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STUDIES IN LITERATURE AND HISTORY

SIR ALFRED C. LYALL

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STUDIES IN LITERATURE AND HISTORY

BY THE LATE

SIR ALFRED C. LYALL

P.C., G.C.I.E., K.C.B., D.C.L., LL.D.

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1915

PREFACE

In the Second Series of his *Asiatic Studies* the late Sir Alfred Lyall republished a number of articles that he had contributed to various Reviews up to the year 1894. After that date he wrote frequently, especially for the *Edinburgh Review*, and he left amongst his papers a note naming a number of articles from which he considered that a selection might be made for publication.

The present volume contains, with two exceptions, the articles so mentioned, together with one that was not included by the author.

A large number of Sir Alfred Lyall's contributions[1] to the Reviews deal, as might be expected, with India —with its political and administrative problems, or with the careers of its statesmen and soldiers. He appears, however, to have regarded such articles as not of sufficient permanent value for republication, and his selection was confined almost exclusively to writings on literary, historical or religious subjects.

He made an exception in favour of an essay on his old friend Sir Henry Maine; but as the limitations imposed by the publisher made it necessary to sacrifice one of the larger articles, this essay was, with some reluctance, excluded. It dealt chiefly with Maine's influence on Indian administration and legislation; and would more appropriately be included in a collection of his writings on India, should these ever be published.

While Indian official subjects have been excluded, readers of the earlier 'Studies' will recognise that many of the writings in this volume follow out lines of thought suggested in the earlier works, or apply in a larger sphere the results of observations made when the author was studying Indian myths and Indian religions in Berar, or the 'rare and antique stratification of society' in Rajputana. The two addresses on religion placed at the end of the volume form the most obvious example, but there is a close connection between a group of the other articles and the views developed in *Asiatic Studies*.

In the last edition of that work a chapter on 'History and Fable' was inserted because of its bearing on the author's general views 'regarding the elementary commixture of fable and fact in ages that may be called prehistoric.' In this chapter the author made a rapid survey of the 'kinship between history and fable,' tracing it through the times of myth and romance to the period of the historic novel. 'At their birth,' he says, 'history and fable were twin sisters;' and again, 'There is always a certain quantity of fable in history, and there is always an element of history in one particular sort of fable.' The reviews of English and Anglo-Indian fiction, and of 'Heroic Poetry' in the present work, give opportunities of further

illustrations from fiction of his views: which reappear from another standpoint in the 'Remarks on the Reading of History'—a short address, which it has been thought worth while to reprint, though it was not specially indicated by the author for publication.

Several of the other articles contain criticism of a more purely literary character; the article on 'Frontiers,' which recounts exciting but little-known episodes in the Russian advance in Asia, has an important bearing on a branch of Indian policy in which Sir Alfred Lyall to the end of his career took a deep interest, and of which he had a profound knowledge; and 'L'Empire Libéral' may, it is thought, be found to contain much that is of special interest at the present time.

These articles have not had the benefit of any general revision by their author, but in a few cases he had indicated in the printed copies alterations or additions that he desired to be made.

The Quarterly.
The Anglo-Saxon.
The Edinburgh.
The Fortnightly. Except that the two essays on 'Race and Religion' and 'The State in its Relation to Religion' have been brought together at the end of the volume, the chronological order of original publication has been observed. The source from which each article is drawn has in all cases been indicated, and this opportunity is taken of acknowledging the permission to republish that has courteously been accorded by the editors or proprietors of the Reviews concerned.

Permission has also been given to publish the article

on 'Sir Spencer Walpole' written for the British Academy, and the address on the 'Reading of History.'

JOHN O. MILLER

December 1914.

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NOVELS OF ADVENTURE AND MANNERS[2]

Mr. Raleigh[3] very rightly goes back to mediæval romance for the origins of English fiction. In all countries the metrical tale is many generations older than the prose story; for prose writing is a refinement of the literary art which flourishes only when reading has become popular; while verse, being at first a kind of *memoria technica* used for the correct transmission of sacred texts and the heroic tradition, strikes the ear and fixes the recollection of an audience. The exploits of mighty warriors and the miracles of saints—love, fighting, and theology—form the subject matter of these stories in verse. They are, as Mr. Raleigh says, epical in spirit though not in form: 'they carry their hero through the actions and adventures of his life ... they display a marked preference for deeds done, and attempt no

character-drawing.... A sense of the instability of human life, very present to the minds of men familiar with battle and plague, is everywhere mirrored in these romances.' Then came Chaucer, who not only wrote prose tales, but also carried far toward perfection the art of narration in verse; and 'in the fifteenth century both of the ancestors of the modern novel—that is, the novella or short pithy story after the manner of the Italians, and the romance of chivalry—appear in an English prose dress.' But the genius of English fiction was still loaded with the chains of allegory and pedantic moralisation; and in the *Gesta Romanorum*, the most popular collection of English prose stories which had been translated from the Latin at the end of the fifteenth century, 'human beings are mere puppets, inhabiting the great fabric of mediæval thought and mediæval institution.... It was the work of the Renaissance to recover the literal and obvious sense of human life, as it was the work of the closely-allied Reformation to recover the literal sense of the Bible.'

The playwright has always been a formidable rival to the novelist, insomuch that in a period of dramatic activity the novel, as our author remarks, can hardly maintain itself. But from the middle of the seventeenth century the stage had fallen low, while the formal and fantastic romance, the long-winded involved story, was losing its vogue. So the heroic romances, we are told, 'availed themselves skilfully of the opportunity to foster a new taste in the reading public—a delight, namely, born of the fashionable leisure of a self-conscious society, in minute introspection, and the analysis and portraiture of emotional states.' We are inclined to suspect that these words, which would serve well enough to describe the taste for the analytic novel of

our own day, must be taken with considerable reserve in their application to the writings and the readers of two centuries ago. But we may agree that certain tendencies of style and developments of feeling which are now predominant may be traced back to this time. And when, toward the end of the seventeenth century, Mrs. Aphra Behn began to enlist incidents of real life into the service of her fiction, she was making a distinct attempt, as Mr. Raleigh points out, to bring romance into closer relation with contemporary life, although a conventional treatment of facts and character still overlay all her work. Mr. Raleigh holds, however, that this attempt was abortive; that it failed at the time; and that the great eighteenth-century school of English novelists, with Richardson and Fielding at their head, took its rise, quite independently of predecessors in the seventeenth century, out of the general stock of miscellaneous literature—plays, books of travel, adventures, satires, journals, and broadsides—which had been drawn at first hand from observation and experience of the various forms of surrounding life.

We are quite ready to agree that the eighteenth-century Novel of Manners belongs to a family distinct from that of the Romantic story, or is at any rate very distantly connected with it. But when Mr. Raleigh goes on to say that the heroic romance died in the seventeenth century and left no issue, although it was revived again in the latter half of the eighteenth century, to this view we are much inclined to demur. Such complete interruptions in the transmission of species are as rare in the intellectual as in the physical world; and we prefer to maintain that the romance, although it was for a time eclipsed by the brilliancy of the writers who described the manners and sentiments of

contemporary society, was never extinguished, but became transformed gradually, by successive modifications of environment, into the modern novel of adventure. It is true that Defoe entirely rejected the marvellous, while Horace Walpole, fifty years later, dealt immoderately in the elements of mystery and wonder; yet, notwithstanding these violent oscillations of style and method, we believe that the great historical novels of the early nineteenth century, and the tales of stirring incident which flourish at the present day, descend by an unbroken filiation from the fabulous romance of elder times.

Mr. Raleigh does not carry his brief yet instructive history of the English novel beyond the time of Walter Scott, with whom, he says, 'the wheel has come full circle,' the Romantic revival was victorious, prose finally superseded verse as the vehicle of adventurous story, and realism was wedded to romance. We trust that in some future work he will carry on up to a later date his survey of the course and currents of imaginative fiction. In the meantime, it may not be irrelevant to follow up further and a little more closely the ruling characteristics and the formative influences that have contributed toward the production of English light literature as it exists at the present day.

The novels with which our fortunate generation is so abundantly supplied may be divided broadly into two classes, overlapping and interlaced with each other, yet on the whole distinguishable as separate species—the Novel of Adventure and the Novel of Manners. The former class has a very long pedigree. The early romance writer drew his incidents from the field of heroic action and marvellous enterprise; he revelled in noble sentiments, astonishing feats, and

the exhibition of all the cardinal virtues in tragic situations; his mission was to preserve and hand down to us magnified figures of mighty men, or the pictures of great events, as they had impressed themselves upon the popular imagination. For such material he was obliged to travel abroad into remote countries, or backward to bygone ages; but if his images of gallant knights and fair damsels were well modelled, if the language was superb, and the deeds or sufferings sufficiently astonishing, no one cared about anachronisms, incongruities, or improbabilities.

But as the heroic romance dwindled and withered under the dry light of precise knowledge and extending erudition, the purveyors of fiction, accommodating themselves to a more exacting taste, applied themselves seriously to the reproduction of famous scenes and portraits by the aid and guidance of historic documents and antiquarian research. The modern romantic school, of whom the master, if not the founder, is Scott, represented a clear step forward to what is now called Realism, and a proportionate abandonment of the classic convention, or the method of drawing from traditional or imaginary models. To Scott may be ascribed the authoritative introduction of descriptions of landscape, of storms, sunsets, and picturesque effects; not the artificial scene-painting of Mrs. Radcliffe, but artistic delineations of the aspects of earth, sea, and sky which gave depth and atmosphere to his dramatic situations. From this period, also, may be dated the practice, so entirely contrary to the spirit of true romance, of verifying by documentary evidence the details of a story. It was Scott who, in the first years of this century, set prominently the example of appending copious notes

to his stories in verse or prose, wherein he displayed his archæologic lore and produced his authorities for any striking illustration of manners or characteristic incident. This practice, which was largely adopted by others, was at least an improvement upon the old unregenerate system of seasoning the conversation of warriors and peasants with uncouth phrases picked up at random, or trusting to mere fancy or accepted formula for the description of battles or of the ways of folk in mediæval castles and cottages. But the process savoured too much of the workshop. A novel or poem that required an appendix of notes and glossaries must be of high excellence to avoid suspicious resemblance to an elaborate literary counterfeit, since open and avowed borrowing from dictionaries of antiquities or volumes of travel must damage the illusion which is the indispensable element of romance. In Moore's fantastic metrical romance of *Lalla Rookh* the system was carried to an extent that now seems ridiculous, for certain passages are loaded with outlandish phrases or metaphors that are unintelligible except by reference to the notes. Nevertheless the English public, being then quite ignorant of the true East, tolerated Moore's sham Orientalism, even though Byron's fine poems were just then exposing the difference between working up the subject in a library and wandering in Asiatic countries. Byron's language seems in the present day turgid, and his Greeks and Turks may have a theatrical air, but his splendid descriptive passages were drawn by a master hand straight from nature, while his colouring, landscape, and costume are usually excellent; so that his work also is a distinct movement in the direction of realism. Yet it is to be observed that after Byron and Scott the metrical romance, that most ancient form

of tale-telling, fell rapidly into disuse. The fact that Byron's latest poem, *Don Juan*, belonged essentially to the coming realistic school, is a significant indication of transition; and Scott's abandonment of poetry for prose, which was a necessary consequence of his advance toward realism, gave its death-blow to the earlier fashion.

By this time, indeed, the conventional writer of adventures, though he held his ground up to or even beyond the middle of the century, was in a state of incurable decadence. He was losing the confidence of the general reader, who had picked up some precise notions regarding appropriate scenery, language, and costume in sundry periods and divers places, from China to Peru; and he was persecuted by that mortal foe of the old romancer, the well-informed critic, who trampled even upon a commonplace book well filled with references to standard authorities, insisting upon careful study of the whole environment, the dexterous incorporation of details, and delicate blending of local colours. Severe pedagogic handling of a historic novel, as if it were a paper done at some competitive examination, was too much for the old school, which finally subsided into cheap popular editions, making way for a new class of writers that adapted the Novel of Adventure to the requirements of latter-day taste, to the widening of knowledge, and the diversified expansion of our national life. The prevailing tendency was now to confine the range of scene and action more and more approximately to the contemporary period, to insist on genuine materials, and to observe a stricter canon of probabilities, wherein the discriminating reader fancied himself to be a judge. The use of notes was discarded as contrary to the high artistic principle that in fiction

everything must resemble reality while nothing must be demonstrably matter of fact. The appearance of famous personages must be occasional, after the manner of gods in an epic poem; they must not be, as formerly, the leading characters and chief actors in the drama. And great battles, instead of marking the grand climacteric of a story's development, were now merely traversed, so to speak, on their outskirts, or were only approached near enough to throw a glowing sidelight on certain groups and situations. The gradual adoption of these limitations may be traced back to the naval and military novels that reflect the traditions of the great French war. No one even then thought of writing a romance with Nelson or Bonaparte as the hero, or of finishing off in the full blaze of Trafalgar or in the rout of Waterloo; although with Marryat and Lever the English reader revelled in the dashing exploits or bacchanalian revels of sailors and soldiers. Lever did indeed give glimpses of Wellington or Napoleon; but his business was with Connaught Rangers and French guardsmen; while Marryat and Michael Scott gave us daring sea-captains and reckless sailors with inimitable vigour and animation.

But as the echo of thunderous battles by sea and land died away, this particular offshoot of modern romance ceased to flourish, and has never had any considerable revival. The tale-teller of adventure, like his ancestor the epic poet, requires a certain haziness of atmosphere; he must have elbow room for his inventive faculty; and he is liable to be stifled in the flood of lucid narrative and inflexible facts let loose upon recent events in our day by complete histories, personal memoirs, public documents, war correspondence, and all-pervading journalism. This is probably the main reason why the Crimean War and

the Indian Mutiny, which broke for brief intervals the long peace of England, have furnished no fresh material contribution of importance to the romance of war, either in prose or poetry, to stamp the memory of a long weary siege, or of a short and bloody struggle, upon the popular imagination. Another reason must be, of course, the non-appearance in England of the *vates sacer*; for Tolstoi has shown us that within and without Sebastopol there might be found material for work of the highest order. However this may be, it is a remarkable fact that just about that time the novel of adventure turned back for a moment, in Kingsley's hands, to the spacious times of great Elizabeth, to the Armada and the legends of filibustering on the Spanish main; and at the present time we may observe that the leading writer of this school goes back at least a hundred years for the field of his best stories. The eighteenth century, whose politics, philosophy, and literature seemed to Carlyle's somewhat bookish conception to be flat, prosaic, and comparatively uninteresting, was in truth for Englishmen pre-eminently the age of energetic activity, which touched the high level of romantic enterprise at two points, the Scottish rebellions and the exploits of famous buccaneers. Mr. Stevenson has reopened, with great skill and success, these mines of literary ore that had been discovered but only partially worked by Walter Scott. His rare artistic instinct divined the rich veins which they still contained; while in other stories his intimate acquaintance with actual life and circumstance on the coasts and islands of the Pacific Ocean has provided him with those elements of distance and unfamiliarity which are essential, as we have suggested, to the composition of the novel of

adventure. Other less original writers have travelled in search of these elements to the Australian bush or the outlying half-explored regions of South Africa.

This very cursory survey of the main influences and circumstances that have shaped the course and set the fashion of our modern novel of adventure may be useful in explaining its actual position at the present moment. Scepticism and research have effectually retrenched the very liberal credit formerly assigned to romance writing; the art now consists in spinning a long narrative out of authentic materials which must be disguised or kept hidden; while its leading features are a delight in elaborate accessories and that very modern sentiment, a horror of anachronism. A few living artists, like Mr. Shorthouse and Mr. Stevenson, can still excel under these difficult conditions, which have driven a crowd of second-rate novelists into the extreme of minute realism. Into this retreat, however, they have been followed by a host of readers; for in these days of universal instruction and flat uneventful existence nothing satisfies the average mind like photographic detail, which is a commodity to be had of every industrious or studious composer. As the range of accurate information extends, as the dust heap of old records, private as well as public, is sifted more narrowly, as the antique habit of taking things readily for granted disappears, the novel becomes more and more an arrangement of genuine facts and circumstances, interleaved by such fiction as the skill and imagination of the author can produce. It may be worth observing that this demand for exact verification has affected the use of the early chronicles in two contrary ways; they are relied upon implicitly or they are arbitrarily discredited, in proportion as the facts stated appear credible or not

credible to critics or professors who are working upon them. All the particulars of a great battle or of some famous event that can be gleaned out of some ancient monkish annalist, who must always have collected his information by hearsay and often after many years, are treated as authentic so long as they do not sound improbable; but if they offend against the canon of probability set up by a library-hunting student, they are liable to be summarily rejected. We may venture upon the conjecture that the true result of this process is to assimilate the work of the critical historian much more nearly than he would for a moment allow to that of a skilful historic novelist. A romancer of insight and imaginative power, who studied his period, would be quite as likely to make a lucky selection of real incidents, motives, and characters, in a story of the Roman Empire or of England under the Plantagenets, as an erudite writer of history. Perhaps the best measure available to us of what we may believe in regard to far-off times is afforded by observation of what now happens in rough societies or remote places; and this test the novelist is rather more apt, on the whole, to employ than the historian.

In the novels, as upon the stage, this demand for minute accuracy of scenic or historical details has necessarily elicited an abundant supply; though whether the entire picture is rendered much more natural and real by an accumulation of correct particulars may be questioned. 'La recherche exagérée du vrai peut conduire au faux.' It is most doubtful whether laborious research can reconstruct a life-like presentation of a vanished society, its modes of life, its ways of thinking and acting. In vain the novelist or the painter studies archæology, takes a journey to the Holy Land for his local colouring,

reads up the records of the time, or works in museums. The result may be ingenious and even instructive; but there are sure to be great errors and anachronisms, although they may now be undiscoverable; while the general tone, point of view, and balance of motives are nearly certain to be obscured or distorted. For the modern novelist, like the ancient myth-maker, is necessarily the child of his time; his work takes the bent of his personal temperament, and is moulded by the environment of ideas and circumstances within which he lives. The Myth, the Romance, the Historic Novel, each in its successive period, did at least this service to later generations: they preserved and handed down to us the popular impressions, the figures or pictures of great men and striking events, as they were reflected upon the imagination of subsequent ages. It can never be discovered, and it does not very much matter, whether these images have any close resemblance to the lost originals; it may be that some artists in some periods saw far more clearly than in others. The true criterion for estimating the true value of romantic fiction, of tales of action and adventure, must be always its artistic and intellectual qualities, the question whether it succeeds in filling a broad canvas, in dealing with masculine sentiment and stirring action, in striking the deeper chords of human emotion and energy.

But the historic novel of our day strives principally after exact reproduction, as may be seen even in a book of such incontestable talent as *Marius the Epicurean*, and very notably in Archdeacon Farrar's book, *Darkness and Dawn, or Scenes in the Days of Nero* (1891), which may stand as the type and complete specimen of Erudite Fiction. In his preface he tells us that

> 'those who are familiar with the literature of the first century will recognise that even for the minutest allusions and particulars I have contemporary authority. Expressions and incidents which to some might seem startlingly modern, are in reality suggested by passages in the satirists, epigrammatists, and romancers of the (Roman) Empire, or by anecdotes preserved in the grave pages of Seneca and the elder Pliny.'

Here we have reached, in this conscientious explanation of method, the extreme point of remoteness from the original spirit of historic romance. Archdeacon Farrar's figures and descriptions are worked out upon the pattern of a mosaic, by piecing together the loose fragmentary bits of our knowledge regarding life and society under Nero. A glance at these books shows that they belong to the latest school of nineteenth-century fiction, to a period when careful scholarly accumulation of accessories and adroit adaptation of history have taken the place, not only of convention and clumsy invention, but also of the free untrammelled handling of types and traditions which gave freshness and originality to the simpler forms of early romance.

We believe, then, that these attempts at exact reproduction, this method of the multiplication of particulars, involve a fallacy, and are detrimental to the more enduring forms of art. But the people is willing to be deceived; the general reader has acquired a taste that must be gratified; with the result that the elder romancers in prose and verse, including Scott and Byron, are falling out of fashion with the middle classes, though Scott holds his own

in the sixpenny edition. The rule of Realism is becoming so despotic that the story of adventure is reverting more and more to that shape which lends itself most completely to life-like narrative, the shape of a Memoir. And it may be pointed out accordingly that in France the Editor of Memoirs has lately entered into substantial rivalry with the Novelist of Adventure.

It must have been noticed by those who attend to the course of French literature, that of late years the publication of Memoirs relating to the period of the Revolutionary war, and especially of the First Empire, has rather suddenly increased. The causes are undoubtedly to a considerable degree political, connected with the reorganisation of the French army and navy, which has revived the military ardour of the nation, and has given an edge to the deep-seated spirit of rivalry with Germany on land and with England at sea. Whatever immediately interests a nation gives a sharp turn to its literature, and the immense success of General Marbot's book, containing the extraordinary personal experiences of one who passed through the most famous scenes of the heroic era, exactly hit off the public taste at a moment when various motives combined to revive the Napoleonic legend. The historians of that era had done their harvesting; the crop had been reaped, raked, and gleaned; the time was too near and too thoroughly known for fiction; and yet there never was a finer field for the production of romance. No one can doubt that if Napoleon Bonaparte had conquered half Europe, won his tremendous battles, and founded his empire in an illiterate prehistoric age, he would have taken everlasting rank with Alexander the Great and Charlemagne as the central figure of a third world-wide cycle of heroic myths;

nor is it necessary to read Archbishop Whately's *Historic Doubts* to perceive how readily Napoleon's real story lends itself to extravagant myth-making. At a later period he might have been the leading character in some prolix and pedantic romance, and still more recently his life and deeds would have been built up into the scaffolding within which the historic novelist used to construct his love idylls, his tragic situations, or even his illustrations of some social theory. All these methods and devices have become obsolete; and though the spirit of hero-worship that animated those who listened to the ancient tales still possesses mankind at certain seasons, Romance must now submit to the hard conditions of modern Realism. In this predicament it finds a new and satisfactory embodiment in the form of Memoirs concerning the great Emperor and his companions, which dispense copious anecdotes of his court and camp, his sayings and doings, his domestic habits, his private manners and peccadilloes. If these particulars can be served up as sauce to the description of mighty events, the contrast renders them all the more savoury. But there is now a large class of readers who care less about Jena and Austerlitz than for such books as *Napoléon Intime, Napoléon et les Femmes*, which have all the attraction always possessed by the intermixture of love and war, and by the blending of arms with amours in the conventional style of historic fiction. The lowest depth is reached when the reminiscences of an Emperor's valet, to whom he is still a kind of hero, are served up with that succulent dressing of vivid particularity which is swallowed with relish because it brings down a great man to the level of the most trivial experience.

How far these Memoirs are genuine in the sense

which makes them so attractive—that is to say, as literally authentic pictures of a great man's interior life, of his actual words and behaviour as witnessed by his intimates—must always remain doubtful to the sceptical mind. True reminiscences are naturally somewhat cloudy in outline, hanging loose together with gaps and interruptions; whereas these are all coherent, clear-cut, and written in a style that gives superior polish and setting to every scene and anecdote. That they are compiled upon a solid substratum of truth need not be questioned; nevertheless some of them seem to differ only in degree from the realistic novel of the very latest type, such as Zola's *Débâcle*, which contains a very strong and pervading mixture of pure historical fact.

But whatever may be the exact proportion of authenticity which this class of Memoirs can justly claim, they completely fulfil the prime conditions of popularity prescribed for the modern novel, which must work out minute details with the greatest possible resemblance to actual life and circumstance. Upon this ground, indeed, the ablest professors of fiction might despair of competing with those who exhibit a mighty man of valour in undress, who lead us where we may hear him talk, watch him eat or shave, and study his conjugal relations. It is to be feared that if the multiplication of such Reminiscences continues, they will seriously trench upon the province of the novelist, who will be left no scope for the employment of his craft in a field that has been thoroughly ransacked, and who must inevitably retire before writers who have discovered the art of making truth quite as amusing as fiction, than which it must always be more interesting. The brilliant success of Marbot's Memoirs, which were undoubtedly written by himself, seems to have

warmed into activity and circulation various other volumes of similar reminiscences that must have been hibernating for one or two generations in the family archives, or have otherwise fallen into temporary oblivion; for in many cases one is inclined to wonder why authentic documents of such value and interest were not sooner produced.

The latest example of this class of Memoirs, belonging to the Revolutionary or Napoleonic cycle, is to be found in the *Adventures* of A. Moreau de Jonnés, who died in 1870 at the age of ninety-two, having been for fifty years a member of the Institut and a great authority on statistics. 'We should never have supposed,' says M. Léon Say in his preface to this book, 'that Moreau had been the hero of warlike adventures, or that he might possibly have been placed in a line with Marbot.' The men of M. Say's generation who knew Marbot were quite unaware, he adds, that here was a naval and colonial Marbot, whose fighting life was one of the strangest of stories. M. Say's preface seems to be intended as a guarantee of this story's authenticity, though he notices casually the remarkable fact that 'on every occasion when Moreau is on the brink of destruction, it is his luck to be saved by a pretty girl'; also that 'a charming portrait-gallery might be made of the women who, between 1793 and 1805, rescued this hardy rover, who was both sailor and soldier, from death by sword or sickness in divers parts of the world,' from the West India Islands to the banks of the Thames. His guarantee must be accepted; yet if this book had not been the genuine autobiography of a known personage, there would really be nothing to distinguish it from the historic novel, in which an imaginary person, such as Thackeray's Esmond, describes well-known scenes of history as an eye-

witness and actor in them. Moreau was present at the great naval engagement of June 1, 1794; at the hanging of Parker, the ringleader of the famous mutiny at the Nore, when he was saved by Parker's widow; he was in Bantry Bay with the ships of Hoche's unlucky expedition; he landed with Humbert in Donegal, and saw the Race of Castlebar; he had some marvellous experiences in the West Indies, and everywhere the devotion of women facilitated his hairbreadth escapes. There need be no irony in repeating that avowed fiction can have no chance at all in competition with literature of this class.

'Times are changed,' observes M. Léon Say in his preface. 'The taste of the public of our own day grows more and more keen for the romance of the cloak and rapier, when the heroes relate their own adventures. The authentic Memoirs of the d'Artagnans of our own century are now preferred even to the works of Alexandre Dumas, so dear to our youth.' Undoubtedly they must be preferred, for being more real than the most realistic novel, and just as full of fascinating adventures, the Memoir is superior precisely at those points which have given the modern romance an advantage over its more conventional predecessors. There may be consolation for the novelist in the reflection that the fund from which these Memoirs are drawn must soon be running low, whereas the resources of fiction are comparatively inexhaustible. In the meantime one result, already perceptible, will be that the novel will tend more and more to imitate the personal memoir, by reverting to the autobiographical form which, since Defoe's day, has always been fiction's most effective disguise, permitting the author to efface himself completely, while it gives the whole composition an air of dramatic vigour. It will have

been observed that the most vivid modern English romances, from *Barry Lyndon* and *Esmond* to *John Inglesant*, *Kidnapped*, and *The Master of Ballantrae*, are all written as the direct narratives of men who have taken a comparatively secondary or even humble share in great transactions. On the other hand, the famous characters who stand in the foremost line of history, and who were the delight and ornament of the elder romances, must now be struck out of the repertory of the modern story-teller, since the public now will no longer tolerate ancient or mediæval heroes, while the great men of recent times have been too often photographed. The only novelist of our own day who has attempted with some success to draw thinly-veiled portraits of contemporary celebrities is Disraeli, and his whole style and treatment show him to be a true-bred descendant of the old romantic stock.

Our argument is, therefore, that various causes and tendencies, the change of environment, the limitation of the average reader's experiences, his taste for accuracy, his rejection of tradition, convention, anachronism and improbabilities, the extension of exact knowledge and the critical spirit, have all combined to limit the sphere of the Novel of Adventure and to check the free sweep of its inventive genius. To these conditions the first-class artist can accommodate himself; but for the average writer they serve fatally to expedite his descent into the regions of everyday life, among all the emotions known to middle-class folk, from murders, bankruptcies, and railway accidents down to their religious doubts and the psychology of their love-making.

Against all these adverse circumstances the Novel of Adventure strives gallantly, and, of late years, with such conspicuous success, that it is difficult to decide whether the tide of popular inclination has not turned against the Novel of Manners. This branch of the great story-telling family has, as we know, a long descent and an illustrious pedigree, although for our present purpose we need not go back further than the eighteenth century, to *Gil Blas* in France and *Tom Jones* in England. It will be found that these masterpieces consist principally of a series of scenes and comical or semi-tragical situations, rather loosely strung together on the thread of the experiences undergone by the principal personages. The main object is not so much ingenuity of plot as the presentation with much humour, some strokes of caricature, and a touch of pathos, of morals and manners, of public abuses and private vices, the way of living and standard of thinking, the distinctive prejudices and ingrained beliefs, that characterised different classes at a time when their ideas and habits were often in sharp contrast. The sketches are admirably done, the conversation is full of wit, the whole work may be relied upon as a faithful though coarsely drawn picture of contemporary society. Fielding constantly makes a halt in his narrative to moralise and discourse ironically with the reader, in a vein that was reopened a century later by Thackeray, and by him pretty nearly exhausted, for at any rate it has since been closed.

Mr. Raleigh's book contains a just and discriminating appreciation of Fielding's place in the line of great novelists, and of the strong formative influence that his work exercised over the early development of what is now called Naturalism. This note is struck, as

he points out, in the invocation at the beginning of the thirteenth book of *Tom Jones*, addressed to Experience, to the inspiration which is derived from what one has actually seen and known among all sorts and conditions of men:

> 'Others before him had seen and known these things, but in Fielding's pages they are for the first time introduced, with no loss of reality, to subserve the ends of fiction; common life is the material of the story, but it is handled here for the first time with the freedom and imagination of a great artist.'[4]

And here, we may add, is the fruitful and vigorous stock out of which has since radiated that immense growth of realistic novels which now tends to overshadow and supersede the earlier species of romance literature.

But Fielding's style is unblushingly masculine; his scenes are in the street, the tavern, the sponging-house, and other places unmentionable. By the end of his century the Novel of Manners had fallen into very different hands, and to these it owes mainly the shaping, both as to tone and subject, that decisively laid down its course of future development. The electricity of that stormful period which comprises the last years of the eighteenth and the opening of the nineteenth century seems to have generated an efflorescence of high original capacity in the department of imagination as well as of action. Nevertheless nothing is more remarkable, probably nothing was less expected, than the sudden accession of women to the first rank of popular novelists. Miss Burney, Miss Edgeworth, Miss Austen (not to mention Miss Ferrier), entered upon the same field

from different points and divided it among them. They may be said to have virtually created the decent story of contemporary life, the light satirical pictures of familiar folk, the representation of ordinary society in the form of a delicate comedy, which rose to the pitch of racy humour when the scenes and characters were Irish. Under the touch of this feminine genius convention vanishes altogether; the painting is direct from nature; the plot and incidents are saturated with probability; the personages might be met at the corner of any street in town or village; the very voice, gesture, and language are almost ludicrously familiar. No heroics, not much use of the pathetic; very slight landscape-painting and background; no psychology; there is no systematic attempt to introduce, under the story's disguise, the serious discussion of social, political, or polemical questions.

For an artist who deals so largely with country life, the absence of landscape-painting in Miss Austen is very noticeable. The fine vein of satire that pervades all her work, the constant presence of the human element, leave her no room for expatiating on the aspects of nature; and indeed she was manifestly impatient with enthusiasts over the picturesque. She only touched upon such tastes in order to bring out character:

> '"It is very true," said Marianne, "that admiration of landscape scenery is become a mere jargon. Everybody pretends to feel and tries to describe with the taste and elegance of him who first defined what picturesque beauty was. I detest jargon of every kind; and sometimes I have kept my feelings to myself, because I could find no language to

> describe them in but what was worn and hackneyed out of all sense and meaning."
>
> "'I am convinced," said Edward, "that you really feel all the delight in a fair prospect which you profess to feel. But, in return, your sister must allow me to feel no more than I profess. I like a fine prospect, but not on picturesque principles; I do not like crooked, twisted, blasted trees. I admire them much more if they are tall, straight, and flourishing. I do not like ruined, tattered cottages. I am not fond of nettles or thistles or heath blossoms. I have more pleasure in a snug farm-house than a watch-tower, and a troop of tidy happy villagers please me better than the finest banditti in the world.'"[5]

There can be no doubt, indeed, that in the novels of this period two main features of the modern story, the word-painting of scenery and the analysis of subjective emotions, are conspicuously absent. Yet among the manifold causes to which may be ascribed the wide recent expansion of the Novel of Manners, we may well reckon the decisive impulse that it received from these famous authoresses. They were, in fact, the founders of the dominion which women bid fair to establish over this class of fiction, where they are already extending it to a degree that threatens to evict the men. Various circumstances have co-operated toward this curious literary revolution. The conventional romance, though apparently flourishing, was in their time on the brink of a decline; and as women have never succeeded in the Novel of Adventure—for the obvious reason that their tastes and experiences are opposed to success—they had no difficulty in abandoning a decaying

school, and in throwing all their freshness of mind and subtlety of observation into the department which precisely suited their idiosyncrasy. The spread of education among female readers and writers has undoubtedly aided them. And thus the rise of feminine novelists has operated as a formidable contingent of fresh troops that has joined the camp of Manners, to which alliance it may be noticed that, with very few exceptions, the women have faithfully adhered. For although in the last century Mrs. Radcliffe had revived, as Mr. Raleigh observes, the Romance proper, and Miss Jane Porter claimed in the first years of this century the honour of having invented the historical romance, women have been practically superseded in this class of literature, so far as it survives, by men, George Eliot's *Romola* being the only notable exception. The true representatives of female novelists are now the leaders of that school which confines itself to minute observation, whether of outward facts or inward feeling, and which is above all things devoted to the close delineation of contemporary society. The analysis of character within the range of ordinary experience, the play of civilised emotion, the vicissitudes of grief or joy in the parsonage, the ball-room, and the village, the troubled course of legitimate love-making, have all contributed the congenial material whereby the Novel of Manners treated realistically, as the phrase goes, has been moulded by the adroit hands of women.

We do not forget that the most remarkable Mannerists that have appeared in this century were male authors—Thackeray and Dickens. But we are not now attempting to survey the whole field of modern English fiction, or to assign to every star its place in that wide firmament. Our aim is only to

indicate the main lines of filiation that have produced the prevailing novel of the day. The permanent influence of the two great artists who have been mentioned has not been, we think, proportionate to the rare and original value of their work. Both of them had many imitators in their lifetime and for a little time afterward; but before they died they were both showing symptoms of loss of power; and one could see that the special fibre or faculty that distinguished them was becoming overstrained; it was betraying effort and exaggeration. In their latest productions their peculiar qualities became mannerisms, of which readers soon began to be weary; and this may partly account for the speedy subsequent diversion of the popular taste into other channels. At any rate they did not found an enduring school, like Jane Austen, of whom it may be said that a great proportion of those novels of ordinary society which fill annually the lists of circulating libraries may be referred to her work as their type and forerunner. The novels of Anthony Trollope, for example, follow very much the same range of subject, the same level of emotion and incident; they consist mainly of satirical yet good-humoured descriptions of middle-class life in the country, the suburbs, and occasionally in the higher walks of society—they are always decorous and never dull, but they never rise to the note of romance or adventure. It may even be added, in further proof of Trollope's literary ancestry, that the predominant quality of these very clever but eminently commonplace stories, with their interminable flirtations and their amusing dialogues which might have been reported by phonograph, is essentially feminine.

Our view is, therefore, that three famous women

authors accomplished for the Novel of Manners very much what Scott at the same period did for the Novel of Adventure; they stamped its lasting form and shaped its subsequent development. And in both classes, in tales of adventure as of society, we may detect clearly the rising spirit of what has been since called Realism or Naturalism, the discarding of convention, the abandonment of mere attitudes for action studied from the life, the direct appropriation of material from surrounding facts and perceptible feelings, from the familiar humours and concerns of everyday existence. In *Le Roman Naturaliste*, by M. Brunetière, one chapter is allotted to English Naturalism, and the author declares that the standard of Naturalism was raised in 1859 by the author of *Adam Bede*, quoting certain passages in which George Eliot, he says, has distinctly preached the fundamental doctrines of that school. Undoubtedly George Eliot declared her purpose to be the rendering of a faithful account of men and things as they mirrored themselves in her mind. 'I feel as much bound,' she says, 'to tell you as precisely as I can what that reflection is, as if I were in the witness-box narrating my evidence on oath'; and she set up as her ideal 'this rare precious quality of truthfulness, for which I delight in many Dutch paintings.' But the cardinal virtue of this fine and sombre genius lay in her power of raising Realism to a high artistic level, of diffusing a poetic light over humble scenes, of touching the deeper and vital relations of common things. In Charlotte Brontë, again, we have Naturalism throwing out a fresh shoot of great vigour and originality; the old-fashioned masculine hero is supplanted by a heroine who strives against adverse circumstance upon an ordinary, often an humble, plane of society, never

travelling for a moment beyond the possibilities of everyday existence. This ominous dismissal of the male hero from his previous position in the centre of the story's movement may be taken as a sign that he is not of so much account in the sphere of domestic fiction as he was erst in the arena of perilous adventure. It is true that mankind is still glorified by Ouida, a lady who may yet be occasionally found sitting, almost alone, by the shores of old Romance; but with Mrs. Gaskell, Mrs. Oliphant, Miss Broughton, and even Miss Braddon, the majority of their leading characters may be said to be female. And the most deservedly popular of our latest novels by women is *Marcella*.

We must not be understood to maintain that the Novel of Manners has been, or is being, completely monopolised, as a department of light literature, by women, for of course there are many men who are achieving success in that field, among whom Henry James holds a high place for distinction and delicacy of workmanship. And among certain special branches in which women have not as yet competed at all, we may mention the Sporting Novel, where provincial manners and the humour of the coverside have been portrayed by Surtees with wonderful exactitude and a kind of coarse yet irresistible comicality that remind one of Fielding. It is true that he never moralises, as Fielding does; but then the interjection by the author of moral reflections went out, as we have said, with Thackeray. The description of landscape drawn from nature occupies large and extending space in the latter-day novel of manners, where it is used very sparingly as subservient to character or situation, but commonly as an illustration or pictorial background. Let us compare the two following extracts. The first is from Jane

Austen's *Mansfield Park*:

> 'Now we shall have no more rough road, Miss Crawford; our difficulties are over. The rest of the way is such as it ought to be. Mr. Rushworth has made it since he succeeded to the estate.—Here begins the village. Those cottages are really a disgrace. The church spire is reckoned remarkably handsome. I am glad the church is not so close to the great House as often happens in old places. The annoyance of the bells must be terrible. There is the parsonage, a tidy-looking house, and I understand the clergyman and his wife are very decent people. Those are almshouses, built by some of the family. To the right is the steward's house; he is a very respectable man. Now we are coming to the lodge gates; but we have nearly a mile through the park still. It is not ugly, you see, at this end; there is some fine timber, but the situation of the house is dreadful. We go down hill to it for half a mile, and it is a pity, for it would not be an ill-looking place if it had a better approach.'

The second is from the opening pages of Mrs. Humphry Ward's *Marcella*:

> 'She looked out upon a broad and level lawn, smoothed by the care of centuries, flanked on either side by groups of old trees—some Scotch firs, some beeches, a cedar or two—groups where the slow selective hand of Time had been at work for generations, developing here the delightful roundness of quiet mass and shade, and there the bold

> caprice of bare fir trunks and ragged branches, standing back against the sky. Beyond the lawn stretched a green descent indefinitely long, carrying the eye indeed almost to the limit of the view, and becoming from the lawn onwards a wide irregular avenue, bordered by beeches of a splendid maturity, ending at last in a far distant gap where a gate—and a gate of some importance—clearly should have been, yet was not. The size of the trees, the wide uplands of the falling valley to the left of the avenue, now rich in the tints of harvest, the autumn sun pouring steadily through the vanishing mists, the green breadth of the vast lawn, the unbroken peace of wood and cultivated ground, all carried with them a confused general impression of well-being and of dignity. Marcella drew it in—this impression—with avidity. Yet at the same moment she noticed involuntarily the gateless gap at the end of the avenue, the choked condition of the garden paths on either side of the lawn, and the unsightly tufts of grass spotting the broad gravel terrace beneath her window.'

In the former passage, which is brimful of humorous suggestion, the writer is exclusively intent upon setting out points of human character in an effective light. The latter is a highly-finished piece of word-painting, taken direct, as an artist would take a picture, from a landscape that lay before the writer, and as such it is excellently done; but, except for the slight indication of a neglected estate, it stands apart from the plot or the play of character, and might be bound up with the volume or omitted like a

woodcut. Undoubtedly the art of descriptive writing, which demands poetic feeling and a delicate hand upon the organ of language, is practised finely by the best of our modern novelists, and is a valuable element of their popularity. Yet there are signs that it is already threatened by the inexorable demands of the lower realism, which takes slight account of the intimations that can be conveyed or the emotions that may be roused by using language as an instrument for the interpretation of nature, and requires to be shown the thing itself, as it is seen in a photograph. 'The tendency of the times,' we are told, 'seems to be to read less and less, and to depend more upon pictorial records of events.' And the author from whom we quote[6] proceeds to show how a few lines of sketch at once elucidate and vivify whole pages of word-painting. He goes further, and relates how 'the fallacy of the accepted system of describing landscapes, buildings, and the like in words,' was proved experimentally by reading slowly a description of a castle, mountains, and a river winding to the sea, from one of the Waverley novels, before a number of students, three of whom proceeded to indicate on a black board the leading lines of the mental picture produced by the words. The drawings were all different and all wrong, as might indeed have been confidently foretold; for the two sister arts of the pen and of the pencil cannot possibly interpret each other reciprocally after this fashion, or produce identical effects by their widely differing methods.

