think that it would have been very good if he had. His lectures, which were necessarily numerous, and the articles which he wrote (I believe in no small numbers) have never taken any important position, and again I should doubt whether, if we had them or more of them, anything very remarkable would be included.[1] Yet he had, and displayed in the intensest degree, that most agreeable and not least profitable function of the critical faculty which attaches itself to literature, assimilates it, transforms it into instruction and delight. This is noticeable in almost every page of his poems: it is the very genesis of many of them, and perhaps of the best of them: it is at once the explanation and the refutation of the charge of want of originality brought against him. So in his prose. *Hyperion* and *Outre-Mer* are permeated and saturated with it. The literature of Germany, the literature of Spain, have done more than colour the poet's or prose-writer's work, they have penetrated to its substance, fed it, been digested and absorbed into its very life. From *The Golden Legend* and *The Spanish Student* to the smallest fragments this process is noteworthy. And while it shows, on the part of the writer himself, processes necessary to the critic, in intenser and more poetic form, it performs on the reader "the office of the critic"—his hierophantic, initiating, inoculating office—in the most vivid and forcible manner and degree. No one who, susceptible to literature, but more or less ignorant of it, reads Longfellow but must, consciously or unconsciously, imbibe something of literature itself—of a literature far wider and deeper than that which the poet (though I speak as a lifelong lover of Longfellow's poetry) himself creates

Longfellow.

That Emerson also is not first of all a critic is not surprising, because, as most people have seen, Emerson is not, first of all, anything but Emerson. But he is in some ways more of a critic than either of the others, and the reason why he is not more so still is that, like his master or analogue Carlyle, he rather refuses to look on literature as literature. His ethical preoccupations and his transcendentalism alike prevent him from doing this—he is Carlyle *plus* Vinet. In the second place, if I may say so without offence, he shows us, as neither Ticknor nor Longfellow, both of whom were too cosmopolitan, shows us, the American touch-me-not-ishness, the somewhat unnecessary affectation of nationality. The literary chauvinism of the famous lecture on

Emerson.

[1] The chief source of my direct knowledge of his work of the kind is the collection called *Drift-Wood*, which I have known for very many years. Somewhat later — the *Drift-Wood* papers date from before 1840 — he inserted critical introductions in his *Poets and Poetry of Europe* (1845).

"The American Scholar" is perhaps more apparent than real; but his query, "Who is Southey?" in the record of his interview with Landor, is awkward. "Southey is, say what you like about his poetry or his politics, one of the greatest *men of letters* of all time," is the answer which a critic should have given to himself. Yet there is much good positive criticism in Emerson (if there can be said to be anything positive in him), and there is still more of that vague stimulative force which is so noticeable in these first great writers of America, and which is so interesting when we consider their circumstances, individual and national. In the *English Traits* and the *Representative Men*, in the lectures and elsewhere, there is always ringing to the fit ear the "*Tolle, lege!*" of the greater critics, with the comment which helps to make the book understood, when it is taken up and read.

By the 'Thirties and 'Forties of the nineteenth century the European pilgrimage was no longer necessary to fetch the critical spark home. American criticism became abundant, and not merely abundant. In no case do I so much regret the necessity of compression as in that of Poe. The extreme and almost incomprehensible injustice with which the ill-fated author of *Ligeia* and *The Haunted Palace* was so long treated by his countrymen has, I believe, abated; and I have seen, in the article referred to, a complimentary, though merely passing, reference to him as a critic. But there is still room, I think, for some substantial *Rettung*, as Lessing would have said. The substance would have to be considerable, for the matter under consideration,[1] which is not small in bulk, is heterogeneous, and even to some extent chaotic. More than any other part of Poe's work it is the scapegoat of his unfavourable circumstances, of his patchy education, of his weaknesses in conduct, temper, and constitution. A great deal is mere hack-writing—*chaînes de l'esclavage*—stuff never meant to abide the steady judgment of posterity. You may, if you please, pick out of it the most amazing things, such[2] as that "for one Fouqué there are fifty Molières" (I am no undervaluer of Fouqué, but I wish—I *do* wish—that I knew where to look for even one of the forty-nine additional Poquelins); and "for one Dickens . . . five million . . . Fieldings," where perhaps five million marks of exclamation might not inadequately meet the case. Generous as is the praise which he heaps upon Mrs Browning and Mr Horne; true as much of what he says is; one feels that his observations want *reducing*, adjusting, co-ordinating under the calmer influence of comparative and universal criticism. There

[1] It fills half the third volume and all the fourth in Mr Ingram's edition of the works (4 vols., Edinburgh, 1874).