Yet it is not impossible that the lower ranks of writers, who exaggerate the prevailing fashion of exactly reproducing what any one can see and hear, may find themselves outbid and overpowered on this ground by illustration in line and colour. In this

direction, indeed, lies the danger of extreme Realism. It wages war against Romance, which subsists upon idealistic conceptions of noble thought and action; it pretends to hold up a true mirror to society, because it reflects faithfully and without discrimination, like a photograph, the street, the club, or the drawing-room, and arranges dramatically the commonplace talk of everyday people. All this is fatal to high art, in writing as in painting; nor can very clever dialogue, ingenious situations, variety of style and subject, or even a high average morality, preserve such literature from triviality and gradual degradation.

It is the saying of a French writer, that the novel of to-day has abjured both the past and the future, and lives wholly in the present. We are so far of his opinion in regard to the past, that we doubt, for reasons already given, whether the reading public can be induced to travel backward into distant periods and unfamiliar scenes, even though facts, anecdotes, costume, and other accessories be scrupulously and historically exact. The future is a domain upon which the novelist has rarely trespassed; but in close propinquity to it lies theologic speculation, and we have not long ago witnessed the fascination that can be exercised over a multitude of readers by a novel which described the unhappiness brought upon the peaceful home of an Anglican clergyman who was driven forth from his parsonage by imbibing some tincture of modern Biblical criticism. The sensation, for so it must be called, produced by *Robert Elsmere*, illustrated the degree to which in these days popularity depends on

hitting the intellectual level of the general reader, and on touching the fancy or the conscience of that very numerous class whose culture is of the medium sort, neither high nor low. For while it seems certain that to a great many people the views and arguments which overthrew Elsmere's orthodoxy and brought him to martyrdom must have seemed profound, daring, and novel, to others they are but too familiar and by no means fresh. To some of us, indeed, the overpowering effect produced on Elsmere's mind by his remarkable discoveries may be not unlike the awe and gratitude with which an African chief receives the present of an obsolete cannon. But the main reason why the future is no better field than the distant past for the modern novelist, is that in both cases there is a want of actuality, and that the positive temper of the age requires in either case something more definite and verifiable.

It may be affirmed, moreover, as a general observation, that the spirit of realism is hostile to the Novel with a Purpose, whether it be that species which undertakes to argue or instruct under the cloak of agreeable fiction, or that other species, much cultivated by Dickens in his later works, which attacks antiquated institutions and public abuses in a story so contrived as to expose their absurdity and injustice. There is an air of artificiality about such compositions which damages the artistic illusion, the photographic rendering of actual life, upon which the author relies, because it throws over the stage a shadow of his own personality. For one tendency of excessive realism is to encourage an approximation between literary and theatrical effects, since the whole interest becomes concentrated upon figures acting and moving under a strong light in the foreground of scenes carefully adjusted, so that

anything which betrays the author's presence interrupts the performance.

Yet although our contemporary novelist is thus subjected, in respect of his period and his repertory, to limitations from which his predecessors were free, there has never been a time when English fiction has exhibited, in competent hands, greater fertility of invention and resource, or so high an average proficiency in the art of writing. The vastly increased demand for amusement in modern life has stimulated the production of light literature, which is now cultivated far more widely than heretofore, like tea, and the market is flooded with an article of sound moderate quality. At this moment we have in very truth a democracy of letters, for while no mighty masters overtop the rest, the number of writers who stand on an equality of merit, who can produce one or more excellent stories, is very large. Their field has widened with the expansion of British enterprise; they can draw their plots, descriptions, and characters from the colonies, from Africa, from the South Sea Islands, or from India; and it will be observed that not only the tale of adventure, but also the quiet story of domestic interiors and family troubles, is easily acclimatised, and gains something from a sparing use of variety of dialect and landscape. As for the Novel of Adventure, it is drawing copious sustenance from these outlying regions. For although it is only from first favourites that the home-keeping reader will tolerate an elaborate romance about Africa or the Pacific, he has taken a very strong liking to short stories of scenes and actions strictly contemporaneous, written in a rough, vigorous, and utterly unconventional style, which convey to his mind impressions as distinctly as a set of pictorial sketches.

We believe that this style, which retains a strong flavour of its American origin (it can hardly be dated earlier than Bret Harte), may be reckoned to be peculiar to the light literature of the English language. We are not aware that it prevails to any extent in other countries; for although the short story of love, intrigue, and manners in general has flourished from mediæval times, and at this moment is almost exclusively confined to these subjects in France, the class of works to which we are now referring differs entirely in subject and style. In England and America the roving life of the colonies, the backwoods, the Western States, and the Indian frontiers has created an unique school of realistic fiction in which Mr. Kipling is at this moment the chief professor. There is moreover a manifest affinity between these short prose narratives and the strain of racy strenuous versification upon the quaint unvarnished notions and hardy exploits of the bush, the prairie, or the frontier, by which Bret Harte, Lindsay Gordon, and again Kipling have attained celebrity. As these poems echo the far-off ring of the ancient ballad, so we may venture to surmise that the short prose story of adventure, which appeals to modern taste by its vivid reality, its terseness of style, and its picturesque outline, represents the latest form reached by Romance in its long evolution. Such a tale will squeeze into fifty or a hundred pages what Fenimore Cooper or G. P. R. James would have distended into three volumes of slow-moving narrative, whereby infinite labour is saved to the hasty and indolent reader of these railroad days.

Here, in short, we perceive the influence of that very characteristic school of contemporary art, which we know to have always existed, but to which men have recently given the exceedingly modern title of

Impressionist,—the school of authors who desire to strike the imagination vividly and with a few sharp strokes, grouping their figures in a strong light, rounding off their compact story upon a small canvas, and rejecting every detail that is not strictly accessory to the main purpose. Already it is beginning to be said in France that Zola with his laborious particularism has passed his climacteric of fashion, and that the swift impressionist is sailing in on a fair wind of spreading popularity. Now in France, though no longer in England, the critics still do their duty; they are not merely, to borrow a phrase from Coleridge, the eunuchs who guard the temple of the Muses; they are often prolific authors who exercise great influence upon public opinion, so that their forecast of the course and tendencies of fiction is worth bearing in mind. We ourselves are ever a restless, bustling, far-wandering folk, great lovers of fiction and travel, who not only carry forth the English language into the uttermost parts of the earth, to be moulded in strange dialects to queer uses, but also bring back fresh ideas and incidents, and various aspects of a many-sided world-ranging life. If, as has been often asserted, literature be the collective expression of the ideas and aspirations, the tastes, feelings, and habits of the generation which produces it, we may not be altogether wrong in treating the short highly finished story, whether of adventure or manners, as the impress and reflection of modern English society. But no operation is more delicate than the endeavour to trace the subtle connection between constant modifications of literary form and the pressure of its ever-changing moral and material environment.

FOOTNOTES:

[1] The list of these contributions at page 477 of his *Life* is not complete.

[2] (1) *The English Novel.* By Walter Raleigh. Being a short Sketch of its History from the Earliest Times to the Appearance of 'Waverley.' London, 1894. (2) *Aventures de Guerre au temps de la République et du Consulat.* Par A. Moreau de Jonnés. Préface de M. Léon Say. Paris, Guillaumin et Cie., 1893.—*Quarterly Review*, October 1894.

[3] Now Sir Walter Raleigh.

[4] Page 179.

[5] *Sense and Sensibility.*

[6] *The Art of Illustration*, by Henry Blackburn, 1894.

ENGLISH LETTER-WRITING IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY[7]

The preservation and posthumous publication of private correspondence has supplied modern society with one of its daintiest literary luxuries. The art of letter-writing is, of course, no recent invention; it reached a high level of excellence, like almost every other branch of refined expression in prose or verse, in the older world of Rome. Nevertheless, the exceeding rarity of the specimens that have come down to us from those times is an important element of their value; while in our own day the letters of eminent persons fill many book-shelves in every

decent library, and their quantity increases out of all proportion to their quality.

It may be said, generally, of fine letter-writing that it is a distinctive product of a high civilisation, denoting the existence of a cultured and leisurely class, implying the conditions of secure intercourse, confidence, sociability, many common interests, and that peculiar delight in the stimulating interchange of ideas and feelings which is one characteristic of modern life. The language of a country must have thrown off its archaic stiffness, must have acquired suppleness and variety; the writer's instrument must be a style that combines familiarity with distinction, correctness of thought with easy diction. It is from the lack of these conditions that the Asiatic world has given us no such letters; the material as well as the intellectual environment has been wanting. For similar reasons the middle ages of Europe produced us none of the kind with which we are now dealing; the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries have left us very few samples of them; and since in this article we propose to treat only of English letter-writers, we may affirm that the art did not flourish in England until the eighteenth century, when according to certain authorities it rose to something like perfection. It is a notable observation of Hume's that Swift is the first Englishman who wrote polite prose; and Swift is one of the earliest, as he is still one of the pleasantest, writers of private correspondence that has taken a permanent place in our literature.

We can understand without difficulty why the eighteenth century was a period favourable to the growth of excellent letter-writing. There were very few newspapers, and those which appeared were low in tone and ill-informed—political pamphleteers

abounded and the essayists on morals and manners were numerous—but it was chiefly by private hands that accurate information and ideas were circulated in a small and highly cultivated society with an exquisite taste in literature, with a keen interest in public affairs, and a very strong appetite for philosophic discussion. Side by side with the intellectual conditions we may take into account the national circumstances of that age. The post was expensive, with a slow and intermittent circulation, so that letters, being infrequent, were worth writing carefully and at length; while correspondents were nevertheless not separated by distances of time and space sufficient to weaken or extinguish the desire of interchanging thoughts and news. For it is within the experience of most of us that the difficulty of keeping up regular correspondence increases with distance; that friends who meet seldom write to each other rarely; and that, although letters are most valued by those who are far from home and long absent, yet it is precisely in the case of prolonged separation that the chain of friendly communication is apt gradually to slacken until it becomes entirely disconnected. So long, indeed, as men depended for news on private sources, there was always a kind of obligation to write; but the telegraph and the newspaper have now monopolised the Intelligence Department. On the whole, it may be concluded that the art of letter-writing flourishes best within a limited radius of distance, among persons living neither very near to each other nor yet far apart, who meet occasionally yet not often, and who are within the same range of social, political, and intellectual influences. Its best period is probably before the advent of copious indefatigable journalism, before men have taken to publishing letters in the morning papers, and when

they have not yet acquired the economical habit of reserving all their valuable ideas and information for signed articles in some monthly review.

It was under these conditions that the letters of eminent men in the eighteenth century and the early part of the nineteenth century were generally written. In the former century letter-writing was undoubtedly a recognised form of high literary workmanship, with close affinities on one side to the diary or private journal, and on another to the essay. Long, continuous, and intimate correspondence, as in the case of Swift and Walpole, gravitated toward the journal; dissertations on literature, politics, and manners were more akin to the essay; while in the hands of the novelist the journalistic series of letters took artificial development into a method of story-telling. On the other side, the tendency of epistles to become essays reached its climax in the letters of Burke, some of which are only distinguishable from brilliant pamphlets by the formal address and subscription.

With the nineteenth century begins an era of amusing and animated letter-writing. The classic and somewhat elaborate style of the preceding age falls into disuse; the essayist draws gradually back into a department of his own; the new school reflects, as is natural, the general tendency of English literature toward a livelier and more varied movement, with a wider range of subjects and sympathies. In his letters, as in his poetry, the precursor of the Naturalistic school was Cowper, who could be simple without being trivial, was never prosy and often pathetic, and who possessed the rare art of stamping on his reader's mind an enduring impression of quiet and somewhat commonplace society in the English

midlands. That poets should usually have been good letter-writers is probably no more than might have been expected, for imagination and word-power must tell everywhere; yet the list is so long as to be worth noticing. Swift, Pope, Gray, and Cowper in the last century, and in the present century Scott, Byron, Shelley, Coleridge, and Southey, have all left us distinctive and copious correspondence. Wordsworth may, perhaps, be classed as a notable exception; for Wordsworth's letters are dull, being at their best more like essays or literary dissertations than the free outpouring of intimate thought. They have none of the charm which comes from the revelation of private doubt or passionate affection that is ordinarily stifled by convention; they are, on the contrary, eminently respectable, deliberate, and carefully expressed. 'It has ever been the habit of my mind,' he writes, 'to trust that expediency will come out of fidelity to principles, rather than to seek my principles of action in calculations of expediency.' This is what the Americans call 'high toned'; but the metal is too heavy for the light calibre of a letter.

Whether Tennyson had the gift of letter-writing we shall be able to judge when his biography appears; though we may anticipate that it will contain some things worthy of a great master in the art of language. The publication of letters deriving their sole or principal interest from the general reputation of the writer is indeed quite legitimate and intelligible. They are often biographical documents of considerable value, apart from all questions of style and intellectual quality; they can be handled and arranged to exhibit a man's character; they may be used as negative proofs of reserve and reticence, as showing his mental attitude toward various subjects, his domestic habits and virtues, or merely

as annals of where he went and what he did. They may be carefully selected and revised for occasional insertion at different stages of a long biography, where the editor sees fit to let the dead man speak for himself; they may be employed as an advocate chooses the papers in his brief, for attack or defence. Or they may be produced without commentary, sifting, or omissions, as the unvarnished presentation of a man's private life and particular features which a candid friend commits to the judgment of posterity. Or, lastly, they may be mere relics, not much more in some instances than curiosities, valued for much the same reasons that would set a high price on the autograph or the inkstand of a celebrated man, on his furniture, his house, or anything that was his. In proportion as little or nothing is known of such a man's private life, every scrap of his writing increases in value; and so a letter of Shakespeare or of Dante would be priceless. But of Shakespeare no letter has come down to us; and of Dante not even, we believe, his signature; though we do know something of what Dante did and thought, for his religion and his politics are manifested in his poems; whereas Shakespeare's works have the divine attribute of impersonality. Here is one supreme poet of whom the world would gladly hear anything; but nothing remains to feed the modern appetite, which is never so well gratified as when a rare and sublime genius stands revealed as the writer of ordinary letters upon petty domesticities.

It is evidently impossible to draw a line that shall accurately divide the interest that men feel in a celebrated person from the interest that they take in his posthumous correspondence; so as to determine how far the letters are good in themselves. When the writer is well known, he and his writings are

inseparable. Yet some attempt must be made, for the purposes of this article, to distinguish critically between letters that are readable and will survive by their own literary quality, as fine specimens of the art, and those which are preserved and published on the score of the writer's name and fame, with little aid from their merits. In which category are we to place the letters of Keats, including those that have been very recently unearthed by diligent literary excavation? His poetry is so exquisite, so radiant with imaginative colour, that to see such a man in the light of common day, among the ordinary cares and circumstances of the lower world, is necessarily a descent and a disillusion. He was young, he was poor, he had few acquaintances worthy of him; he roved about England and Scotland without adventures; his letters were perfectly familiar and unsophisticated. As Mr. Sidney Colvin has written, in an excellent preface to an edition of 1891, 'he poured out to those he loved his whole self indiscriminately, generosity and fretfulness, ardour and despondency, boyish petulance side by side with manful good sense, the tattle of suburban parlours with the speculations of a spirit unsurpassed for native gift and insight.' Every now and then the level of his easygoing discourse is lit up by a flash of wit, and occasionally by a jet of brilliant fancies among which some of his finest poetry may be traced in the process of incubation. His whole mind is set upon his art; for that only, and for a few intimate friends, does he care to live and work; his letters often tell us when and where, under what influences, his best pieces were composed; one likes to know, for example, that the *Ode to Autumn* came to him on a fine September day during a Sunday's walk over the stubbles near Winchester. His criticisms are always

good, and their form picturesque. He compares human life to a chamber that becomes gradually darkened, in which one door after another is set open, showing only dim passages leading out into darkness. This, he says, is the burden of the mystery which Wordsworth felt and endeavoured to explore; and he thinks that Wordsworth is deeper than Milton, though he attributes this, justly, more to 'the general and gregarious advance of intellect, than individual greatness of mind.' So far as spontaneity and the free unguarded play of sportive and serious ideas, taken as they came uppermost, are tests and conditions of excellence in this kind of writing, Keats's letters must rank high. Nevertheless there is still room for doubt whether these juvenile productions would have left any but a most ephemeral mark apart from their connection with his poetry.

In the case of other poets, who were his contemporaries, the verdict will be different. They are all to be classed, though not in the same line, as writers of letters that have great original and intrinsic value. Scott's letters exhibit his generous and masculine nature; the buoyancy of his spirits in good or bad fortune; and that romantic attachment to old things and ideas which hardened latterly into inveterate Toryism. Southey's prose writings will probably survive his metrical compositions, which indeed have already fallen into oblivion. There is life in a poet so long as he is quoted; but no verses or even lines of Southey have fixed themselves in the popular memory. And whereas the letters of Keats disclose a mind filled with the sense of beauty and rich with poetic seedlings that blossomed into beautiful flowers, in Southey's correspondence we discern only an erudite man of taste labouring

diligently upon epics which he expected to be immortal. The letters of Byron stand upon broader ground, because Byron was so much more of a personage than either Keats, or Southey, or Wordsworth. They supply, in the first place, an invaluable, and indeed indispensable, interpretation of his poetry, which is to a great extent the imaginative and romantic presentation of his own feelings, fortunes, and peculiar experiences. Secondly, they are full of good sayings and caustic criticism; they touch upon the domain of politics and society as well as upon literature; they give the opinions passed upon contemporary events and persons, during a stirring period of European history, by a man of genius who was also a man of the world; they float on the current of a strangely troubled existence. In these letters we have an important contribution to our acquaintance with literary circles and London society, and with several notable figures on either stage, during the years immediately before and after Waterloo. They were published in an introduction to the works of a famous poet; yet, although they cannot be detached from his poetry, they possess great independent merits of their own. They echo the sounds of revelry by night; they strike a note of careless vivacity, the tone of a man who is at home alike in good and bad company, whose judgment on books and politics, on writers and speakers, is always fresh, bold, and original. We may lament that the spirit of reckless devilry and dissipation should have entered into Byron; and the lessons to be drawn from the scenes and adventures in Venice and elsewhere, described for the benefit of Tom Moore, are very different from the moral examples furnished by the tranquil and well-ordered correspondence of our own day. Yet the world would

have been poorer for the loss of this memorial of an Unquiet Life, and the historical gallery of literature would have missed the full-length portrait of an extraordinary man.

The letters of Coleridge, like their writer, belong to another class, yet, like Byron's, they have the clear-cut stamp of individuality. Here again we have the man himself, with his intensity of feeling, his erratic moods and singular phraseology, the softness of his heart and the weakness of his will. He belongs to the rapidly diminishing class of notable men who have freely poured their real sentiments and thoughts out of their brain into their letters, who have given their best (without keeping their worst) to their correspondents, so that the letters abound with pathetic and amusing confessions, and with ideas that bear the stamp of the author's singular idiosyncrasy. The *Memorials of Coleorton* are a collection of letters written to the Beaumont family by Coleridge, Wordsworth, Southey, and Scott; the reader may pass from one to another by taking them as they come; the book is like the *menu* of a dinner with varied courses. Wordsworth's letters are the product of cultivated taste, a fine eye for rural scenery, and lofty moral sentiment. Southey is the high-class *littérateur*, with a strong dash of Toryism in Church and State; in both there is a total absence of eccentricity, but in neither case is the attention forcibly arrested or any striking passage retained. When Coleridge is served up the flavour of unique expression and a sort of divine simplicity is unmistakable; he is alternately indignant and remorseful; he soars to themes transcendent, and sinks anon to the humble details of his errors and embarrassments. Uncongenial society plunged him into such dark depression that he is not ashamed to

confess that he found 'bodily relief in weeping.'

> 'On Tuesday evening Mr. R——, the author of ——, drank tea and spent the evening with us at Grasmere; and this had produced a very unpleasant effect upon my spirits.... If to be a poet or man of genius entailed on us the necessity of housing such company in our bosoms, I would pray the very flesh off my knees to have a head as dark and unfurnished as Wordsworth's old Molly's.... If I believed it possible that the man liked me, upon my soul I should feel exactly as if I were tarred and feathered.'

And so on through the whole letter, with a comical energy of phrase that scorns reserve or compass in giving vent to the misery caused by uninteresting conversation. We may contrast this melancholy tea-drinking with Byron's rollicking account of a dinner with some friends 'of note and notoriety':

> 'Like other parties of the same kind, it was first silent, then talking, then argumentative, then disputatious, then unintelligible, then altogethery, then articulate, and then drunk. When we had reached the last step of this glorious ladder it was difficult to get down again without stumbling; and, to crown all, Kinnaird and I had to conduct Sheridan down a damned corkscrew staircase, which had been certainly constructed before the invention of fermented liquors, and to which no legs, however crooked, could possibly accommodate themselves. Both he and Coleman were, as usual, very good; but I carried away much wine, and the wine

> carried away my memory, so that all was hiccup and happiness for the last hour or so, and I am not impregnated with any of the conversation.'

We are, of course, not reviewing Byron or Coleridge; we are only giving samples by the way. Here are two great poets, remote from each other as the two poles in social circumstances and habit of mind, but at any rate alike in this one quality—that their life is in their letters, and that in such passages as these the genuine undisguised temperament of each writer stands forth in a relief that could only be brought out by his own unintentional master-strokes. For neither of them was aware that in these scenes he was describing his own character—though Byron may have intended to display his wit, and Coleridge may have been to some extent conscious of his own humour. In the way of literary criticism, again, Coleridge throws out the quaint and uncommon remark upon Addison's Essays, that they 'have produced a passion for the unconnected in the minds of Englishmen.' And he touches delicately upon the negative or barren side of the critical mind in his observation that the critics are the eunuchs that guard the temple of the Muses.

Of Shelley's letters, again, we may say that they are unconsciously autobiographical; they are confessions of character, spontaneous, unguarded, abounding with brilliancies and extravagances. They betray his shortcomings, but they attest his generosity and courage; they are the outpourings of a new spirit, who detests what would now be called Philistinism in literature and society; who does not stop to pick his words, or to mix water with the red wine of his enthusiasm. He abandons himself in his letters to the

feelings of the moment; he ardently pursues his immediate object by sophistical arguments which convict himself but could never convince a correspondent, and which astonish and amuse the calm reader of after days. 'A kind of ineffable, sickening disgust seizes my mind when I think of this most despotic, most unrequired fetter which prejudice has forged to confine its energies.... Anti-matrimonialism is as necessarily connected with scepticism as if religion and marriage began their course together,' for both are the fruit of odious superstition. He was endeavouring to persuade Harriet Westbrook to join him in testifying by example against the obsolete and ignoble ceremony of the marriage service, which he held to be a degradation that no one could ask 'an amiable and beloved female' to undergo. In Shelley's case, as in Byron's, the letters are of inestimable biographical value as witnesses to character, as reflecting the vicissitudes of a life which was to the writer more like the 'fierce vexation of a dream' than a well-spent leisurely existence, and as the sincere unstudied expression of his emotions. For all these reasons they are essential to a right appreciation of his magnificent poetry.

William Godwin, pedantic, self-conceited, and impecunious, has come down to us as a kind of central figure in a literary group which included such men as Coleridge, Shelley, and Lamb, of whom the somewhat formal English world at the beginning of this century was not worthy. By reason of this position, and because Shelley married his daughter, he became the cause and subject of excellent letter-writing, though his own correspondence is heavy with philosophic platitudes. It is of the class which, as we have said, is akin to essays; he discourses at

large upon first principles in religion and politics; and out of his frigid philosophy came some of Shelley's most ardent paradoxes. But some of the most amusing letters in the English language were addressed to him. It was after a supper at Godwin's that Coleridge wrote remorsefully acknowledging 'a certain tipsiness'—not that he felt any 'unpleasant titubancy'—whereby he had been seduced into defending a momentary idea as if it had been an old and firmly established principle; which (we may add) has been the way of other talkers since Coleridge. No one, he goes on to say, could have a greater horror than himself of the principles he thus accidentally propounded, or a deeper conviction of their irrationality; 'but the whole thinking of my life will not bear me up against the crowd and press of my mind, when it is elevated beyond its natural pitch.' The effect of punch, after wine, was to make a philosopher argue hotly against his profoundest beliefs; yet it is to Godwin's supper that we owe this diverting palinodia. And all Englishmen should be grateful to Godwin for having written the tragedy of *Antonio*; for not only was it most justly damned, but it also elicited some letters to the unlucky author that are unmatched in the record of candid criticism. Mrs. Inchbald writes, briefly:

> 'I thank you for the play of Antonio, and I most sincerely wish you joy of having produced a work which will protect you from being classed with the successful dramatists of the present time, but which will hand you down to posterity among the honoured few who, during the past century, have totally failed in writing for the stage.'

Coleridge goes to work more elaborately:

> 'In the tragedy I have frequently used certain marks (which he gives). Of these, the first calls your attention to my suspicions that your language is false or intolerable English. The second marks the passages that struck me as *flat* or mean. The third is a note of reprobation, levelled at those sentences in which you have adopted that worst sort of vulgar language, commonplace book language. The last mark implies bad metre.'

All this is free speaking beyond the compass of modern literary consultations. It may be added that Lamb also discussed the play, before it was performed, in his letters to Godwin; and that his description of Godwin's deportment, of his own feelings, and of the behaviour of the audience on the memorable night that witnessed its utter failure, has bequeathed to us a comedy over which the tragic Muse herself might well become hysterical.

There is, indeed, in the correspondence of this remarkable group a tone of frankness and sincerity which, combined with the absence of malice and a strong element of fun, distinguishes it from the half-veiled disapproval and prudish reserve of later days. 'When you next write so eloquently and well against law and lawyers,' says Coleridge to Godwin, 'be so good as to leave a larger place for your wafer, as by neglect of this a part of your last was obliterated.' Again, in a more serious tone, 'Ere I had yet read or seen your works, I, at Southey's recommendation, wrote a sonnet in praise of the author. When I had read them, religious bigotry, the but half understanding of your principles, and the *not* half understanding of my own, combined to render me a warm and boisterous anti-Godwinist.' His moods and

circumstances, his joys and pains, are reflected in his language with remarkable fertility of metaphor; his feelings vary with his society. Of Lamb he writes that 'his taste acts so as to appear like the mechanic simplicity of an instinct—in brief, he is worth a hundred men of more talents: conversation with the latter tribe is like the use of leaden bells, one warms by exercise, Lamb every now and then *irradiates*.' In the best letters of this remarkable group we perceive the exquisite sensitiveness of open and eager minds, giving free play to their ideas and feelings, their delight and disgust, so that their life and thoughts are mirrored in their correspondence as in their conversation. Such writing has become very rare, if it is not entirely extinct, in these latter days of temperate living and guarded writing. Lamb's own letters are all in a similar key; and that which he wrote to Coleridge, who had a bad habit of borrowing books, is a model of jocose expostulation: 'You never come but you take away some folio that is part of my existence.... My third shelf from the top has two devilish gaps, where you have knocked out its two eye teeth.' And his lament over the desolation of London, as it appears to a man who has lived there jovially, and revisits it as a stranger in after years, may even now touch a chord in the hearts of some of us.

> 'In London I passed houses and places, empty caskets now. The streets, the shops are left, but all old friends are gone. The bodies I cared for are in graves or dispersed. My old clubs that lived so long and flourished so steadily are crumbled away. When I took leave of our friend at Charing Cross, 'twas heavy unfeeling rain, and I had nowhere to go ... not a sympathising house to turn to in

> the great city. Never did the waters of heaven pour down on a forlorner head. Yet I tried ten days at a sort of friend's house, large and straggling; one of the individuals of my old long knot of friends, card-players, and pleasant companions, that have tumbled to pieces into dust and other things; and I got home convinced that I was better to get to my hole in Enfield and hide like a sick cat in my corner.'

We might, indeed, multiply indefinitely our quotations from the correspondence of this literary period to show its sincerity, its spontaneity, its uncommonness, the tone of intimate brotherhood and natural unruly affection that pervades it everywhere. Nothing of the kind has come down to us from the eighteenth century; and the last fifty years of this century, so prolific in biographies and posthumous publications of the papers of eminent men, go to prove that in the general transformation of letter-writing these peculiar qualities have almost, though not altogether, disappeared. Probably conversation has suffered a like change; and we may ascribe it generally to a lowering of the social temperature, to the habits of reserve, respectability, and conventional self-restraint that in these days govern so largely the intercourse of men. Something may be due to cautious expurgation of passages which tell against the writer, or might offend modern taste; yet in other respects contemporary editors have been sufficiently indiscreet. And the growth of these habits, so discouraging to free and fearless correspondence, may be partly ascribed to the influence of journalism, which makes every subject stale and sterile by incessantly threshing and tearing at it, and which reviews biographies in a manner

that acts as a solemn warning to all men of mark that they take heed what they put into a private letter. There are other causes, to which we may presently advert; but it is quite clear that this fine art is undergoing certain transmutations, and that on the whole it does not flourish quite so vigorously as heretofore.

In a recent article upon Matthew Arnold's letters it is laid down by a consummate critic[8] that the first canon of unsophisticated letter-writing is that a letter is meant for the eye of a friend, and not for the world. 'Even the lurking thought in anticipation of an audience destroys the charm; the best letters are always improvisations; the public breaks the spell.' In this, as we have already suggested, there is much truth; yet the conditions seem to us too straitly enjoined; for not every man of genius has the gift of striking out his best thoughts, in their best form, clear and true from the hot iron of his mind; and in some of our best writers the improvising spirit is very faint. If a man writes with leisurely care, selecting deliberately the word that exactly matches his thought, aiming directly at the heart of his subject and avoiding prolixity, he may, like Walpole, Gray, and others, produce a delightful letter, provided only that he is sincere and open, has good stuff to give, and does not condescend to varnish his pictures. We want his best thoughts; we should like to have his best form; we do not always care so much for negligent undress. And as for the copious outpouring of his personal feelings, one says many things to a friend or kinsman that are totally without interest to the public, unless they are expressed in some distinctive manner or embody some originality of handling an ordinary event. This a writer may have the knack of doing artistically, even in a private

and confidential letter, without betraying the touch of art; nor, indeed, can we ever know how many of the best modern letters are really improvised. Then, again, with regard to the anticipation of an audience, it is a risk to which every man of note must feel that he is exposed; the shadow of eventual publicity is always in the background; his letters have passed out of his control during his lifetime, and he can only trust in the uncertain discretion of his literary executor. He does not care to leave the record of his passing moods, his confessions of weakness, his personal likings and antipathies, to be discussed by the general reader; and it is probable that he only lets his pen run freely when he feels assured that his confidential improvisations will be judiciously omitted.

It is, we think, impossible to suppose that these considerations have not weighed materially upon the minds of eminent men in our own day, when biographies have become so much more numerous, and when they are so much more closely criticised than formerly. And in comparing the letters written in the early part of this century—such as those from which we have given a few characteristic quotations —with those which have been recently published, we have to take account of these things, among other changes of the social and literary environment. Undoubtedly the comparison is to the advantage of the earlier writings; they seem infinitely more amusing, more genuine, more biographical, more redolent of the manners and complexion of the time. There is in them a flavour of heartiness and irresponsibility which may partly be attributed to the fact that the best writers were poets, whose genius flowered as early as their manhood, and most of whom died young; so that their letters are fresh,

audacious, and untempered by the chilly caution of middle or declining age. Their spirits were high, they were ardent in the pursuit of ideals; they were defying society, they either had no family or were at feud with it, and they gave not a thought to the solemn verdict of posterity. For correspondents who were brimming over with humour, imagination, and enthusiasm, no situation could be more thoroughly favourable to sparkling improvisation; and accordingly they have left us letters which will be a joy for ever.

The correspondence of our own generation has been written under a different intellectual climate, and various circumstances have combined to lower the temperature of its vivacity. Posthumous publicity is now the manifest destiny that overhangs the private life of all notable persons, especially of popular authors, who can observe and inwardly digest continual warnings of the treatment which they are likely to receive from an insatiable and inconsistent criticism. They may have lived long and altered their opinions; they may have quarrelled with friends or rivals, and may have become sworn allies later; they may have publicly praised one whom in private they may have laughed at; for when you have to think what you say, it does not follow that you say what you think. All these considerations, enforced by repeated examples, are apt to damp the natural ardour of improvisation; the more so because the writer may be sure either that his genuine utterances will be suppressed by the editor, or that, if they are produced, the editor will be roundly abused for giving him away. For in these matters the judgment of the general reader is wayward, and his attitude undecided, with a leaning toward hypocrisy. The story of the domestic tribulations and the conjugal

bickerings of a great writer, of the irritability that belongs to highly nervous temperaments, and which has always made genius, like the finest animals, hard to domesticate, has lost none of its savour with the public. But if all letters that record such scenes and sayings are faithfully reproduced in preparing the votive tablet upon which the dead man's life is to be delineated, the ungrateful reader answers with an accusation of imprudence, indiscretion, and betrayal of confidence; and the surviving friends protest still more vehemently. Within the last three months these consequences have been forcibly illustrated by the reception of Cardinal Manning's Life, in which the letters are of extraordinary value toward the formation of a right understanding of that remarkable personage. Much of all this sensitiveness is clearly due to the hasty fashion of publishing private correspondence within a few years of the writer's decease, but more to the fitful and somewhat feminine temper of an inquisitive yet censorious society.

If, on the other hand, expurgation is freely employed, the result is a kind of emasculation. Nothing is left that can offend or annoy living people, or that might damage the writer's own reputation with an audience that enjoys, yet condemns, unmeasured confidences. And so we get clever, sensible letters of men who have travelled, worked, and mixed much in society, who have already put into essays or reviews all that they wanted the public to know, and whose private doubts, or follies, or frolics, have been neatly removed from their correspondence. Let us take, for example, two batches of letters very lately published, and written by two men who have left their mark upon their generation. Of Dean Stanley it may be affirmed that no ecclesiastic of his time was better

known, or had a higher reputation for strength of character and undaunted Liberalism. His public life and his place in the Anglican Church had been already described in a meritorious biography; and it might have been expected that these letters would bring the reader closer to the man himself, would accentuate the points of a striking individuality. There are few of these letters, we think, by which such expectations have been fulfilled to any appreciable degree. In one or two of them Stanley writes with his genuine sincerity and earnestness on the state of his mind in regard to the new spirit of ecclesiasticism that had arisen in Oxford nearly sixty years ago; we see that he saw and felt the magnitude of a coming crisis, and we can observe the formation of the opinions which he consistently and valiantly upheld throughout his career. The whole instinct of his intellectual nature—and he never lost his trust in reason—was against the high Roman or sacerdotal absolutism in matters of dogma; he ranked Morals far above Faith; and he had that dislike of authoritative uniformity in church government which is in Englishmen a reflection of their political habits. Yet he discerned plainly enough the spring of a movement that was bringing about a Roman Catholic revival.

> 'Not that I am turned or turning Newmanist, but that I do feel that the crisis in my opinions is coming on, and that the difficulties I find in my present views are greater than I thought them to be, and that here I am in the presence of a magnificent and consistent system shooting up on every side, whilst all that I see against it is weak and grovelling.' (Letter to C. J. Vaughan, 1838.)

'I expect,' he writes a year later, 'that the whole thing will have the effect of making me either a great Newmanite or a great Radical'; and it did end in making him an advanced Liberal. His practical genius, and his free converse with general society (from which Manning deliberately turned away as fatal to ecclesiasticism), very soon parted him from the theologians.

> 'I think it is true,' he writes to Jowett (1849), 'that we have not the same mental interest in talking over subjects of theology that we had formerly. They have lost their novelty, I suppose; we know better where we are, having rolled to the bottom together, and being now able only to make a few uphill steps. I acknowledge fully my own want of freshness; my mind seems at times quite dried up.... And at times I have felt an unsatisfied desire after a better and higher sort of life, which makes me impatient of the details of theology.'

In these, and perhaps one or two other passages, we can trace the development of character and convictions in the man to whom Jowett wrote, thirty years afterwards, that he was 'the most distinguished clergyman in the Church of England, who could do more than any one towards the great work of placing religion on a rational basis.'[9]

But, on the whole, the quality of these letters is by no means equal to their quantity; and too many of them belong to a class which, though it may have some ephemeral interest among friends and kinsfolk, can retain, we submit, no permanent value at all. It is best described under a title common in French

literature—*impressions de voyage*. A very large part of the volume consists of letters written by Stanley, an intelligent and indefatigable tourist, from the countries and cities which he visited, from Petersburg and Palestine, from Paris and Athens, from Spain and Scotland. The standpoint from which he surveys the Holy Land is rather historical and archæological than devotional; but he had everywhere a clear eye for the picturesque in manners and scenery. He had excellent opportunities of seeing the places and the people; his descriptive powers are considerable; and there is a finely drawn picture of All Souls' Day in the Sistine Chapel, written from Rome to Hugh Pearson, although a ludicrous incident comes in at the end like a false note. Such correspondence might be so arranged separately as to make an interesting narrative of travel, but when judged by a high literary or intellectual criterion of letter-writing it is out of court. It is not too much to aver that most, if not all, of these letters might have been written by any refined and cultivated Englishman, whose education and social training had given him correct tastes and a many-sided interest in the world. They belong to the type of private diary or chronicle, and as such they inevitably include trivialities, though not many. Some of Stanley's letters are from Scotland, where he travels about admiring its wildness, and with a cultured interest in its antiquities. But no country has been better ransacked in search of the picturesque; it is the original hunting-ground of the romantic tourist, and what Stanley said about it to his family is pleasantly but not powerfully written. It is more than doubtful whether excellence in letter-writing lies that way, or, indeed, whether mediocrity is avoidable. Charles Lamb's letters are none the worse

because he stayed in London and had no time for the beauties of Nature.

> 'For my part,' he wrote, 'with reference to my friends northwards, I must confess that I am not romance-bit about Nature. The earth and sea and sky (when all is said) is but a house to dwell in. If the inmates be courteous, and good liquors flow like the conduits at an old coronation, if they can talk sensibly and feel properly, I have no need to stand staring at the gilded looking-glass, nor at the five-shilling print over the mantelpiece. Just as important to me (in a sense) is all the furniture of my world; eye pampering, but satisfies no heart.'

This may be Cockney taste, yet it is better reading than Stanley's account of Edinburgh or the valley of Glencoe.

The editor assures us, in his preface, that none of these letters touch upon theological controversies, yet many readers might have been very willing to part with some of the travelling journal for closer knowledge of Stanley's inward feelings while he was bearing up the fight of liberty and toleration against the gathering forces that have since scattered and well-nigh overwhelmed the once flourishing Broad Church party. Well might Jowett write to him in 1880, 'You and I, and our dear friend Hugh Pearson, and William Rogers, and some others, are rather isolated in the world, and we must hold together as long as we can.' All those who are here named have passed away, leaving no party leaders of equal rank and calibre, and if Stanley's letters survive at all, they will live upon those passages which remind us how

strenuously he contended for the intellectual freedom that he believed to be the true spiritual heritage of English churchmen.

The latest contribution to the department of national literature that we have been surveying is the volume containing the letters of Matthew Arnold (1848-88). 'Here and there,' writes their editor, 'I have been constrained, by deference to living susceptibilities, to make some slight excisions; but with regard to the bulk of the letters this process had been performed before the manuscript came into my hands.' No one has any business to question the exercise of a discretion which must have been necessary in publishing private correspondence so recently written, and only those who saw the originals can decide whether they have been weakened or strengthened by the pruning. On the other hand, the first canon of unsophistical letter-writing, as laid down by the eminent critic already cited—that they should be written for the eye of a friend, never for the public—is amply fulfilled. 'It will be seen' (we quote again from the preface) 'that the letters are essentially familiar and domestic, and were evidently written without a thought that they would ever be read beyond the circle of his family.' They are, in short, mostly family letters that have been necessarily subjected to censorship, and it would be unreasonable to measure a collection of this kind by the high standard that qualifies for admission to the grade of permanent literature. As these letters are to supply the lack of a biography (which was expressly prohibited by his own wish), we are not to look for further glimpses of a character which his editor rightly terms 'unique and fascinating.' The general reader may therefore feel some disappointment at finding that the correspondence takes no wider or

more varied range; for Matthew Arnold's circle of acquaintances must have been very large, and he must have been in touch with the leading men in the political, academical, and official society of his day.

The letters are as good as they could be expected to be under these conditions, which are to our mind heavily disadvantageous. We must set aside those which fall under the class of *impressions de voyage*, for the reasons already stated in discussing Stanley's travelling correspondence. One would not gather from this collection that Arnold was a considerable poet. And the peculiar method of expression, the vein of light irony, the flexibility of style, that distinguish his prose works are here curiously absent; he does not write his letters, as Carlyle did, in the same character as his books. Yet the turn of thought, the prevailing note, can be often detected; as, for instance, in a certain impatience with English defects, coupled with a strong desire to take the conceit out of his fellow-countrymen:

> 'The want of independence of mind, the shutting their eyes and professing to believe what they do not, the running blindly together in herds for fear of some obscure danger and horror if they go alone, is so eminently a vice of the English, I think, of the last hundred years, has led them and is leading them into such scrapes and bewilderment, that,' etc., etc.

It is certainly hard to recognise in this picture the features of the rough roving Englishman who in the course of the last hundred years has conquered India, founded great colonies, and fought the longest and most obstinate war of modern times: who has been

the type of insularity and an incurable antinomian in religion and politics. Not many pages afterwards, however, we find Arnold sharing with the herd of his countrymen the shallow 'conviction as to the French always beating any number of Germans who come into the field against them.' He adds that 'they will never be beaten by any other nation but the English, for to every other nation they are in efficiency and intelligence decidedly superior'—an opinion which contradicts his previous judgment of them, and replaces the national superiority on a lofty though insecure basis; for if he was wrong about the French, he may be wrong about us whom he puts above them. Arnold admired the French as much as Carlyle liked the Germans, and both of them enjoyed ridiculing or rating the English; but each was unconsciously swayed by his own particular tastes and temperament, and neither of them had the gift of political prophecy, which is, indeed, very seldom vouchsafed to the highly imaginative mind. He had a strong belief, rare among Englishmen, in administrative organisation. 'Depend upon it,' he writes, 'that the great States of the Continent have two great elements of cohesion, in their administrative system and in their army, which we have not.' The general conclusion which Arnold seems to have drawn from his travels in Europe and America is that England was far behind France in lucidity of ideas, and inferior to the United States in straightforward political energy and the faculties of national success. 'Heaven forbid that the English nation should become like this (the French) nation; but Heaven forbid that it should remain as it is. If it does, it will be beaten by America on its own line, and by the Continental nations on the European line. I see this as plain as I see the paper before me.' Since

this was written in 1865, England has been perversely holding her own course, nor has she yet fulfilled Arnold's melancholy foreboding, by which he was 'at times overwhelmed with depression' that England was sinking into a sort of greater Holland, 'for want of perceiving how the world is going and must go, and preparing herself accordingly.'

On the other hand, his imaginative faculty comes out in his speculation upon the probable changes in the development of the American people that might follow their separation into different groups, if the civil war between the Northern and Southern States (which had just begun) should break up the Union.

> 'Climate and mixture of race will then be able fully to tell, and I cannot help thinking that the more diversity of nation there is on the American continent, the more chance there is of one nation developing itself with grandeur and richness. It has been so in Europe. What should we all be if we had not one another to check us and to be learned from? Imagine an English Europe. How frightfully *borné* and dull! Or a French Europe either, for that matter.'

The suggestion is, perhaps, more fanciful than profound; for history does not repeat itself; and, in fact, the result of breaking up South America into a dozen political groups has not yet produced any very satisfactory development of national character. Much more than political subdivision goes to the creation of a new Europe; nevertheless Arnold is probably right in supposing that uniformity of institutions and a somewhat monotonous level of social conditions over a vast area, may have depressed and stunted the

free and diversified growth of North American civilisation.

The literary criticism to be found in these letters shows a fastidious and delicate taste that had been nurtured almost too exclusively upon the masterpieces of classic antiquity. Homer he ranked far above Shakespeare, though one might think them too different for comparison; and he praises 'two articles in *Temple Bar* (1869), one on Tennyson, the other on Browning,' which were afterwards republished in a book that made some stir in its day, and has brought down upon its author the unquenchable resentment of his brother poets. He thought that both Macaulay and Carlyle were encouraging the English nation in its emphatic Philistinism, and thus counteracting his own exertions to lighten the darkness of earnest but opaque intelligences. As his interest in religious movements was acute, so his observations occasionally throw some light upon the exceedingly complicated problem of ascertaining the general drift of the English mind in regard to things spiritual. The force which is shaping the future, is it with the Ritualists or with the undogmatical disciples of a purely moral creed? With neither, Arnold replies; not with any of the orthodox religions, nor with the neo-religious developments which are pretending to supersede them.

> 'Both the one and the other give to what they call religion, and to religious ideas and discussions, too large and absorbing a place in human life. Man feels himself to be a more various and richly endowed animal than the old religious theory of human life allowed, and he is endeavouring to give satisfaction to

> the long suppressed and imperfectly understood instincts of their varied nature.'

No man studied more closely than Arnold the intellectual tendencies of his generation, so that on the most difficult of contemporary questions this opinion is worth quoting, although the ritualistic leanings of the present day hardly operate to support it. But here, as in his published works, his religious utterances are somewhat ambiguous and oracular; and one welcomes the marking of a definite epoch in Church history when he writes emphatically that 'the Broad Church *among the clergy* may be said to have almost perished with Stanley.'

But correspondence that was never meant for publication is hardly a fair subject for literary criticism. Arnold seems to have written hurriedly, in the intervals of hard work, of journeyings to and fro upon his rounds of inspection, and of much social bustle; he had not the natural gift of letter-writing, and he probably did it more as a duty than a pleasure. He had none of the ever-smouldering irritability which compelled Carlyle to slash right and left of him at the people whom he met, at everything that he disliked, and every one whom he despised. Nor was he born to chronicle the small beer of everyday life in that spirit of contemplative quietism which is bred out of abundant leisure and retirement. A few lines from one of Cowper's letters may serve to indicate the circumstances in which 'our best letter-writer,' as Southey calls him, lived and wrote a hundred years ago in a muddy Buckinghamshire village:

> 'A long confinement in the winter, and indeed for the most part in the autumn too,

> has hurt us both. A gravel walk, thirty yards long, affords but indifferent scope to the locomotive faculty; yet it is all that we have had to move in for eight months in the year, during thirteen years that I have been a prisoner here.'

If we compare this manner of spending one's days with Arnold's hasty and harassed existence among the busy haunts of men, we can understand that in this century a hard-working literary man has neither the taste nor the time for the graceful record of calm meditations, or for throwing a charm over commonplace details. And, on the whole, Arnold's correspondence, though it has some biographical value, must undoubtedly be relegated to the class of letters that would never have been published upon their own intrinsic merits.

Carlyle's letters, on the other hand, fall into the opposite category; they stand on their own feet, they are as significant of style and character as Arnold's, and even Stanley's, letters were comparatively insignificant; they are the fearless outspoken expression of the humours and feelings of the moment, and it is probable that the writer did not trouble himself to consider whether they would or would not be published. In these respects they as nearly fulfil the authorised conditions of good letter-writing as any work of the sort that has been produced in our own generation, though one may be permitted some doubt in regard to improvisation; for the work is occasionally so clean cut and pointed, his strokes are so keen and straight to the mark, that it is difficult to believe the composition to be altogether unstudied. Whether any writer ever excelled in this or, indeed, in any other branch of the art literary

without taking much trouble over it, is, in our judgment, an open question; but surely Carlyle must have selected and sharpened with some care the barbed epithets upon which he suspends his grotesque and formidable caricatures.

For example, he writes, in 1831, of Godwin, who still figures, in advanced age, as a martyr in the cause of good letter-writing—'A bald, bushy browed, thick, hoary, hale little figure, with a very long blunt characterless nose—the whole visit the most unutterable stupidity.' Lord Althorp is 'a thick, large, broad-whiskered, farmer-looking man.' O'Connell, 'a well-doing country shopkeeper with a bottle-green frock and brown scratch wig.... I quitted them all (the House of Commons) with the highest contempt.' Of Thomas Campbell, the poet, it is written that 'his talk is small, contemptuous, and shallow; his face has a smirk which would befit a shopman or an auctioneer.' Wordsworth, 'an old, very loquacious, indeed, quite prosing man.' Southey 'the shallowest chin, prominent snubbed Roman nose, small carelined brow, the most vehement pair of faint hazel eyes I have ever seen.' There is a savage caricature of Roebuck, and so Carlyle goes on hanging up portraits of the notables whom he met and conversed with, to the great edification of these latter days. No more dangerous interviewer has ever practised professionally than this artist in epithets, on whom the outward visible figure of a man evidently made deep impressions; whereas the ordinary letter-writer is usually content to record the small talk. As material for publication his correspondence had three singular advantages. His earlier letters were excellent, and we may hazard the generalisation that almost all first-class letter-writing, like poetry, has been inspired by the ardour

and freshness and audacity of youth. He lived so long that these letters could be published very soon after his death without much damage to the susceptibilities of those whom his hard hitting might concern; and, lastly, his biographer was a man of nerve, who loved colour and strong lineaments, and would always sacrifice minor considerations to the production of a striking historical portrait. Undoubtedly, Carlyle's letters have this virtue—that they largely contribute to the creation of a true likeness of the writer, for in sketching other people he was also drawing himself. He could also paint the interior of a country house, as at Fryston, and his landscapes are vivid. He was, in short, an impressionist of the first order, who grouped all his details in subordination to a general effect, and never gave his correspondent a mere catalogue of trivial particulars.

It was originally in a letter to his brother that Carlyle wrote his celebrated description of an interview with Coleridge. No two men could be more different in taste or temperament, and yet any one who reads attentively Coleridge's letters may observe a certain similarity to Carlyle's writing, not only in the figured style and prophetic manner, but also in the tendency of their political ideas. In the matter of linguistic eccentricities, it may be guessed that both of them had been affected by the study of German literature; and in politics they had both a horror of disorder, an aversion to the ordinary Radicalism of their day, and a contempt for mechanic philosophy and complacent irreligion. Each of them had a strong belief in the power and duties of the State; but Coleridge held also that salvation lay in a reconstitution of the Church on a sound metaphysical basis, whereas for Carlyle all articles and liturgies were dying or dead.

A comparison of these two supreme intellectual forces may help us to distinguish some of the most favourable conditions of good letter-writing. They were men of highly nervous mental constitution of mind, on whom the ideas and impressions that had been secreted produced an excitability that was discharged upon correspondents in a torrent of language, sweeping away considerations of reserve or self-regard, and submerging the commonplace bits of news and everyday observations which accumulate in the letters of respectable notabilities. To whomsoever the letters may be addressed, they are in consequence equally good and characteristic. Carlyle's epistles to his wife and brother are among the best in the collection; and Coleridge threw himself with the same ardour into letters to Charles Lamb and to Lord Liverpool. It is this capacity for pouring out the soul in correspondence, for draining the bottom of one's heart to a friend, which, combined with exaltation under the stimulus of spleen or keen sensibility, raises correspondence to the high-water mark of English literature.

But in saying that these conditions are eminently favourable to the production of fine letter-writing, we do not mean to affirm that they are essential. Against such a theory it would be sufficient to quote Cowper, though he had the poetic fire, and was subject to the religious frenzy; and we know that repose and refinement have a tendency to develop good correspondents. Among these we may number Edward FitzGerald, whose letters are, perhaps, the most artistic of any that have recently appeared, and may be placed without hesitation in the class of letters that have a high intrinsic merit independently of the writer's extraneous reputation; for FitzGerald was a recluse with a tinge of misanthropy, nearly

unknown to the outer world, except by one exquisite paraphrase of a Persian poem, and his popularity rests almost entirely upon his published correspondence. Of these letters, so excellent of their kind, can it be said that they have the note of improvisation, that they were written for a friend's eye, without thought or care for that ordeal of posthumous publication which has added, as we have been told, a fresh terror to death? The composition is exactly suited to the tone of easy, pleasant conversation; the writing has a serene flow, with ripples of wit and humour; sometimes occupied with East Anglian rusticities and local colouring, sometimes with pungent literary criticisms; it is never exuberant, but nowhere dull or commonplace; the language is concise, with a sedulous nicety of expression. A man of delicate irony, living apart from the rough, tumbling struggle for existence, he was in most things the very opposite to Carlyle, whose *French Revolution* he admired not much, and who, he thinks, 'ought to be laughed at a little.' Such a man was not likely to write even the most ordinary letter without a certain degree of mental preparation, without some elaboration of thought, or solicitude as to form and finish, for all which processes he had ample leisure. It may be noticed that he never condescends to the travelling journal, and that his voyaging impressions are given in a few fine strokes; but, although he was a home-keeping Englishman, he was free from household cares, nor did he keep up that obligatory family correspondence which, when it is published to exhibit the domestic habits and affections of an eminent person, becomes ever after a dead-weight upon his biography.

In endeavouring to analyse the charm of these delightful letters, we may suggest that they gain their

special flavour from his talent for compounding them, like a skilful *chef de cuisine*, out of various materials or intellectual condiments assorted and dexterously blended. He is an able and accomplished egoist, one of the few modern Englishmen who are able to plant themselves contentedly, like a tree, in one spot, and who prefer books to company, the sedentary to the stirring life. He was not cut off, like Cowper, a hundred years earlier, from the outer world in winter and rough weather, yet he had few visitors and went abroad little; so that he had ample leisure for perusal and re-perusal of the classic masterpieces, ancient and modern, and for surveying the field of contemporary literature. His letters to Fanny Kemble have the advantage of unity in tone that belongs to a series written to the same person, though the absence of replies is apt to produce the effect of a monologue. How far good letter-writing depends upon the course of exchange, upon the stimulus of pleasant and prompt replies, is a question not easily answered, since the correspondence on both sides of two good writers is very rarely put together. Mrs. Kemble had certain fixed rules which must have been fatal to the free epistolary spirit. 'I never write,' she said, 'until I am written to; I always write when I am written to, and I make a point of always returning the same amount of paper that I receive;' but at any rate it is evident that FitzGerald's letters to her were regularly answered. He had a light hand on descriptions of season and scenery; he could give the autumnal atmosphere, the awakening of leaf and flower in spring, the distant roar of the German Ocean on the East Anglian coast. As he could record his daily life without the minute prolixity of a diary, so he could throw off criticisms on books without falling into the manner of an essayist. In regard to

the 'fuliginous and spasmodic Carlyle,' he asks doubtfully whether he with all his genius will not subside into the Level that covers, and consists of, decayed literary vegetation. 'And Dickens, with all *his* genius, but whose Men and Women act and talk already after a more obsolete fashion than Shakespeare's?' None of the contemporary poets—Tennyson, Browning, or Swinburne—seem to have entirely satisfied him; he loved the quiet landscapes and rural tales of Crabbe, who is now read by very few; and he quotes with manifest enjoyment the lines:

> 'In a small cottage on the rising ground,
> West of the waves, and just beyond the
> sound.'

'The sea,' he writes, 'somehow talks to one of old things,' probably because it is changeless by comparison with the land; and a man whose life is still and solitary is affected by the transitory aspect of natural things, because he can watch them pass. As old friends drop off he touches in his letters upon the memories of days that are gone, and he consorts more and more with the personages of his favourite poets and romancers, living thus, as he says, among shadows.

Here is a man to whom correspondence was a real solace and a vehicle of thought and feeling, not a mere note-book of travel, nor a conduit of confidential small talk. A faint odour of the seasons hangs round some of these letters, of the sunshine and rain, of dark days and roads blocked with snow, of the first spring crocus and the faded autumnal garden plots. We can perceive that, as his retirement became habitual with increasing age, the

correspondence became his main outlet of ideas and sensations, taking more and more the place of friendly visits and personal discussion as a channel of intercourse with the external world. The Hindu sages despised action as destructive of thought; and undoubtedly the cool secluded vale of life is good for the cultivation of letter-writing, in one who has the artistic hand, and to whom this method of gathering up the fruits of reading and meditation, the harvest of a quiet eye, comes easily. In many respects the letters of FitzGerald, like his life, are in strong contrast to Carlyle's; and FitzGerald was somewhat startled by the publication of Carlyle's 'Reminiscences.' He thinks that, on the whole, 'they had better have been kept unpublished;' though on reading the 'Biography' he writes: 'I did not know that Carlyle was so good, grand, and even lovable, till I read the letters which Froude now edits.' He himself was not likely to give the general reader more than he wished to be known about his private affairs; and if one or two remarks with a sting in them appeared when these letters were first published in a magazine, they have been carefully excerpted from the book. The mellow music of his tones, the self-restraint and meditative attitude, are pleasant to the reader after the turbid utterances and twisted language of Carlyle; we may compare the stirring rebellious spirit brooding over the folly of mankind with the man who takes humanity as he finds it, and is content to make the best of a world in which he sees not much, beyond art and nature and a few old friends, to interest him. Upon the whole, we may place Carlyle and FitzGerald, each in his very different manner, at the head of all the letter-writers of the generation to which they belong, which is not precisely our own. It is to be recollected

that a man must be dead before he can win reputation in this particular branch of literature, and that he cannot be fairly judged until time has removed many obstacles to unreserved publication. But both Carlyle and FitzGerald had long lives.

Mr. Stevenson, whose letters are the latest important contribution to this department of the national library, died early, in the full force of his intellect, at the zenith of his fame as a writer of romance. His letters have been edited by Mr. Sidney Colvin, with all the sympathy and insight into character that are inspired by congenial tastes and close friendship; and his preface gives an excellent account of the conditions, physical and mental, under which they were written, and of the limitations observed in the editing of them.

> 'Begun,' Mr. Colvin says, 'without a thought of publicity, and simply to maintain an intimacy undiminished by separation, they assumed in the course of two or three years a bulk so considerable, and contained so much of the matter of his daily life and thoughts, that it by-and-by occurred to him ... that "some kind of a book" might be extracted out of them after his death.... In a correspondence so unreserved, the duty of suppression and selection must needs be delicate. Belonging to the race of Scott and Dumas, of the romantic narrators and creators, Stevenson belonged no less to that of Montaigne and the literary egotists.... He was a watchful and ever interested observer of the motions of his own mind.'

The whole passage, too long to be quoted, suggests an instructive analysis of the mental qualities and disposition that go to make a good letter-writer—a dash of egotism, sensitiveness to outward impressions, literary charm, the habit of keeping a frank and familiar record of every day's moods, thoughts, and doings, the picturesque surroundings of a strange land. In these journal letters from Samoa the canon of improvisation is to a certain extent infringed, for Stevenson wrote with publicity in distant view; and the depressing influence of remoteness is in his case overcome, for he lived in tropical Polynesia, 'far off amid the melancholy main,' and had speech with his correspondent only at long intervals. But it is the privilege of genius to disconcert the rules of criticism; the letters have none of the vices of the diary, the trivialities are never dull, the incidents are uncommon or

uncommonly well told, and the writer is never caught looking over his shoulder at posterity.

For extracts there is now little space left in this article; but we may quote, to show Stevenson's style of landscape-painting, a few lines describing a morning in Samoa after a heavy gale:

> 'I woke this morning to find the blow quite ended. The heaven was all a mottled grey; even the East quite colourless. The downward slope of the island veiled in wafts of vapour, blue like smoke; not a leaf stirred on the tallest tree. Only three miles below me on the barrier reef I could see the individual breakers curl and fall, and hear their conjunct roaring rise, like the roar of a thoroughfare close by.'

It is good for the imaginative letter-writer to live within sight and sound of the sea, to hear the long roll, and to see from his window 'a nick of the blue Pacific.' It is also good for him to be within range of savage warfare, and to take long rough rides in a disturbed country. On one such occasion he writes:

> 'Conceive such an outing, remember the pallid brute that lived in Skerryvore like a weevil in a biscuit, and receive the intelligence that I was rather the better for my journey. Twenty miles ride, sixteen fences taken, ten of the miles in a drenching rain, seven of them fasting and in the morning chill, and six stricken hours' political discussions with an interpreter; to say nothing of sleeping in a native house, at which many of our excellent literati would look askance of itself.'

The feat might not seem miraculous to a captain of frontier irregulars in hard training; but for a delicate novelist in weak health it was pluckily done. These letters would be readable if Stevenson had written nothing else, though of course their worth is doubled by our interest in a man of singular talent who died prematurely. They illustrate the tale of his life and portray his character; and they form an addition, valuable in itself, and unique as a variety, to the series of memorable English letter-writers.

Mr. Colvin mentions, in his preface, that Stevenson's talk was irresistibly sympathetic and inspiring, full of matter and mirth. It cannot be denied that between correspondence and conversation, regarded as fine arts, there is a close kinship; and very similar reasons have been alleged for the common belief that both are on the decline. Whether such a belief has any solid foundation in the case of letter-writing, we may be warranted in doubting. Observations of this sort, which have a false air of acuteness and profundity, are repeated periodically. The remark so constantly made at this moment, that nowadays people read nothing but magazines, was made by Coleridge early in this century; and Southey prophesied the ruin of good letters from the penny post. It is true that the number of letters written must have increased enormously; it is also true that many more are published than heretofore, and that as a great many of these are not above mediocrity, are valueless as literature, and of little worth biographically, they produce on the disappointed reader the effect of a general depreciation of the standard. Nevertheless, this article will have been written to little purpose, unless it has shown fair cause for rejecting such a conclusion, and for maintaining that, although fine letter-writers, like poets, are few and far between,

yet they have not been wanting in our own time, and are not likely to disappear. There will always be men, like Coleridge or Carlyle, whose impetuous thoughts and humoristic conceptions cannot perpetually submit to the forms and limitations and delays of printing and publishing, but must occasionally demand instant liberation and prompt delivery by the natural process of private letters. And although the stir and bustle of the world is increasing, so that quiet corners in it are not easily kept, yet it is probable that the race of literary recluses—of those who pass their days in reading books, in watching the course of affairs, and in corresponding with a select circle of friends—will also continue. Whether Englishwomen, who write letters up to a certain point better than Englishmen, will now rise, as Frenchwomen have done, to the highest line, and why they have not done so heretofore, are points that we have no space here for taking up.

But it is the exceptional peculiarity of letters, as a form of literature, that the writer can never superintend their publication. During his lifetime he has no control over them, they are not in his hands; and they do not appear until after his death. He must rely entirely, therefore, upon the discretion of his editor, who has to balance the wishes of a family, or the susceptibilities of an influential party in politics or religion, against his own notions of duty toward a departed friend, or against his artistic inclination toward presenting to the world a true and unvarnished picture of some remarkable personage. He may resolve, as Froude did in the case of Carlyle, that 'the sharpest scrutiny is the condition of enduring fame,' and may determine not to conceal the frailties or the underlying motives which explain

conduct and character. He may refuse, as in the case of Cardinal Manning, to set up a smooth and whitened monumental effigy, plastered over with colourless panegyric, and may insist on showing a man's true proportions in the alternate light and shadow through which every life naturally and inevitably passes. But such considerations would lead us beyond our special subject into the larger field of Biography; and we must be content, on the present occasion, with this endeavour to sketch in bare outline the history and development of English letter-writing, and to examine very briefly the elementary conditions that conduce to success in an art that is universally practised, but in which high excellence is so very rarely attained.

FOOTNOTES:

[7] (1) *The Letters of Charles Lamb.* Edited, with Introduction and Notes, by Alfred Ainger. London, 1888. (2) *Letters of John Keats to his Family and Friends.* Edited by Sidney Colvin. London, 1891. (3) *Letters and Verses of Arthur Penrhyn Stanley.* Edited by Rowland E. Prothero. London, 1895. (4) *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, 1848-88. Collected and arranged by George Russell. London and New York, 1895. (5) *Letters of Edward FitzGerald to Fanny Kemble.* Edited by William Aldis Wright. London, 1895. (6) *Vailima Letters, from Robert Louis Stevenson to Sidney Colvin*, 1890-94. London, 1895.—*Edinburgh Review*, April 1896.

[8] Mr. John Morley, *Nineteenth Century*, December 1895.

[9] *Dean Stanley's Letters*, p. 440.

THACKERAY

It is remarkable that in a century which is far more profusely supplied with biographies than any preceding age, and at a time when chronicles of small beer no less than of fine vintages seem to gratify the rather indiscriminate taste of the British public, no formal life has ever been produced of Thackeray. That this omission has been due to his express wish is well understood, and at any rate it may be cited as a praiseworthy breach of the latter-day custom of publishing a man's private affairs and correspondence as soon as possible after his funeral. Nevertheless the generation of those who knew Thackeray, for whom and among whom he wrote, is now rapidly vanishing; so that it would have been a kind of national misfortune if posterity had been left without some authentic record of his personal history, his earlier experiences, his characteristic sayings and doings, and the general environment in which he worked.

For the biographical introductions, therefore, which are appended to each volume of this new edition,[10] we owe gratitude to his daughter, Mrs. Richmond Ritchie.[11] No more than seven volumes have been actually published up to this date, but since these include a large proportion of Thackeray's most important and characteristic work, we make no apology for anticipating the completion of the series by an attempt to make a critical examination of the salient points which distinguish his genius, and mark his place in general literature. Mrs. Ritchie tells us in

a brief prefatory note that although her father's wishes have prevented her from writing his complete biography she has at last determined to publish memories which chiefly concern his books. Her desire has also been 'to mark down some of the truer chords to which his life was habitually set'; and accordingly we have in every volume an instalment, too brief and intermittent for such interesting matter, of the incidents and vicissitudes belonging to successive stages of his life and work, with glimpses of his mind and tastes, of the friendships that he made, and the society in which he moved. The form in which these reminiscences and *reliquiæ* appear has necessarily disconnected them, since they have been evidently chosen on the plan of connecting each novel with the circumstances or particular field of observation which may have suggested the plot, the scenery, or the characters. One can thus see that Thackeray's mind, like his sketch-book, was constantly taking down vivid impressions of people and places, and in some of his notes of travel can be easily traced the sources whence he took hints for elaborate studies. But under this arrangement the chronology becomes here and there somewhat entangled. *Pendennis*, for example, was finished in 1850, but as the hero's life at Oxbridge is described in the novel, its introduction takes us back to the period when the writer himself was at Cambridge in 1829. *Vanity Fair*, again, written in 1845, contains a well-known episode of Dobbin's school life, and the story carries us more than once to the Continent; so the introduction gives us recollections of Charterhouse, where Thackeray went in 1822, and of travels about Germany in the early thirties. The *Contributions to Punch*, which form the sixth volume of this series, began in 1842, and lasted ten years.

They provide occasion for many diverting anecdotes, and for references to his colleagues who founded the fortunes of that most successful of comic papers; but as on this plan the biographical lines cross and recross each other it is not easy for the reader to obtain a connected or comprehensive view of Thackeray's career. Nevertheless as the system fortunately affords room and reason for giving many fresh details of his daily life, with some of his letters, or extracts from them, which are fresh and amusing, we may cheerfully pass over these petty drawbacks. We are heartily thankful for our admission to a closer acquaintance with an author who has drawn some immortal pictures of English society, its manners, prejudices, and characteristic types, in novels that will always hold the first rank in our lighter literature.

How his boyhood was passed is tolerably well known already. Returning home in childhood from India he was put first to a preparatory school, and afterwards, for nigh seven years, to Charterhouse. At eighteen he went up to Cambridge, where he spoke in the Union, wrote in university magazines, criticised Shelley's *Revolt of Islam*, 'a beautiful poem, though the story is absurd,' and composed a parody on Tennyson's prize poem, *Timbuctoo*. In 1830 he travelled in Germany, and had his interview at Weimar with Goethe; and from 1831 we find him settled in a London pleader's office, reading law with temporary assiduity, frequenting the theatres and Caves of Harmony, making many literary acquaintances, taking runs into the country to canvass for Charles Buller, and trying his 'prentice hand at journalism. His vocation for literature speedily damped his legal ardour, and drew him out of Mr. Tapsell's chambers, where he left a desk full of sketches and caricatures. In May

1832 he wrote: 'This lawyer's preparatory education is certainly one of the most cold-blooded, prejudicial pieces of invention that ever a man was slave to;' and he longs for fresh air and fresh butter. By August he had fled to Paris, where he read French, worked at a painter's *atelier*, and took seriously to the work of a newspaper correspondent. On the romantic school, which was just then at its height, he makes the following remark, which betrays the antipathy to artificial and theatrical tendencies in literature that always provoked his satire:

> 'In the time of Voltaire the heroes of poetry and drama were fine gentlemen; in the days of Victor Hugo they bluster about in velvet and mustachios and gold chains, but they seem in nowise more poetical than their rigid predecessors.'

He had little taste, in fact, for mediævalism in any shape, and 'old Montaigne' was more to his liking. We are told, also, that he became absorbed in Cousin's *Philosophy*, noting upon it that 'the excitement of metaphysics must equal almost that of gambling'; and finding, perhaps, no great attraction in either. After his marriage in 1836 he settled down in London, devoting himself thenceforward to literature as a profession; the *Yellowplush Papers*, published in 1837 by *Fraser's Magazine*, being his earliest contribution of any length or significance. In the introductory chapter Mrs. Ritchie says:

> 'I hardly know—nor, if I knew, should I care to give here—the names and the details of the events which suggested some of the *Yellowplush Papers*. The history of Mr. Deuceace was written from life during a very

> early period of my father's career. Nor can one wonder that his views were somewhat grim at that particular time, and still bore the impress of an experience lately and very dearly bought.... As a boy he had lost money at cards to some cardsharpers who scraped acquaintance with him. He never blinked at the truth or spared himself; but neither did he blind himself to the real characters of the people in question, when once he had discovered them. His villains became curious studies in human nature; he turned them over in his mind, and he caused Deuceace, Barry Lyndon, and Ikey Solomons, Esq., to pay back some of their ill-gotten spoils, in an involuntary but very legitimate fashion, when he put them into print and made them the heroes of those grim early histories.'

We may infer from this passage that Thackeray's mind acted not only as a microscope but as a magnifying glass; he had an eye, as one knows, for characteristic details, and it appears that he could also enlarge the small fry of scoundrelism into magnificent rascals. There can be no doubt that he had the image-making faculty of sensitive genius, and that much of all he saw and felt went to fill up his canvas and fix his point of view. Writing to his mother, he once said, 'It is the fashion to say that people are unfortunate who have lost their money. Dearest mother, we know better than that;' though 'for years and years he had to face the great question of daily bread.' But while he could battle stoutly against losses of this kind, he had no mercy on the rogues who caused them; and his indignation, accentuated by the strain of married life on a very narrow income, may account in some degree for the

cynical tone, now sombre, now mocking, which so perceptibly dominates his earlier writings, and pervades all his books, though in a lesser and more tolerant way, up to the end. Against this shaded background, however, we may set many kindly figures, and the contrast is heightened by the humorous joviality which finds vent in his talent for caricature. To this we owe the full-length portrait of Major Gahagan, and a whole gallery of other drawings, usually of Irishmen, which have been the delight of innumerable readers. The striking alternation between two extremes of character and conduct, between tragedy and farce, between ridiculous meanness and pathetic unselfishness, is to be found in all his novels, though in his later and finer work it is controlled and tempered to more artistic proportions. But in the productions of his youth the darker tints so predominate as to disconcert the judgment of a generation which has become habituated, at the present day, to a less energetic and uncompromising style of exposing fools and gibbeting knaves. And after making due allowance for those indescribable differences of taste which separate us from our fathers in every region of art—and even admitting, what is by no means sure, that sixty years ago rascality, snobbery, and humbug were more rampant in society than nowadays—we are still disposed to regret that a writer whose best work is superlatively good should have dwelt so persistently in his earlier stories upon the dreary and ignoble side of English life. From some passages in them it might be inferred by foreigners that the better born Englishmen habitually indulged in rudeness toward their social inferiors, and that English domestics in good houses broke out into vulgar insolence whenever they could do so with

impunity.

Take, for an example, in the scene from *The Great Hoggarty Diamond*, the behaviour of Mr. Preston, 'one of her Majesty's Secretaries of State,' to an underbred but good-tempered little city clerk, whom Lady Drum takes in her carriage for a drive in Hyde Park, and whom she hints he might ask to dinner. Mr. Preston acts on the hint, but with savage sarcasm, and Titmarsh, the clerk, accepts in order to plague the minister for his astounding rudeness:

> '"I did not," he says, "intend to dine with the man, but only to give him a lesson in manners."'

And so, when the carriage drove up to Mr. Preston's door, he says to him:

> '"When you came up and asked who the devil I was, I thought you might have put the question in a more polite manner, but it wasn't my business to speak. When, by way of a joke, you invited me to dinner, I answered in a joke too, and here I am. But don't be frightened, I'm not agoing to dine with you."...
>
> '"Is that all, sir?" says Mr. Preston, still in a rage. "If you have done, will you leave the house, or shall my servants turn you out? Turn out this fellow; do you hear me?"'

Assuming that sixty years ago a Secretary of State was much the same sort of man that he is to-day, what are we to think of this spirited colloquy? and what kind of impression will it, and others no less forcible, produce upon the future student of manners

who turns to light literature as the mirror of contemporary society?

With regard, again, to the *Yellowplush Papers*, is it from unpardonable fastidiousness, the affectation of an over-refined literary taste, that we are inclined to question whether they have been wisely preserved in standard editions of so great a novelist? The use of ludicrously distorted spelling intensifies the impression of ignorant vulgarity, and there is a moral lesson in the story of Mr. Deuceace that atones in some degree for the very low company whom we meet in it. But the labour of deciphering the ugly words, and the cheerless atmosphere of sordid vice and servility which they are most appropriately used to describe, are so unfamiliar to contemporary novel-readers that we think few will master two hundred pages of this dialect in the present edition. On the whole, after renewing our old acquaintance with Mr. Jeames, with Captain Rook and Mr. Pigeon, with Mr. Stubbs of the Fatal Boots, and others of the same kidney, we doubt whether these immature character sketches, which all belong to the author's first and most Hogarthian manner, do not range below the legitimate boundaries of literature as a fine art, and whether they do not much rather harm than heighten his permanent reputation when they are placed on a line with his masterpieces by formal reproduction. It is impossible to take much interest in personages with an unbroken record of profligacy and baseness; and we are reminded of the Aristotelian maxim that pure wickedness is no subject for dramatic treatment.

Yet we are aware that it may be practically impossible to publish incomplete editions of a very popular writer; and in the extravagances of his youth

one may discern the promise of much higher things. Very rapidly, in fact, in the work which comes next, Thackeray rises at once to a far superior level of artistic performance. We are not indisposed to endorse the opinion, pronounced more than once by good judges, that the high-water mark of his peculiar genius was touched by *Barry Lyndon*, which first exhibits the rare and distinctive qualities that were completely developed in his later and larger novels. It may be affirmed, as a general rule, that most of our eminent writers of fiction have leapt, as Scott did, into the arena with some work of first-class merit, which has immediately caught public attention and established their position in literature. Their fugitive pieces, their crudities and imperfect essays, have been either judiciously suppressed or consigned to oblivion. They have followed, one may say, the goodly custom prescribed by the governor of the Cana marriage feast; they put forth in the beginning their good wine, and they fall back upon inferior brands only when the public, having well drunk of the potent vintage, will swallow anything from a favourite author. We may regret that Thackeray's start as a man of letters should have furnished an exception to this salutary rule; and in surveying, after the lapse of many years, his collected works, we are disposed to observe that no first-class writer has suffered more from the enduring popularity which has encouraged the republication of everything that is his, from the finished *chefs-d'œuvres* down to the ephemeral and unripe products of an exuberant youth. He would have given the world a notable confirmation of the rule that a great author usually leads off on a high note, if he had opened his munificent literary entertainment with *Barry Lyndon*. We quote here from Mrs. Ritchie's

introduction:

> 'My father once said to me when I was a girl, "You needn't read *Barry Lyndon*; you won't like it." Indeed it is scarcely a book to *like*, but one to admire and to wonder at for its consummate power and mastery.... Barry Lyndon tells his own story, so as to enlist every sympathy against himself, and yet all flows so plausibly, so glibly, that one can hardly explain how the effect was produced. From the very first sentence, almost, one receives the impression of a lawless adventurer, brutal, heartless, with low instincts and rapid perceptions. Together with his own autobiography, he gives a picture of the world in which he lives and brags, a picture so vivid ... that as one reads one almost seems to hear the tread of remorseless fate sounding through all the din and merriment. Take those descriptions of the Prussian army during the Seven Years' War, and of that hand of man which weighs so heavily upon man—what a haunting page in history!'

These remarks are very justly appreciative, for the book stamps Thackeray as a fine impressionist, as an artist who skilfully mixes the colours of reality and imagination into a composition of striking scenes and the effective portrayal of character. With extraordinary ability and consistency to the type he works out the gradual evolution of a wild Irish boy, hot-headed in love and fighting, full of daring impetuosity and ignorant vanity, into the ruffianly soldier, the intrepid professional gambler, and finally

into the selfish profligate, who marries a great heiress and sets up as a county magnate. Instead of the mere unadulterated villainy and meanness which were impersonated in his previous stories, we have here the complex strength and weakness of real human nature; we have the whole action lifted above the platform of city swindlers, insignificant scoundrels, and needy cardsharpers, up to a stage exhibiting historic personages and scenes, courts and battlefields; and we breathe freely in the wider air of immorality on a grand scale. As a sample of spirited freehand drawing, the sketches of Continental society, 'before that vulgar Corsican upset the gentry of the world,' are admirable for their force and originality; and what can be better as a touch of character than the following defence of his profession by a prince of gamblers?

> 'I speak of the good old days of Europe, before the cowardice of the French aristocracy (in the shameful Revolution, which served them right) brought ruin on our order.... You call a doctor an honourable man—a swindling quack, who does not believe in the nostrums which he prescribes, and takes your guinea for whispering in your ear that it's a fine morning; and yet, forsooth, a gallant man who sits him down before the baize and challenges all comers, his money against theirs, his fortune against theirs, is proscribed by your modern moral world. It is a conspiracy of the middle classes against gentlemen; it is only the shopkeeper cant which is to go down nowadays. I say that play was an institution of chivalry; it has been wrecked along with other privileges of men of birth.'

Here we have the romance of the gaming-table; and in the same chapter Barry Lyndon recounts the evil chance that befell him at cards with two young students, who had never played before:

> 'As ill luck would have it, they were tipsy, and against tipsiness I have often found the best calculations of play fail entirely. A few officers joined; they played in the most perfectly insane way, and won always.... And in this ignoble way, in a tavern room thick with tobacco smoke, across a deal table besmeared with beer and liquor, and to a parcel of hungry subalterns and beardless students, three of the most skilful and renowned players in Europe lost seventeen hundred louis. It was like Charles xii. or Richard Cœur de Lion falling before a petty fortress and an unknown hand.'

The picture of gamblers in a grimy tavern, the unconscious humour of Lyndon's heroic lament, the comparison between the cardsharpers' discomfiture and the fall of mighty warriors, make up a fine example of Thackeray's eye for graphic detail, and prove the force and temper of his incisive irony.

Yet, in spite of its great excellence, the book still labours under the artistic disadvantage of having a rogue for its hero. Thackeray was too good an artist to be unconscious of this defect, and in a footnote to page 215 he defends his choice characteristically. After admitting that Mr. Lyndon maltreated his lady in every possible way, bullied her, robbed her to spend the money in gambling and taverns, kept mistresses in her house, and so on, he argues:

> 'The world contains scores of such amiable

> people, and, indeed, it is because justice has not been done them that we have edited this autobiography. Had it been that of a mere hero of romance—one of those heroic youths who figure in the novels of Scott or James, there would have been no call to introduce the reader to a personage already so often and so charmingly depicted. Mr. Barry is not, we repeat, a hero of the common pattern; but let the reader look round and ask himself, "Do not as many rogues succeed in life as honest men, more fools than men of talent?" And is it not just that the lives of this class should be described by the students of human nature as well as the actions of those fairy-tale princes, those perfectly impossible heroes,' etc., etc.

One would be almost inclined to infer from this passage that the author had identified himself so completely with his own creation as to have become slightly infected with Mr. Barry Lyndon's sophistry; for it is impossible to maintain seriously that rogues and fools are no less successful in life than men of honesty and talent. But the truth is that Thackeray found in a daring rogue a much finer subject for character-drawing than in the blameless hero, while he was deeply implicated in the formidable revolt which Carlyle was leading against the respectabilities of that day.

It is worth notice that in Barry Lyndon's military reminiscences, done with great vigour and fidelity of detail, we have a very early example of the realistic as contrasted with the romantic treatment of campaigns, of life in the bivouac and the barrack. This method, which has latterly had immense vogue,

seems to have been first invented in France, where Thackeray may have taken the hint from Stendhal; but we are disposed to believe that he was the first who proclaimed it in England. As it professes to give the true unvarnished aspect of war it would certainly have accorded with Thackeray's natural contempt, so often shown in his writings, for the commonplaces of the military romancer who revelled in the pomp and circumstance of glorious battles, the charges, the heroic exploits, the honours, rather than the horrors, of the fighting business. Moreover, it is not only in style and treatment but also in sentiment and in certain peculiar prepossessions, that we can trace in this novel the lines which the writer followed throughout his narratives, and his favourite delineations of character. For diplomatists he has always a curious contempt, and he never misses an opportunity of ridiculing them. 'Mon Dieu,' says Lyndon, 'what fools they are; what dullards, what fribbles, what addle-headed coxcombs; this is one of the lies of the world, this diplomacy'—as if it were not also a most important and difficult branch of the national services. Abject reverence of great folk he regarded as the besetting disease of middle-class Englishmen; and so we find Lyndon remarking, by the way, that Mr. Hunt, Lord Bullingdon's governor, 'being a college tutor and an Englishman, was ready to go on his knees to any one who resembled a man of fashion.' And the kindly cynicism which discoloured Thackeray's ideas about women, notwithstanding his tender admiration and love for the best of them, comes out pointedly in old Sir Charles Lyndon's advice to Barry on the subject of matrimony:

> 'Get a friend, sir, and that friend a woman, a good household drudge, who loves you. *That*

> is the most precious sort of friendship, for the expense of it is all on the woman's side. The man need not contribute anything. If he's a rogue, she'll vow he's an angel; if he's a brute, she will like him all the better for his ill-treatment of her. They like it, sir, these women; they are born to be our greatest comforts and conveniences, our moral boot-jacks, as it were.'