[2] In the article on Lever, where some special gadfly seems to have stung Poe.

was not the slightest reason why he should get into such a frantic rage with the "devilled kidneys" (a most pleasant and wholesome food) in that very pleasant and wholesome book *Charles O'Malley*; or why he should have so furiously resented Mr Lowell's remarks on himself in the *Fable for Critics*, open as these are to criticism; or why he should have said or done a hundred other things of the kind. His "hungry heart and burning," his ill-disciplined intellect and temper, drove him in all sorts of directions, and not unfrequently in the wrong ones.

Yet his critical instincts were almost always right; and not seldom they were remarkably original. Considering what the ways of poets are, and that Poe had his full share of the then prevailing American soreness towards "British" writers, I know few things in literature more pleasant and edifying at once than his enthusiastic and intelligent welcome of Tennyson. "The Rationale of Verse," though there are faults in it, due to ignorance or carelessness in terminology, to haste, and to imperfect reading, is one of the best things ever written on English prosody, and quite astonishingly original. Although, when he takes a great deal of pains it is apt to be rather lost labour, as, for instance, in the comically laborious dissection of Longfellow's *Spanish Student* (a delightful thing if taken in the proper way), the acuteness which he often shows even in such pieces, and much more in his lighter *aperçus*, is remarkable. The *Marginalia* are full of good things—I find, after reading them anew for this purpose, that my reference slips "stand like the corn arow." His dislike of German criticism[1] may have been half opposition to Carlyle, between whom and himself there was a gulf fixed; and he should not have said that Macaulay had more true critical spirit than both the Schlegels put together. But this very passage is worth pondering, and it was very bold at the time. I do not think he borrowed the true observation of the resemblance between *Hudibras* and the *Satyre Menippée*[2]. His defence of the "rhetorician's rules"[3] is just and lively. It is not a little noteworthy that he, the most apparently irregular and spasmodic of men of genius, perfectly understands the importance of Form.

And all this, let it be remembered, was written, not merely in distress, and in disease, and sometimes in despair, but—to adapt the Dickensian and Gautieresque juxtaposition—in the 'Thirties and 'Forties, when, as we have seen, criticism in England itself had fallen into the state from which it was aroused by Matthew Arnold years after Poe's death; when Carlyle was turning his back on it, when Macaulay was acknowledging that he was not the man for it, when the men who meddled with it were showing absolute want of comprehension of Tennyson, and passing Browning over as

[1] *Marg.*, 76. [2] *Ibid.*, 114. [3] *Ibid.*, 177.

beneath their notice. It was written in spite of the bad influence (discernible enough, as it is, in Poe) of the swaggering, swashbuckler fashion of "British" criticism itself. It was written before—long before in most cases—Lowell came to his maturity as a critic. It is, except in flashes and indications, mostly a might-have-been. But that might-have-been, translated into fact, would, I think, have ranked with the most noteworthy critical achievements that we possess in regard to poetry and *belles-lettres*. On other departments Poe could probably never, in the most favourable circumstances, have laid much hold. But in his own sphere he not only did the works, but knew those who did them and how they were done.

Lowell: his general position.

On the whole, however, I suppose that a majority of the best judges would award the place of premier critic of America to Mr Lowell, and I should certainly not attempt to contest the judgment. He had, in an eminent degree, most of the qualities which our long examination has enabled us to specify as generally found in good critics; catholic and observant reading, real enthusiasm for literature, sanity of judgment, good-humour, width of view, and (though this perhaps in rather less measure than the others) methodic arrangement and grasp. He was free, not merely from the defects which are the opposites of these good qualities, but from others—the niggling and carping of the gerund-grinder and the *gradus*-hunter,[1] the hideboundness of the type-and-kind critic, and above all the incomprehensible and yet all-pervading inability to like something because it is not something else. He could put his perceptions brightly and forcibly—in a way perhaps rather tempting to re-read than at once sinking into the memory, but not the less excellent, and perhaps (in criticism) rather the more uncommon, for that.