Barry Lyndon discloses the promise and potency of Thackeray's genius. In *Vanity Fair*, his next work, it has attained its climax; the dramatic figures are more finely conceived, the plot is varied and more skilfully elaborated, the actors more numerous and life-like; and whereas in his preceding stories he has mainly used the form of a fictitious memoir, whereby the hero is made to tell his own tale, in this 'Novel without a Hero' the author proceeds by narration. The tone is still governed by irony and pathos, wherein Thackeray chiefly excels; yet the contrasts between weak and strong natures, the superiority of honesty and the moral sense over craftiness and unscrupulous cleverness, are now touched off with a lighter and surer hand. The unmitigated villain and the coarse-tongued hard-hearted virago have disappeared with other primitive stage properties; the human comedy is played by men and women of the upper world, with their virtues and frailties sufficiently set in relief, yet not exaggerated, for the purposes of the social drama. The book's very title, *Vanity Fair*, denotes a transition from the scathing satire of his earlier manner to more indulgent irony, from Swift to Sterne, two authors whom Thackeray had evidently studied attentively. In his short preface the author preludes with the gentler note when he invites people of a lazy, benevolent, or sarcastic

mood to step into the puppet show for a moment and look at the performance.

The book's success, Mrs. Ritchie tells us, was slow; the sale hung fire. 'One has heard of the journeys which the manuscript made to various publishers' houses before it could find any one ready to undertake the venture, and how long its appearance was delayed by various doubts and hesitations, until it was at last brought out in its yellow covers by Messrs. Bradbury and Evans on January 1, 1847.' But when the last numbers were appearing Thackeray wrote that, 'although it does everything but sell, it appears really to increase my reputation immensely'—as it assuredly did. That a signal success in literature is nearly always achieved, not by following the beaten road, but by a bold departure from it, is a principle that could be abundantly established by examples, and which seems almost a truism when it is stated. *Vanity Fair* was decidedly a work of great freshness and originality; but publishers are circumspect and rarely adventurous, they distrust novelties and prefer to follow the prevailing fashion as far as it will go, wherein we may discern one reason why the accouchement of the first literary child is usually so laborious.

To criticise at length any single novel of Thackeray's would be far beyond the scope or purpose of this article. Our object is rather to illustrate the course and development of his distinctive literary qualities, the slow effacement of prejudices which never entirely disappeared, and the rapid expansion of his highest artistic faculties. To begin with the prejudices. In *Vanity Fair* he still makes merciless war upon the poor paltry snob, whom one must suppose to have infested English society of that day in a very

rampant form; though unless we have had great changes for the better in the last fifty years, one might suspect exaggeration. And another important reform of manners must have supervened in the same period if we are to believe that in these novels the English servant is not unfairly caricatured. As we know him at the present day, in the class that lives with gentle-folk, he may be touchy and troublesome, with much self-assertiveness, but also with much self-respect. He has as many faults as other people, but among them brutal rudeness is practically unknown; yet when Rebecca Sharp is driven in Mr. Sedley's carriage to Sir Pitt Crawley's, having given nothing to the domestics on leaving the Sedleys, the coachman is ludicrously rude to a poor governess.

> "'I shall write to Mr. Sedley, and inform him of your conduct," said Miss Sharp to him.
>
> "'Don't," replied that functionary; "I hope you've forgot nothink? Miss 'Melia's gownds —have you got them—as the lady's maid was to have 'ad? I hope they'll fit you. Shut the door, Jim, you'll get no good out of *'er*," continued John, pointing with his thumb towards Miss Sharp; "a bad lot, I tell you, a bad lot.'"

One may conjecture that Thackeray's natural turn for comic burlesque, which comes out so plainly in his drawings, had become ingrained and inveterate by early practice, and certainly his immoderate delight in setting snobs and flunkeys on a pillory became a flaw in the perfection of his higher composition. It might well produce, among foreigners at any rate, an unreal impression of the true relations existing between different classes of English society.

But these are slight blemishes upon the surface of an epoch-making book, for *Vanity Fair* inaugurated a new school of novel-writing in this country, with its combined vigour and subtlety of character-drawing, and with the marvellous dexterity of its scenes and dramatic situations. The army and military life in all its phases had a remarkable attraction for him; in all his larger books one or more officers are brought prominently upon the foreground of his canvas. He hits off the strong and weak points of the profession, in war and peace, with a truth and humour that gave freshness and originality to the whole subject, and the best of these pictures are in *Vanity Fair*. There is not one of its leading *militaires*—Dobbin and Osborne, Crawley and Major O'Dowd—in whom a typical representative of well-known varieties may not be recognised. His fine picturesque handiwork, his consistent preference of the real to the romantic, and his reserve in the use of such tempting materials as the battlefield affords to the story-teller, are shown in his treatment of the episode of Waterloo. He is far too good an artist to lay out for us a grand scene of fierce fighting and carnage; nor does he, like Lever, produce Wellington and Bonaparte acting or speaking up to the popular conception of these mighty heroes. He is content to follow his own personages into that famous field, and to show how perilous circumstance brings out the force or feebleness of each character, male and female, whether of the wives left behind at Brussels, or the soldiers in the fighting line at Waterloo. It is only at the end of his chapter, after some seriocomic incidents and dialogues exhibiting the behaviour of the non-combatants—of Jos Sedley, Mrs. O'Dowd, Lady Bareacres, and the rest—that his narrative rises suddenly to the epic note in a brief passage full of

admirable energy and pathos:

> 'All our friends took their share and fought like men in the great field. All day long, whilst the women were praying ten miles away, the lines of the dauntless English infantry were receiving and repelling the furious charges of the French horsemen. Guns which were heard at Brussels were ploughing up their ranks, and comrades falling, and the resolute survivors closing in. Toward evening the attack of the French, repeated and resisted so bravely, slackened in its fury ... they were preparing for a final onset. It came at last, the columns of the Imperial Guard marched up the hill of St. Jean.... Unscared by the thunder of the artillery, which hurled death from the English line, the dark rolling column pressed on and up the hill. It seemed almost to crest the eminence, when it began to wave and falter. Then it stopped, still facing the shot. Then at last the English troops rushed from the post from which no enemy had been able to dislodge them, and the Guard turned and fled.
>
> 'No more firing was heard at Brussels; the pursuit rolled miles away. Darkness came down on the field and city; and Amelia was praying for George who was lying on his face, dead, with a bullet through his heart.'

The military critic might pick holes in this description, and Thackeray might as well have thrown the English infantry into squares instead of into line. Yet the passage is instinct with compressed

emotion; and the sudden transition from the general battle to the single death is a good touch of tragic art.

In *Pendennis* (1850) we may discern the slowly softening influences of years that bring the philosophic mind, of a calmer and easier time, and perhaps also of a different class of readers. Thackeray has now discovered that, as he says in his preface, 'to describe a real rascal you must make him too hideous to show;' and that 'Society will not tolerate the Natural in our Art.' Even the attempt to describe, in *Pendennis*, one of 'the gentlemen of our age, no better nor worse than most educated men,' has startled the prudery of the public for whom he now finds himself writing. 'Many ladies have remonstrated, and subscribers left me, because, in the course of the story, I described a young man resisting and affected by temptation.' Here, again, is another instance of the changes which rules of taste and convention may undergo in the course of a generation; for surely not even the straitest middle-class sect would in our day banish *Pendennis* on the score of impropriety. Mrs. Ritchie mentions that the author's descriptions of literary life were criticised on the ground that he was trying to win favour with the non-literary classes by decrying his own profession—an absurd accusation which nettled him into replying. The truth seems to be that Thackeray, who poked fun at the weak sides of every class and calling, saw no reason why he should leave out his own; and the men of letters might have been comforted by observing that he dealt with them much more tenderly than with their natural enemy the publisher, who has taken philosophically, for all we have ever heard, the unmerciful caricatures of Bungay and Bacon in Paternoster Row. Yet it may

have been annoying to find such a writer confidentially whispering to his readers 'that there is no race of people who talk about books, or perhaps read books, so little as literary men.'

Pendennis is in Thackeray's best style, as the novelist of manners. It opens, like *Vanity Fair*, with a short amusing scene that poses, as the French say, some leading actor in the play, and encourages the reader to go on. Next follows, as is usual with our author, a short retrospective account of the people and places among whom the plot is laid, with a descriptive pedigree of his hero. In his habit of setting his portraits in a framework of family history (compare the Crawleys, the Newcomes, the Esmonds) he resembles, though with less prolixity, Balzac, and he displays much knowledge and observation of English provincial life. He is, we imagine, the first high-class writer who brought the Bohemian, possibly an importation from France, into the English novel; and the contrast between the seedy strolling adventurer and strait-laced respectability provides him with material for inexhaustible irony, with much good-natured sympathy for the waifs and strays. He has always a soft corner in his heart for reckless hardihood; and every one must be glad that his 'poor friend Colonel Altamont,' who had been doomed to execution, was respited at the last moment, as Thackeray tells us in his preface, on the very technical plea that the author had not sufficient experience of gaol-birds and the gallows. Merciful good nature toward a daring scamp, who was free with his money and kind to women, was probably at the bottom of the condonation. We know from a paper, reproduced (to our thinking unnecessarily) in one of these volumes, that in 1840 Thackeray went to see Courvoisier hanged, and was so much upset by

the spectacle that he prayed for the abolition of capital punishment to wipe out its stain of national blood-guiltiness. It may be noticed, moreover, that his stern denunciation of crime and folly has by this time settled down into a philosophic mood that is almost fatalistic, as when he suggests that 'circumstance only brings out the latent defect or quality, and does not create it'; that 'our mental changes are, like our grey hairs and wrinkles, no more than the fulfilment of the plan of mortal growth and decay,' so that each man is born with the natural seed of fortune or failure. The voyage of life

> 'has been prosperous, and you are riding into port, the people huzzaing and the guns saluting, and the lucky captain bows from the ship's side, and there is a care under the star on his breast that nobody knows of; or you are wrecked and lashed, hopeless, to a solitary spar out at sea; the sinking man and the successful one are thinking each about home, very likely, and remembering the time when they were children; alone on the hopeless spar, drowning out of sight; alone in the midst of the crowd applauding you.'

In such fine passages as these we hear the elegiac strain of the antique world, wherein remorseless fate held dominion over human efforts and destiny. Like other great writers who are touched with humorous melancholy, he falls often into the moralising vein; he stops his narrative to address his reader with some ironical observation, after the manner of Fielding, whose leisurely tone of satire is so audible in the following quotation from *Pendennis* that he might well have written it:

> 'Even his child, his cruel Emily, he would have taken to his heart and forgiven with tears; and what more can one say of the Christian charity of a man than that he is actually ready to forgive those who have done him every kindness, and with whom he is wrong in a dispute?'

As we have said that *Vanity Fair* touches the climax of Thackeray's peculiar genius, so in our judgment *Esmond* shows the gathered strength and maturity of his literary power, and has won for him an eminent place in the distinguished order of historical novelists. We may say that the art of historical romance was brought to perfection in our own century, although French writers trace far back into the eighteenth century, and even further, the method of weaving authentic events and famous personages into the tissue of a story which turns upon fictitious adventures in love and war. The elder novelists dealt largely in extravagant sentiment, in conventional language, and in marvellous exploits embroidered upon the sober chronicles which served as the framework of their drama; they were content to set upon stilts the traditional hero or heroine of former days, whose ideas and conversation expressed with little disguise the manners, not of the period to which they belonged, but of the author's own time and of the society for whom he was writing. These books are, therefore, full of glaring anachronisms and improbabilities; the knights and dames are sometimes (as in the *Grand Cyrus*) thinly veiled portraits of contemporary notabilities, but they are often mere lay figures representing the prevailing fashions of thought and feeling. The virtuous hero abounds in judicious reflections; the heroines are chaste and beauteous damsels—Joan of Arc herself

appears in one romance as an adorable shepherdess —and love-making is conducted after the model of a Parisian *précieuse*.

It is the opinion of a recent French critic, who has made careful study of his subject, that the new school was founded by Chateaubriand, who first, at the last century's end, laid an axe to the root of all this rhetorical artifice, these frigid and grotesque incongruities, and filled his romances with local colour, stamping them with the impress of reality and conformity to nature, by picturesque reproduction of the landscape, costumes, usages, and conditions of existence of the time and country in which he might be unwinding his tale. But Chateaubriand, like Byron (who was of a similar temperament), never could put himself, to use a French phrase, into another man's skin; he is to be detected soliloquising and dispensing noble sentiments under the costume of a Christian martyr or an American savage, and thus the fidelity of his scene-painting was still marred by the artificiality of the discourse. It was the Waverley novel that lifted the historical romance far beyond Chateaubriand's level, that established it, in England, France, and Italy on the true principle of creating vivid representations of a bygone age by a skilful mixture of fact and fiction, and by a correct and harmonious combination of characters, manners, and environment.

But during the twenty years that intervene between the dates, taken roughly, of Scott's worst novel and Thackeray's best, the flood tide of romanticism had risen to its highest point, and had then ebbed very low, on both sides of the British Channel. And we can see that the younger writer was no votary of the

older school of high-flying chivalrous romance, with its tournaments, its crusaders, its valiant warriors, and distressed maidens. His youthful aversion for shams and conventionalities, his strong propensity toward burlesque and persiflage, his early life among cities and commonplace folk, seem to have obscured in some degree his appreciation of even such splendid compositions as *Ivanhoe* or *The Talisman*; or, at any rate, his sense of the ridiculous overpowered his admiration. The result was that, as Scott had exalted his mediæval heroes and heroines far above the level of real life, had revived the legendary age of chivalry and adventure with all the magnificence of his poetic imagination, Thackeray had at first set himself, conversely, to strip the trappings off these fine folk, and to poke his fun at the feudal lords and ladies by treating them as ordinary middle-class men and women masquerading in old armour or drapery. He came in as a writer on the ebb-tide of romanticism, when the reaction showed its popular form in a curious outburst of the taste for burlesques and parodies on the stage and in the light reading of the time. Whether the creation of this taste is to be ascribed to the appearance of two writers with such genius for wit and fun as Thackeray and Dickens, or whether they only supplied a natural demand, may be questionable; they undoubtedly headed the army of Comus, and thereby raised the whole standard of facetious literature. But the defect of this school was its propensity to take a hilarious or sardonic view, not only of mediæval romance, but of quaint old times generally; and one leading embodiment of this mocking spirit was *Punch* founded in 1841. A'Beckett's *Comic History of England*, which ran through many numbers, seems to this generation a dreary and deleterious specimen of misplaced farce;

though historically it is not quite such bad work as Dickens's *Child's History of England*, which he meant to be serious. Among Thackeray's very numerous contributions to *Punch* are *Miss Tickletoby's Lectures on English History*, which might well have been consigned to oblivion, *Rebecca and Rowena*, and *The Prize Novelists*. The sarcastic and the sentimental temper must always be hostile to each other; between romance and ridicule the antipathy is fundamental; and although one regrets that he ever wrote *Rebecca and Rowena*, the melodramatic novels of Bulwer-Lytton were fair enough game for the parodist. However, it is certain that in his earlier writings Thackeray did much to laugh away the novel of mediæval chivalry; and while we think he often carried his irreverent jocosity much too far, since after all chivalry is better than cockneyism, we may award him the very high honour of becoming, latterly, one of the founders of a new and admirable historical school in England.

The eighteenth century was always Thackeray's favourite period; he liked the rational, unpretentious tone of its best literature, its practical politics and tolerance, its common sense, and its habit of keeping very close, in art as in action, to the realities of the world as we find it. Swift is the most unromantic of any writer that possessed great imaginative faculty; Defoe was a master of minute life-like detail, an inimitable imitator of truth; Hogarth's paintings are like Wesley's or Whitefield's sermons, they are stern, unvarnished denunciations of vice and profligacy; Fielding was the easy, large-hearted moralist, who hated above all sins cant and knavery, loved to banter the parsons, to bring fops and boobies upon his stage, and to place in contrast the wide difference that then separated manners in town and in country.

Perhaps Thackeray owes more to Fielding than to any other single literary ancestor; but all these influences were most congenial to his temperament, and informed his best work. His instinctive dislike of unreality, exaggeration, and fanciful ideals would have always prevented him from laying the situation of his story in some distant age, of which hardly anything is known accurately, and supplementing his ignorance by giving free scope to fantastic invention, as was the usage of the humble followers who tried in vain to conjure with the wand of Scott. He required a period which he could study, master, and sympathise with, and he found it in the eighteenth century; though in *Esmond* the plot, being founded on Jacobite intrigues and conspiracies, opens with the Revolution of 1688. He had taken great trouble, as usual, with the localities, knowing well that you never understand a battle clearly until you have seen its field.

> '"I was pleased to find Blenheim," he wrote to his mother, "was just exactly the place I had figured to myself, except that the village is larger; but I fancied I had actually been there, so like the aspect of it was to what I looked for. I saw the brook which Harry Esmond crossed, and almost the spot where he fell wounded."'

Mrs. Ritchie quotes this letter as illustrating 'a sort of second sight as to places which my father used to speak of'; and it certainly attests his possession of the strong imaginative faculty which puts together vivid mental pictures.

The first page strikes the note of disenchantment, of escape from the spell of conventionalism and the

shores of romance. Colonel Esmond, who tells his own tale, wishes the Muse of History to disrobe, to discard her buskins, and to deliver herself like a woman of the everyday world.

> 'I wonder shall History ever pull off her periwig and cease to be court-ridden? Shall we see something of France and England besides Versailles and Windsor? I saw Queen Anne tearing down the Park slopes after her staghounds, in her one-horse chaise—a hot redfaced woman.... She was neither better bred nor wiser than you and me, though we knelt to hand her a letter or a washhand basin. Why shall History go on kneeling to the end of time? I am for having her rise off her knees, and take her natural posture, not to be for ever performing cringes and congees like a Court chamberlain, and shuffling backward out of doors in the presence of the sovereign. In a word, I would have History familiar rather than heroic.'

No very deep philosophy in this, we might say, for surely historians up to Esmond's day had not all been pompous and servile, while something like dignity is desirable. But here we have Thackeray speaking through Esmond his own thoughts about history, and proclaiming the rise of naturalism against the romantic high-heeled school. And in a much later chapter, where Esmond visits Addison, we have the true realistic method of Tolstoi and other quite modern novelists, as compared with the old classic style of describing war. Addison has been writing a poem on the Blenheim campaign:

> '"I admire your art," says Esmond to Addison;

> "the murder of the campaign is done to military music, like a battle at the opera, and the virgins shriek in harmony, as our victorious grenadiers march into their villages. Do you know what a scene it was? what a triumph you are celebrating, what scenes of shame and horror were enacted, over which the commander's genius presided as calm as though he didn't belong to our sphere? You talk of 'the listening soldier fixed in sorrow,' the 'leader's grief swayed by generous pity'; to my belief the leader cared no more for bleating flocks than he did for infants' cries, and many of our ruffians butchered one or the other with equal alacrity. You hew out of your polished verses a stately image of smiling victory; I tell you 'tis an uncouth, distorted, savage idol, hideous, bloody, and barbarous. The rites performed before it are shocking to think of. You great poets should show it as it is, ugly and horrible, not beautiful and serene.'"

When Colonel Esmond has to describe the battles in which he himself took part, he avoids, as might be supposed, the high romantic style. But he does not, therefore, fall on the other side, into the mire of the writers who at the present day conscientiously give us the horrors of the hospital and all the brutalities of war, which Esmond knows, but does not choose to set down in his memoir. In his account of the Blenheim victory there is a skilful touch of the professional soldier, who records briefly the position of the armies and the tactical movements; and it lights up with suppressed enthusiasm when he records the intrepidity of the English regiments in that fierce and famous struggle. We read of Major-

General Wilkes,

> 'on foot, at the head of the attacking column, marching with his hat off intrepidly in the face of the enemy, who was pouring in a tremendous fire from his guns and musketry, to which our people were instructed not to reply except with pike and bayonet when they reached the French palisades. To these Wilkes walked intrepidly, and struck the woodwork with his sword before our people charged it. He was shot down on the instant, with his colonel, major, and several officers,'

and the assault was repelled with great slaughter.

In this and other similar passages, you have the historic novelist at his best; the true facts are selected and arranged so as to form pictures of soul-stirring action; while their connection with his story is maintained by giving Esmond himself a very modest and natural share in the glorious victory:

> 'And now the conquerors were met by a furious charge of the English horse under Esmond's general, Lumley, behind whose squadrons the flying foot took refuge and formed again, while Lumley drove back the French horse, charging up to the village of Blenheim and the palisades where Wilkes, and many hundred more gallant Englishmen, lay in slaughtered heaps. Beyond this moment, and of this famous victory, Mr. Esmond knows nothing, for a shot brought down his horse and our young gentleman on it, who fell crushed and stunned under the animal.'

A lesser artist would have made his hero perform some brilliant exploit; but Thackeray prefers to sketch the scene as Wouvermans might have done it. We have not here the incomparable fire and spirit which Scott throws into the skirmishes at Bothwell Brig and Drumclog; we see the difference of mind and method; but we can have nothing except admiration for the rare imaginative faculty which enabled a quiet man of letters to deal so finely and faithfully, with such reserve and discrimination, with a subject that might easily have been spoiled by the noisy clatter and coarse colouring of the inferior artist. His full length portrait of Marlborough has been too often quoted to be reproduced here —'impassible before victory, before danger, before defeat; the splendid calm of his face as he rode along the lines to battle, or galloped up in the nick of time to a battalion reeling before the enemy's charge or shot.' Of Swift, Esmond says—'I have always thought of him and of Marlborough as the two greatest men of that age ... a lonely fallen Prometheus, groaning as the vultures tear him'; and with a few such strokes he gives etchings of other celebrities in letters and politics. One may observe with astonishment that the youthful Thackeray, who delighted in suburban chronicles, in mean lives and paltry incidents, has risen by middle age to the rank of an illustrious painter on the broad canvas of history. The annals of literature contain few, if any, other examples of so remarkable a transformation.

It is evident that Thackeray, like Scott, was an industrious collector of material for his novels from all sources; we may refer, for an instance, to a scene which will have left a passing impression upon many readers, where, as the French and English armies are facing each other on two sides of a little stream in

the Low Countries, Prince Charles Edward rides down to the French bank and exchanges a salute with Esmond. It falls quite naturally and easily into the narrative, and reads like a very happy original conception; yet the incident, which is quite authentic, may be found in the papers obtained in the last century from the Scottish convent at Paris by Macpherson.

In *The Virginians*, which might have had for its second title *Forty Years Later*, the chronicle of the Esmond family is continued; with North America during the French war for the battlefields, Braddock, Wolfe, and Washington for the military figures, and Esmond's grandsons as the personages round whom the story's interest centres. It is a novel of very great merit, skilfully constructed, full of vivacious writing and delineation of character; and the novelist avails himself with his usual adroitness of the celebrated incidents of this period and the salient features of English society in the middle of the last century. Yet we must reluctantly admit that Thackeray has passed his climacteric, and that as a work of the historical school this book cannot claim parity with Esmond. George Warrington was on Braddock's staff at the fatal rout and massacre on the Ohio; his brother Harry was with Wolfe on the Plains of Abraham; they witnessed a battle lost and a battle won, and each saw his commander fall. But George's recital of his hairbreadth escape lacks the stern simplicity with which his grandfather told the story of Marlborough's wars; and the device of his being saved from the Indians by a French officer, who was his intimate friend, is so ingenious as to be a trifle commonplace. The author does not sketch in any details or personal adventures from the great fight under the walls of Quebec; he has fallen back, at this part of the story,

into personal narrative, and *The Warrington Memoirs* only describe how the news of Wolfe's victory and death were acclaimed in London. In the War of Independence, George Warrington, who takes the British side, records the feelings and situation of an American Loyalist—a class to whom only Mr. Lecky, among historians, has done fair justice. There is much acute and well-informed reflection upon the state of the colonies at this time, the strong currents of party politics, and the exasperation which brought about the rebellion; but, on the whole, this part of the narrative has too much resemblance to real history. It has not enough of the imaginative and picturesque element to lift it above the comparatively prosaic level of an interesting memoir, though some good scenes and situations are obtained by making the two Warrington brothers take opposite sides. When we learn that, in 1759, the English Lord Castlewood repaired his shattered fortunes by marrying an American heiress, we are inclined to suspect that our author has taken a hint from the fashion of a century later.

In the story of *Esmond* Thackeray dropped the satirical tone, and indulged very rarely indeed in the habit of pausing to moralise, as writer to reader, upon social hypocrisy, servile obsequiousness, and whited sepulchres generally. In *The Virginians* he is less attentive to dramatic propriety; he begins again to turn aside and lecture us, in the midst of his tale, upon the text of *De te fabula narratur*. Sir Miles and Lady Warrington are scandalised by their nephew's extravagance, and refuse all help to the spendthrift.

> 'How much of this behaviour goes on daily in respectable society, think you? You can fancy Lord and Lady Macbeth concocting a

> murder, and coming together with some little awkwardness, perhaps, when the transaction was done and over; but my Lord and Lady Skinflint, when they consult in their bedroom about giving their luckless nephew a helping hand, and determine to refuse, and go down to family prayers and meet their children and domestics, and discourse virtuously before them...?'

And so on, for a page or two, in a tone that some may think almost as sophistical as the reasoning by which the Skinflints might excuse to themselves their pharisaical behaviour. Such interpolations are artistically incorrect, and out of harmony with the proper conception of a well-wrought work of fiction, in which the moral should be conveyed through the action and the dialogue, and the meditations should be left to be done by the reader himself.

We must, therefore, place *The Virginians* below *Esmond* in the order of merit. Nevertheless, these two novels, with *Barry Lyndon*, are most important and valuable contributions to the English historical series. Nothing like them had been written before, and nothing equal has been written after them, with the single exception of *John Inglesant*. They possess one essential quality that ought to distinguish all fiction founded on the history of bygone times—they are, so far as posterity can judge at all, faithful and effective representations of manners. Now, the inferior practitioner in this particular school, being prevented by indolence or incapacity from mastering his period and acquiring insight into its ways of thought and living, is too often content to cover up his deficiencies by indenting freely on the theatrical wardrobe and armoury. He deals largely in the

costumes of the day; he supplies himself plentifully with old-fashioned phrases; he is fond of old furniture; he is strongest, in fact, upon the external and decorative aspect of the society to which he introduces us. Most of the romances written in imitation of Scott had this tendency; and this same feebleness underlies the superfluous minuteness of detail that may be observed in the decadent realists of the present day. Nothing of this sort can be alleged against Thackeray, who works from inward outwardly in his creations of character, and whose personages are truly historical in the sense that they move and speak naturally according to the ideas and circumstances of their age, the dialect and dress being merely added as appropriate colouring. It is, indeed, a peculiarity of Thackeray's novels, which distinguishes him alike from the romancer and the modern naturalist that they contain hardly any description, that he is never professedly picturesque, that he relies entirely on passing strokes and effective details given by the way. In Scott we have superb descriptive pieces of scenery, of storms, of the interiors of a castle or a Gothic cathedral; and some of the best living novelists are much given to elaborate landscape painting. But we doubt whether half a page of deliberately picturesque description can be found in any of Thackeray's first-class works. He will sometimes sketch off the inside of a house or the look of a town, but with natural scenery he does not concern himself; he is, for the most part, entirely occupied with the analysis of character, or with the emotional side of life; and he seems constantly to bear in mind the Aristotelian maxim that life consists in action. His principal instrument for the exhibition of motive, for the evolution of his story, for bringing out qualities, is dialogue, which he manages with

great dexterity and effect, giving it point and raciness, and avoiding the snare—into which recent social novelists have been falling—of insignificance and prolixity. The method of easy, sparkling, natural dialogue for developing the plot and distinguishing the personages is said to have been first transferred from the theatre to the novel by Walter Scott. At any rate, the use of it on a large scale, which has since been carried to the verge of abuse, began with the Waverley novels; where we find abundance of that humorous vernacular talk in which Shakespeare excelled, though for the romance Cervantes may be registered as its inventor. In Thackeray's hands dramatic conversation, as of actors on the stage, becomes of very prominent importance, not only for the illustration of manners in society, but also for dressing up the subordinate figures of his company. He is now no longer the caricaturist of earlier days; he employs the popular dialect and comic touches with effective moderation. And he avails himself very freely, in *The Virginians*, of the privilege which belongs to the historical novelist, who is allowed to make the reader acquainted with the notabilities of the period not only for the movement of his drama, but also for a passing glance or casual introduction, as might happen in any place of public resort or in a crowded *salon*. Franklin, Johnson, and Richardson, George Selwyn and Lord Chesterfield, cross the stage and disappear, after a few remarks of their own or the author's. For military officers, who figure in all his novels, he has ever a kindly word; and also for sailors, although it is only in his last (unfinished) novel that he takes up the navy. For English clergymen, especially for bishops, he has no indulgence at all; and he seems to be possessed by the commonplace error of believing that the

prevailing types of the Anglican Church in the eighteenth century were the courtier-bishop and the humble obsequious chaplain. The typical Irishman of fiction, with his mixture of recklessness and cunning, warm-hearted and unveracious, is to be found, we think, in every one of Thackeray's larger novels, except in *The Virginians*; the Scotsman is rare, having been considerably used up by Walter Scott and his assiduous imitators. We may notice (parenthetically) that our own day is witnessing a marvellous revival of Highlanders and Lowlanders in fiction, from Jacobite adventures to the pawky wit and humble incidents of the kailyard.

In *The Newcomes* we return regretfully to the novel of contemporary society; wherewith disappears all the light haze of enchantment that hangs over the revival of distant times, even though they lie no further behind us than the eighteenth century. Such a change of scene necessitates and completes the transition from the romantic to the realistic; for how can a picture of our own environment, which any one can verify, avoid being more or less photographic? In one sense it is a continuation of the historic novel, which has only to put off its archaic or literary costume to appear as a presentation of social history brought up to date; the method of minute description, the portrayal of manners, are the same, with the drawback that the celebrities of the day must be kept off the stage. Any eighteenth-century personage might figure, with effect, in *The Virginians*, while Macaulay and Palmerston could hardly have been sketched off, however briefly and good-naturedly, in *The Newcomes*. In all essential respects the tone and treatment are unaltered in the two stories; although the ironical spirit, restrained in the historical novels by a sense of dramatic

consistency, is again among us having great wrath, as Thackeray surveys the aspect of the London world around him. The character of Colonel Newcome, his distinguished gallantry, his spotless honour, his simplicity and credulity, is drawn with truth and tenderness; and some of the lesser folk are admirable for their kindliness and unselfishness. But what a society is this in which the Colonel is landed upon his return from India! He calls, with his son, at his brother's house in Bryanston Square:

> '"It's my father," said Clive to the "menial" who opened the door; "my aunt will see Colonel Newcome."
>
> '"Missis not at home," said the man. "Missis is gone in the carriage. Not at this door. Take them things down the area steps, young man," bawls out the domestic to a pastry-cook's boy ... and John struggles back, closing the door on the astonished Colonel.'

An astonishment that most Londoners of his time would have assuredly shared; unless, indeed, the West-end doorstep has gained wonderfully by the scrubbing of sixty years. On the relations between masters and servants Thackeray was never more severe than in this book; he is irritated by the marching in of the household brigade to family prayers, and he declares that we 'know no more of that race which inhabits the basement floor, than of the men and brethren of Timbuctoo, to whom some among us send missionaries'—a monstrous imputation. He constantly resumes the moralising attitude; and his pungent persiflage is poured out, as if from an apocalyptic vial, upon worldliness and fashionable insolence. Sir Barnes Newcome's divorce

from the unhappy Lady Clara furnishes a text for sad and solemn anathema upon the mercenary marriages in Hanover Square, where 'St. George of England may behold virgin after virgin offered up to the devouring monster, Mammon, may see virgin after virgin given away, just as in the Soldan of Babylon's time, but with never a champion to come to the rescue.' We would by no means withhold from the modern satirist of manners the privilege of using forcibly figurative language or of putting a lash to his whip. Yet if his novels are, as we have suggested, to be regarded as historical, in the sense of recording impressions drawn from life for the benefit of posterity, such passages as those just quoted from Thackeray raise the general question whether documentary evidence of this kind as to the state of society at a given period is as valuable and trustworthy as it has usually been reckoned to be. He has himself declared that 'upon the morals and national manners, works of satire afford a world of light that one would in vain look for in regular books of history'—that *Pickwick*, *Roderick Random*, and *Tom Jones*, 'give us a better idea of the state and ways of the people than one could gather from any pompous or authentic histories.' Whether Fielding and Smollett's contemporaries would have endorsed this opinion is the real question; for on such a point the judgment of Thackeray, who lived a century after them, cannot be conclusive. It is probable that to an Englishman of that day the novels of these two authors appeared to be extraordinary caricatures of actual society, in town or country.

On the other hand, the story is excellently conducted, and each actor performs with consummate skill his part or hers; for in none of his works has Thackeray given higher proof of that

dramatic power which brings out situations, leads on to the *dénouement*, and points the moral of the story, by a skilful manipulation of various incidents and a remarkably numerous variety of characters. There, is one chapter (ix. of vol. II.), headed 'Two or Three Acts of a Little Comedy,' where he carries on the plot entirely by a light and sparkling dialogue which may be compared to some of A. de Musset's wittiest *Proverbes*. It is a book that could only have been composed by a first-class artist in the maturity of his powers; and for that very reason we must regret that it is steeped in bitterness; while Thackeray's rooted hostility to mothers-in-law misguides him into the æsthetic error of admitting a virago to scold frantically almost over the colonel's death-bed. The unvarying meanness and selfishness of Mrs. Mackenzie, and of Sir Barnes Newcome, fatigue the reader; for whereas in the delineation of his amiable and high-principled characters Thackeray is careful to shade off their bright qualities by a mixture of natural weakness, these ill-favoured portraits stand out in the full glare of unredeemed insolence and low cunning.

In his last novel, broken off half-way by his death, Thackeray went back once more to that eighteenth century, which, as he says in one of his letters, 'occupied him to the exclusion almost of the nineteenth,' and to the method of weaving fiction out of historical materials. We have already remarked upon his practice of opening with a kind of family history, which explains the antecedent connections, relationship, and pedigree of the persons who are coming upon the stage, and marks out the background of his story. In *Denis Duval* he carries this preamble through two chapters, and arranges all the pieces on his board so carefully that an inattentive

reader might lose his way among the preliminary details. One sees with what pleasure he has studied his favourite period in France and England, and how he enjoyed constructing, like Defoe, a fictitious autobiography that reads like a picturesque and genuine memoir of the times. Having thus laid out his plan, and prepared his *mise en scène*, he begins his third chapter with an animated entry of his actors, who thenceforward play their parts in a succession of incidents and adventures, that are all adjusted and fitted in to the framework of time and place that he has taken so much pains to design for them. In this manner he touches upon the great events of contemporary history, like the French War, or illustrates the state of England by bringing in highwaymen and the press-gang; while a minute description of localities lends an air of simplicity to the tale of an old man who has (as he says) an extraordinarily clear remembrance of his boyhood.

The Notes which appeared in the *Cornhill Magazine*, June 1864, as an epilogue to the last lines written by Thackeray, when the story stopped abruptly, throw curious light on the methods of gathering his material and preparing his work. Just as he visited the Blenheim battlefield, when he was engaged upon *Esmond*, so he went down to Romney Marsh, where Denis Duval was born and bred, surveyed Rye and Winchelsea as if he were drawing plans of those towns, and collected local traditions of the coast and the country, of the smugglers, the Huguenot settlements, and the old war time of 1778-82. The *Annual Register* and the *Gentleman's Magazine* furnished him with suggestive incidents and circumstantial reports which he expanded with admirable fertility of imagination; so that by combining what he saw with what he read he could

lift the curtain and light up again an obscure corner of the Kentish coast, and the doings of the queer folk who lived on it a century before he went there. That he never finished this novel is much to be lamented, for Denis had just become a midshipman on board the *Serapis*, and we learn from these 'Notes' that he was to take part in the great fight which ended in the capture of that ship by Paul Jones, after the most bloody and desperate duel in the long and glorious record of the British Navy. Captain Pearson, who commanded the *Serapis*, reported his defeat to the Admiralty in a letter of which 'Mr. Thackeray seems to have thought much,' and, indeed, it is precisely the sort of document—quiet, formal, with a masculine contempt for adjectives (there is not one in the whole letter)—which denotes a character after Thackeray's own heart.

> 'We dropt alongside of each other, head and stern, when, the fluke of our spare anchor hooking his quarter, we became so close, fore and aft, that the muzzles of our guns touched each other's sides.'

Here we have the style which Thackeray loved; and 'tis pity that we have so narrowly missed the picture of a fierce naval battle by an artist who could describe strenuous action in steady phrase, and who knew that the hard-fighting commander is usually a cool, resolute, resourceful man, for whom it is a matter of plain duty to fight his ship till he is fairly beaten, and to report the result briefly, whatever it may be, to his superiors. One can observe the mellowing influence upon Thackeray of the atmosphere of past times and the afterglow of heroic deeds; for in *Denis Duval* there is no trace of the scorching satire which pursues us in *The Newcomes*;

nor does he once pause to moralise, or to enlarge upon the innumerable hypocrisies of modern society. It is questionable, indeed, whether this fine fragment binds up well in a volume with the *Roundabout Papers*, which bring the author back into the light of common day, and to the trivialities of ordinary society.

It has not been thought necessary, in this biographical edition, to issue the several volumes in the order of the dates at which they were written; nor has the attempt been made to preserve some serial continuity of their style or subject. The arrangement, moreover, serves to accentuate unnecessarily the undeniable imparity of Thackeray's different books; for *Punch* and the *Sketch Books* are interposed between *Barry Lyndon* and *Esmond*; while even the wild and wicked Lyndon hardly deserved to be handcuffed in the same volume with Fitzboodle, whom in the body he would have crushed like an insect. Yet the classification of Thackeray's novels might be easily made, for *Barry Lyndon*, *Esmond*, *The Virginians*, and *Denis Duval* fall together in one homogeneous group, having a strong family resemblance in tone and treatment, and following generally the chronological succession of the periods with which they are concerned. If to Esmond is awarded the precedence that is due to him not by seniority, but by importance, we have the wars of the eighteenth century between England and France from Marlborough's campaigns down to Rodney's great naval victory of 1783, in which Duval was destined to take part. These works represent Thackeray's very considerable contribution to the Historic School of English novelists; and we may count them also a valuable commentary upon English history, for without doubt every luminous

illustration of past times and personages acts as a powerful stimulant to the national mind, by exciting a keener interest in the nation's story and a clearer appreciation of its reality. Chateaubriand has affirmed that Walter Scott's romances produced a revolution in the art of writing histories, that no greater master of the art of historical divination has ever lived, and that his profound insight into the mediæval world, its names, the true relation between different classes, its political and social aspects, originated a new and brilliant historical method which superseded the dim and limited views of scholarly erudition. For Thackeray we make no such extensive or extravagant claims; but it may be said that the dramatic conception of history in his novels and lectures was of great service to his readers and hearers by the vivid impressions which they conveyed of the life, character, and feelings of their forefathers, of their failings, virtues, and memorable achievements. Some material objections may be taken to the system of teaching by graphic pictures in Thackeray, as in Carlyle's *French Revolution*, and in both cases the philosophy leaves much to be desired, for the writer's own idiosyncrasy colours all his work. Yet when we remember how few are the readers to whom the accurate Dryasdust, with his careful research and well attested facts, brings any lasting enlightenment, we may well believe that very many owe their distinct ideas of the state of England and its people during the last century to Thackeray's genius for carefully studied autobiographical fiction.

To the four historical novels mentioned above let us add three novels of nineteenth-century manners—*Vanity Fair*, *Pendennis*, *The Newcomes*—and we have seven books (one incomplete) upon which Thackeray's name and fame survive, and will be

handed down to posterity. The list is by no means long if it be compared with the outturn of Scott and Bulwer-Lytton, or of his foremost contemporary Dickens; and Stevenson, who resembles him in the subdued realistic style of narrating a perilous fight or adventure, has left us a larger bequest. But they are amply sufficient to build up for him a lasting monument in English literature; and their very paucity may serve as a warning against the prevailing sin of copious and indiscriminate productiveness, by which so many second-rate novelists of the present day exhaust their powers and drown a respectable reputation in a flood of writing, which sinks in quality in proportion to the rise in quantity.

How far the character and personal experiences of an author are revealed or disguised in his writings is a question which has often been discussed. Bulwer once endeavoured, in a whimsical essay, to prove that men of letters are the only people whose characters are really ascertainable, because you may know them intimately by their works; but herein he merely touched upon the general truth or truism that society at large judges every man only by his public performances, and does not trouble itself at all about anything else. In the category of those who display in their writings their tastes and prejudices, their feelings and the special bent of their mind, we may certainly place Thackeray, who was a moralist and a satirist, very sensitive to the ills and follies of humanity, and impressionable in the highest degree. For such a man it was impossible to refrain from giving his opinions, his praise or his blame, in all that he wrote upon everything that interested him; and in portraying the society which surrounded him, he inevitably portrayed himself. He displayed as

much as any writer the general complexion of his intellectual propensities and sympathies; and we can even trace in him the existence of some of the minor human frailties which he was most apt to condemn, an unconscious tendency which is not altogether uncommon. But he is essentially a high-minded man of letters, acutely sensitive to absurdities, impatient of meanness, of affectation, and of ignominious admiration of trivial things; a resolute representative of the independent literary spirit, with a strong desire to see things as they are, and with the gift of describing them truthfully. He repudiated 'the absurd outcry about neglected men of genius'; and in a letter quoted by Mrs. Ritchie he writes:

> 'I have been earning my own bread with my own pen for near twenty years now, and sometimes very hardly too; but in the worst time, please God, never lost my own respect.'

His delicacy of feeling comes out in a letter from the United States, where he was lecturing—

> 'As for writing about this country, about Goshen, about the friends I have found here, and who are helping me to procure independence for my children, if I cut jokes upon them, may I choke on the instant'—

having probably in remembrance, as he wrote, Charles Dickens and the *American Notes*.

On the other hand, he was not free from the defects of his qualities, mental and artistic, from the propensity to set points of character in violent relief, or from the somewhat unfair generalisation which grows out of the habit of drawing types and

distributing colours for satirical effect.

In regard to his religion, it appears to have been of the rationalistic eighteenth-century order in which moral ideas are entirely dominant, to the exclusion of the deeply spiritual modes of thought; and we may say of him, as of Carlyle, that his philosophy was more practical than profound. The subjoined quotation is from a letter to his daughter:

> 'What is right must always be right, before it was practised as well as after. And if such and such a commandment delivered by Moses was wrong, depend upon it, it was not delivered by God, and the whole question of complete inspiration goes at once. And the misfortune of dogmatic belief is that, the first principle granted that the book called the Bible is written under the direct dictation of God—for instance, that the Catholic Church is under the direct dictation of God, and solely communicates with Him—that Quashimaboo is the directly appointed priest of God, and so forth—pain, cruelty, persecution, separation of dear relatives, follow as a matter of course.... Smith's truth being established in Smith's mind as the Divine one, persecution follows as a matter of course—martyrs have roasted over all Europe, over all God's world, upon this dogma. To my mind Scripture only means a writing, and Bible means a book.... Every one of us in every part, book, circumstance of life, sees a different meaning and moral, and so it must be about religion. But we can all love each other and say "Our Father."'

This is true, stout-hearted, individualistic liberty of believing—an excellent thing and wholesome, though it by no means covers the whole ground, or meets all difficulties. The logical consequence is a strong distaste for theology, and no very high opinion of the priesthood, wherein we may probably find the root of Thackeray's proclivity, already mentioned, toward unmerited sarcasm upon the clergy. In the Introduction to *Pendennis* is a letter written from Spa, in which he says, 'They have got a Sunday service here in an extinct gambling-house, and a clerical professor to perform, whom you have to pay just like any other showman who comes.' It does not seem to have occurred to Thackeray that the turning of a gambling-house into a place of prayer is no bad thing of itself, or that you have no more right to expect your religious services to be done for you in a foreign land without payment than your newspapers or novels.

But these are blemishes or eccentricities which are only worth notice in a character of exceptional interest and a writer of great originality. Thackeray's work had a distinct influence on the light literature of his generation, and possibly also on its manners, for it is quite conceivable that one reason why his descriptions of snobbery and shams appear to us now overdrawn, may be that his trenchant blows at social idols did materially discredit the worship of them. His literary style had the usual following of imitators who caught his superficial form and missed the substance, as, for example, in the habit which arose of talking with warm-hearted familiarity of great eighteenth-century men, and parodying their conversation. It was easy enough to speak of Johnson as 'Grand Old Samuel,' and to hob-nob with Swift or Sterne, seeing that, like the lion's part in *Pyramus and*

Thisbe, 'you can do it extempore, for it is nothing but roaring.'

Thackeray will always stand in the front rank of the very remarkable array of novelists who have illustrated the Victorian era; and this new edition is a fresh proof that his reputation is undiminished, and will long endure.

FOOTNOTES:

[10] *The Works of William Makepeace Thackeray, with Biographical Introductions by his daughter*, Anne Ritchie. In 13 volumes. London, 1898.—*Edinburgh Review*, October 1898.

[11] Now Lady Ritchie.

THE ANGLO-INDIAN NOVELIST[12]

For the last one hundred and fifty years India has been to Englishmen an ever-widening field of incessant activity, military, commercial, and administrative. They have been occupied, during a temporary sojourn in that country, in acquiring and developing a great dominion. No situation more unfavourable to the development of imaginative literature could be found than that of a few thousand Europeans isolated, far from home, among millions of Asiatics entirely different from them in race, manners, and language. Their hands have been

always full of business, they have been absorbed in the affairs of war and government, they have been cut off from the culture which is essential to the growth of art and letters, they have had little time for studying the antique and alien civilisation of the country. It seldom happens that the men who play a part in historical events, or who witness the sombre realities of war and serious politics, where kingdoms and lives are at stake, have either leisure or inclination for that picturesque side of things which lies at the source of most poetry and romance. And thus it has naturally come to pass that while Englishmen in India have produced histories full of matter, though often deficient in composition, and have also written much upon Oriental antiquities, laws, social institutions, and economy, they have done little in the department of novels.

That a good novel should have been produced in India was, therefore, until very recent times improbable; that it should have been successful in England was still less to be expected. For the modern reader will have nothing to do with a story full of outlandish scenes and characters; he must be told what he thinks he knows; he must be able to realise the points and the probabilities of a plot and of its personages; he wants a tale that falls more or less within his ordinary experience, or that tallies with his preconceived notions. Accordingly, any close description of native Indian manners or people is apt to lose interest in proportion as it is exact; its value as a painting of life is usually discernible only by those who know the country. The popular traditional East was long, and indeed still is, that which has been for generations fixed in the imagination of Western folk by the *Arabian Nights*, by the legends of Crusaders, and by pictorial editions of the Old

Testament. It is seen in the Oriental landscape and figures presented by Walter Scott in *The Talisman*, which every one, at least in youth, has read; whereas *The Surgeon's Daughter*, where the scene is laid in India, is hardly read at all. Of course there are other reasons why the former book is much more liked than the latter; yet it was certainly not bad local colouring or unreality of detail that damaged *The Surgeon's Daughter*, for Scott knew quite as much about Mysore and Haidar Ali as he did about Syria in the thirteenth century and Saladin. But in *The Talisman* he was on the well-trodden ground of mediæval English history and legend; whereas the readers of his Indian tale found themselves wandering in the fresh but then almost unknown field of India in the eighteenth century.

These are the serious obstacles which have discouraged Anglo-Indians from attempting the pure historical romance. They knew the country too well for concocting stories after the fashion of Thomas Moore's *Lalla Rookh*, with gallant chieftains and beauteous maidens who have nothing Oriental about them except a few set Eastern phrases, turbans, daggers, and jewellery. They could not use the true local colour, the real temper and talk of the Indian East, without great risk of becoming neither intelligible nor interesting to the English public at large. It may be said that before our own day there has been only one author who has successfully overcome these difficulties—Meadows Taylor, who wrote a romantic novel, now almost forgotten, founded upon the history of Western India in the seventeenth century. The period was skilfully chosen, for it is the time of the Moghul emperor Aurungzeb's long war against the Mohammedan kingdoms in the Dekhan, and of the Maratha insurrection under

Sivaji, which eventually ruined the Moghul empire. The daring murder of a Mohammedan governor by Sivaji, the Maratha hero who freed his countrymen from an alien yoke, is still kept in patriotic remembrance throughout Western India. Nor is there anything in such a natural sentiment that need give umbrage to Englishmen; although the liberality of a recent English governor of Bombay who headed a list of subscriptions for public commemoration of the deed, betrayed a somewhat simple-minded unreadiness to appreciate the significance of historical analogies.

Meadows Taylor has treated this subject with very creditable success. He had lived long in that part of the country; he knew the localities; he was unusually conversant with the manners and feelings of the people, and he had the luck to be among them before the old and rough state of society, with its lawless and turbulent elements, had disappeared. He had himself been in the service of a native prince whose governing methods were no better, in some respects worse, than those of the seventeenth century; and his possession of good natural literary faculty made up in him a rare combination of qualifications for venturing upon an Indian romance. The result has been that *Tara* has not fallen into complete oblivion, though one may doubt whether it would now be thought generally readable. Although written so late as 1863, the influence of Walter Scott's mediæval romanticism shows itself in the chivalrous language of the nobles, and in a somewhat formal drawing of the leading figures, as if they were taken from a model. But all the details are truly executed. There are sketches of scenery, of interiors, of dress, arms, and manners, which are clearly the outcome of direct observation; and the incidents have a genuine

flavour. The misfortune is that these are just the sterling qualities which require special knowledge and insight for their appreciation, and are therefore missed by the great majority of readers. The following picture of a party of Maratha horsemen returning from a raid may be taken as an example:

> 'There might have been twenty-five to thirty men, from the youth unbearded to the grizzled trooper, whose swarthy, sunburnt face, large whiskers and moustaches touched with grey, wiry frame, and easy lounging seat in saddle, as he balanced his heavy Maratha spear across his shoulder, showed the years of service he had done. There was no richness of costume among the party; the dresses were worn and weather stained, and of motley character. Some wore thickly quilted white doublets, strong enough to turn a sword-cut, or light shirts of chain-mail, with a piece of the mail or of twisted wire folded into their turbans; and a few wore steel morions with turbans tied round them, and steel gauntlets inlaid with gold and silver in delicate arabesque patterns. All were now soiled by the wet and mud of the day. It was clear that this party had ridden far; and the horses, from their drooping crests and sluggish action, were evidently weary. Four of the men had been wounded in some skirmish, for they sat their horses with difficulty, and the bandages about them were covered with blood.'

No Indian novel, indeed, has been written which displays greater power of picturesque description, or better acquaintance with the distinctive varieties of

castes, race, and habits, that make up the composite population of India. It was for a long time the only Indian novel in which the *dramatis personæ* are entirely native.

Although *Tara* is unique as an Indian romance, there is another story which renders Indian life and manners with equal fidelity. *Pandurang Hari* was written by a member of the Indian Civil Service, and first published in 1826, though it reappeared in 1874, with a preface by Sir Bartle Frere. Here again the scene is in Western India, among the Marathas; but the period belongs to the first quarter of this century. It purports to be a free translation from a manuscript given to the author by a Hindu who had in his youth served with the Maratha armies, and latterly fell in with the Pindaree hordes, from whom he heard tales of their plundering raids. He eventually joins a band of robbers, and leads a wandering, adventurous life in the hills and jungles of the Dekhan, until the general pacification of the country by the British permits or obliges him to settle down quietly. The merit of the book consists entirely in its precise and valuable delineation of the condition of the country when it was harried by the freebooting Maratha companies, and in certain glimpses which are given of Anglo-Indian life in those rough days; for the writer, unlike Meadows Taylor, has no literary power, and can only relate accurately what he has seen or has carefully gathered from authentic sources.

We have thus only two novels worth mention which have preserved true pictures of the times before all the wild irregularity of Indian circumstance and rulership had been flattened down under the irresistible pressure of English law and order. The

historical romance has shared the general decline and fall of that school in Europe; while as for the exact reproduction of stories dealing entirely with native life, very few Anglo-Indians would now attempt it, for such a book would find very scanty favour in England. Nearly all recent Indian novels have for their subject, not native, but Anglo-Indian society; the heroes and heroines, in war or love, in peril or pastime, are English; the natives take the minor or accessory part in the drama, and give the prevailing colour, tragical or comical, to the background. One of the best and earliest novels of this class is *Oakfield*, written about 1853 by William Arnold, a son of Dr. Arnold of Rugby, who, after spending some years in one of the East India Company's sepoy regiments, obtained a civil appointment in India, and died at Gibraltar on his way homeward. Some pathetic lines in the short poem by Matthew Arnold called *A Southern Night* commemorate his untimely death. The book is remarkable for the autobiographic description, too austere and censorious, of life in Indian cantonments, or during an Indian campaign, before the great Mutiny swept away the old sepoy army of Bengal. It represents the impression made upon a young Oxonian of high culture and serious religious feeling by the unmannerly and sometimes vicious dissipation of the officers' mess in an ill-managed regiment stationed up the country.

Oakfield, a clergyman's son, carefully bred up in Arnold's school of indifference to dogma and strictness in morals, finds himself oppressed by the hollow conventionality of religious and social ideas at home, and sees no prospect of a higher level in the ordinary English professions. He leaves Oxford abruptly for an Indian cadetship, and sets out with

the hope of finding wider scope for work and the earnest pursuit of loftier ideals in India. He is intensely disappointed and disgusted at finding himself, on joining his regiment, among men who have very slight education and wild manners, whose talk is coarse, who gamble, fight duels, dislike the country, and care nothing for the people. The aims and methods of the Government itself appear to him eminently unsatisfactory, being chiefly directed towards such grovelling business as revenue collection, superficial order, and public works, with little or no concern for the moral elevation of the people. When his friends urge him to study for the purpose of rising in the service, civil or military, he asks: 'What then? What if the extra allowances have really no attraction? I want to know what the life is in which you think it good to get on. It seems to me that my object in life must be not so much to get an appointment, or to get on in the world, as to work, and the only work worth doing in the country is helping to civilise it.'

We have here the interesting, though not uncommon, case of a youthful enthusiast transported as if by one leap—for the sea voyage is a blank interval—from England to the Far East, from a sober and disciplined home to a loose society, from the centre of ancient peace and calm study to a semi-barbarous miscellany of races under an elementary kind of government. Ovid's banishment from Rome to the shores of the Euxine, to live among rude Roman centurions and subject Scythians, could have been no greater change, though Ovid and Oakfield are not comparable otherwise. The sight of a great Hindu fair on the river bank at Allahabad, as surveyed from the deck of a steamer, strikes him with that ever-recurrent feeling of a great gulf fixed between

Europeans and natives: 'What an inconceivable separation there apparently and actually is between us few English, silently making a servant of the Ganges with our steam engines and paddles, and these Asiatics, with shouts and screams worshipping the same river!'

He meets a cool and capable civilian, who expounds to him the practical side of all these questions and administrative problems; and he makes a few military friends of the higher stamp, who stand by him in his refusal to fight a duel and in the court-martial which follows. Then comes the second Sikh war, with a vivid description, evidently by an eye-witness, of an officer's share in the hard-fought action at Chillianwalla, and of the other sharp contests in that eventful campaign. It is an excellent example of the skilful interweaving of real incident with the texture of fiction, showing the clear-cut lines and colour of actual experience gained in the fiercest battle ever won by the English in India:

> 'The cavalry and horse-artillery dashed forward, and soon the rolling of wheels and clanking of sabres were lost in one continual roar from above a hundred pieces of artillery. On every side the shot crashed through the jungle; branches of trees were shattered and torn from their stems; rolling horses and falling men gave an early character to this fearful evening.... The 3rd Division advanced, with what fatal results to the gallant 24th Regiment is well known.... Either by an injudicious order, or, as stated in the official despatch, by mistaking a chance movement of their commandant for a signal, the 24th broke into a double at a

> distance from the guns far too great for a charge; they arrived breathless and exhausted at the guns, where a terrific and hitherto concealed fire of musketry awaited them. The native corps came up and well sustained their European comrades; but both were repulsed—not until twenty-one English officers, twelve sergeants, and 450 rank and file of the 24th had been killed or wounded.... Oakfield counted the bodies of nine officers lying dead in as many square yards; there lay the dead bodies of the two Pennycuicks side by side; those of the men almost touched each other.'

The transfer of Oakfield to a civil appointment in no way diminishes his dissatisfaction at the spectacle of a Government that has no apparent ethical programme and misconceives its true mission:

> 'The Indian Government is perhaps the best, the most perfect, nay, perhaps the only specimen of pure professing secularism that the civilised world has ever seen since the Christian era, and sometimes, when our eyes are open to see things as they are, such a secularism does appear a most monstrous phenomenon to be stalking through God's world.... When the spirit of philosophy, poetry, and godliness shall move across the world, when the philosophical reformer shall come here as Governor-General, then the spirit of Mammon may tremble for its empire, but not till then.'

Yet, notwithstanding the author's solicitude for India's welfare, the natives make no figure at all in

his story; they are barely mentioned, except where Oakfield denounces the unblushing perjury committed daily in our courts; and one can see that he does them the very common injustice of measuring their conduct by an ideal standard of morality. Anglo-Indian officials leave their country at an early age, in almost total ignorance of the darker side of English life, as seen in a police court or wherever the passions and interests of men come into sharp conflict. But this is just the side of Indian life that is brought prominently before them, at first, as junior magistrates and revenue officers, who sometimes do not care to look into any other aspects of it; and in consequence they stand aghast at the exhibition of vice and false-swearing. A London magistrate transferred to Lucknow or Lahore would find much less reason for astonishment.

The same criticism applies, for similar reasons, to Oakfield's unmeasured censure of the tone and habits prevalent among officers of the old Indian army; he probably knew nothing of regimental life in the English army sixty years ago, and therefore supposed the delinquencies of his own mess to be monstrous. It must be admitted, however, that morals and manners were loose and low in a bad sepoy regiment before the Mutiny. No two men could have differed more widely in antecedents or character than William Arnold and John Lang, whose novel, *The Wetherbys; or, A Few Chapters of Indian Experience*, was written a few years earlier than *Oakfield*. It deals with precisely the same scenes and society, at the same period, in the form of an Indian officer's autobiography. The book is clever, amusing with a touch of vulgarity, yet undoubtedly composed with a complete knowledge of its subject; for Lang was the editor of a Meerut newspaper, who took his full

share of Anglo-Indian revelry, and who knew the Indian army thoroughly. Whereas in *Oakfield* the tone rises often to righteous indignation, in *The Wetherbys* it falls to a strain of caustic humour, and in the modern reader's mouth it might leave an unpleasant taste; yet the verisimilitude of the narrative would be questioned by no competent judge. As Oakfield fought at Chillianwalla, so Wetherby fights in the almost equally desperate battle of Ferozeshah, where the English narrowly escaped a great disaster; and here, again, we have a momentary ray of vivid light thrown upon the battlefield by a writer who had associated with eye-witnesses, though he was not one of them. It is difficult to give an extract from this part of the tale, because Lang's power lies not in description, but in characteristic conversation; so we may be content, for the purpose of bringing out the contrast between two very diverse styles, with a specimen of his comic talent, as exhibited in the injunctions laid upon her husband by the vulgar half-caste wife of a poor henpecked officer just starting for the campaign:

> 'Well, then,' she continued, 'keep out of danger. If your troop wishes to charge into a safe place, let 'em. *You* don't want brevet rank, or any of that nonsense, I hope. Make as much bluster and row as you like, but for Heaven's sake keep out of harm's way.... You need not write to me every day, but every third or fourth day, for the postage is serious. If you should happen to kill any Sikhs, search them, and pull down their back hair; that's where they carry their money and jewels and valuables. A sergeant of the 3rd Dragoons, like a good husband, has sent his wife down a lot of gold mohurs and some precious

> stones that he found tied up in the hair of a Sikh officer. And, by the by, you may as well leave me your watch. You can always learn the time of day from somebody; and if anything happened to you, it would be sold by the Committee of Adjustment, and would fetch a mere nothing.'

This is unquestionably a grotesque caricature; yet the ladies of mixed parentage were quaint and singular persons in the India of sixty years ago. As Arnold could hardly have failed to read *The Wetherbys* before he wrote *Oakfield*, the book may have suggested to him the plan of going over the same ground upon a higher plane of thought and treatment. The two books stand as records of a state of society that has now entirely passed away, and from their perusal we may conclude that, among the many radical changes wrought upon India by the sweeping cyclone of the great Mutiny, not the least of them has been a thorough reformation of the native army.

When we turn to the Indian novels written after the Mutiny we are in the clearer and lighter atmosphere of the contemporary social novel. We have left behind the theoretic enthusiast, perplexed by the contrast between the semi-barbarism of the country and the old-fashioned apathy of its rulers; we have no more descriptions, serious or sarcastic, of rakish subalterns and disorderly regiments under ancient, incapable colonels; we are introduced to a reformed Anglo-India, full of hard-working, efficient officers, civil and military, and sufficiently decorous, except where hill-stations foster flirting and the ordinary dissipation of any garrison town. It is, however, still a characteristic of the post-Mutiny stories that they find very little room for natives; the secret of

successfully interpreting Indian life and ideas to the English public in this form still awaits discovery. One of the best and most popular of the new school was the late Sir George Chesney, whose *Battle of Dorking* was a stroke of genius, and who utilised his Indian experiences with very considerable literary skill, weaving his projects of army reform into a lively tale of everyday society abroad and at home. The scene of *A True Reformer* opens at Simla, under Lord Mayo's vice-royalty, names and places being very thinly disguised; the hero marries a pretty girl, and starts homeward on furlough, thereby giving the writer his opportunity for bringing in a description of a railway journey across India to Bombay in the scorching heat of May:

> 'And now the day goes wearily on, marked only by the change of the sun's shadow, the rising of the day-wind and its accompaniment of dust, and the ever-increasing heat. The country is everywhere the same—a perfectly flat, desert-looking plain of reddish brown hue, with here and there a village, its walls of the same colour. It looks a desert, because there are no signs of crops, which were reaped two months ago, and no hedgerows, but here and there an acacia tree. Not a traveller is stirring on the road, not a soul to be seen in the fields, but an occasional stunted bullock is standing in such shade as their trees afford. At about every ten miles a station is reached, each exactly like the previous one and the next following.... Gradually the sun went down, the wind and dust subsided, and another stifling night succeeded, with uneasy slumbers, broken by the ever-recurring

hubbub of the stoppages.'

On reaching home Captain West learns, like the elder Wetherby in Lang's story, that an uncle has died leaving him a good income; so he enters Parliament, and the remainder of his autobiography is entirely occupied by an account of his efforts in the cause of army reform, which eventually succeed when he has overcome the scruples and hesitation of the prime minister—Mr. Merriman, a transparent pseudonym. The author's plan of endeavouring to interest his readers in professional and technical questions is very creditably carried out, for the book is throughout readable; and it also shows that on the subject of military organisation Chesney was often in advance of his time; but the scene changes from India to England so very early in the narrative that this novel takes a place on our list more by reason of its Anglo-Indian authorship than of its connection with India.

In *The Dilemma*, on the other hand, Chesney gives us a story with characters and catastrophes drawn entirely from the sepoy mutiny. The main interest centres round the defence of a house in some up-country station that is besieged by the mutineers, and for such a purpose the writer could supply himself, at discretion, from the abundant repertory of adventures and the variety of personal conduct—heroic, humorous, or otherwise astonishing—which had been provided by actual and recent events. We have here, indeed, a dramatic version of real history; and, since the original of an intensely tragic situation must always transcend a literary adaptation of it, the fiction necessarily suffers by comparison with the fact. Yet the novel contends not unsuccessfully with this disadvantage, and in the lapse of years, as the

real scenes and piercing emotions stirred up by a bloody struggle fade into distance, the value of Chesney's work may increase. For it preserves a true picture, drawn at first hand, of the time, the circumstances, and the behaviour of an isolated group of English folk who, while living in a state of profound peace and apparent security, found themselves suddenly obliged to fight desperately for their lives against an enemy from whom no quarter, even for women and children, could be expected in case of defeat.

We may now take up a book of a very different kind, the production, not of an Anglo-Indian amateur, but of an eminent English novelist who has lived, though not long, in India—Mr. Marion Crawford. Here we are back again in the region of romance, for, although the story opens at Simla in Lord Lytton's reign and during the second Afghan War, Mr. Isaacs, the hero (whose name gives the book its title) is outwardly a Persian dealer in precious gems, but esoterically an adept in the mysteries of what has been called occult Buddhism. This queer science, as professed by a certain Madame Blavatsky, had much vogue in Northern India about 1879, particularly at Simla. To sceptics it appeared to be an adroit mixture of charlatanry and mere juggling tricks, with some elementary knowledge of the beliefs and practices of the true Indian Yogi, who seeks to attain supernatural powers by rigid asceticism, and who has really some insight into secret mental phenomena, being in this line of discovery the forerunner of the English Psychical Society.

The part played in this story by Mr. Isaacs, who is not in all respects an imaginary personage, might remind one of Disraeli's Sidonia. He is an enigmatic

character, versed in the philosophy of the East and the West, who excels on horseback and in tiger shooting, yet can discourse mystically and can bring the mysterious influences at his command to bear upon critical situations. The novel has thus two sides: we have the usual sketch of Anglo-Indian society—the soldiers, the civilians, the charming young English girl whom Mr. Isaacs fascinates. But a writer of Mr. Crawford's high repute is bound to put some depth and originality into his Indian tale, and so we have the Pandit Ram Lal, who is somehow also a Buddhist, and who is Mr. Isaacs's colleague whenever occult Buddhism is to give warning or timely succour. The chief exploit occurs in a wondrous expedition to rescue and carry away into Tibet the Afghan Amir, Sher Ali, who had just then actually fled from Kabul before the advance of an English army; and it must be confessed that so fantastic an adventure sounds rather startling in connection with a bit of authentic contemporary history.

On the whole, whether we assume that the object of a novel is to illustrate history, or to present a faithful reflection of life and manners, or to render strenuous action dramatically yet not improbably—by whatever standard we measure Mr. Crawford's book, it cannot be awarded a high place on the list of Indian fiction. But we have run over this list so rapidly, touching only upon typical examples, that we are now among the latest writers of the present day; and we may take *Helen Treveryan* (1892) as a very favourable specimen of their productions. Comparing it with earlier novels, we may remark, in the first place, that there is no great variety of plot or treatment, Anglo-Indian society being everywhere, and at most times, very much the same, except so far as closer intercourse with Europe softens down its

roughness, materially and morally, increases the feminine element, and assimilates its outer form to the English model. *Helen Treveryan*, whose author is a very distinguished member of the Indian Civil Service, is, like all other novels of the kind, the narrative of the adventures, in love and war, of a young English military officer in India. The characters are evidently drawn from life; the main incidents belong to very recent Indian history; the description of society in an up-country station, with which the movement of the drama begins, is an exact and humorous photograph. A tiger hunt is done better, with more knowledge of the business, than a similar episode in Mr. Crawford's novel; and the passionate love between Guy Langley and Helen Treveryan is well painted in bright colours to intensify the gloom and pathos of Langley's death in battle.

As Chesney went to the sepoy mutiny for his scenes of tragedy and heroism, so Sir Mortimer Durand (we believe that the original pseudonym has been dropped) takes them from the second Afghan War, having been at Kabul with General Roberts in the midst of hard fighting, where he first placed his foot on the ladder which has led him upward to high places and unusual distinction. In the chapters describing the march upon Kabul, its occupation, the rising of the tribes, and their attack upon the British army beleaguered in the Sherpur entrenchments, we have simply a memoir of actual events, written with truth, spirit, and with the pictorial skill of an artist who understands the value and proportion of romantic details. The English commanders, the Afghan sirdars, and several other well-known folk are mentioned by name; the skirmishes and perilous situations are described just as they really occurred.

No book could better serve the purpose of a home-keeping Englishman who might desire to see as in a moving photograph what was going on in the British camp before Kabul during the perilous winter of 1879-80, to hear the camp-talk, and to realise the nature and methods of Afghan fighting.

> 'He turned to the westward, and as he did so there was a flicker in the darkness, where the rugged top of the Asmai Hill could just be made out. For an instant there was perfect silence; then, as the flame caught and flared, there rose from the men around him a low, involuntary "A—h," such as one may sometimes hear at Lord's when a dangerous wicket goes down. Then in the distance two musket shots rang out, and after them a few more; but along the cantonment wall all was silent; men stood with beating hearts awaiting the onslaught. For some minutes the suspense lasted, and then suddenly burst from the darkness a wild storm of yells, "Allah, Allah, Allah," and fifty thousand Afghans came with a rush at the wall, shouting and firing. The cantonment was surrounded by a broad continuous ring of rifle-flashes, and over the parapet and over the trenches the bullets began to stream.'

But the subjoined extract, which gives Langley's death, is a better example of the book's general style —cool, circumstantial, abhorrent of glitter or exaggeration, leaving a clear impression of things actually witnessed and done, a brief glimpse of one of the incidents that remain stamped on the brain of those who saw it, but are otherwise forgotten in war-time, after a day or two's regret for the lost comrade.

[13]

> 'They were all weary, and marched carelessly forward in silence. The night was closing fast, and a little fine snow was falling.... There was a sudden flash in the darkness to the right, a shot, and then a scattering volley. Guy Langley threw up his arms with a cry, and as the startled horse swerved across the road he fell with a dull thud on the snow. There was a moment of confusion, but the Sikhs, though careless, were good soldiers, and two or three of them dashed towards the low wall from which the shots had come. They were just in time to see four men running across a bit of broken ground towards a deep water-cut, fringed with poplars. The horsemen were very quick after them, being light men on hardy horses; and one of the four Afghans, a big man in a dirty sheepskin coat, lost his head, and ran down under a bit of wall; the other three crossed the water-cut. The horsemen saw the position at once, and rode after the man on their side of the trench. They were up to him in a minute, and Atar Singh made a lunge at him with his lance; but the Afghan avoided it, and swinging up his heavy knife cut the boy across the hand. Before he could turn to run again a second horseman was on him, and with a grim "Hyun—Would you?" drove the lance through his chest.'

The dialogue is occasionally used to bring out contending views in regard to Indian politics, as might be expected from a writer who has thoroughly studied them. At a Simla dinner-party the

conversation turns upon the question whether, in the event of a collision between the armed forces of Russia and England on the Indian frontier, the Anglo-Indian army could hold its own successfully against such a serious enemy. We have on one side the man of dismal forebodings, so well known in India, and against him the hopeful, resolute officer, who lays just stress on England's superior position, with all the strength and resources of India and the British empire at her back. One supremely important point in the discussion is, by consent of both speakers, the probable behaviour in such a crisis of the native Indian army; and we may here express our agreement with the view that our best native regiments would prove themselves faithful soldiers and formidable antagonists to the Russians. As is well said in the course of the argument, the Sikhs and Goorkhas faced us well when they fought us, 'and with English officers to lead them, why should they not face the Russians?... I believe the natives will be true to us if we are true to ourselves; some few are actively disloyal, but not the mass of them. If we begin to falter they will go, of course; but if we show them we mean fighting they will fight too.' This is the true political creed for Englishmen in India, outside of which there is no salvation, but the reverse.

It is perhaps to be regretted that so capable a writer upon Indian subjects has given us nothing of native life and character beyond a few silhouettes; and after Guy Langley's death, when the scene is transferred entirely to England, the story's interest decidedly flags. Yet we may fairly assign a high place in the series of Indian novels to *Helen Treveryan*, not only for its literary merits, but also for the historical value of the chapters which preserve the day by day

experience of one who took his share in the culminating dangers and difficulties of an arduous campaign.

Mrs. Steel's book, *On the Face of the Waters*, has been so widely read and reviewed since it appeared, so lately as 1897, that another criticism of it may appear stale and superfluous; yet to omit mentioning in this article the most popular of recent Indian novels would be impossible. Here, at any rate, is a book which is not open to the remark that the Anglo-Indian novelist usually leaves the natives in the background, or admits them only as supernumeraries. For Mrs. Steel's canvas is crowded with Indian figures; their talk, their distinctive peculiarities of character and costume, their parts in the great tragedy which is taken as the ground-plan of her story, are so abundantly described as occasionally to bewilder the inexperienced reader. The scene of action is the Sepoy mutiny at Meerut and the siege of Delhi, and while the Indian *dramatis personæ* are mainly types of different classes and castes—except where, like the King of Delhi, they are historical—the English army leaders act and speak under their own names, as in Durand's book, being of course modelled upon the ample personal knowledge of them still obtainable from their surviving contemporaries in India.

The book, in fact, attempts, as is frankly stated in its preface, 'to be at once a story and a history.' And we observe that Mrs. Steel tells us, as if it were a credit and a recommendation to her work, that she 'has not allowed fiction to interfere with fact in the slightest degree.'

'The reader may rest assured that every

> incident bearing in the remotest degree on the Indian Mutiny, or on the part which real men took in it, is scrupulously exact, even to the date, the hour, the scene, the weather. Nor have I allowed the actual actors in the great tragedy to say a word regarding it which is not to be found in the accounts of eye-witnesses, or in their own writings.'

Is such minute matter-of-fact copying a virtue in the novelist? or is it not rather a defect arising out of a misunderstanding of the principles of his art? In our opinion the business of the novelist, even when he chooses an historical subject, is not to reproduce as many exact details as he can pick out of memoirs, official reports, and histories, but, on the contrary, to avoid making up his story out of a string of extracts and personal reminiscences, or at any rate to use his skill rather for disguising than for disclosing the precise verbal accuracy of his borrowed material. What would be thought of a naval romance that adopted, word for word, the authentic account of Nelson's death, or of a military novel that seasoned a full and particular account of Waterloo with a few imaginary characters and incidents? Any one who has observed how two fine writers, Thackeray and Stendhal, have brought that famous battle into the plot of their masterpieces (*Vanity Fair* and *La Chartreuse de Parme*), will have noticed that they carefully avoid the crude and undisguised employment of detail, either in words or incidents; they allow fiction to interfere very constantly with fact in all petty matters of this sort; their art consists, not in historical accuracy, but in verisimilitude; they discard authentic phrases and incidents; they do not aim at precision, but at dramatic probabilities. But Mrs. Steel does not only draw too copiously, for a

novelist, upon history; she also undertakes to pass authoritative judgments upon disputable questions of fact and situation, with which fiction, we submit, has no concern. She very plainly intimates that nothing but culpable inaction and want of energy prevented instant pursuit by a force from Meerut of the mutineers who made a forced march upon Delhi on the night of May 10, and whose arrival produced the insurrection in that city.

> 'Delhi lay,' she says, 'but thirty miles distant on a broad white road, and there were horses galore and men ready to ride them—men like Captain Rosser, of the Carabineers, who pleaded for a squadron, a field battery, a troop, or a gun—anything with which to dash down the road and cut off that retreat to Delhi.'

To argue the point in this review would be to fall into the very error on which we desire to lay stress, of attempting to deal with serious history in a light, literary way. We shall therefore be content with reminding our readers that Lord Roberts, who is perhaps the very best living authority on the subject, has come to the conclusion, after a careful survey of the circumstances, that the refusal of the Meerut commanders to pursue the mutineers was justifiable.

Yet Mrs. Steel's performance is better than her principles. The unquestionable success of *On the Face of the Waters* is in no way due to her scrupulous exactitude in particulars, for if this had been the book's chief feature it would have failed. She has a clear and spirited style; she knows enough of India to be able to give a fine natural colour to the stirring scenes of the Sepoy mutiny, and to execute good

character-drawing of the natives, as they are to be studied among the various classes in a great city. And whenever her good genius takes her off the beaten road of recorded fact her narrative shows considerable imaginative vigour. The massacres at Meerut and Delhi, the wild tumult, terror, and agony, are energetically described; and her picture of the confusion inside Delhi during the siege is admirably worked up, remembering that she wrote forty years after the event, at a time when the people and even the places had very greatly changed. The storming of the breach at the Kashmir gate by the forlorn hope that led the English columns is dexterously brought into an animated narrative; and although that story has been much better told in Lord Roberts's autobiography, we need not look too austerely on the crowd of readers who find history more attractive under a thin and embroidered veil of fiction.

A still more recent novel, entitled *Bijli the Dancer* (1898), should be mentioned here, not only for its intrinsic merits, but also because the author has boldly faced the problem of constructing a story out of the materials available from purely native society, the stock themes and characters of Anglo-India being entirely discarded. Bijli is a professional dancing girl, whose grace and accomplishments so fascinate a great Mohammedan landholder of North India, that he persuades her to abandon her profession and to abide with him as his mistress. This arrangement is correctly treated in the book as quite consistent with the maintenance of due respect and consideration for the Nawab's lawful wife, who occupies separate apartments, and, according to Mohammedan ideas in that rank of society, has no reasonable ground for complaint. Yet Bijli, though she has every comfort,

and is deeply attached to her lord, grows restless in her luxurious solitude; she pines for the excitement and triumphs of singing and dancing before an assembly. So, in the Nawab's absence, she takes professional disguise, and sings with a lute in the harem before his wife. To those who would like to see a Mohammedan lady of high rank in full dress, the following description of costume may be commended:

> 'She was dressed and adorned with scrupulous care; her eyebrows trimmed of every stray hair that might deform the beauty-arch; the lids pencilled with lampblack; the palms of her hands and the soles of her feet stained with henna; not one stray lock encroached on the straight parting of her glossy hair.
>
> 'She wore gold-embroidered trousers of purple satin, loose below the knee and full over the ankles, and fastened round her waist by a gold cord with jewelled tassels. A black crape bodice adorned with spangles and gold edging confined her full bosom, and an open vest of grey gauze with long, tight sleeves hung loosely over her waistband. Upon the back of her head was thrown a veiling-sheet of the fine muslin known as the dew of Dacca. Her feet and hands, arms and wrists and neck, were adorned with numerous rings, jewels, and chains, and from her nose was hung a ring of gold wire, on which was strung a ruby between two grey pearls.'

But Bijli's intrusion into the harem is a grave breach

of etiquette; she is detected, and told to be gone, though the lady bears her no malice. The incident brings home to her a sense of degradation; she asks the Nawab to marry her, and her discontent is increased by his refusal, until at last she escapes secretly from his house. The Nawab follows, and finds her in a hut on the bank of a flooded river which has stopped her flight; but after a really pathetic interview she returns to her free life—and 'thus ended the romance of Bijli the Dancer.'

In this short story, written with much truth and feeling, the style and handling rises above the commonplace device of dressing up European sentimentality in the garb and phraseology of Asia; and we have, so far as can be judged, a fairly real picture of the inner and the emotional side of native life in India, sufficiently tinged with romantic colouring. The fascination which professional dancers often exercise over natives of the highest rank is a well-known feature of Indian society; and although the dancer is always a courtesan, yet to invest her with a capacity for tender and honourable affection is by no means to overstep the limits of probability. We have noticed this book because it proves that the study of native manners, and sympathetic insight into their feelings and character, still survive among Anglo-Indians, albeit officials; and because it stands out in quiet relief among tales of fierce wars and savage mutiny; it neither chronicles the heroic deeds of Englishmen, nor does it devote even a single page to the loves, sorrows, or comic misadventures that break the monotony of a British cantonment.

The Chronicles of Dustypore, by H. S. Cunningham, takes us back again from the sombre, half-veiled

interior of an Indian household, into the fierce light which beats upon English society at some station in the sun-dried plains of the Punjab. We have here a sketch, half satirical, half in earnest, of official work and ways, with one or two personages that can be easily identified from among the provincial notabilities of twenty years ago. The book, which had considerable success in its time, will still provide interest and amusement for those who enjoy an exceedingly clever delineation of familiar scenes and characters; and it is in the main as true and lively a picture of Anglo-Indian life as when it was first written. Here is the summer landscape of the Sandy Tracts, a region just annexed to British administration after the usual skirmish with, and discomfiture of, the native ruler:

> 'Vast plains, a dead level but for an occasional clump of palms or the dome of some despoiled and crumbling tomb, stretched away on every side and ended in a hazy, quivering horizon that spoke of infinite heat. Over these ranged herds of cattle and goats, browsing on no one could see what; or bewildered buffaloes would lie, panting and contented, in some muddy pool, with little but horns, eyes, and nostrils exposed above the surface. Little ill-begotten stunted plants worked hard to live and grow and to weather the roaring fierce winds. The crows sat gasping, open-beaked, as if protesting against having been born into so sulphurous an existence. Here and there a well, with its huge lumbering wheel and patient bullocks, went creaking and groaning night and day, as if earth grudged the tiny rivulet coming so toilfully from her dry breast, and gave it up with sighs of pain. The sky was cloudless, pitiless, brazen. The sun rose into it without a single fleck of vapour to mitigate its fierceness ... all day it shone and glistened and blazed, until the very earth seemed to crack with heat and the mere thought of it was pain.'