On the wrong side of the account there are of course some things to put. I shall not be suspected of wishing to banish quips and cranks from criticism, but Mr Lowell was perhaps a little too prodigal of them. His patriotism was a little aggressive—not in the way (which he had far too much critical good sense ever to tread) of overvaluing his countrymen's literary performances, but in too often infusing into his criticism a sort of *Nemo-me-impune-lacessit* flavour which was quite unnecessary, and in fact almost entirely irrelevant. And lastly, as has been hinted above, his grasp was not always sure. To compare the two papers on Gray, written at no great interval of time, by him and by his slightly younger contemporary Mr Arnold, is very interesting and instructive. I am

[1] He comes perhaps too close to this in his paper on "The Library of Old Authors"; but there was certainly no little provocation in the editing, and even in the selection, of some of the volumes of that always comely and mainly comfortable series.

not sure that, if it were just (or indeed possible) to extract separate good critical things, like nuggets, from the two essays, and weigh the parcels against each other, the American would not prove the richer, even allowing weight for length. But Gray is not "put" in the Harvard man's essay as he is in the Oxonian's: the critical contact is less full and vital, the congress less complete. It may be urged, indeed, that the selection is not quite fair, because of the unusual sympathy, and as it were harmony pre-established, between the Graian and the Arnoldian temperaments; but the same slight shortcoming will be found elsewhere.[1]

Among my Books.

Mr Lowell's best known book of literary criticism is, no doubt, *Among my Books;* but though it shows his method characteristically enough, it is by no means mainly bookish: in fact, I think there is rather less in it about the literary part of the matter than in others. The famous essay on "Dryden" is of course a standard, and perhaps its author's diploma-piece as a critic, and the "Shakespeare once More" (a title suggested by Goethe) is a very interesting literary *pot-pourri*. But the "Lessing" and the "Rousseau" are chiefly biographical, and such papers as "Witchcraft" and "New England," attractive as they are, are from the literary point of view quite "off," as literary slang has it. There is nothing to object to in this, for the general title covers subjects suggested by books, or the subjects of books, quite as amply as books-by-themselves-books, and there can be no doubt that the reader usually likes the others best. But the whole volume shows its author well as a scholar but not a pedant, a man of letters who is also a man of the world, and a judge who, though by no means ideally impartial, and even with a tolerably well-stuffed portfolio of prejudices, can give judgments not to be pooh-poohed at the worst, and at the best things worthy to take their place with the best of judge-made law in our subject.

My Study Windows.

The equally well-known *My Study Windows* does not contain, as the title may seem to intimate, matter of *more* mixed quality as regards pure literature, but the quality is still mixed. Mr Lowell was not happy in his reception of the avatar of Mr Swinburne: it is indeed so rare for a man of more than middle age to be quite at focus with a new poet, that some of the wiser or more pusillanimous of our kind decline in such cases to register a formal judgment. The "Carlyle" is much

[1] On some minor defects it is not worth while to dwell. Lowell could see that Guest had no ear for verse: yet he was all his life long as impatient as Guest himself of that duly transferred and adapted "classical" system of English prosody which could be easily shown to justify almost all the things he himself liked, and to explain the badness of those which he thought bad. He began this impatience quite early with Poe in the *Fable for Critics*, and he never shook it off.

tainted by political prejudice, though it does credit to Mr Lowell's perspicacity to have so early found out in Carlyle that real "Toryism" which was so long mistaken. But the "Chaucer" and the "Pope"—differ here and there with them as we may or must—are solid and substantive contributions to the main shelf of criticism; while in the lower ranges "The Life and Letters of James Gates Perceval" only needed more quotation and more ruthlessness to make it a pendant to Macaulay's "Montgomery."

Essays on the English Poets.

The Essays which have been reprinted in England, with the permission of Mr Lowell and with a Preface by his own hands, as *Essays on the English Poets*[1] (including those on Lessing and Rousseau as a very welcome though not exceedingly relevant bonus or make-weight), are partly drawn from the two books just noticed. Some of them seem to have been written rather early; most were originally lectures to a university, and may have a little sacrificed literature to instruction. The best by a good deal is, I think, the "Wordsworth,"[2] which, though there are many good essays on Wordsworth to make up for the many bad ones, deserves to rank almost with the best. It is seldom that in a single essay one finds such a capital specimen of delicate appreciation as the comparison of the fall of Goethe's *Ueber allen Gipfeln* to "blossoms shaken down by a noonday breeze on turf"; so good an example of the criticism of epigram as "Wordsworth is the historian of Wordsworthshire";[3] and so fine and just a critical simile as the comparison of Milton's verse to a mixed fleet of men-of-war and merchantmen, which comes shortly after. The "Milton" itself has more to do with Milton's editor and biographer than with Milton, and is marred by that curious impatience of a reasoned prosody which appears in Mr Lowell so often. So is the Spenser—quite admirable in great part of it—by the author's well-known and excessive depreciation of fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century poetry.[4] The "Keats" leaves off just when we are expecting the critic to begin. As if to carry out unity of cross-purpose, if of nothing more, the "Lessing" hardly says anything about Lessing's criticism, and the "Rousseau" is chiefly about Rousseau as a man. But though, putting the "Wordsworth" aside, the contents of the volume would hardly have given us a fair idea of Mr Lowell's critical powers by themselves, it could

[1] London, n. d. The Preface is dated 1885.

[2] Ed. cit., pp. 184-239.

[3] Unfortunately the readers of that very peculiar kind of literature the "County History" are not often critical students of literature itself: so the charm of this remark may be missed.

[4] This intolerance of things not quite "best and principal" was almost as much a *tic* with him as with Mr Arnold. I was once praising some recently printed Old French poems to him. "Are they better than Chrestien?" he said. And he would not read them.

have been written by no bad critic as a whole, and in part could only have been written by a very good one

As nearly always, too, this critic's last work is of his best. The "Gray" we have noticed. The "Landor" is mainly, though not wholly, personal; and the "Walton," as a "Walton" must be and ought to be, rather of life rather than of literature. But the paper on the *Areopagitica* is an admirable piece, and "On the Study of Modern Languages" stands, I think, alone among the arguments on its side, distinguished at once by competent knowledge and judicial fairness in regard to ancient and modern alike.

Last Essays.

So much critical gift, indeed, of so wide a range and so happy in its display, is seldom to be found. And though nothing is more impertinent than to recommend a representative to a constituency to which you do not yourself belong, I think that perhaps these volumes may give me the right to say that if I were an American I should vote for Mr Lowell, and that whatever might be my nationality I should say "Well done!" if he were elected.

To pass to yet another of the same distinguished group There is, though a great deal of indirect, not much direct criticism in the omniform and (when the writer could keep the cant of anti-cant out) almost always agreeable trilogy of the *Breakfast-Table*. But there is one passage[1] in the last of the three which, with hardly an alteration, is so admirable and final a description of the duty of the critic himself that I must borrow it with some slight interlineations. These, I am sure, Dr Holmes—if only as to a brother member of the Rabelais Club of pleasant memory—would not have refused me:—

O. W. Holmes.

(critic)

"Now the present case, as the doctor sees it, is just exactly such a collection of paltry individual facts as never was before—a snarl and tangle of special conditions out of which it is his business to wind as much thread as he can. It is a good deal as when a painter goes to take the portrait of any sitter who happens to send for him He has seen just such noses, and just such eyes, and just such mouths: but he never saw exactly such a face before, and his business is with that and no other person's—with the features of the worthy father of a family before him, and not with the portraits he has seen in galleries, or books, or Mr Copley's grand pictures of the fine old Tories, or the Apollos and Jupiters of Greek sculpture. It is the

The whole duty of critics stated by Aim in alia materia.

(critic's subject) (production)

same with the patient. His disease has features of its own; there never was and never will be another case in all respects

[1] *The Poet at the Breakfast-Table*, chap. v.

exactly like it. If a doctor (critic) has science without common-sense he treats a fever (book), but not this man's fever (book). If he has common-sense without science he treats this man's fever (book) without knowing the general laws that govern all fevers and all vital movements (books and all literature)."

Which thing let it be frontlet and wristlet to whosoever meddles with criticism.

Whitman and the "Democratic" ideal.