Such is the environment in which many English officers live and labour for years; and this is the side of Anglo-Indian existence that is unknown to, and consequently unappreciated by, the rapid tourist, who runs by railway from one town to another during the bright cold winter months, is delighted with the climate and the country, takes note of the deficiencies or peculiarities of Anglo-Indians, and has

a very short memory for their hospitality. The narrative carries us, as a matter of course, to a Himalayan Elysium, with its balls, picnics, and its flirtations, among which the leading lady of the piece is drawn to the brink of indiscretion, but steps happily back again into the secure haven of domestic felicity. A good deal of excellent light comedy and sparkling dialogue will always maintain for this novel a creditable place upon the Indian list; and as an indirect illustration of the social wall that separates ordinary English folk from the population which surrounds them, it is complete, since we have here a story plotted out upon the stage of a great Indian province which contains absolutely no mention of the natives beyond occasional necessary reference to the servants.

For a strong contrast to *Dustypore*, both in subject and style of treatment, we may take a story which merits notice, even though it be hardly long enough to be ranked among Indian novels. *The Bond of Blood*, by R. E. Forrest (1896), draws, like *Bijli the Dancer*, its incidents and their environment exclusively from Indian life; and the book may be placed high in this class of difficult work, which few have ventured to attempt, and where success has been very rare. It is a study of peculiarly local manners, that may be also called contemporary; for though the period belongs to the early years of this century, yet the sure drawing from life of a skilful hand may still be verified by those readers who actually know the customs and feelings at the present day of the Rajpût clans, among whom primitive ideas and institutions have been less obliterated in the independent States than in any other region of India. The descriptive and personal sketches attest the writer's gift of close observation; there is good

workmanship in all the details; his sentences hit the mark and are never overcharged or superfluous. The tale is of a dissipated Rajpût chief, to whom a moneylender has lent a large sum upon a bond which has been endorsed by the sign-manual of the family Bhât, or hereditary bard, herald, and genealogist—an office of great repute and importance in every noble Rajpût house. Debauchees and cunning gamblers empty the chief's purse; the moneylender, an honest man enough in his way, is obliged to press him for the sum due; until at last the bewildered chief is persuaded by one of the gamblers to declare flatly that he will not pay at all, whereupon the creditor falls back upon the surety. Now the Bhât has pledged upon the bond not his property but his life, according to an ancient and authentic custom among Rajpût folk, as formerly throughout India, whereby a man who has no other means of enforcing a just claim against a powerful debtor has always the resource of bringing down upon him a fearful curse by committing suicide before his door. The Rajpût chief pretends that the bond is illegal and void, being founded upon an obsolete custom disallowed by the English rulers; but in truth he has brought himself to believe that the blood penalty will not really be paid, and he is struck with horror when the Bhât, after formal and public warning, stabs his own mother in the chief's presence, whereupon the curse falls and clings to the family. We may add that the substitution of the Bhât's mother for himself as an expiatory victim is in accordance with accepted precedents on such occasions, while it makes room for a pathetic situation, and greatly enhances the dramatic interest of the closing scene. Here we have the antique Oriental version of the story in Shakespeare's

Merchant of Venice, where Shylock takes the same kind of security from Antonio, upon whose person he subsequently demands execution of his bond of blood; nor does the law refuse it to him. But the Hindu custom is so far milder than the Venetian code that the Rajpût Shylock could not have rejected a tender of full payment in cash. Mr. Forrest's tale might be turned into an effective stage-tragedy if the main incident were not too shockingly improbable for Europeans, although to an Indian audience it would be credible enough. The final scene of the mother's death is stamped on the reader's imagination by the writer's power of giving intense significance not only to the speech but to slight movements of the actors, so that the mental picture becomes almost objective, while the strained expectation of the crowd makes itself felt by the force of the words.

> '"Will you redeem the bond?" asks the herald once more.
>
> '"Say 'No,'" exclaims Takht Singh.
>
> '"No," shouts Hurdeo Singh (the chief).
>
> '"Then blood must be shed at your door, and the life forfeit paid at your threshold, so that the curse may alight upon you and your house."
>
> 'He draws the dagger from its sheath. He had not laid his hand upon its handle in the same manner that he would have laid it on the hilt of his sword, but the reverse way to that; he puts the palm of his hand under it and not over it, so he could best use it in the way he intended to use it—so could he best strike

> the blow he meant to strike.
>
> '"Begone! Begone!" shouts Hurdeo Singh, waving him away with his hand.
>
> 'The people around stand fixed as statues, eyes straining, necks craning. The herald stretches his left arm behind his mother, and she, throwing open her *chudder*, leans back against it....
>
> 'The money-lender had given a sudden cry, stretched out his hand, uttered some words.
>
> 'When Hurdeo Singh had beheld the herald raise his right arm, his own had gone up with it, and from his mouth had come the cry, "Don't! Don't."
>
> 'But it was too late. The herald had raised his arm, turned round his head, and plunged the sharp stiletto into his mother's breast.'

It would be scarcely possible in an article that ranges over the light literature of Anglo-India to omit mentioning the name of Mr. Rudyard Kipling, who is the most prominent and by far the most popular of Anglo-Indian authors. Yet our reference to his writings must be very brief, since most of them lie beyond the scope of our present subject; for although Mr. Kipling's short stories are famous, and he is a consummate artist in black and white, yet in the complete edition of his volumes up to date there is, in fact, but one full-sized Indian novel, and for this he is only responsible in part. Nor, assuming that the Indian chapters of the *Naulakha*[14] may be ascribed to him, would it be fair criticism to treat them as good samples of his work, or as illustrating his

distinctive genius. The attempt in this story to bring together West and East, and to strike bold contrasts by setting down a Yankee fresh from Colorado before the palace gate of a Maharaja in the sands of western Rajputana, is too daring a venture; and the plot's development, though here and there are some touches of true vision and some vigorous passages, labours under the weight of its extravagant improbability. The American's restless energy, brought face to face with Oriental immobility, expresses itself in the following way:

> 'It made him tired to see the fixedness, the apathy, and lifelessness of this rich and populous world, which should be up and stirring by rights—trading, organising, inventing, building new towns, making the old ones keep up with the procession, laying new railroads, going in for fresh enterprises, and keeping things humming.
>
> '"They've got resources enough," he said. "It isn't as if they had the excuse that the country's poor. It's a good country. Move the population of a lively Colorado town to Rhatore, set up a good local paper, organise a board of trade, and let the world know what is here, and we'd have a boom in six months that would shake the empire. But what's the use? They're dead. They're mummies. They're wooden images. There isn't enough real, old-fashioned, downright rustle and razzle-dazzle and 'git up and git' in Gokral Seetaram to run a milk-cart."'

Such indeed might be the sentiments of an eager speculator who found himself among primitive folk.

But the discord of ideas puts the whole piece so completely out of tune as to produce only a harsh and jarring sensation; the rough Western man is thoroughly out of his element, and flounders heavily, like a cockney among mediæval crusaders. This must be taken in fairness to be the result of collaboration, for in his own short stories Mr. Kipling never commits solecisms of the kind; on the contrary, he excels in the shading of strong local colours, and in the rapid, unerring delineation of characters that stand out in clear relief, yet blend with and act upon each other when they encounter. But Mr. Kipling's volumes would require a separate article to themselves, so that we will merely take this occasion of recording our wish that he may some day turn his unique faculty of painting real Indian pictures toward the composition of a novel which shall *not* be about Anglo-Indian society (for the thin soil of that field has already been over-harrowed), but shall give a true and lively rendering of the thoughts which strike an imaginative Englishman when he surveys the whole moving landscape of our Indian empire, watches the course of actual events, and tries to forecast its probable destiny.

It has been manifestly impossible in this brief article to do more than touch upon a few books that may illustrate the prominent characteristics, and the general place in light literature, of Indian novels. This must explain why we have omitted several other works, of which *Transgression*[15] is the latest. In this tale we have a sketch of life on the North-West Frontier at the present day, with some well-known incidents of the Afridi War of 1897-98 introduced, and so coloured from the writer's own point of view as to convey, under a thin varnish of fiction, some sharp and sarcastic criticism on the management of

affairs, the politics of the Government, and the personal behaviour of certain officials, who can be at once identified. Although the book is not without interest as a true account of hazardous and stirring frontier duties, we are bound to repeat our warning that this abuse of the novel for controversial purposes is not only unfair, but profoundly inartistic. No literary success, but failure and the confusion of styles, lies that way.

What, then, are the conclusions which we may draw from this brief survey of the more prominent and typical Indian novels? To the repertory of English fiction, which is perhaps the largest and most varied that any national literature contains, they have undoubtedly made a not unworthy contribution; for we may agree that fiction has some, if not the highest, value when it produces an animated representation of life and manners, even upon a limited and distant field. In the present instance the narrow range of plot and character that may be observed in the pure Anglo-Indian novel reflects the uniformity of a society which consists almost entirely, outside the Presidency capitals on the sea-coast, of civil and military officials—a society that is also upon one level of class and of age, for among the English in India there are neither old men nor boys and girls; the men and women are in the prime of life, with a number of small children. This age-limit lops off from both ends of human existence a certain proportion of the characters that are available for filling up the canvas of the social novelist at home. And it is in truth a peculiar feature, not only of Anglo-Indian society, but of the Anglo-Indian administration, because the enforced retirement of almost every officer after the age of

fifty-five years greatly diminishes the influence of weighty and mature experience exercised by the senior men in the services and government of most countries. In regard to the equality of class it may be observed that here also the lack of variety produces a similar dearth of materials; we miss the picturesque contrasts of rich and poor, of townsfolk and country folk, of the diverse groups which make up a European population. The 'short and simple annals of the poor' cannot be woven into the Indian tapestry which records higher and broader scenes; the peasantry, for example, whose quaint figures and idioms are so useful in English novels, do not come into the Anglo-Indian tale. They cannot be blended in fiction with the foreign element because they are wholly apart in reality. In short, the whole company that play upon the exclusively Anglo-Indian stage belong to one grade of society, and the hero is invariably a military officer.

The most popular of Anglo-Indian novels are probably those which deal in exact reproduction of ordinary incidents and conversation, related in a sprightly and humorous style. This accords with the taste of present-day readers, many of whom take up a book only for the momentary amusement that it gives them, and are well content with interminable dialogues that do little more than echo, with a certain spice of epigram and smart repartee, the commonplaces interchanged among clever people at a country house or in a London drawing-room. Nevertheless, we believe that Anglo-Indian fiction is seen at its best in the novel of action, since war and love-making must still, as formerly, rule the whole kingdom of romance; since as emotional forces they are the same in every climate and country. Each successive campaign in India, from the first Afghan

War to the latest expedition across the Afridi frontier, has furnished the Anglo-Indian writer with a new series of striking incidents that can be used for his heroic deeds and dire catastrophes, for new landscapes and figures, all of them bearing the very form and stamp of impressive reality. If he is artist enough to avoid abusing these advantages, if he is neither an extravagant colourist nor a mere copyist or compiler, he has this fresh field to himself, he can give us a stirring narrative of frontier adventures, he can sketch in the aspect of a country or the distinctive qualities of a people that have preserved many of the features which in Europe have now vanished into the dim realms of early romance. His danger lies, as we have seen from some examples already quoted, in the temptation to make too much use of the attractive materials that are readily found to hand in military records or in such a real tragedy as the Sepoy mutiny, so that the novel is liable to become little more than authentic history related in a glowing, exuberant style of writing and portraiture.

In short, the Indian novel belongs to the objective outdoor class; it is full of open air and activity, and the introspective psychological vein is almost entirely wanting. There are, indeed, passages which indicate that peculiar sense of the correlation, so to speak, of the environment with the moods and feelings of men, the influence upon the human mind of nature—a sense which has inspired some of our finest poetry, and which is so well rendered by the best Russian novelists, by Tourguéneff and by Tolstoi. One work of Tolstoi's, *Les Cosaques*, might be especially recommended for study to the Anglo-Indian novelist of the future, as an example of the true impress that can be made upon a reader's mind by the literary art, when it succeeds in giving vivid

interest to the picture of a solitary officer's life upon a dull and distant frontier.

FOOTNOTES:

[12] (1) *Tara.* By Meadows Taylor. London, 1898. (2) *Oakfield.* By William D. Arnold. London, 1853. (3) *The Wetherbys, Father and Son.* By John Lang. London, ?1850. (4) *Mr. Isaacs.* By F. Marion Crawford. London, 1898. (5) *Helen Treveryan.* By John Roy. London, 1892. (6) *On the Face of the Waters.* By Mrs. Steel. London, 1896. (7) *Bijli the Dancer.* By James Blythe Patton. London, 1898. (8) *The Chronicles of Dustypore.* By H. S. Cunningham. London, 1875. And other Novels.—*Edinburgh Review*, October 1899.

[13]

'αλλ χρη τον καταθαπτειν, οσ κε
θανησι,
νηλεα θυμον εχοντασ, επ ηματι
οακρυσαντσ.'

(*Iliad*, xix. 228, 229.)

[14] *Naulakha*, by Rudyard Kipling and W. Balestier. London, 1892.

[15] *Transgression*, by S. S. Thorburn. London, 1899.

HEROIC POETRY[16]

I have taken the words 'Heroic Poetry' to signify the poetry of strenuous action, the art of describing in vigorous animating verse those scenes and emergent situations in which the energies of mankind are strung up to the higher tones, and where the emotions are brought into full play by the exhibition of valour, endurance, and suffering. It seems to me remarkable that modern English poetry, with all its splendid variety, should have produced very little in this particular form; because no one can deny that the latter-day story of the English has been full of enterprise and perilous adventure, providing ample material to the artist who knows how to use it. Nor can it be said that there is any lack of demand for this sort of poetry, and consequently little inducement to supply it. On the contrary, any one can see that hero worship is as strong as ever, that any striking incident, or example of personal valour, or exploit of war, brings out the verse-writer, and that his efforts, if only very moderately successful, are sure to win him great popularity.

But it must be admitted that most of these efforts fail rather lamentably, insomuch that at the present day we may seem to be losing one of the finest forms of a noble art. From this point of view there may be some advantage in looking back to the heroic poetry of earlier ages, and in endeavouring to mark briefly and imperfectly its distinctive qualities, to recall the conditions and circumstances in which it flourished, and possibly to hazard some suggestions as to the causes of its decline.

I do not know any recent book which throws more light upon this subject than Professor Ker's book on *Epic and Romance*, published in 1897. It is, to my mind, most valuable as an exposition of the right

nature and methods of heroic narrative, in poetry and in prose. The author has the rare gift of insight into the ways and feelings of primitive folk, and the critical faculty of discerning the characteristics of a style or a period, showing how men, who knew what to say and the right manner of saying it, have shaped the true form of heroic poetry. We can see that its elementary principles, the methods of composition in verse and prose, are essentially the same in all times and countries, in the *Iliad*, in the Icelandic Sagas, in the old Teutonic and Anglo-Saxon poems, and to some extent in the French Chansons de Geste; they might be used to-morrow for a heroic subject by any one gifted with the requisite skill, imagination, and the eye for impressive realities.

> 'Few nations have attained, at the close of their heroic age, to a form of poetical art in which men are represented freely in action and conversation. The labour and meditation of all the world has not discovered, for the purposes of narrative, any essential modification of the procedure of Homer.'

Professor Ker's essays are a brilliant and scholarly contribution to the external history of poetical forms: and it would be great presumption in me to attempt a review of his work. But it is so eminently suggestive, and to my mind so valuable as a study for verse writers of the present day, that I have ventured to place this book in the foreground of an attempt to sketch rapidly some clear outline of the conditions and the essential qualities of heroic poetry, which is too commonly regarded as an easy off-hand kind of versification, largely made up of dash, glowing words, and warlike clatter; although in reality nothing is more rare or difficult than success in it.

We may say, then, that the first heroic poets and tale-tellers were those who related the deeds and sufferings, the life and death of the mighty men of earlier times; and that their verse was the embodiment of the living traditions of men and manners. They were bards and chroniclers who lived close enough to the age of which they wrote to understand and keep touch with it—an age when battles and adventures were ordinary incidents in the annals of a tribe, a city, or a country—when valour, skill at arms, and a stout heart were supremely important, being almost the only virtues that led to high distinction and a great career. Heroic poetry of the higher kind could not exist in a period of mere barbarism, for among barbarous folk there is no art of poetic form. It could not have arisen before the people were so far civilised as to have among them artistic singers or story-tellers who gave fine and forcible expression to the acts they celebrated or the scenes they described.

The old heroic poets were neither too near to the time of which they sung or wrote, nor too far from it; and this gave them another special advantage, they had a good audience. The song, or the story, must have often been recited before listeners to whom the whole subject was more or less familiar, who knew the facts and ways of war, the true aspect and usages of a rough and perilous existence. They were too well acquainted, at any rate, with such things to be captivated by vague imaginative descriptions of fighting and refined chivalrous methods of dealing with a mortal foe, such as are found in the later Romance. Among primitive folk there would have been no taste for fantastic, allegoric, and extravagant though highly poetical accounts of valorous exploits by noble knights, with their tournaments and their

adventures with giants, dwarfs, or enchanters. The tradition was of a community encompassed by dangers for men and for women, where life and goods depended on strength and sagacity. And so the original hero was strictly a practical soldier, a man who knew his business, who had very few troublesome scruples; he was a man of war from his youth up, struggling with arduous circumstance; and he usually came at last, as in actual life, to a bloody though glorious end. For the experience of a rough age is that the drama mostly finishes tragically, not happily as in a modern novel. There was always a strain of Romance in the heroic tale, and softer feelings were never quite absent: but all this was subordinate to facts: whereas Romance seems to have prevailed and grown popular in proportion as the writer stood further away from the actualities, trusted to imagination rather than to authentic experience, preferred literary ornament to probability, and indeed took his readers as far away as possible from scenes or situations which they could recognise or verify.

It may thus be suggested that the essential quality of Heroic poetry is this—that it gives a true picture of the time. Not that the poet was an eye-witness of what he narrated, or even that he lived in the same generation with the men or the events that he celebrated. On the contrary, the distance which lends enchantment to the view is needed to surround heroes with a golden haze of glorification. But the bard did live on the outer edge, so to speak, of the period which he wrote about; he was more or less in the same atmosphere; his audience kept him very near the truth because they could detect any exaggeration, absurdity, or very unlikely incident; just as we should mark and reject any particularly

foolish story of the war that might appear in to-morrow's newspaper. They would indeed swallow strange marvels of a supernatural kind, the doings of gods and goddesses, and of magicians. But I think it will be agreed that in all ages this has been a separate matter, because men will believe what is plainly miraculous, when they will not accept what is merely improbable. So far as the natural world was concerned, the heroic artist worked upon genuine material, transmitted orally or by fragmentary records, producing a right image of remarkable men and the world in which they lived. It was a world, in most cases, of small communities and petty wars, in which a good chief or warrior came rapidly to the front, and was all-important individually.

The word Hero is one of those Greek words which have been adopted into all European languages, because they signify precisely a universal idea of the thing. He must be strong and able in battle, for a lost fight might mean the death or slavery of all his people. If the hero does his living and dying in a noble fashion, the folk trouble themselves very moderately about minor questions of religion or ethics, and are very moderately scandalised by occasional ferocity. Such a man is not to be hampered by ordinary rules; he is like a general commanding in the field, who may do anything for the preservation of his army, and the consequence is that he is seldom expected to moralise. He acknowledges and pays great honour to the cardinal virtues of truth-speaking, mutual fidelity, hospitality, strict observance of pledges. He is in many ways a religious man; though he is apt to break away from the priests when they interfere seriously with the business in hand. For the chastity of wives he has a high esteem, yet although he and his people are

constantly brought into trouble about women, he is tolerant of them, even when their behaviour is what might be called regrettable; he treats them in some degree as irresponsible beings, on the ground, perhaps, that they are the only non-combatants in the world as he knows it, and that this gives them special privileges. We can measure the importance of such a personage in ancient days, by the noise which a first-class hero made in the primitive world. He became literally and figuratively immortal: he was regarded as a god, or at least godlike—the greatest of them were actually deified. He was seized upon by fable, myth, miraculous legend, and poetry—his name was handed down for centuries until the heroic lineaments were softened down, disfigured, and at last faded away in the magical haze of later Romance. But in very rare instances he had the good luck to be taken in hand, before it was too late, by some man of genius, who knew the temper of heroic times because he lived within range of them, and who has preserved for us a story, an incident, or a typical character—not, indeed, an authentic narrative, for the true story disappears under the tradition which is built over it; nor would such accurate knowledge be of much use to the poet, whose business it is only to give us a fine spirited account of what might have occurred. For the evidence that an ancient battle was really fought we must go to the historian; the poet will tell us how it was fought, he stirs the blood and fires the imagination by his tale of noble deeds and deaths. His strength rests upon the foundation of reality that underlies his artistic construction: he has never let go his hold upon sound experience: and the truth is felt in all the colour and detail of the picture, though the whole is a work of vivid imagination. We cannot

verify, obviously, the facts and motives which led to the siege of Troy, although Herodotus appears to agree that the cause of that war was a Spartan woman's abduction, and only examines the point whether the Asiatic or the European Greeks were first to blame in the matter. Professor Murray prefers to believe in a myth growing out of the strife of light and darkness in the sky: but the rape of beautiful girls by seafaring rovers was evidently common enough in those times, so why should not the Homeric version be right? We can always be sure that the old poems represent accurately life, manners, and character; and from the analogy of those legends whose origin is known, we may fairly infer that the root of a famous story, divine or human, is first planted in fact, not in fancy; just as the Chanson de Roland is founded on a real battle in the pass of Roncevalles.

Such, therefore, were the conditions and fortunate coincidences which produced the finest heroic poetry. You had the popular hero—the noble warrior who knew his business; and you had also the poet or story-teller who knew his art, could give you a dramatic picture founded upon fact, and could always keep close to reality, without crowding his canvas with unnecessary particulars; he gave you the ruling motives, actions, and feelings of the age. The excellence of the work lay in simplicity and directness of treatment, in a sureness of line drawing, in a power of striking the right note, whether of praise or sorrow, of glory or grief. There is no staginess or far-fetched emotion, or artificial scene-painting: the style strikes the right chords of passion or pity, and stamps upon the mind a vivid impression of situation and character. Moreover, the heroic poet, as a composer, had this advantage in early days, that

continual recital before an appreciative public must have had the effect of polishing up his best verses, and polishing off his bad ones. As the theme was always some well-known story or personage, it was possible to omit details and explanations, and to go straight to the points that repetition had proved to be the most effective, so that the criterion of excellence must have been immediate popularity with the audience as in a play. It may be conjectured also that the metre, in length of line and cadence, formed itself to a great degree on the natural conditions of oral delivery and listening. For all poetry, I think, makes its primary appeal to the ear; and the modern habit of reading it seems to me to have thrown this essential test of quality somewhat into the background. The arrangement of metre and rhyme may have been gradually invented to correspond with and satisfy that natural expectation of the recurrence of certain tones and measures which always delights primitive men, and of which one may possibly trace some symptoms even in animals, as when the snake sways slowly to the simple sounds of a snake-charmer's pipe. The order of all modern versification (except in blank verse, which is never popular) depends on the echoing rhyme, which marks time like the stroke of a bell, and is waited for with keen anticipation by the sensitive listener. It is strange, to my mind, that such a beautiful creation as the beat of tonic sounds at a line's terminal should have been comparatively so recent a discovery in European poetry.

That a master of this art must have been very rare is shown by the very few pieces of first-class heroic poetry still extant out of the immense quantity that must have been attempted in different ages and countries. Yet the materials lie strewn around us,

awaiting the skilful hand; they are to be found wherever a high-spirited warlike race is fighting its way upward out of barbarism into some less wretched stage of society that may allow breathing time for working the precious mines of recent traditions. The state of society described in some Icelandic Sagas, for example, with its hereditary blood feuds and perpetual assassinations, with its code of honour making vengeance a pious duty, its tariff of blood money, and its council for adjusting civil and criminal wrongs, has a close resemblance to everyday life among the free Afghan tribes beyond the North-West Frontier of India. But the Saga writers flourished, I understand, when this state of things had passed or was passing away; while the Afghans are still a rude illiterate folk who have only songs, recited by the professional bards. The best collection of these popular songs has been made by a Frenchman, the late James Darmesteter, who remarks that 'English people in India care little for Indian songs'; though one may reply that he has made use of English writers and collectors of frontier folklore, and indeed he acknowledges his debt to Mr. Thorburn's excellent book on *Bannu or our Afghan Frontier*. However that may be, we have here, in these unwritten lays, the stuff out of which is developed, first, the established tradition, and, secondly, not only poetry but also the beginnings of history, for these lays are the oral records of contemporary events—'c'est le cri même de l'histoire.' They tell of the last Afghan War, and of the most famous border forays made by the English lords on the Afghan marches: they preserve the names and deeds of English officers and of the leading warriors of the Afghan tribes: they tell how Cavagnari 'drank the stirrup-cup of the great journey' when the English

mission was slaughtered at Kabul in 1879, and how General Roberts, his heart shot through with grief, set out in fiery speed on his avenging march against the Afghan capital. Here then is for the modern historian a rare opportunity of comparing the contemporary popular version of events with exact authentic official record; and the result ought to aid him in deciding, by analogy, what value is to be placed on similar material that has been handed down in the ancient songs and stories of other countries. He will be fortified, I think, in the sound conclusion that all far-sounding legend has a solid substratum of fact. As poetry, these songs render forcibly the temper and feelings of the people; they illustrate their virtues and vices, their worship of courage and devotion to the clan, their fanaticism and ferocity. The sense of Afghan honour, in the matter of sheltering a guest, is shown in the ballad which relates how a son killed his father for violating this law of hospitality. Like all popular verse, the Afghan songs have their recurrent phrases and familiar commonplaces; yet, says Darmesteter,

> 'in spite of the limited range of ideas and interests, and a rather low ideal, all such defects find their excuse in the passion, the simplicity, the direct spontaneous outspeaking, that supreme gift which has been lost in our intellectual decadence.'

The stirring events of the time have been immediately put into verse; the scenes and feelings are struck off in the die of actual circumstance; the heated metal takes a clear-cut impression. It is in rough songs like these that are to be found the germs of the higher heroic poetry. The ballad, the short stories, the favourite anecdotes of remarkable men at

their exploits, have the luck to fall, later, into the hands of a skilful reciter or verse-maker; they are enlarged, knit together, and fashioned according to the ideas of the day, with an infusion of rhetoric and literary decoration. The heroic ideal, to use Professor Ker's words, is thus worked up out of the sayings and doings of great men of the fore-time, who stand forth as the type and embodiment of the virtues and vices of their age, as it was conceived by poets who could handle the popular traditions. And we may guess that all anecdotes, words of might, and feats of arms that were current before and after him, if they were appropriate to the type, would cluster round the hero, and be used for bringing his character into strong relief. We can even discern this tendency in modern society, where a notable personage, like the Duke of Wellington or Talleyrand, is credited with any vigorous or caustic saying that suits the idea of him, and may be passed on in another generation to the account of the next popular favourite. The literary habit of providing impressive 'last words' for great men at death's door might be taken as another example of the magnetic attraction of types.

Of course the perfect samples of heroic verse, of famous songs and stories woven into an epic poem, are to be found in Homer.[17] Nowhere, in the whole range of the world's poetry, can we see such splendid impersonations of primitive life and character treated artistically. Yet the plot is simple enough. Agamemnon, the chief commander of the Greek army, has carried off the daughter of a priest of Apollo, and flatly refuses to give her back; whereupon the priest appeals to the god, who brings the chief to reason by spreading a plague in the Grecian camp; and so the girl goes home with apologies. But Agamemnon indemnifies himself by

seizing a captive damsel belonging to Achilles, who, being justly infuriated, will go no more to battle, but sits sulkily in his tent, until the Greek army is very nearly destroyed, for want of his help, by the Trojans.

Here we have at once a picture of manners not unlike those of the Afghan tribes, though very differently treated. The poet is at no pains to put on any moral varnish, or to tone down the roughness romantically; because he is writing, or reciting, for people of much the same way of thinking as his heroes, who are fierce chiefs quarrelling over captured women; and the whole plot is developed by sheer pressure of circumstance and character. Then on the Trojan side we have the figure of Hector, the true patriotic hero, who is naturally displeased with Paris for the abduction of Helen, which has brought a disastrous war upon Troy; yet what is done cannot be undone, and his clear duty is to fight for his own people. To Helen herself he is gentle and kind; and the religious men only irritate him when they interfere in military matters. But although he is far the noblest character in the whole poem, he is eventually slain by Achilles, for the plain reason that Achilles is the most terrible warrior of both armies. It was Hector's fate, which is the poet's way of saying that the inexorable logic of facts, as he knows them, must always prevail.

With regard to the position of women in Homeric poetry. They are mainly irresponsible creatures: how could they be otherwise, when everything depends on the sword, and a woman cannot wield it? As the equality of sexes implies a high state of civilisation and security, so in the old fighting times a woman had to stand aside; yet though she could not take

part in a battle, there were incessant battles about her: the fatal woman, who is the ruin of her country, is well-known in all legend and romance, from Helen of Troy to La Cava, whose seduction by King Roderick brought the Moors into Spain.[18] In the *Iliad* King Priam treats Helen with delicate consideration, as is seen in the beautiful passage that describes her sitting by him on the walls of Troy, and pointing out to him the leaders of the Greek army marshalled in the plain before them. Nor is any more perfect female character to be found in poetry than Andromache, Hector's wife, high-spirited, virtuous, and passionately affectionate. Yet Helen, the erring woman, is brought home eventually by Menelaus, and appears again in the *Odyssey* as a highly respected matron, who has had an adventure in early life; while Andromache, having seen her husband slain and dragged round the walls of Troy behind the chariot of Achilles, is carried off a childless widow into dolorous servitude.

Here one may feel the tragic power of an artist who draws life from the sombre verities, not as it is seen through the romantic colouring of a softer moralising age; he never wastes himself on vain lamentations, never suggests that virtue will save you from bitter unmerited calamity: he gives the true situation. There is one short passage in the *Odyssey* where the poet, merely by the way, and to illustrate something else, lets us have a glimpse of an incident that was probably familiar to him and his audience. He wishes to show what he means by a burst of grief, and this he does, not by a string of epithets, but by a picture.[19]

From the historic books of the Old Testament, particularly from the books of Samuel and the Kings,

one might take some fine specimens of the peculiar quality distinguishing the heroic style, in prose that is very near poetry. Nothing can be more simple than the narrative, it is cool and quiet: there are whole chapters without an unnecessary adjective; and yet it is most impressive, both in the drawing of such characters as Saul, David, and Joab, who stand out dramatically, like Homeric heroes, and in the stories of their deeds and death.

Professor Ker's essays contain a masterly and luminous survey of the vicissitudes undergone by the songs and legends of Western and Northern nations in the course of transmutation from the primitive heroic stage into deliberate literary composition. The original material never attained the grand epical form; the process was interrupted by the advancement of learning, by ecclesiastical influences, and by vast social changes.

> 'Even before the people had fairly escaped from barbarism, before they had made a fair beginning of civilisation and of reflective literature on their own account, they were drawn within the Empire, within Christendom.'

A similar fate, it may here be noticed, has overtaken, or awaits, the heroic songs of the Afghans; for Darmesteter tells us that as the oral tradition becomes written it falls into the net of translation and paraphrase, it is absorbed into the elegant literature of Persia, Arabia, and Hindustan, it becomes theological and romanesque. And another dangerous enemy has now appeared in the shape of the Anglo-Indian schools which follow and fix the English dominion; for the primitive folklore has no

more chance against systematic education than the wild fighting men have against drilled and disciplined soldiers. In Europe the Sagas of Iceland, which lay furthest from the civilising influences, had the luck of preserving the true elements of heroic narrative; and the Anglo-Saxon poem of Beowulf, though it falls far short of the epic, has a certain Homeric flavour. The chief is the 'folces-hyrde,' his people's shepherd; and we have Beowulf, like Hector, [20] desiring that after his death a mound may be raised at the headland which juts out into the sea, 'that seafaring men may afterward call it Beowulf's Mound, they who drive from far their roaring vessels over the mists of the flood.'[21]

Let us turn now to the romantic poetry of England, which for some centuries ruled all our imaginative literature, and annexed, so to speak, almost the whole field of battles, adventures, and energetic activity generally. The subjects are much the same: the gallantry of men, the beauty, virtues, and frailties of women: but the writers have got a loose uncertain grip upon the actualities of life; they wander away into fanciful stories of noble knights, distressed damsels, and marvellous feats of chivalry—in short they are *romancing*. They care little whether the details accord with natural fact—whether, for instance, the account of a fight is incredible to any one who knows what a battle really is; the heroes are chivalrous knight-errants, noble, pious, devoted to their lady loves; but they are not hard-headed, hard-fisted men like Ulysses, David, or some old Icelandic sea-rover. The true heroic spirit shoots up occasionally, nevertheless the prevailing idea of the romance-writer is to tell a wondrous tale of love and adventure, in which he lets his fancy run riot, rather enjoying than avoiding magnificent improbabilities.

Undoubtedly the beautiful mystic romance of the Morte d'Arthur does light up at the end with a true flash of heroic poetry, in the famous lamentation over Lancelot, when he is found at last dead in the hermitage: but in this passage the elegiac strain rises far above the ordinary level of romantic composers. Meanwhile, as the English nation at home settled down into peaceful habits under the strong organising pressure of Church and State, and arms gave way to laws, the hero's occupation disappeared from our everyday society, and the heroic tradition decayed out of imaginative literature, which was often picturesque, sublime, and profoundly reflective, but had parted with the special qualities of energetic simplicity and the vivid impression of fact. Nevertheless, heroic poetry in this sense has never been quite extinguished in Great Britain; it survived, naturally, wherever it could be preserved by a living popular tradition. And so it found a congenial refuge, though in greatly reduced circumstances, in the rough outlying regions where personal strength and daring were still vitally necessary—in the borderland between England and Scotland. An epic poem gave heroic poetry on a grand scale, it told the incidents of a great war: the ballad tells of a single skirmish or foray. Yet the difference is but one of degree, for both epic and ballad were composed for men and by men, who were in the right atmosphere; and so we have here very different work from that of the fanciful romancer. There are not many good examples; yet the antique tone rings out now and then, as in the ballad of Chevy Chase, which commemorates a fierce Northumbrian fight at Otterburne that must have stirred the hearts of the whole countryside. Here you have no knightly tournament, or duel for rescue of dames, but the

sharp clash of bloody conflict between English and Scots borderers, the best fighting men of our island. Of course the genuine account, given in Froissart, is very different; but the ballad-singer knows his art; and whereas from history we only learn that a Scottish knight, Sir Hugh Montgomery, was slain in the medley, in the ballad an English archer draws his bow

'An arrow of a cloth yard long
To the hard head hayled he.'

And then

'Against Sir Hugh Montgomery
So right his shaft he set,
The swan's feather that his arrow bare
In his heart's blood was wet.'

In the compressed energy of these four lines, without an epithet or a superfluous word, we have a picture, drawn by a sure hand, of a man drawing his long bow, and driving it from steel to feathers through a knight in armour.

Well, the border fighting disappeared with the union of the two kingdoms, and as Great Britain became civilised and began to transfer her wars oversea, the heroic verse decayed under the influence of the higher culture. For a civilised and literary society to have preserved its ancient lays and ballads is the rarest of lucky chances; the enthusiastic collector, like Percy or Walter Scott, is generally born too late, for indeed all antiquarianism is a very modern task. And poetry of this sort must decay under what Shakespeare calls 'the cankers of a calm world': while it also tends to disappear with the introduction of

professional soldiers and great armies, where personal heroism counts for little. These may be, I suppose, the main reasons why great wars produce so little heroic verse: it may be questioned whether even our civil wars of the seventeenth century inspired any genuine poetry of this sort. And when in the eighteenth century the clang of arms had completely died away at home, the battle pieces were done after an artificial literary fashion, by writers who were content to describe vaguely the charging of hosts, the thunder of cannon, the groans of the wounded, and other such mechanical generalities.

If any one could have revived the true heroic style, it would have been done by Walter Scott, with his delight in the border minstrelsy, and his martial ardour; but the romantic spirit was too strong upon him. He had laid hold of the right tradition, could give picturesque scenes and characters of a bygone time, and *Bonnie Dundee* is a ringing ballad; yet his style in the longer metrical tales is distinctly romantic and conventional. If he had not been writing for readers to whom the rough riders of the Border in the sixteenth century were totally strange and unreal beings, he could never have said that they

> 'Carved at the meal with gloves of steel,
> And drank the red wine through the
> helmet barred.'

An unsophisticated audience would have laughed outright at such a comical performance. And we can see how Scott, as a poet of the battlefield, had become possessed with the idea that the grand style must be a lofty strain, something magnificently unusual, by his two poems upon Waterloo, which are

fine failures; though we may admit the impossibility of making a heroic poem out of a battle that has just been minutely described in newspapers. On the other hand, his prose novels afford us a remarkable example of the two styles contrasted. When he wrote of the middle ages, as in *Ivanhoe*, *The Talisman*, and others, he was a pure romancer; whereas in his Tales of Scotland in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, in the *Legend of Montrose*, *Old Mortality*, *The Bride of Lammermoor*, there are two or three rapid sketches of sharp fighting which are true and spirited, full of vivacity and character. On this ground he trod firmly, knowing the country, the times, and the people of Scotland: while the petty skirmishes at Drumclog or Bothwell Brig were easier to manage artistically than a great battle. Poetry, indeed, like painting, can do nothing on a vast scale, cannot manage masses of men; and moreover it fails to deal effectively with a state of war in which mechanical skill and the tactical movement of large bodies of troops win the day. There may be as much personal heroism as ever, but it is lost in the multitude. Nevertheless sea-fighting, where separate ships may encounter and grapple like two mortal foes, with the deep water around and beneath them, gives heroism a better chance; and the mariner is always a poetic figure. So Thomas Campbell did rise very nearly to the heroic level in his poem on the battle of the Baltic, written when the true story of Nelson's famous exploit was still fresh; we have a clear and forcible impression of the British ships moving silently to the attack; and the closing lines touch the ancient ever-living feeling of gratitude to Captain Riou and his brave comrades, 'so tried and yet so true,' who fell in the great victory.

With this exception, the prolonged conflict between

England and France, which lasted twenty years up to its end at Waterloo, struck out hardly a spark of heroic poetry. Yet the Peninsular War is full of splendid military exploits, of fierce battles and the desperate storming of fortresses: it was a period of great national energy, when the people were contending with all their heart and strength against a most dangerous enemy; it was also a time when England was singularly rich in poets of the highest order. Nevertheless the only verses that may be assigned to the peculiar class which I have been attempting to define, were written, not by one of the famous group of poets, but by an unknown hand; and they relate not to a great battle, but to a slight incident, not to a victory, but to a hasty retreat. I am alluding to the well-known stanzas on the *Burial of Sir John Moore*, who was killed at Corunna in 1809; and my apology for quoting anything so hackneyed must be that it is trite by reason of its excellence; for a short poem, like a single happy phrase, wins incessant repetition and lasting popularity, because the words precisely fit some universal feeling. Why have these verses made such an effect that they are familiar to all of us, and fresh as when they were first read? Is it not because the writer had one clear flash of imaginative light, which showed him the reality of the scene, so that the description speaks for itself, without literary epithets, creating, as the French say, the true image. He struck the right note of soldierly emotion, brief, stern, and compressed, when there is no time for vain lamentation—as when in the *Iliad* Ulysses says to Achilles, who is inconsolable for the death of his friend, that a soldier must bury his comrade with a pitiless heart, and that in war a day's mourning is all that can be spared for slain men.[22]

It may be allowable to suggest, therefore, among the reasons for the prevailing dearth and scarcity of first-class heroic poetry, notwithstanding the universal demand for it, the impossibility of thus handling war on a great scale, and also the serious difficulty of giving this poetic form to contemporary events, which are not easily grouped in artistic perspective because they are so accurately described elsewhere. This suggestion may derive support from the observation that whenever, in our own day, we have had brief samples of verse-writing with a strain of the genuine old quality, they have almost always come from a distant scene, usually from the frontiers of the British Empire, far away from the centres of academic culture and the fields of organised war. Two or three of Rudyard Kipling's short poems about life on the Afghan border and Indian camp life have the right ring: they are instinct with the colour and sensation of the environment: they stir the blood with a conviction of reality. If it be permissible for a moment to compare these rough energetic verses with the battle pieces of an immeasurably greater artist—with Tennyson's *Charge of the Light Brigade*, for example—one may see that in the poetry of action the grand style misses something which has been caught by the eye that has seen the thing itself; the Charge is a splendid composition, but the frontier ballad sets you down on the ground and shows you life.

Undoubtedly, also, the romantic literary style, which prevailed so long in this country, and which is the natural product of high culture, has been unfavourable, because it was radically unsuitable, to the poetry of energetic action. It is true that all the highest compositions of the heroic poet are set off by a tinge of romance, as fine drawing is perfected by

superb colouring; but the drawbacks of romance lie in a tendency to vagueness of thought, and to the preference of archaic words and overstrained sentiments which were given as poetic mainly because they were far-fetched and did not sound commonplace. In fact the later poets adopted mechanically the strong natural language of those who wrote under the inspiration of actual emotion or events, and therefore they used it awkwardly and ineffectively; or else in their consciousness of not knowing how things really happened, they kept within sonorous generalities, which are the resource of artistic impotence. In our own day we have witnessed a sharp revolt against romantic verse, and a reversion toward those forms of art which reflect the actual experience of men, toward precision and accurate detail: Romance has been abandoned for what is called Realism. But here we are threatened by a danger from the opposite direction: for a clumsy Realist is apt to suppose that his business is merely to describe facts without adding anything out of his own imaginative faculty, that he may bring his characters on the stage in their daily garb, in the dirty slovenliness with which they go about dreaming or acting in their own petty sphere,[23] and so he overcharges with technicalities or trivial particulars. Nevertheless one may say that the poetry of action has found better methods since it shook off the influence of fantastic romance, and is distinctly improving: though its strength lies in short pieces repeating some notable incident or dramatic situations bringing out character, which is just where it began originally, and where indeed it is likely to remain, for the epic poem, or heroic verse on the grand scale, may be thought to have disappeared finally.

To conclude a very brief and inadequate dissertation, we may, I think, lay it down as a principle of the art, that heroic poetry must be true to circumstances and to character, must have the qualities of simplicity and sincerity, combined with the magnetic power of stirring the heart by showing how men and women can behave when really confronted by danger, death, or irremediable misfortune. Its background, in skilful hands, is the contrast of calm Nature looking on at human strife and sorrow, at stern fortitude and energetic effort in tragic situations. We are reading every day of such situations in the South African War, where there has been no lack of brave men 'so tried and yet so true,' who have found themselves back again suddenly in the rough fighting world of their forefathers, and have felt and acted like the men of old time. There is abundant proof that the English folk can display as much heroism as ever men did; but we may look in vain for the poet who knows how to commemorate their valour and patriotic self-sacrifice in heroic verse.

FOOTNOTES:

[16] *Anglo-Saxon Review*, June 1900.

[17] *Epic and Romance*, p. 15.

[18]

'Ay España
Perdita por un gusto y por
La Cava.'

Romance del Rey Rodrigo.

[19]

So doth a woman weep, as her

husband in death she
embraces,
Him, who in front of his people and
city has fallen in battle,
Striving in vain to defend his home
from the fate of the
vanquished.
She there, seeing him die, and
gasping his life out before her,
Clings to him bitterly moaning. And
round her the others, the
foemen,
Beat her, and bid her arise, and stab
at her back with the lances,
Dragging her off as a slave to the
bondage of labour and sorrow.

Odyssey, viii. 523-29.

[20] *Iliad*, vi. 86-90.

[21] Arnold's translation.

[22] *Iliad*, xix. 228-29.

[23] Lessing.

THE WORKS OF LORD BYRON[24]

'When the year 1900 is turned, and our nation comes to recount her poetic glories in the century which has then just ended, the first names will be Wordsworth and Byron.' Thus wrote Matthew Arnold in 1881, and now that the century's last autumn is

passing away, a new edition of Byron's works appears in the fullness of time to quicken our memories and rekindle our curiosity, by placing before us a complete record of the life, letters, and poetry of one whom Macaulay declared in 1830 to be the most celebrated Englishman of the nineteenth century, and who seventy years later may still be counted among its most striking and illustrious figures.

As the new edition is issued by instalments, and several volumes are still to come, to compare its contents, arrangement, and the editorial accessories with those of preceding editions might be thought premature. We may say, however, that a large number of Byron's letters, not before printed, have now been added; and that the text of this new material has been prepared from originals, whereas it is now impossible so to collate the text of the greater number of the letters heretofore published. Moore is supposed to have destroyed many of those entrusted to him; and moreover he handled the originals very freely, making large omissions, and transposing passages from one letter to another, though we presume that he did not re-write and amplify passages after the fashion in which certain French editors have dealt with recent memoirs. The letters now for the first time published by Mr. Murray were for the most part inaccessible to Moore. But for all these details we may refer our readers to the concise and valuable prefaces appended to the three volumes of Letters and Journals.

We have now, therefore, a substantial acquisition of fresh and quite authentic material, though it would be rash to assume that all important documents are included, for the family archives are still held in

reserve. It is admitted by the editor that the literary value of the letters now printed for the first time is not high, but he explains that in publishing, with a few exceptions, the whole available correspondence, he has acted on the principle that they form an aggregate collection of great biographical interest, and may thus serve as the best substitute for the lost memoirs. We may agree that any scrap of a great man's writing, or even any words spoken, may throw some light upon his character, whether the subject be trivial or tremendous, a business letter to his solicitor or a defiance of society; for even though careless readers chance to miss some pearl strung at random on a string of commonplaces, to the higher criticism nothing is quite valueless. In this instance, at any rate, no pains have been spared to place the real Lord Byron, as described more or less unconsciously by himself, before his fellow-countrymen; and the result is to confirm his reputation as a first-class letter-writer. The private and confidential correspondence of eminent literary men would be usually more decorous than interesting; but Byron, though he is not always respectable, is never dull. The correspondence and journals, taken all together, constitute the most interesting and characteristic collection of its kind in English literature.

In regard to the effect upon his personal reputation, we have long known what manner of man was Byron; nor is it likely that, after passing in review the complete array of evidence collected in these volumes, the general verdict of posterity will be sensibly modified. Those who judge him should bear in mind that perhaps no famous life has ever been so thoroughly laid bare, or scrutinised with greater severity. The tendency of biographers is to soften

down errors and praise where they can; and in an autobiography the writer can tell his own story. But the assiduous searching out and publication of every letter and diary that can be gathered or gleaned is a different ordeal, which might try the reputation of most of us; while in the case of an impulsive, wayward, high-spirited man, exposed to strong temptations, with all a poet's traditional irritability, whose rank and genius concentrated public attention on his writings from his early youth, this test must be extremely severe. Many of the letters are of a sort that do not ordinarily appear in a biography. Byron's letters to his wife at the time of their separation, which are moderate and even dignified, are supplemented by his wife's letters to him and to her friends, full of mysterious imputations; and there are letters to and from the lady with whom his *liaison* was notorious. His own reckless letters from Venice to Moore, and those from Shelley and others describing his dissipated habits, were clearly never intended for general reading after his death. Of course most of these are not now produced for the first time, nor do we argue that they ought never to have appeared, for the biographical interest is undeniable. Our point is that the publication of such private and damaging correspondence is so very unusual in biographies that it places Byron at a special disadvantage, and that when we pass our judgment upon him we are bound to take into account the unsparing use that has been made of papers connected with the most intimate transactions of a lifetime which was no more than a short and stormy passage from youth to manhood; for he was cut off before the age at which men abandon the wild ways of their springtide, and are usually disposed to obliterate the record of them. At least

one recent biography might be mentioned which would have read differently if it had been compiled with similar candour.

The annotations subjoined to almost every page of the text are so ample and particular as to furnish in themselves extensive reading. The notices of every person named would go far to serve as a brief biographical dictionary of Byron's contemporaries, whether known or unknown to fame. We get a concise account of Madame de Staël—her birth, books, and political opinions—very useful to those who had no previous acquaintance with her. Lady Morgan and Joanna Southcote obtain quite as much space as would be allotted to them in any handbook of celebrities. Beau Brummell and Lord Castlereagh are treated with similar liberality. There is a full account, taken from the *Examiner*, of the procession with which Louis XVIII. made his entry into London in 1814. The notes—of about four pages each—upon Hobhouse and Lord Carlisle may be justified by their close connection with Byron's affairs; though some of us might have been content with less. Allusions to such notorious evildoers as Tarquin are explained, and stock quotations from Shakespeare have been carefully verified. The result is that a reader might go through this edition of Byron with the very slightest previous knowledge of general literature or of contemporary history, and might give himself a very fair middle-class education in the process, although the consequence might be to imbue him with what Coleridge has called 'a passion for the disconnected.' Nevertheless we readily acknowledge the thorough execution of this part of the editorial work, and the very meritorious labour that has been spent upon bringing together every kind of document and reference that can inform or enlighten us upon

the main subjects of Byron's life and writings. In the poems the practice of giving in notes the rough drafts and rejected versions of passages and lines, so as to show the poet at work, seems to us not altogether fair to him, and is occasionally distracting to those readers who enjoy a fine picture without asking how the colours were mixed, or are not anxious about the secrets of a good dinner. Yet to students of method, to the fellow-craftsman, and to the literary virtuoso, these variant readings, of which there are sometimes four to a single line, may often be of substantial interest, as throwing light on the tendencies and predilections of taste which are the formative influences upon style in prose or poetry.

Probably the most favourable circumstance for a poet is that he should only be known, like the Divinity of Nature, from his works; or at least that, like Wordsworth, he should keep the noiseless tenor of his way down some secluded vale of life, whereby his poems stand out in clear relief like fine paintings on a plain wall. Is there any modern English poet of the first class, except Byron, whose entire prose writings and biography are bound up in standard editions with his poetry? The question is at any rate worth asking, because certainly there is no case in which the record of a poet's private life and personal fortunes has so greatly affected, for good or for ill, his poetic reputation. Those who detested his character and condemned his way of living found it difficult to praise his verses; they detected the serpent under every stone. For those who were fascinated by the picture of a reckless prodigal, always in love and in debt, with fierce passions and a haughty contempt for the world, who defied public opinion and was suspected of unutterable things—such a personality added enormous zest to his

poetry. But now that Byron's whole career has been once more laid out before his countrymen, with light poured on to it from every cranny and peephole, those who take up this final edition of his life and works must feel that their main object and duty should be to form an unbiased estimate of the true value, apart from the author's rank and private history, of poems which must always hold a permanent place in the high imaginative literature of England.

It may be said that every writer of force and originality traverses two phases of opinion before his substantive rank in the great order of merit is definitely fixed: he is either depressed or exalted unduly. He may be neglected or cheapened by his own generation, and praised to the sides by posterity; or his fame may undergo the inverse treatment, until he settles down to his proper level. Byron's reputation has passed through sharper vicissitudes than have befallen most of his compeers; for though no poet has ever shot up in a brief lifetime to a higher pinnacle of fame, or made a wider impression upon the world around him, after his death he seems to have declined slowly, in England, to a point far below his real merits. And at this moment there is no celebrated poet, perhaps no writer, in regard to whom the final judgment of critics and men of letters is so imperfectly determined. Here is a man whom Goethe accounted a character of unique eminence, with supreme creative power, whose poetry, he admitted, had influenced his own later verse—one of those who gave strenuous impulse to the romantic movement throughout England, France, and Germany in the first quarter of this century, who set the fashion of his day in England, stirred and shaped the popular

imagination, and struck a far resonant note in our poetry. Yet after his death he suffered a kind of eclipse; his work was much more unduly depreciated than it had been extolled; while in our own time such critics as Matthew Arnold and Mr. Swinburne have been in profound disagreement on the question of his worth and value as a poet. Nor is it possible for impartial persons to accept the judgment of either of these two eminent artists in poetry, since Arnold placed Wordsworth and Byron by anticipation on the same level at this century's end, whereas Wordsworth stands now far higher. And the bitter disdain which Sir. Swinburne has poured upon Byron's verse and character, though tempered by acknowledgment of his strength and cleverness, and by approbation of his political views, excites some indignation and a sympathetic reaction in his favour. One can imagine the ghost of Byron rebuking his critic with the words of the Miltonic Satan, 'Ye knew me once no mate For you, there sitting where ye durst not soar'; for in his masculine defiant attitude and daring flights the elder poet overtops and looks down upon the fine musical artist of our own day.

Some of the causes which have combined to lower Byron's popularity are not far to seek. The change of times, circumstance, and taste has been adverse to him. The political school which he so ardently represented has done its work; the Tory statesmen of the Metternich and Castlereagh type, who laid heavy hands upon nations striving for light and liberty, have gone down to their own place; the period of stifling repression has long ended in Europe. Italy and Greece are free, the lofty appeals to classic heroism are out of date, and such fiery high-swelling trumpet notes as

'Yet, Freedom! yet, thy banner, torn, but
flying,
Streams like a thunderstorm *against* the
wind,'

fall upon cold and fastidious ears. 'The day will come,' said Mazzini in after-years, 'when the democracy will acknowledge its debt to Byron;' but the demos is notoriously ungrateful, and the subject races have now won their independence. The shadow of discouragement and weariness which passed over sensitive minds at the beginning of this century, a period of political disillusion, has long been swept away by the prosperity and sanguine activities of the Victorian era; and the literary style has changed with the times. Melancholy moods, attitudes of scornful despair, tales of fierce love and bloody revenge are strange and improbable to readers who delight in situations and emotions with which they are familiar, who demand exactitude in detail and correct versification; while sweet harmonies, perfection of metre, middle-class pastorals, and a blameless moral tone came in with Tennyson. In short, many of the qualities which enchanted Byron's own generation have disenchanted our own, both in his works and his life; for when Macaulay wrote in 1830 that the time would come when his 'rank and private history will not be regarded in estimating his poetry,' he took no account of future editions enlarged and annotated, or of biographies of *The Real Lord Byron*; whereby it has come to pass, as we suspect, that the present world knows more of Byron's private history than of his poems. His faults and follies stand out more prominently than ever; his story is more attractive reading than most romances; and the stricter morality of the day condemns him

more severely than did the society to which he belonged. Psychological speculation is now so much more practised in literature than formerly, there is so much more interest in 'the man behind the book,' that serious moral delinquencies, authentically recorded and eagerly read, operate more adversely than ever in affecting the public judgment upon Byron's poetry, because they provide a damaging commentary upon it. His contemporaries—Coleridge, Keats, Shelley—lived so much apart from the great world of their day that important changes in manners and social opinion have made much less difference in the standard by which their lives are compared with their work. Their poetry, moreover, was mainly impersonal. Whereas Byron, by stamping his own character on so much of his verse, created a dangerous interest in the man himself; and his *empeiria* (as Goethe calls it), his too exclusively worldly experience, identified him with his particular class in society, rendering him largely the responsible representative of a libertinism in habits and sentiments that was more pardonable in his time than in our own. His poetry belongs also in another sense to the world he lived in: it is incessantly occupied with current events and circumstance, with Spain, Italy, and Greece as he actually saw them, with comparisons of their visible condition and past glories, with Peninsular battlefields, and with Waterloo. Of worldliness in this objective meaning his contemporaries had some share, yet they instinctively avoided the waste of their power upon it; and so their finest poetry is beautiful by its detachment, by a certain magical faculty of treating myth, romance, and the mystery of man's sympathetic relations with universal Nature.

A recent French critic of Chateaubriand, who defines

the 'romantisme' of that epoch as no more than a great waking up of the poetic spirit, says that the movement was moral and psychological generally before it spread into literature. In criticising Byron's poetry we have to bear in mind that he came in on the first wave of this flood, which overflowed the exhausted and arid field of poetry at the end of the last century, fertilising it with colour and emotion. The comparison between Byron in England and Chateaubriand in France must have been often drawn. The similarity in their style, their moody, melancholy outlook upon common humanity, their aristocratic temper, their self-consciousness, their influence upon the literature of the two countries, the enthusiasm that they excited among the ardent spirits of the generation that reached manhood immediately after them, and the vain attempts of the elder critics to resist their popularity and deny their genius—form a remarkable parallel in literary history. As Jeffrey failed at first to discern the promise of Byron, so Morellet could only perceive the obviously weak points of Chateaubriand, laying stress on his affectations, his inflated language, his sentimental exaggeration, upon all the faults which were common to these two men of genius, the defects of their qualities, the energetic rebound from the classic level of orderly taste and measured style. It was the ancient *régime* contending against a revolutionary uprising, and in poetry, as in politics, the leaders of revolution are sure to be excessive, to force their notes, to frighten their elders, and to scandalise the conservative mind. Yet just as Chateaubriand, after passing through his period of depression, is now rising again to his proper place in French literature, so we may hope that an impartial survey of Byron's verse will help to determine the

rank that he is likely to hold permanently, although the high tide of Romance in poetry has at this moment fallen to a low ebb, and the spell which it laid upon our forefathers may have lost its power in an altered world.

It must be counted to the credit of these Romantic writers that at any rate they widened and varied the sphere and the resources of their art, by introducing the Oriental element, so to speak, into the imaginative literature of modern Europe. They brought the lands of ancient civilisation again within the sphere of poetry, reviving into fresh animation the classic glories of Hellas, reopening the gates of the mysterious East, and showing us the Greek races still striving, as they were twenty-two centuries earlier, for freedom against the barbarous strength of an Asiatic empire. Byron was the first of the poets who headed this literary crusade for the succour of Christianity against Islam in the unending contest between East and West on the shores of the Mediterranean, and in this cause he eventually died. Chateaubriand, Lamartine, and Victor Hugo were also travellers in Asia, and had drawn inspiration from that source; they all instinctively obeyed, like Bonaparte, the impulse which sends adventurous and imaginative spirits toward that region of strong passions and primitive manners, where human life is of little matter, and where the tragic situations of drama and fiction may at any time be witnessed in their simple reality. The effect was to introduce fresh blood into the veins of old romance; and Byron led the van of an illustrious line of poets who turned their *impressions de voyage* into glowing verse, for the others only trod in his footsteps and wrote on his model, while Lamartine openly imitated him in his *Dernier Chant de Childe Harold*. For the first time the

Eastern tale was now told by a poet who had actually seen Eastern lands and races, their scenery and their cities, who drew his figures and landscape with his eye on the objects, and had not mixed his local colours by the process of skimming books of travel for myths, legends, costume, or customs, with such result as may be seen in Moore's *Lalla Rookh* and in Southey's *Thalaba*, or even in Scott's *Talisman*. The preface to this novel shows that Scott fully appreciated the risk of competing with Byron, albeit in prose, in the field of Asiatic romance, yet all his skill avails little to diminish the sense of conventional figure-drawing and of uncertainty in important details when they are not gathered in the field, but only transplanted from the library.

Byron has noticed in one of his letters the errors of this kind into which a great poet must fall whose accurate observation has been confined mainly to his own country. 'There is much natural talent,' he writes, 'spilt over the *Excursion*, yet Wordsworth says of Greece that it is a land of

> 'Rivers, fertile plains, and sounding shores
> Under a cope of variegated sky.

The rivers are dry half the year, the plains are barren, the shores still and tideless, the sky is anything but variegated, being for months and months beautifully blue.'

This may be thought trivial criticism, yet it is evidence of the attention given by Byron to precise description. His accuracy in Oriental costume was also a novelty at that time, when so little was known of Oriental lore that even Mr. Murray 'doubted the propriety of putting the name of Cain into the mouth

of a Mohammedan.' With regard to his characters, we may readily admit that in the *Giaour* or the *Bride of Abydos* the heroes and heroines behave and speak after the fashion of high-flying Western romance, and that their lofty sentiments in love or death have nothing specifically Oriental about them. But this was merely the romantic style used by all Byron's contemporaries, and generally accepted by the taste of that day as essential to the metrical rendering of a passionate love-story. It may be argued, with Scott, that when a writer of fiction takes in hand a distant age or country, he is obliged to translate ideas and their expression into forms with which his readers are, to some extent, familiar. Byron seasoned his Oriental tales with phrases and imagery borrowed from the East; but whatever scenic or characteristic effects might have thus been produced are seriously marred by the explanatory notices and erudite references to authorities that are appended to the text. This fashion of garnishing with far-fetched outlandish words, in order to give the requisite flavour of time or place, was peculiar to the new romantic school of his era; it was the poetical dialect of the time, and Byron employed it too copiously. Yet, with all his faults, he remains a splendid colourist, who broke through a limited mannerism in poetry, and led forth his readers into an unexplored region of cloudless sky and purple sea, where the serene aspect of nature could be powerfully contrasted with the shadow of death and desolation cast over it by the violence of man.

Undoubtedly this contrast, between fair scenery and foul barbarism, had been presented more than once in poetry; yet no one before Byron had brought it out with the sure hand of an eye-witness, or with such ardent sympathy for a nation which had been for

centuries trodden under the feet of aliens in race and religion, yet still clung to its ancient traditions of freedom. Throughout his descriptive poems, from *Childe Harold* to *Don Juan*, it is the true and forcible impression, taken from sight of the thing itself, that gives vigour and animation to his pictures, and that has stamped on the memory the splendid opening of the *Giaour*, the meditations in Venice and Rome, the glorious scenery of the Greek islands, and even such single lines as

'By the blue rushing of the arrowy Rhone.'

In the art of painting what may be called historical landscape, where retrospective associations give intellectual colour to the picture, Byron has very few rivals. His descriptions of the Lake of Geneva, of Clarens, of the Trojan plain—

'High barrows, without marble or a name,
A vast, untilled, and mountain-skirted
plain,
And Ida in the distance'—

have the quality of faithful drawing illumined by imaginative power. They have certainly touched the emotions and enhanced the pleasure of all travellers in the last three generations whose minds are accessible to poetic suggestion; and if at the present day their style be thought too elaborate and the allusions commonplace, it cannot be denied that the fine art of English composition would be poorer without them. The stanzas in *Childe Harold* on Waterloo are full of the energy which takes hold of and poetically elevates the incidents of war—the distant cannon, the startled dancers, the transition from the ball-room to the battlefield, from the gaiety

of life to the stillness of death. Nothing very original or profound in all this, it may be said; yet the great difficulty of dealing adequately with heroic action in contemporary verse, of writing a poem on a campaign that has just been reported in the newspapers, is exemplified by the fact that Walter Scott's two compositions on Waterloo are failures; nor has any poet since Byron yet succeeded in giving us a good modern battlepiece.

Nevertheless there is much in Byron's longer poems (excepting always *Don Juan*) that seems tedious to the modern reader; there are descriptions and declamations too long drawn-out to sustain the interest; and there are many lines that are superfluous, untidy, and sometimes ungrammatical. One can only plead, in extenuation of these defects, that the fashion of his day was for long metrical romance, in which it is difficult to maintain the high standard of careful composition exacted by the latest criticism. It is almost impossible to tell a long story in verse that shall be throughout poetical. And one main reason why this fashion has nearly passed away may be surmised to be that the versified narrative cannot adapt itself in this respect to the present taste, which is impatient of fluent lengthy heroics, refusing to accept them for the sake of some finely executed passages. Southey's epics are now quite unreadable, and many of the blemishes in Byron's poetry are inseparable from the romantic style; they are to be found in Scott's metrical tales, which have much redundancy and some weak versification; while his chiefs and warriors often talk a stilted chivalrous language which would now be discarded as theatrical. Byron's personages have the high tragic accent and costume; yet one must admit that they have also a fierce vitality; and as for the crimes and

passions of his Turkish pashas and Greek patriots, he had actually seen the men and heard of their deeds. The fact that he also portrayed more unreal characters in dismal drapery—Lara, Conrad, and Manfred, as the mouthpieces of splenetic misanthropy—has led to some unjust depreciation of his capacity for veritable delineation. Macaulay, for example, in his essay on Byron, observes that 'Johnson, the man whom Don Juan met in the slave-market, is a striking failure. How differently would Sir Walter Scott have drawn a bluff, fearless Englishman in such a situation!' and Mr. Swinburne echoes this criticism. But it is unfair to compare a minor character, slightly sketched into a poem for the purposes of the plot, with the full-length portrait that might have been made of him by a first-class artist in prose. The proper comparison would be between the figures in the metrical romances of the two poets, whereby it might be shown that Scott could take as little trouble as Byron did about an unimportant subsidiary actor. In regard to the leading heroes and heroines, Scott's poetic creations are hardly more interesting or dramatic than Byron's; and whenever he makes, even in prose, an excursion into Asia, his figure-drawing becomes conventional. But he was usually at the disadvantage, from which Byron was certainly free, of being hampered by an inartistic propensity to make virtuous heroes triumph in the long run.

Yet it must be admitted that no poet of the same calibre has turned out so much loose uneven work as Byron. His lapses into lines that are lame or dull are the more vexatious to the correct modern ear when, as sometimes happens, they spoil a fine passage, and in the midst of a superb flight his muse comes down with a broken wing. In the subjoined stanza, for

example, from the Waterloo episode in *Childe Harold*, the first five lines are clear, strenuous, and concise, while the next three are confused and clumsy; so that though he recovers himself in the final line, the general effect is much damaged:

'Last noon beheld them full of lusty life,
Last eve in Beauty's circle proudly gay,
The midnight brought the signal-sound of strife,
The morn the marshalling in arms—the day
Battle's magnificently stern array.
The thunder-clouds close o'er it, *which when rent,*
The earth is covered thick with other clay,
Which her own clay shall cover, heaped and pent,
Rider and horse—friend, foe—in one red burial blent.'

These blots, and there are many, become less pardonable when we observe, from the new edition, that Byron by no means neglected revision of his work. But his impetuous temper, and the circumstance of his writing far from the printing-press, encouraged hasty execution; and though the most true remark that 'easy writing is devilish hard reading' is his own, though he praised excessively the chiselled verse of Pope, he was always inclined to pose as one who threw off jets of boiling inspiration, and in one letter he compares himself to the tiger who makes or misses his point in one spring. He ranked Pope first among English poets, yet he learnt

nothing in that school; he pretended to undervalue Shakespeare, yet he must have had the plays by heart, for his letters bristle with quotations from them. His avowed taste in poetry is hard to reconcile with his own performances: his verse was rushing, irregular, audacious, yet he overpraises the smooth composition of Rogers; he dealt in heroic themes and passionate love-stories, yet Crabbe's humble pastorals had their full charm for him. Except Crabbe and Rogers, he declared, 'we are all—Scott, Wordsworth, Moore, Campbell, and I—upon a wrong revolutionary poetical system, not worth a damn in itself;' but among these are some leaders of the great nineteenth-century renaissance in English verse; and Byron was foremost in the revolt against unnatural insipidity which has brought us through romance to realism, by his clear apprehension of natural form and colour, and even by the havoc which he made among conventional respectabilities. He dwelt too incessantly upon his own sorrows and sufferings; and in the gloomy soliloquies of his dramatic characters we have an actor constantly reappearing in his favourite part. Yet this also was a novelty to the generation brought up on the impersonal poetry of the classic school; and here, again, he is a forerunner of the self-reflecting analytical style that is common in our own day; for there is a Byronic echo in the 'divine despair' of Tennyson. The melancholy brooding spirit, dissatisfied with society and detesting complacency, had for some time been in the air; it had affected the literature of France and Germany; Werther, Obermann, and René are all moulded on the same type with Childe Harold; yet Sainte-Beuve rightly says that this identity of type does not mean imitation—it means that the writers were all in the same atmosphere. There is

everywhere the same reaction against philosophic optimism and the same antipathy to the ways of mankind 'so vain and melancholy,' They sought refuge from inborn ennui or irritability among the mountains, on the sea, or in distant voyages, and they instinctively embodied these moods and feelings in various personages of fiction, in the solitary wanderer, in the fierce outlaw, in the man 'with chilling mystery of mien,' who rails against heaven and humanity. Their literature, in short, however overcoloured it may have been, did represent a generally prevailing characteristic among men of excessive sensibility at a time of stir and tumult in the world around them; it was not a mere unnatural invention, though we must leave to the psychologist the task of tracing a connection between this mental attitude and the circumstances that generated it. But the self-occupied mind has no dramatic power, and so their repertory contained one single character, a reproduction of their own in different attitudes and situations. Chateaubriand may be said never to have dropped his mask; whereas Byron, whose English sense of humour must have fought against taking himself so very seriously, relieved his conscience by lapses into epigram, irony, and persiflage. Thus in the same year (1818), and from the same place (Venice), he produced the fourth canto of *Childe Harold*, full of deep longing for unbroken solitude:

'There is a pleasure in the pathless woods,
There is a rapture on the lonely shore,
There is society, where none intrudes,
By the deep sea, and Music in its
roar;'

and also *Beppo*, a satirical sketch of the loose and easy Venetian society in which he was actually

living. Here, again, his somewhat ribald letters from Venice do his romantic poetry some wrong; but in fact he had a diabolic pleasure in betraying himself, and his *Mémoires d'Outre Tombe*, if they had been preserved, would have been very different from Chateaubriand's elaborate autobiography.

It was the spectacle of Christians groaning under Turkish oppression, and of their heroic resistance, that inspired three of Byron's finest poems, the *Giaour*, the *Bride of Abydos*, the *Siege of Corinth*. On this subject he was so heartily in earnest that he could even lose sight of his own woes; and notwithstanding the exuberance of colour and sentiment, these tales still hold their place in the first rank of metrical romance. Their construction is imperfect, even fragmentary; yet while Scott could put together and tell his story much better, not even Scott could drive it onward and sustain the verse at a high level with greater energy, or decorate his narrative with finer description of scenery, or give more intensity to the moments of fierce action. The splendid apostrophe to Greece in the *Giaour*—

> 'Clime of the unforgotten brave!
> Whose land from plain to mountain cave
> Was Freedom's home or Glory's grave'—

has forty lines of unsurpassed beauty and fire, written in the manuscript, as a note tells us, in a hurried and almost illegible hand—an authentic example of true improvisation which the elaborate poets of our own day may match if they can. The tumid phrase and melodramatic figuring—

> 'Dark and unearthly is the scowl
> That glares beneath his dusky cowl'—

are now worn-out theatrical properties; yet those who have seen the untamed Asiatic might find it hard to overdraw the murderous hate and sullen ferocity that his face, or his victim's, will occasionally disclose. The heroes, at any rate, love and die in a masculine way; it is the old tragic theme of bitter unmerited misfortune, of daring adventure that ends fatally, without any of the wailing sensuality that infects the more harmonious poetry of a later day. There are, perhaps, for modern taste, too many outlandish words and references to Eastern customs or beliefs, requiring glossaries and marginal explanations; nor does the profuse annotation of the present edition lighten a reader's burden in this respect. Byron had no business to write 'By pale Phingari's trembling light,' leaving us at the mercy of assiduous editors to expound that 'Phingari' is the Greek φενγαριον, and stands here for the moon. And if he could have spared us such Orientalisms as 'Al Sirât's arch,' or 'avenging Monkir's scythe,' we should have mixed up less desultory reading with the enjoyment of fine passages. He gives us too much of his local colouring, he checks the rush of his verse by superfluous metaphors, he has weak and halting lines. The style is heated and fuming, yet the dainty art-critic who lays hands on such metal thrown red hot from the forge may chance to burn his fingers over it. Nor must we forget that in these poems Byron brought the classic lands of Greece and the Levant within the sphere of modern romance, and has unquestionably added some 'deathless pages' to English literature.

Byron has told us why he adopted for the *Corsair*, and afterwards for *Lara*, 'the good old and now neglected heroic couplet':

> 'The stanza of Spenser is, perhaps, too slow and dignified for narrative, though I confess it is the measure after my own heart; Scott alone, of the present generation, has hitherto triumphed completely over the fatal facility of the octosyllabic verse; and this is not the least victory of his fertile and mighty genius; in blank verse Milton, Thomson, and our dramatists are the beacons that shine along the deep, but warn us from the rough and barren rocks on which they are kindled.'[25]

We doubt much, from a comparison of the poems, whether the experiment of changing his metre was successful. The short eight-syllabled line displayed Byron's capacity for vigorous concision and swift movement; it is eminently suited for strength and speed; whereas in the slow processional couplet he becomes diffuse, often tedious; he has room for more rhetoric and verbosity; he falls more into the error of describing at length the character and sentiments of his gloomy heroes, instead of letting them act and speak for themselves. At moments when inspiration is running low, and a gap has to be filled up, the shorter line needs less padding, and can be more rapidly run over when it is weak. Whereas a feeble heroic couplet becomes ponderous and sinks more quickly into bathos—as in the following sample from the *Corsair*:

> 'Oh! burst the Haram, wrong not on your lives
> One female form—remember—*we* have wives.'

And the consequence has been that *Lara* and the *Corsair* are now, we believe, the least readable of

Byron's metrical romances.

Of Byron's dramas we are obliged to say that, to borrow his own metaphor, he would have fared better as a poet if he had taken warning from the beacons, and had given blank verse a wide berth, instead of setting himself boldly on a course which, as he evidently knew, is full of peril for fast-sailing, free-going versifiers. He saw that he could not approach the great masters of this measure, he was resolved not to imitate them; and so he appears to have chosen the singular alternative of writing nothing that should in the least resemble them. His general object as a playwriter is stated, in a letter about *Sardanapalus*, to have been 'to dramatise striking passages of history and mythology.'

> 'You will find,' he adds most truly, 'all this very unlike Shakespeare; and so much the better in one sense, for I look upon him to be the worst of models, though the most extraordinary of writers. It has been my object to be as simple and severe as Alfieri, and I have broken down the poetry as nearly as I could to common language.'

And undoubtedly he did break it down so effectually that much of his blank verse hobbles like a lame horse, being often mere prose printed in short lines. Here are two specimens, not cut into lengths, which have no metrical construction at all:

> 'Unless you keep company with him, and you seem scarce used to such high society, you can't tell how he approaches.'[26]

> 'Where thou shalt pass thy days in peace, but on condition that the three young princes are

given up as hostages,'[27]

Many others of the same quality might be given, in which the *disjecti membra poetæ* would be exceedingly hard to find. It is surprising that a writer of Byron's experience should have fallen into the error of supposing that simplicity could be attained by the mere use of common language. For even Wordsworth, who is a master of simple strength, could never allow his peasants to talk their ordinary vernacular without a fatal drop into the commonplace; and all verse that is to be plain and unaffected in style and thought requires the most studious composition. Byron seems scarcely to have understood that blank verse has any rules of scansion, and his signal failure in this metre has become less tolerable and more conspicuous, since Keats in his day, and Tennyson after him, have carefully studied the construction of blank verse, and have left us admirable examples of its capacity for romantic expression. It is indeed strange that Byron should have fancied that he could use so delicate an instrument with a rough unpractised hand.

There are some vigorous passages scattered through the plays, and we have it on record that Dr. Parr could not sleep a wink after reading *Sardanapalus*. Nevertheless, we fear that the present generation will find little cause for demurring to Jeffrey's judgment upon the tragedies, that they are for the most part 'solemn, prolix, and ostentatious.' They were not composed, as Byron himself explained, 'with the most remote view to the stage,' so that he had not before his eyes the wholesome fear of a critical audience. In truth it must be admitted that he lacked the true dramatic instinct; he could only set up his leading figures to deliver imposing speeches

appropriate to a tragic situation; and one may guess that the consciousness of awkward handling weighed upon the spirit and style of his blank verse, for his ear seems to have completely misled him when it had lost the guidance of recurrent rhyme. Of *Cain: a Mystery*, one must speak reverently, since Walter Scott, to whom it was dedicated, wrote that the author had 'matched Milton on his own ground'; yet in Lucifer, who leads the dialogue, we have little more than a spectral embodiment of Byron's own rebellious temper; and in this poem, as in *Manfred*, the discussion of metaphysical problems carries him beyond his depth. There are, nevertheless, some fine declamatory passages; and we may quote as a curiosity one soft line, fresh from the Swiss mountains:

'Pipes in the liberal air
Mixed with the sweet bells of the sauntering herd,'

which is to be found in *Manfred* and might have been taken from the *Excursion*.

When we turn from the plays to the lyrics, we see at once the importance, to a poet, of choosing rightly the metrical form that is the best expression of his peculiar genius. In some of these shorter poems Byron rises to his highest level, and by these will his popularity be permanently maintained. They are certainly of very unequal merit; yet when Byron is condemned for artificiality and glaring colour, we may point to the poem beginning 'And thou art dead, as young and fair,' where form and feeling are in harmony throughout eight long stanzas, without a single line that is feeble or overcharged:

'The better days of life were ours;
The worst can be but mine;
The sun that cheers, the storm that lowers,
Shall never more be thine.
The silence of that dreamless sleep
I envy now too much to weep;
Nor need I to repine
That all those charms have passed away,
I might have watched through long decay.'

There is no novelty in the ideas, nor does he open the deeper vein of thoughts that touch the mind with a sense of mortality. Yet the verse has a masculine brevity that renders effectively the attitude in which men may well be content firmly to confront an irreparable misfortune.

In his poems of strenuous action, although Byron has not the rare quality of heroic simplicity, he could at times strike a high vibrating war note, and could interpret romantically the patriotic spirit. The two stanzas which we quote from the Hebrew Melodies show that he could now and then shake off the redundant metaphors and epithets that overload too much of his impetuous verse, and use his strength freely:

'Though thou art fall'n, while we are free
Thou shalt not taste of death!
The generous blood that flowed from thee
Disdained to sink beneath;
Within our veins its currents be,
Thy spirit on our breath.

'Thy name, our charging hosts along,
Shall be their battle word!

Thy fall, the theme of choral song
From virgin voices poured!
To weep would do thy glory wrong;
Thou shalt not be deplored.'

And we have another magnificent example of Byron's lyrical power in the *Isles of Greece*, where the two lines,

'Ah, no! the voices of the dead
Sound like a distant torrent's fall,'

drop suddenly into the elegiac strain, into a mournful echo that dwells upon the ear, followed by the rising note of a call to arms. It must be remembered that nothing is so rare as a stirring war-song, and that in our time we have had a good many attempts—almost all failures; whereas the *Isles of Greece* will long continue to stir the masculine imagination of Englishmen.

On the other hand, it must be admitted that Byron's Occasional Pieces abound with cheap pathos, dubious fervour, and a kind of commonplace sentimentality that comes out in the form as well as in the feeling of his inferior work. The rhymes are apt to be hackneyed, the similes are sometimes tagged on awkwardly instead of being weaved into the texture, the expression has often lost its strength, and the emotion lacks sincerity. Byron, like his brother poets, wrote copiously what was published indiscriminately; but if the first-class work had not been very good it would never have buoyed up above sheer oblivion so much that was third-rate and bad. His pieces are much *too* occasional, for he was prone to indulgence in hasty verse whenever the fit

was upon him, or as a method of enlisting public sympathy with his own misconduct, so that he was constantly appearing before the world as a perfidious sentimentalist, with a false air of lamentation over the misfortunes which he had brought upon himself, as in the Poems of the Separation. Yet when he shook off his personal grief and took to politics, no other poet could more vividly express his intense living interest in the great events of his time, or strike the proper note of some great catastrophe. It may be affirmed that the *Ode to Napoleon* is better than anything else that has been written in English upon the most astonishing career in modern history:

'The triumph and the vanity,
The rapture of the strife—
The earthquake-voice of Victory,
To thee the breath of life;
The sword, the sceptre, and that sway
Which man seemed made but to obey,
Wherewith renown was rife—
All quelled; Dark Spirit, what must be
The madness of thy memory!

'The Desolator desolate!
The Victor overthrown!
The Arbiter of others' fate
A suppliant for his own!
Is it some yet imperial hope
That with such change can calmly cope?
Or dread of death alone?
To die a prince—or live a slave—
Thy choice is most ignobly brave.'

In the first of these two stanzas the seventh line is weak and breaks the rapid rush of the verse; but the high pressure and impetus of the poem are sustained

throughout twenty stanzas, producing the effect of an improvisatore who stops rather from want of breath than from any other lack of inspiration. In this respect the ode is a rare poetical exploit; for all poems composed under the spur of the moment, upon some memorable incident that has just startled the world, must be more or less improvised, and must hit the right pitch of extraordinary popular emotion. It is the difficulty of turning out good work under such arduous conditions that has too often shipwrecked or stranded some unlucky laureate.

There is one province of verse, if not exactly of poetry, in which Byron reigns undisputedly, though it is far distant from the land of lyrics. In his latest and longest production, *Don Juan*, he tells us that his 'sere fancy has fallen into the yellow leaf':

> 'And the sad truth which hovers o'er my
> desk
> Turns what was once romantic to
> burlesque.'

It was in *Beppo: a Venetian Story* that he dropped, for the first time, the weapon of trenchant sarcasm and invective, with no very fine edge upon it, which he flourished in his youth, and took up the tone of light humorous satire upon society. He soon acquired mastery over the metre (which was suggested, as is well known, by Hookham Frere's *Whistlecraft*); and in *Don Juan* he produced a long, rambling poem of a kind never before attempted, and still far beyond any subsequent imitations, in the English language. Of a certainty there is much that it is by no means desirable to imitate, for the English literature does not assimilate the element of cynical libertinism, which indeed becomes coarse on an English tongue.

Yet it is remarkable that the Whistlecraft metre, although Byron could manage it with point and spirit, has never produced more than insipid *pastiche* in later hands. But while *Beppo* may be classed as pure burlesque, *Don Juan* strikes various keys, ironical and voluptuous, grave and gay, rising sometimes to the level of strenuous realistic narrative in the episodes of the shipwreck and the siege, falling often into something like grotesque buffoonery, with much picturesque description, many animated lines, and occasional touches of effective pathos. As a story it has the picaresque flavour of *Gil Blas*, presenting a variety of scenes and adventures strung together without any definite plot; as a poem its reputation rests upon some passages of indisputable beauty; while Byron's own experiences, grievances, and animosities, personal or political, run through the whole performance like an accompaniment, and break out occasionally into humorous sarcasm or violent denunciations. That the overheated fervour of a stormy youth should cool down into disdainful irony, under the chill of disappointment and exhaustion, was natural enough; and this unfinished poem may be regarded as typical of Byron's erratic life, full of loose intrigue and adventure, with its sudden and premature ending.