The poet who seems to some possibly rash non-American persons to divide with Poe the prize due to the worthiest in American poetry, was also a critic—less of the professional kind, much more *borné*, but more concentrated, and in some ways more influential. The critical views of Walt Whitman are scattered all over his not inconsiderable works, but are to be found brought together and marshalled most aggressively in his prose *Democratic Vistas*, with their "General Notes," and in the *numeris lege solutis* of the *Song of the Exposition*. According to these views, though Whitman speaks of individual writers (not merely Shakespeare but even Scott) with warm admiration, and with nothing of the curious blindness which has characterised some of his followers in the line, "English literature is not great" because it is anti-Democratic and Feudal. These "Notes" must develop something quite different, and of the nature of an antidote. All "warrior epics" are "void, inanimate, passed," and so forth. The expression of this is often, as Whitman's expression constantly is, admirable, and the temper of it is always intentionally wholesome and generous. If I regard it as hopelessly bad criticism, it is not (to repeat the refrain once more) because I disagree with its conclusions, but because it seems to me to start from a hopelessly wrong principle, and to proceed on hopelessly mistaken methods. That principle and those methods, *mutatis mutandis*, would justify *me* in dismissing—nay, would force me to dismiss—as void, inanimate, worthless, mischievous, something of Heine, much of Shelley, more of Hugo, and very nearly the whole of Whitman himself—four poets in four different countries born, whom, as it happens, if I were the responsible literary adviser of a new King Arthur of Poetry, I should bid him summon among the very first to his Round Table. To the critic, as I understand criticism (and if I may adapt a famous text of Scripture), Feudalism is nothing and Democracy is nothing, but the Spirit of Literature. Whitman did not think so, and unfortunately his ideas (which may have been partly suggested by Emerson) have found followers who have not always mellowed and antidoted the crude poison of theory with the generous wine of temperament and expression.

Of the remarkable, if somewhat abortive, "Transcendental" group in the latter part of the first half of the nineteenth century, George Ripley and Margaret Fuller seem to call for notice here: as specimens of later writers, Whipple and Sidney Lanier may suffice, in the impossibility of including a considerable *numerus*.[1]

Margaret Fuller.

The critical writings of the Marchesa Ossoli are, I suppose, chiefly contained in the volumes of her works entitled *Art, Literature, and Drama*, and *Life Without and Life Within*. They have much interest, and I think deserve the position assigned to her[2] as the first American woman who had regularly trained for criticism, and as being in a way the chief of all such to the present day. They have, however, certain characteristics which perhaps might be anticipated. The merely silly reproach of transcendentalism leaves "Margaret" unscathed. She does not talk nonsense. But she does talk a little vaguely and loosely, and it does seem rather difficult for her to keep her eye steadily on any one object. We know that she will overvalue Goethe. It was, as we have pointed out, the very form and pressure of the time that made her do so, and probably to no country was the gospel according to Wolfgang a more powerful and beneficent gospel than to the United States of America in the second quarter of the nineteenth century. But when we read, *in English*, that "the frail Philina, graceful though contemptible, presents the degradation incident to an attempt at leading an exclusively poetic life," or that "not even in Shakespeare" has she "felt the organising power of genius as in" Ottilie of the *Wahlverwandtschaften*, we think a great deal more than there is room or necessity here to say. The article on Poe's Poems is very curious, the critic appears as a sort of she-Balaam, without that unlucky prophet's generous frankness when he found he could not help it; she cannot ban, and will not bless freely. That on *Philip van Artevelde* is more curious still in another way. It makes the most enormous and yet indecisive sweeps before attacking its subject, feints at the whole question of Classic *v.* Romantic, says more about Alfieri (who seems to have been Margaret's favourite poet) than about Taylor, and finally despatches the nominal theme in very few and very inadequate words. She is always attractive[3]—this "*Margarita* del Occidente"—this new "Margarite of

[1] The poets Bryant and Whittier have respectable reputations as critics, and, from what I know of their other work, are likely to have deserved them. But on the same ground I rather doubt whether it is necessary to investigate their criticism for the present purpose. Nor do I think that the critical work of Bayard Taylor, of which I have some knowledge, impersonal recalls for notice. American Shakespeare-critics (with Richard Grant White at their head) might occupy a special excursus, not without advantage.

[2] As, for instance, by Professor Brander Matthews, *Introduction to American Literature* (New York, 1896), p. 226.

[3] And she can sometimes be piquant. This of the Schlegels. "Men to find plausible meaning for the deepest

America," and the ideas which, before reading, some may have formed of her as of a sort of "mother of all such as are schoolmarms" melt at once in contact with her work. But would she ever have become a great critic? I doubt it; she certainly had not become one when she died. She was thinking of things other than the Power of the Word. Better, if anybody likes; but other.

Ripley.

Her editor, I think, and, with Emerson, certainly her teacher, the Reverend George Ripley, did very much to imbue his country with foreign literature; not a little to help it to understand that literature. Ripley has been very highly spoken of, by good authorities, for the attempts which he made to produce a higher standard and a wider range of literary scholarship in the United States: and in fact there is no doubt that the Transcendental group did yeoman's service in this way, their work not a little resembling that done in Germany a hundred years, or a little less, earlier. But I do not know many of his later Reviews in the *Tribune*, and his *Specimens of Foreign Literature*, two volumes published at Boston in 1838 as the ushers and samples of a much larger library of the subject, are not in the least literary, but purely philosophical. They give translated extracts from Cousin, Jouffroy, and Benjamin Constant, with Introductions and rather copious notes or short excursus. The whole shows knowledge, judgment, and a real critical capacity; but these good gifts are, as has been said, devoted to the philosophic, not the literary character and achievement of their subjects, and it is very noticeable that of the nearly twenty books or parts of books which are announced as to form the intended library, more than half are purely philosophical and only a small part purely literary.

Whipple.

Of Whipple I chiefly know the two volumes of *Essays and Reviews*, which appeared as long ago as 1849. He must have written much else, as he did not die till 1886; but the contents of these volumes are bulky enough and varied enough, I should suppose, to afford a fair field of judgment. His countrymen have, I believe, rather outgrown him, and do not at present rank him very high; but the "perspective of the past," as it "firms," will probably establish him in a fair though not a very high place. He seems to me to have been one of the first American writers who set themselves to be critics without further ambitions, and took literature calmly to be their province in the judicial way. He might, no doubt, have had more style: not that his is bad, but that it is undistinguished, wanting more grace to win that prize and more vigour to win the other. He might also have had more grasp. His dicta are occasion-

enigma, or to hang up each map of literature, well painted and dotted, on its proper roller," is quite inspiriting, and tempts one to regret that she was thrown away on Transcendentalism and Italomania.

ally unfortunate: one reads that Pinkney has written "as well as Lovelace and Carew, better than Waller, Sedley, *Etherege*, and Dorset"; and asks for those works of Pinkney which are as good as "To Althea," and "To Lucasta," and "To A. L."; better than "Phillis is my only Joy" and "To all you Ladies."[1] And it is strange to find a man in two minds about Keats, and sure that Barry Cornwall has "splendid traits of genius." But these things will happen. I do not know what Whipple's education was, but I should rather doubt whether he had been sufficiently brought up on the chief and principal things to keep his eye from wandering and "wobbling." His article on the Elizabethan dramatists has a fatal look of being founded rather on Lamb and Hunt and Hazlitt than on Dodsley and Dilke. Still he is by no means a merely negligible quantity in our calculus. He has interesting separate things—a capital, and, for an American at the moment, very magnanimous article on Sydney Smith; two notable ones on Talfourd and "British Critics"; early, and so valuable, notices of *Jane Eyre* and *Vanity Fair*. A paper on "South's Sermons" makes one regret that he did not turn his attention more to older literature—perhaps he would have had more doubts about the superiority of Pinkney if he had. Again, he saw, what has often to this very day been foolishly denied, the *intellectual* importance of Tennyson—in fact, he seems to have been on the whole more disposed to the philosophical than to the purely artistic side of poetry. Of perhaps his two most ambitious essays the "Byron" has the commonplaceness which Byron's eulogists and detractors alike so commonly display; but the "Wordsworth" is much better. He could hardly be called a critic of genius or even of great talent, but he was fair, not ill-informed, interested and disinterested (both in the good senses) and evidently a "corn-and-seeds-man"—that is to say, a critic—"in his heart." Which things, if they could be said of all of us, so much the better.

Lanier.

Mr Sidney Lanier was, I believe, greatly thought of, and was the object of still greater hopes on the part of those who knew him personally; and though his career was cut short, there appear in his remains such a love for literature, and such an ardent desire to keep that love pure and high, that one cannot but be well affected to him. It is, however, rather difficult to believe that he would ever have been a really great, or even a fairly catholic and competent, critic. Occasional utterances and *aperçus*, when the planets were kind, must at most have been his portion. In the literature of criticism, which has many strange things, there is hardly anything odder than his *The English Novel and the Principle of its*

[1] One might add the question, "What bids 'Gentle George' Etherege to do in this galley?" though he pulls a good oar in another

Development,[1] which is simply a long, rather discursive, and wholly laudatory review of George Eliot. The selection of the individual is a matter of little consequence: I wish that I could save myself constant repetition by printing across the dog's-ear place of these pages the warning, "*Never* judge a critic by your agreement with his likes and dislikes." But the narrowing down of so mighty a theme to the glorification of *any* single novelist of a passing day would have been enough to throw the gravest doubts on Mr Lanier's competence.

Unluckily there is more. "The quiet and elegant narratives of Miss Austen," as the sole notice dealt out to its subject by the author of a treatise on *the English Novel*, "speaks" that author with a disastrous finality. A man need not go all lengths for Miss Austen, just as he need not for Milton or Virgil, but if in a study of Latin or English poetry as a whole he contented himself with referring *obiter* to "the elegant and scholarly verse of Virgil" and the "serious and careful productions of Milton," we should know what to think of him. The oddest thing in Mr Lanier's book, however, is his intense, his obviously genuine, and I think his quite nationally disinterested abhorrence[2] of the "Four Masters"—of Richardson, Fielding, Smollett, and Sterne. *Pamela* is "a silly and hideous realisation" of a really immoral idea. Fielding's morality is similar, but "more clownish." Sterne "spent his life in low, brutish, inane pursuits." He "can read none of these books without feeling as if his soul had been in the rain, draggled, muddy, miserable" He would "blot them from the face of the earth." They are "muck." Praise of them is simply "well-meaning ignorance." Is it ungenerous in face of this last statement to ask whether it is well-meaning *knowledge* which represents "Mr B." not once but often as not an orphan but a widower, and Pamela as the servant, not of his mother but of his wife? I know that Mr Lanier died before he could revise these lectures for publication. But the point happens to be of some, if slight, importance, and when we take it in conjunction with the facts that Mr Lanier thought admirers of *Tom Jones* must centre their admiration on Allworthy, and that he accounted for the unpopularity of *Daniel Deronda* by asserting that English society felt its satire too keenly, our old brocard of *judicia ignorantium* doth something buzz i' the ear.

[1] New York, 1883. The characteristics here noted appear also in the recently and handsomely produced book on the Elizabethan period, *Shakespeare and his Forerunners*, 2 vols., 1902. The much earlier *Science of English Verse*, 1880, attempts to explain prosody by musical signs, and is thus out of the pale.

[2] The expressions quoted and others will be found at pp. 169-183, *op. cit.* Lanier, though quite unprejudiced, I think, by nationality, was badly bitten by the equally fatal though less ignoble mania of "Progress," and by the moral heresy. He shows the same marks as do so many pre-Arnoldian English critics of the mid-nineteenth century.

But Mr Lanier, though a younger man than Mr Lowell, was, to say nothing of his inferiority in genius, practically a member of an older school, corresponding, as I have already remarked, to one which not all contemporaries of his had outgone in England itself, and which, for the matter of that, we have not universally outgone even now. Since his day American criticism (except for that in all probability passing diversion into 'Democratic" parochialism which has been noticed) has become very much more cosmopolitan, very much more fully developed, and in particular very much more learned. It has perhaps, of the very latest years, gone a little too much to Germany for patterns, and plunged too often into the German *cul-de-sac* maze of specialist monographs—a dangerous and soul-killing wilderness, wherein many positively foolish and hurtful things are done, and where at the best the places are all too often dry. Yet some of these very monographs have been executed in a manner escaping the dangers and avoiding the drynesses, and not a few both of the authors of them and of others have shown soul and sight considerably above the mere trail-hunting of the specialist. If all living American critics were to be carried off by a special epidemic, I should be sorry for two reasons—first of all, because several of them are my personal friends, and secondly, because I should have to extend this appendix to an altogether unmanageable length. But meanwhile there is no doubt that Mr Lowell handed in, once for all, the "proofs" of American criticism, and that it has nothing now to do but to go on and prosper.

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