It is in *Don Juan* that Byron stands forth as the founder and precursor of modern realism in poetry. He has now finally exorcised the hyperbolic fiend that vexed his youth, he has cast off the illusions of romance, he knows the ground he treads upon, and his pictures are drawn from life; he is the foremost of those who have ventured boldly upon the sombre actualities of war and bloodshed:—

'But let me put an end unto my theme,

There was an end of Ismail, hapless
town,
Far flashed her burning towers o'er
Danube's stream,
And redly ran his blushing waters
down.
The horrid warwhoop and the shriller
scream
Rose still; but fainter were the
thunders grown;
Of forty thousand that had manned the
wall
Some hundreds breathed, the rest were
silent all.'

'A versified paraphrase,' it may be said, 'of sober history,' yet withal very different from the most animated prose, which must be kept at a lower temperature of intense expression. If we turn to quieter scenes—which are called picturesque because the artist, like a painter, has selected the right subject and point of view, and has grouped his details with exquisite skill—we may take the stanzas describing the return of the pirate Lambro to his Greek island—

'He saw his white walls shining in the sun,
His garden trees all shadowy and green'—

as a fine example of pure objective writing, which lays out the whole scene truthfully, with the direct vision of one who has seen it. One does not find here the suggestive intimations, the wide imaginative horizon of higher poetry; there are no musical blendings of sound and sense, as in such lines as Tennyson's

'By the long wash of Australasian seas.'

Yet in these passages Byron has after his own fashion served Nature faithfully, and he has preserved to us some masterly sketches of life and manners that have long since disappeared. The Greek islands have since fallen under the dominion of European uniformity; the costume of the people, the form of their government, are shabby imitations of Western models. But the cloudless sky, the sun slowly sinking behind Morea's hills, the sea on whose azure brow Time writes no wrinkle, and the marbled steep of Sunium, are still unchanged; and the peaceful tourist in these waters will see at once that Byron was a true workman in line and colour, and will feel the intellectual pleasure that comes from accurate yet artistic interpretation of natural beauties.

The poem of *Don Juan* is, therefore, a miscellany, connected on the picturesque side with *Childe Harold*, and by its mocking spirit with *Beppo* and the *Vision of Judgment*, the two pieces that may be classed as pure burlesque. The irreverent persiflage of the *Vision* belongs to the now obsolete school of Voltaire, and in biting wit and daring ridicule the performance is not unworthy of that supreme master in *diablerie*. Nor can it be asserted that this lashing sarcasm was undeserved, or that all the profanity was in Byron's parody, for Southey's conception of the Almighty as a High Tory judge, with an obsequious jury of angels, holding a trial of George III., browbeating the witnesses against him and acquitting him with acclamation, so that he leaves the court without a stain on his character, was false and abject enough to stir the bile of a less irritable Liberal than Byron. There exists, moreover, in the mind of every good English Whig a lurking sympathy with the Miltonic

Satan, insomuch that all subsequent attempts by minor poets to humiliate and misrepresent him have invariably failed. Southey's *Vision*, and Robert Montgomery's libel upon Satan, have each undergone the same fate of being utterly extinguished, knocked clean out of English literature by one single crushing onslaught of Byron and Macaulay respectively.

Our conclusion must be brief, for in fact it is not easy to propound to the readers of this Review any general observations, which shall be new as well as true, upon a man's life and works that have been subjected to incessant scrutiny and criticism throughout the nineteenth century. At the beginning of this period Byron found himself matched, in the poetic arena, against contemporary rivals of first-class genius and striking originality. And from his death almost up to the century's close there has been no time when some considerable poet has not occupied the forefront of English letters, and stamped his impression on the public mind. Variety in style and ideas has produced many vicissitudes of taste in poetry; it has been discovered that narrative can be better done in prose, and so the novel has largely superseded story-telling in verse. There have also been great political and social changes, and all these things have severely tested the staying powers of a writer who is too closely associated with his own period to be reckoned among those wide-ranging spirits whom Shelley has called 'the kings of thought.' Nevertheless the new edition of Byron is appearing at a moment which is, we think, not inopportune. There is just now, as by a coincidence there was in the year 1800, a dearth of poetic production; we have fallen among lean years; we have come to a break in the succession of notable poets; the Victorian celebrities

have one by one passed away; and we can only hope that the first quarter of the twentieth century may bring again some such bountiful harvest as was vouchsafed to our grandfathers at the beginning of the nineteenth. In the meantime the reading of Byron may operate as a wholesome tonic upon the literary nerves of the rising generation; for, as Mr. Swinburne has generously acknowledged, with the emphatic concurrence of Matthew Arnold, his poems have 'the excellence of sincerity and strength.' Now one tendency of latter-day verse has been toward that over-delicacy of fibre which has been termed decadence, toward the preference of correct metrical harmonies over distinct and incisive expression, toward vague indications of meaning. In this form the melody prevails over the matter; the style inclines to become precious and garnished with verbal artifice. Some recent French poets, indeed, in their anxiety to correct the troublesome lucidity of their mother-tongue, have set up the school of symbolism, which deals in half-veiled metaphor and sufficiently obscure allusion, relying upon subtly suggestive phrases for evoking associations. For ephemeral infirmities of this kind the straightforward virility of Byron's best work may serve as an antidote. On the other hand, we have the well-knit strenuous verse of extreme realism, wrought out by a poet in his shirt-sleeves, with rhymes clear-sounding like the tap of hammer on anvil, who sings of rough folk by sea and land, and can touch national emotion in regard to the incidents or politics of the moment. He paints without varnish, in hard outline, avoiding metaphor and ornamental diction generally; taking his language so freely out of the mouths of men in actual life that he makes occasional slips into vulgarity. He is at the opposite pole from the

symbolist; but true poetry demands much more distinction of style and nobility of thought. And here again Byron's high lyrical notes may help to maintain elevation of tone and to preserve the romantic tradition. His poetry, like his character, is full of glaring imperfections; yet he wrote as one of the great world in which he made for a time such a noise; and after all that has been said about his moral delinquencies, it is certain that we could have better spared a better man.

In one of Tennyson's earlier letters is the following passage, with reference to something written at the time in *Philip van Artevelde*:

> 'He does not sufficiently take into consideration the peculiar strength evolved by such writers as Byron and Shelley, who, however mistaken they may be, did yet give the world another heart, and a new pulse, and so we are kept going. Blessed be those who grease the wheels of the old world.'

This is the large-hearted, far-seeing judgment of one who could survey the whole line and evolutionary succession of English verse, being himself destined to close the long list of nineteenth-century poets, which was opened by Byron and his contemporaries. The time has surely now come when we may leave discussing Byron as a social outlaw, and cease groping after more evidence of his misdeeds. The office of true criticism is to show that he made so powerful an impression on our literature as to win for himself permanent rank in its annals, and that his work, with all its shortcomings, does yet mark and illustrate an important stage in the connected development of our English poetry.

FOOTNOTES:

[24] *The Works of Lord Byron: a New, Revised, and Enlarged Edition.*—'Letters and Journals.' Edited by Rowland E. Prothero, M. A. 'Poetry.' Edited by Ernest Hartley Coleridge, M. A. London, John Murray, 1898.—*Edinburgh Review*, October 1900.

[25] Preface to the *Corsair*.

[26] *The Deformed Transformed* (part I. scene i.).

[27] *Sardanapalus* (act V. scene i.).

THE ENGLISH UTILITARIANS[28]

Mr. Leslie Stephen combines the faculty of acute and searching criticism with a style that is singularly clear, incisive, and exact. His wide knowledge of English literature, and the close study which he has given to the history of English opinions and controversies, speculative, political, and economical, have enabled him to survey an extensive field, to trace the lines of origin and development, to disentangle complicated ideas, and to summarise conclusions in a masterly manner. Nearly twenty-five years have passed since he published his work on *English Thought in the Eighteenth Century*, and his present book on the Utilitarians continues, and indeed brings down to our own time, a similar investigation of the course of certain views, principles, and doctrines which had taken their

shape in England and France during the period preceding the French Revolution, and which profoundly influenced political discussion throughout the first half of the nineteenth century. But on this occasion Mr. Stephen's inquiry does not range over the whole area thus laid open, though his subject compels him to make several excursions into the general region of philosophical and political disputation. His main purpose is to relate the history of a creed propagated by a group of remarkable men, who took hold of some prominent theories and doctrines generated by the rationalism of the preceding century, and endeavoured to make them the basis and framework of a system for improving the condition of the English people. Their immediate object was to abolish intolerable abuses of power by the governing classes, and radically to reform on scientific principles the haphazard blundering administration which was assumed to be the source of all evil. Mr. Stephen describes and explains, in short, the rise, progress, and decay of Utilitarianism.

Such a system, by its nature and aims, is evidently practical; it is directed towards a change of laws and an alteration of the prevailing methods of government. To the philosophic minds of the eighteenth-century reformers in England and France, it seemed evident, that any general conclusions upon questions vitally concerning the interests of mankind should be reached by convincing demonstration, should start from axioms, and proceed by a connected chain of logical argument. During the latter half of that century England and France, so incessantly at war and so different in character and in their governing institutions, were nevertheless in alliance intellectually. They were then (with Holland) the only countries in the world where

public opinion had free play, and where discussion of philosophic problems was actively carried on; and between them there was a constant interchange of ideas. Now in all speculations, on things human or divine, there have existed immemorially two schools or tendencies of thought, two ways of approaching the subject, corresponding, we may conjecture, to a radical difference of intellectual predispositions. You may start by the high *a priori* road, or you may feel your way gradually by induction from verifiable experiences; and of these two main currents of speculative opinion whichever is the stronger at any given period will affect every branch of thought and action. Coleridge appealed to history as proving that all epoch-making revolutions coincide with the rise or fall of metaphysical systems, and he attributed the power of abstract theories over revolutionary movements to the craving of man for higher guidance than sensations. However this may be, it may be affirmed that the rationalism of the eighteenth century in England and France found room by replacing the decaying theologies and substituting reason for the traditional authority. This was the period that produced in France the philosophic conception of abstract humanity, everywhere the same naturally, with a superficial distinction of circumstances, but differentiated in the main by bad laws, artificial inequalities, and social injustice. In France the method of deducing conclusions from abstract principles concerning the rights of man and the social compact gained predominance, until they were shaped by Rousseau and others into the formal indictment of a corrupt society. It was the point and impulse thus given to very real grievances and irritation against privilege, that precipitated the French Revolution. Among the

English, on the other hand, their public spirit, the connection of large classes with national affairs, and their habit of compromise, had predisposed the leading minds towards cautious views in philosophy and in politics; and at the century's end their inbred distrust of abstract propositions as a basis for social reconstruction received startling confirmation from the tremendous explosion in France.

The foregoing remarks give in bare outline the conditions and circumstances, very carefully examined and skilfully analysed by Mr. Leslie Stephen, that prepared and cleared the ground for the Utilitarians. Their object was not to reconstruct, hardly to remodel, existing forms of government; it was to remove abuses, and to devise remedies for the evils of an unwieldy and complicated administrative machine, clogged by stupidity and selfishness. And the plan of Mr. Stephen's first volume is to describe the state of society at this period, the condition of agriculture and the industries, the position of the Church and the Universities, of the Army and Navy, the intellectual tendencies indicated by the philosophic doctrines, and generally to sketch the political and social aspects of England rather more than a hundred years ago. He is writing, as he says, the history of a sect; and in dealing with the tenets of that sect he lays prominent stress upon what may be called the environment, upon the various circumstances which may influence forms of belief, and particularly upon the idiosyncrasies of the men who held and propagated them. It is for this latter reason that he has given us brief and interesting biographies of those whose influence was greatest in shaping and directing the movement, illustrating his narrative by portraits of them as they lived and acted. All these things help us towards understanding

how it comes to pass that conclusions which seem clear as daylight to earnest thinkers in one generation may be abandoned by succeeding generations as manifestly erroneous. The inquiry also shows why, and to what extent, some of the doctrines that were scientifically propounded by the Utilitarians did initiate and lead up to an important reformation in the methods of English government.

> 'It might be stated as a paradox' (Mr. Stephen observes) 'that, whereas in France the most palpable evils arose from the excessive power of the central government, and in England the most palpable evils arose from the feebleness of the central government, the French reformers demanded more government, and the English reformers less government.... The solution seems to be easy. In France, reformers such as Turgot and the economists were in favour of an enlightened despotism, because ... it would suppress the exclusive privileges of a class which, doing nothing in return, had become a mere burthen, encumbering all social development. But in England the privileged class was identical with the governing class.'

The English aristocracy, in fact, were actually doing the country's business, though they were doing it badly, and paid themselves much too highly for very indifferent administration. Yet the English nation acquiesced in the system, because the middle classes were growing rich and prosperous, and the State interfered very little with their private affairs. To this general statement of the case we agree; but we may point out that in terming our aristocracy a privileged class one material distinction has been passed over.

For whereas the French *noblesse* constituted a caste partly exempted by birthright from the general taxation, and vested with certain vexatious rights to which no duties corresponded, the English aristocracy possessed legally no privileges at all. It was not an exclusive order, but an upper class that was constantly recruited, being open to all successful men; and such a governing body is naturally indifferent to reforms, because it is very little affected by administrative imperfections or abuses. Pauperism and ignorance may fester long among the masses before wealthy and prosperous rulers discover that the interests of their own class are imperilled; the state of prisons does not concern them personally; and so long as life and property are fairly secure, they care little about an efficient police. The Englishman of whom a Frenchman reported with amazement that he consoled himself for having been robbed by the reflection that there were no policemen in his country, must have belonged to this comfortable class. And the inveterate conservation of abuses in the Church, the Law, and the Army may be partially explained in a similar way. In France the Church and the army were really privileged bodies: the vast ecclesiastical revenues were protected from taxation, and the commissioned ranks of the army were reserved for the *noblesse*; the French parliaments were close magisterial corporations. In England these were all open professions, with no special fiscal rights or social limitations; the prizes were available for general competition, and as every one had a chance of winning them by interest or even merit, there was no formidable outcry against the system.

In politics, therefore, as well as in philosophy, the prevailing habit of the English mind was more

moderate, less thorough-going and subversive, than in France. Mr. Stephen makes a keen and rapid analysis of the common-sense psychology, as expounded by Reid and Dugald Stewart, to show the correspondence at this period between abstract reasoning and concrete political views, and to illustrate the limitations which cautious Scotch professors endeavoured to place upon the inexorable scepticism of Hume. The general spirit of their teaching was empirical, but the logical consequence of taking experience as the sole foundation of belief was evidently to cut off the hidden springs of moral consciousness, and to support the derivation of ethics from utility. In philosophy, as in politics, there was a sympathetic recoil from extremes. So common sense was brought in as capable of certain intuitive or original judgments which were in themselves necessary, and which luckily coincided with some of the firmest convictions among intelligent mankind. As Carlyle said long afterwards, the Scottish philosophers started from the mechanical premises suggested by Hume. 'They let loose instinct as an indiscriminatory bandog to guard them against his conclusions; they tugged lustily against the logical chain by which Hume was so coldly towing them and the world into bottomless abysses of atheism and fatalism.' To save themselves from materialism they invented Intuitions, and thereby incurred the wrath of orthodox Utilitarianism, which was rigidly empirical. They were, however, accepted in England, where any haven was welcome, however uncertain might be the holding ground, which sheltered the vessel from being blown by windy speculation out into a shoreless sea.

The Scottish philosophy therefore

> 'was in philosophy what Whiggism was in politics. Like political Whiggism, it included a large element of enlightened and liberal rationalism; but, like Whiggism, it covered an aversion to thorough-going logic. The English politician was suspicious of abstract principle, but would cover his acceptance of tradition and rule of thumb by general phrases about liberty and toleration. The Whig in philosophy equally accepted the traditional creed, sufficiently purified from cruder elements, and sheltered his doctrine by speaking of intuitions and laws of thought.'

The foregoing quotation may serve to indicate briefly the situation, in politics and philosophy, at the time when Bentham, 'the patriarch of the English Utilitarians,' appeared upon the scene. Mr. Stephen's sketch of his life and doctrines, which occupies the latter half of the book's first volume, is eminently instructive and often amusing. He excels in tracing the continuity of ideas, and in showing how they converge upon the point of view that is gradually reached by some writer of superior force and activity, who rejects, alters, or uses them in the process of working out the doctrines of some new school. It was the spread of philanthropy, of a conscientious fellow-feeling for those classes of society who suffered from neglect and misrule, that fostered the movement towards political and social reform. This feeling was represented in Bentham's celebrated formula, originally invented by Hutcheson, about 'the greatest happiness of the greatest number'; and the criterion of utility was laid down as having the widest possible application to all

sorts and conditions of men. Self-help, individualism, *laisser-faire*, the economic view that each should be left free to pursue his own interests, were principles intended to operate for the removal of abuses and the destruction of unfair privileges: they were promulgated for the relief of humanity at large, although the system which was built up on them came afterwards to be denounced as narrow, selfish, and materialistic. These ideas were undoubtedly congenial to the habits and character of Englishmen, who, like free men everywhere, had a traditional distrust of strong and active government, preferring King Log, on the whole, to King Stork. Inequalities and incomprehensible laws were to be seen in the course of Nature no less than in the English Constitution; and in either case a man might rely upon his wits and energy to deal with them. It might be that the defects in human government could only be remedied by employing the forces of government to cure them; but if you began to set going the administrative engine there was no saying where it might stop. Bentham held all government to be an evil, though he differed from the modern anarchist in holding it to be a necessary evil; yet he needed a strong scientific administration for the purpose of rooting out inveterate abuses. And this was the dilemma that confronted him. He worked out his solution of the problem by laying out a whole system of morals and a science of politics, with Utility as their base and standard, which has profoundly influenced all subsequent legislation, and led eventually to much more extensive theories regarding the sphere and duties of government than he himself would have advocated or approved.

The principal events of Bentham's life, and the development of his opinions, are condensed by Mr.

Stephen into one chapter with his usual biographical skill. Bentham started in life as a barrister, and attended Blackstone's lectures, with the result that he was deeply impressed by the fallacies of the legal theories there expounded, and soon afterward vowed eternal war against the Demon of Chicane. He struggled against narrow means and obscurity until he made the acquaintance of Lord Shelburne, through whom he became acquainted with other leading statesmen, and with Miss Caroline Fox, to whom he made a futile proposal of marriage some years later. At Bowood he also met Dumont, and thereby formed his connection with the French jurists, though in his old age he declared that Dumont, his chief interpreter abroad, 'did not understand a word of his meaning'; the true cause of his quarrel being that Dumont criticised Bentham's dinners. He travelled on the Continent, and lived some time in Russia. Soon afterward the Revolution made a clean sweep of all the old institutions in France, and thus laid open a bare and level ground just suited, as Bentham thought, for an architect who had his portfolio full of new administrative plans. It was long, indeed, before he could understand why systematic reforms were not immediately accepted as soon as their utility was logically demonstrated. He lost no time in providing the French National Assembly with elaborate schemes for the reconstruction of various departments of government, and he even offered to go to France to set up his model prison, proposing himself 'to become gratuitously the gaoler thereof.' The Assembly requited his zeal by conferring on him the title of a French citizen; but social reorganisation took the shape of September massacres and the Reign of Terror, whereat Bentham was disgusted,

though in no way disheartened, as a theorist.

> 'Never' (says Mr. Stephen) 'was an adviser more at cross purposes with the advised. It would be impossible to draw a more striking portrait of the abstract reasoner, whose calculations of human motives omit all reference to passion, and who fancied that all prejudice can be dispelled by a few bits of logic.'

Here, in fact, we have the key to Bentham's character, to its weakness and also to its strength. A philosopher who plunges into the practical affairs of the world without taking human feelings and imagination into account is sure to find himself stumbling about among blocks and blockheads, and tripped up by the ill-will of vested interests; but on the other hand, if he has taken the right direction, his ardent energies have the impetus of some natural force. Bentham's earlier notion had been that political reforms could be introduced like improvements in machinery; you had only to prove the superior utility of your new invention to obtain its adoption by all who were concerned in the business. Latterly he made the surprising discovery that in the public offices, in the Law, and in the Church, the heads of these professions are usually quite satisfied with their own monopolies, are opposed to change, and are always ready with a stock of plausible arguments to show the folly and danger of innovation. If the Utilitarian appeals to facts, common sense, and experience, so also does the Conservative; and until public opinion is decidedly for progress the dead weight prevails. Not for a day did Bentham relax his strenuous exertions, but he changed his tactics; he turned from his

mechanical workshop to the study of political dynamics, and he found what he wanted in the rising radicalism—'his principal occupation, in a word, was to provide political philosophy for radical reformers.'

Of the philosophic creed which Bentham undertook to proclaim from his hermitage at Ford Abbey, with James Mill as his leading apostle, Mr. Stephen gives us a very shrewd and incisively critical examination. The founder of a new faith has usually begun by the earnest and authoritative declaration of a few simple truths and positive doctrines, for which his disciples provide, in course of time, the necessary philosophical basis. Bentham's voice had been crying ineffectually in the wilderness; and he now set about laying with his own hands the foundations of his beliefs upon primary scientific principles, always with unswerving aim and application to concrete facts. He was a thorough-going iconoclast, wielding, like Mohammed, a single formula, to the destruction of idols of the market or tribe, and to the confusion of those who fattened upon antique superstitions. 'All government is one vast evil,' and can only be kept from mischief by minute regulations and constant vigilance. Whatever is plainly illogical must be radically wrong—'to make a barrister a judge is as sensible as it would be to select a procuress for mistress of a girls' school;' and a parish boy, if he could read properly, might go through the Church services with the Prayer Book and the Homilies, so that an established Church is a costly and indefensible luxury. Taking Utility, founded on observation of actual facts, as his guide and his measure of existing institutions, he treated them as colossal iniquities, as frauds upon the people, as dead and ineffectual for the purposes of moral and political life. Nevertheless, although he condemned

the whole fabric as it stood, Bentham was an absolute believer in the unlimited power of laws and institutions; nor was he far from wishing to deal with them on the principles applicable to the reform of prisons, as undesirable but necessary instruments of coercion to be despotically administered upon a scientific model, after the fashion of his favourite Panopticon. He was, in short, as Mr. Stephen points out, an unconscious follower of Hobbes, with this difference, that in Bentham's case the omnipotent Leviathan, for control and direction, was to be enlightened public opinion. And he was apparently convinced, without misgivings, that a model government, framed logically upon that common sense which is a public property, could be introduced and enforced under popular sanction as easily as new regulations for an ill-managed gaol. He was fully prepared to make liberal allowance, in framing his constitution, for the different needs, circumstances, and habits of communities; he was quite aware that precisely the same legislation would not suit England and India; but he believed national circumstance and character to be extensively modifiable by manifestly useful institutions, and he was ready to begin the operation at once, 'to legislate for Hindostan as well as for his own parish, and to make codes not only for England, Spain, and Russia, but also for Morocco.'

Mr. Stephen has no difficulty in exposing the shortcomings and inadequacy of these doctrines. But he is writing the history of certain political ideas; so his main object is to show how such ideas are formed, the course they have followed, and their influence upon thought and action up to the present day. To trace the links and continuity of ideas is to analyse their elements, and to show the impress that they received from external circumstance, permanent

or temporary; it is an important method in the science of politics. Upon the empiricism of English philosophy in the eighteenth century Bentham constructed a Theory of Morals that purported to rest exclusively on facts ascertained and verifiable, with happiness as our being's end and aim, with pain and pleasure as the ultimate principles of conduct; and upon this foundation he proceeded to build up his system of politics and legislation. Any attempt to derive morality from other sources, or to measure it by other standards, he denounced as arbitrary and misleading; he threw aside metaphysics, and therefore theology, as illusory. The exclusive appeal to experience, to plain reasoning from the evidence of our senses, from actual observation of human propensities, was sufficient for his purposes, and tallied with his designs as a practical reformer. In these views he was a disciple of Hume, whose influence has surreptitiously percolated all modern thought, and his unintentional allies were the teachers of Natural religion, with Paley as its principal exponent. Having thus defined and explained the basis of ethical philosophy, the Utilitarian has to build up the superstructure of legal ordinance; and he is at once confronted by the difficult problem of distinguishing the sphere of ethics from the province of law. Upon this vital question Mr. Stephen, as an expert in ethics, gives a dissertation that is exceedingly acute and instructive; and we may commend, in particular, his criticism of the doctrine that the morality of an act depends upon its consequences, not upon its motives. As he observes, this may be true, with certain reserves, in law, where the business of the legislature is to prohibit and punish acts that directly endanger the order and security of a community. But 'the exclusion

of motive justifiable in law may take all meaning out of morality'; and yet nothing is more complicated than the question of demarcating a clear frontier between the two provinces. Mr. Stephen's examination of this question is the more important because it involves the problem of regulating private morals by public enactments; and also because the confusion of motives with intentions lies at the bottom of much mischievous sophistry, for some of the worst crimes in history have been suggested by plausible motives, and have been defended on that ground. He shows that Bentham's survey of the springs of human action was incomplete, that he overstrained his formula to make it universally applicable, and that he nevertheless gave a far-reaching impulse to clearer notions and an effective advance in the simplification of legal procedure and the codification of laws. As a moral philosophy, Bentham's system appeared so arid and materialistic that its unpopularity has obscured his real services. For he was the engineer who first led a scientific attack up to the ramparts of legal chicanery, and made a breach through which all subsequent reform found its entry.

The axiom that utility is the source of justice and equity is of very ancient date, and indeed the word is sufficiently elastic to comprehend every conceivable human motive; but no one before Bentham had employed it so energetically as a lever to overturn ponderous abuses, or had pointed his theory so directly against notorious facts. On the other hand, since he despised and rejected historical studies, he greatly miscalculated the binding strength of long usage and possession. He forgot, what Hume had been careful to remember, that whether men's reasoning on these subjects be right or wrong, the

conclusions have not really been reached by logic, but have grown up out of instincts, and correspond with certain immemorial needs and aspirations of humanity. Hume had sketched, before Bentham, his Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth; yet he begins by the warning that

> 'It is not with forms of government as with other artificial contrivances; where an old engine may be rejected if we can discover another more accurate and commodious ... the bulk of mankind' (he adds) 'being governed by authority, not by reason, and never attributing authority to anything that has not the recommendation of antiquity.'

Hume's mission was to undermine settled fallacies, and to scatter doubt among conventional certitudes; and this loosening of foundations prepared the way for a bolder political projector, who delivered his frontal attack in disdain of the philosopher's warnings. Political projectors, says the cautious Hume, are pernicious if they have power, and ridiculous if they want it. Bentham was quite confident that if he could only get the power he could radically change for the better the circumstances of a people in any part of the world, by legislation on the principles of Utility; and he was sure that character is indefinitely modifiable by circumstances. That human nature is constantly altering with, and adapting itself to, the environment, is an undeniable truth; but in the moral as in the physical world the natural changes occupy long periods, and to stir the soil hastily may produce a catastrophe. The latter result actually followed in France; while in England the doctrine of the unlimited power of legislation, to be used for the

greatest happiness of the greatest number, and wielded by a sovereign State according to the dictates of public opinion, was met by alarm, suspicion, and protracted opposition. It is the habit of Englishmen to admit no proposition, however clear and convincing, until they discover what the propounder intends to do with it. Yet it will be seen that Bentham's plans of reform, if not his principles, did suggest, and to some extent shape, the main direction of judicial and administrative changes during the nineteenth century, though with some consequences that he neither anticipated nor desired. He thought that the State might be invested with power to modify society, and yet might be strictly controlled in the exercise of that power. He might have foreseen, what has actually happened, that the State, once established on a democratic basis, would exercise the power and disregard his carefully drawn limitations. A tendency toward State Socialism he would have detested above all things; and yet that is the direction inevitably taken by supreme authority when the responsibility for the greatest happiness of the greatest number is imposed upon it by popular demand.

Mr. Stephen's second volume describes the later phase of the Utilitarian creed, when it passed from its founder into the hands of ardent disciples. The transition necessarily involves some divergence of views and methods. In religious movements it usually begins after the founder's death; but as Bentham lived to superintend his apostolic successors, his relations with them were not invariably harmonious. The leadership fell upon James Mill, whose early life and general character, the development of his opinions, and the bearing of his philosophy upon his politics, are the subjects of

one of those condensed biographical sketches in which Mr. Stephen excels. In the *History of India*, which brought to James Mill reputation and pecuniary independence, he could apply his deductive theories to a remote and little known country without much risk of contradiction from actual circumstances or of checks from the misapprehension of facts. In England the Utilitarian doctrines, as propounded in Mill's writings, raised up opposition and hostile criticism from various quarters. The general current of ideas and feelings had now set decidedly toward the suppression of inveterate abuses, and toward constitutional reform. Radicalism was gaining ground rapidly, and even Socialism had come to the surface, while Political Economy was in the ascendant. But the old Tories closed their ranks for a fierce resistance against theories that menaced, as it seemed to them, nothing less than destruction to time-honoured institutions; and the Whigs had no taste for doctrines that pretended to be reasonable, but appeared to them in effect revolutionary. The different positions of contending parties were illustrated, as Mr. Stephen shows, by their respective attitudes towards Church Reform. The Tories defended ecclesiastical establishment as one of the main bastions of the citadel; the Whigs would preserve the Church in subjection to the State; while James Mill, in the *Westminster Review*, declared the Church of England to be a mere State machine, worked in subservience to the sinister interest of the governing classes. He desired 'to abolish all dogmas and ceremonies, and to employ the clergy to give lectures on ethics, botany, and political economy, with decent dances and social meals for the celebration of Sunday.' Mr. Stephen, after observing that this plan exemplifies 'the

incapacity of an isolated clique to understand the real tone of public opinion,' adds that 'it seems to have some sense, but one would like to know whether Newman read his article.' Our own notion would be that it is a signal instance of shortsightedness and of insensibility, on the part of a psychologist, to the strength and persistence of one of the most powerful among the emotions that dominate mankind. Mill's article proclaiming these views appeared in 1835, just at the time when the Oxford Movement was stirring up a wave of enthusiasm for the dogmas and ritual which he treated as obsolete and nonsensical; nor is there anything more remarkable or unexpected in the political changes of the last sixty years, than the discomfiture of those prophets who have foretold the decay of all liturgies and the speedy dissolution of ecclesiastical establishments. This phenomenon is by no means confined to England, or even to Europe; and at the present day, when the power of religious idealism is better understood upon wider experience, no practical politician attempts to disregard sentiments that defy logic and pass the understanding.

Nevertheless Utilitarianism, as represented by James Mill's 'Essay on Government,' was attracting increased attention, and was provoking serious alarm. It was a period of confidence in theories which have been partly confirmed and partly contradicted by subsequent experiences of those 'principles of human nature' in which political speculators so unreservedly trusted. In France, some fifty years earlier, the destructive theorist had swept all before him; in England, while he was assaulting with effect the entrenchments of Conservatism, he was taken in flank by the moderate reformers. Mill

had denounced the Whigs as half-hearted and even treacherous allies, who dallied with Radicalism to conceal their nefarious design of obtaining political mastery with the fewest concessions possible. He relied upon universal education to qualify the masses for the possession of an extensive franchise, and upon enlightened self-interest to guarantee their proper use of it. Macaulay rejoined, in the *Edinburgh Review*, that the masses might possibly conclude that they would get more pleasure than pain out of universal spoliation; and that if his opponent's principles were correct and his scheme adopted, 'literature, science, commerce, and manufactures might be swept away, and a few half-naked fishermen would divide with the owls and foxes the ruins of the greatest of European cities.' It was a notable controversial tournament, at which the intelligent bystander probably assisted with much satisfaction and no excessive alarm, having little faith in the absolute theorist, and not much in the disinterestedness of the Whigs. For the moment it was sufficient that both parties agreed in supporting the Reform Bill, although, as Mr. Stephen remarks, the Radical regarded it as a payment on account, while the Whig hoped that it would be a full and final discharge. We may observe, to the honour of a great Liberal family, that as the first Lord Lansdowne discerned Bentham's talents and gave him his start in life, so the impression made upon the second marquis by Macaulay's articles induced him to offer the writer his first seat in Parliament.

Mr. Stephen deals with the duel between Mill and Macaulay from the standpoint of an impartial umpire, with an expert's appreciation of their logical fencing and some humorous glances at the heated combatants. Mill was an austere Puritan, who would

fell the Tory like an ox and would trample upon the cunning self-seeking Whig. The Edinburgh Reviewers were a set of brilliant young men who represented intellectual Liberalism; but 'they were men who meant to become judges, members of Parliament, or even bishops, and nothing in their social atmosphere had stimulated the deep resentment against social injustice which makes the fanatic or the enthusiast.' As a sample of Whiggism Mr. Stephen takes Mackintosh, who, on the subject of the French Revolution, stood half-way between Burke's holy horror of a diabolic outburst and the applause of root-and-branch Radicals. For a type of Conservatism he gives us Robert Southey, whose fortune it was to be fiercely abused by the Utilitarians and ridiculed by the Whigs. Southey, like many others, had been frightened out of early Liberalism into the conviction that Reform would be the inevitable precursor of revolution; and in 1817 he had written to Lord Liverpool that the only hope of saving the country lay in gagging the seditious press. 'Concessions,' he said, 'can only serve to hasten the catastrophe. Woe be to the garrison who hoist a white flag to an enemy that gives no quarter.' Yet Southey had a deep feeling for the misery of the lower classes at this period of widespread distress. In his belief in the power of Government to remedy social evils, he was much nearer the accepted line of later public opinion than Macaulay, who would have confined the State's business to the maintenance of order, the defence of property, and the practice of departmental economy. And when Southey, following Coleridge and preceding Gladstone, insisted upon the vital importance of religion as a principle of State policy, neither he nor Gladstone deserved all the ridicule cast upon them by Macaulay in his brilliant essays;

for at any rate no first-class Government in Europe has hitherto ventured upon dissolving connection with the Church.

For his philosophy, Mr. Stephen tells us, Southey was in the habit of referring to Coleridge, whose hostility to the Utilitarians went on different and deeper grounds. Coleridge had convinced himself that all the errors of the time, and their political dangers, arose from a false and godless empiricism. He declared that revolutionary periods have always been connected with the popular prevalence of abstract ideas, and that the speculative principles of men between twenty and thirty are the great source of political prophecy. He developed this view in a singular letter upon the state of affairs and opinions which he also, like Southey, addressed to Lord Liverpool in 1817, and which somewhat bewildered that veteran statesman. With the moderns, he said, 'nothing grows, all is made'; whereas growth itself is but a disguised mode of being made by the superinduction of the *jam data* on the *jam datum*; and he insisted that 'the flux of individuals at any moment in existence in a country is there for the value of the State, far more than the State for them, though both positions are true proportionately.' In other words, Coleridge pressed the evolutionary view against the sharp set, shortsighted Utilitarian propositions; and he would have agreed that antiquated prejudices are absurd only to those who have not looked back to their origin, when they can be found to proceed in logical order from natural causes. He had not been always a resolute opponent of the Utilitarian theory of morals; but, like other philosophers, he had become alarmed at the consequence of being shut up within the prison of finite senses, and he grasped at Kant's discovery of

the difference between Understanding and Reason, in order to retire upon a metaphysical basis of religion and morality, and to withstand the prudential calculus. We are inclined to suggest that Mr. Stephen, who does little more than glance at Coleridge's position, has underestimated his influence upon the intellectual direction of politics in the first half of this century. Coleridge certainly provided an antidote to the crudity of eager Radicalism in Church and State, and his ideas may be recognised not only in the great High Church movement that was stirred up by the Tractarians, but also in the larger comprehension of the duties and attributes of the State that has been slowly gaining ground up to our own day.

It is, indeed, the growth and development of English opinion regarding these public duties and attributes, as it is traced in Mr. Stephen's book, that forms, in our opinion, its chief value; and we are reviewing it mainly as a history of political ideas. This is, we believe, the practical outcome of the increasing feeling of sympathy between different classes of the community, of a sense of responsibility, of what is called altruism, of solidarity among all the diverse interests that have lately characterised our legislation:

> 'The two great rival theories of the functions of the State are—the theory which was for so many years dominant in England, and which may for convenience be called the Individualist theory; and the theory which is stated most fully and powerfully by the Greek philosophers, which we may call the Socialist theory. The Individualist theory regards the State as a purely utilitarian

> institution, a mere means to an end.... It represents the State as existing mainly for the protection of property and personal liberty, and as having therefore no concern with the private life and character of the citizen, except in so far as these may make him dangerous to the material welfare of his neighbour.
>
> 'The Greek theory, on the other hand, though it likewise regards the State as a means to certain ends, regards it as something more.... According to this theory, no department of life is outside the scope of politics; and a healthy State is at once the end at which the science aims, and the engine by which its decrees are carried out.'[29]

Accepting this passage as a philosophical statement of tendencies, we may observe that neither theory has ever been definitely adopted in England. The Utilitarians desired to recast institutions for the greater happiness of all citizens, but they were averse to investing the State with autocratic powers of interference. The Tories, on the other hand, were awakening to the conviction that the Government must do more for the people; but their fear of change and their own 'sinister interests,' persuaded them that this might be done without radical reforms. The Whigs faced both ways, and since in England the truly valuable effect of extreme opinions is always to drive the majority into a middle course, they rose to power on that compromise which is represented by the Reform measures of 1832. The Reform Bill was accepted by the Utilitarians as an instalment of the rightful authority of the people over the conduct of public affairs, and therefore a provisional method of

promoting their welfare. The first Tory statesman of that day, on the contrary, was convinced that for the public welfare the existing Constitution could not be bettered:

> 'During one hundred and fifty years the Constitution in its present form has been in force; and I would ask any man who hears me to declare whether the experience of history has produced any form of government so calculated to promote the happiness and secure the liberties of a free and enlightened people.'[30]

Both parties, in fact, appealed to experience; but Peel took his stand upon history, which the Utilitarians disregarded as a mere record of unscientific errors, or at most as a lighthouse to give warning of rocks, rather than a lamp to show the road ahead. And the point upon which they joined issue was as to the consequences of staking the whole fabric of government upon the basis of public opinion, operating through almost unlimited popular suffrage. The Tory foretold that this would end in wrecking the Constitution, with the ship among breakers, and steering by ballot voting. The Benthamite persuaded himself that enlightened self-interest, empirical perceptions of utility, and general education, would prevail with the multitude for their support of a rational system. But with those who demanded sovereignty for the people a strict limitation of the sphere of government was one essential maxim; and the Utilitarians would have agreed with Guizot when he declared it to be 'a mere commonplace that as civilisation and reason progress, the sphere of public authority contracts.' They do not appear to have foreseen that whenever the masses should have got

votes legislation would become democratic, or even socialistic, in order to capture them. This discovery was eventually made by the Tories, who availed themselves of it to dish the Whigs, and to come forward again upon a popular suffrage as the true friends and guardians of the people.

In Mr. Stephen's second volume James Mill is the principal figure, as the apostle of Benthamism, though he also describes briefly, in his terse and incisive style, the lives and opinions of some notable men, foes as well as friends to the party, who represented different expressions of energetic protest against existing institutions. To each of them is allotted his proper place in the line of attack, and his due share in the general enterprise of rousing, by argument or invective, the slow-thinking English people to a sense of their lamentable condition. Cobbett and Owen were at feud with true Utilitarians, and in unconscious alliance, against the orthodox economists, with the Tories, who, as we have said, have eventually found their advantage in the democratic movement. Cobbett fought for the cause of the agricultural labourer, trodden under foot by squires and parsons. Owen believed that the grasping capitalist, with his steam machinery, would further degrade and impoverish the working classes. Godwin, who is merely mentioned by Mr. Stephen, was a peaceful anarchist, who proposed 'to abolish the whole craft and mystery of government,' to abandon coercion and rely upon just reasoning, upon the enlightened assent of individuals to the payment of taxes. They all embodied ideas that are incessantly fermenting in some ardent minds, and that maintain a perceptible influence on political controversies at the present day. Godwin agreed with the Utilitarians that government is a bad thing in itself, but he went

beyond them in concluding that it is, or ought to be, unnecessary to society. To both Radical and Socialist, Utilitarianism, with its frigid philanthropy and its reliance on self-help, prudence, and free competition for converting miserable masses into a healthy and moral population, was the gospel of selfishness, invented for the salvation of landlords and capitalists. Malthus was the heartless exponent of natural laws that kept down multiplication by famine, while the rich man fared sumptuously every day; and the Ricardians, with their mechanical balancing of supply and demand, were mocking distress by solemn formulas. It must be admitted that these sharp assailants hit some palpable rifts in the Utilitarian armour of proof; and we know that popular sentiment has since been compelling later economists to take up much wider ground in defence of their scientific position.

The doctrines of Malthus, of Ricardo and of Ricardo's disciples are subjected to a searching analysis by Mr. Stephen, who brings out their limitations very effectively. Yet it is by no means easy, even under our author's skilful guidance, to follow the Utilitarian track through the fields of economy, philosophy, and theology, and to show in what manner or degree it led up to the issues under discussion in our own time. All these 'streams of tendency' have had their influence on the main current and direction of contemporary politics, but they cannot be measured or mapped out upon the scale of a review. And, in regard to political economy, we may even venture to question whether the earlier dogmatic theories now retain sufficient interest to justify the space which, in this volume, has been devoted to a scrutiny of them; for their methods, as well as their conclusions, have now become to a certain extent obsolete. A strictly

empirical science must be continually changing with fresh data and a broader outlook; it is always shifting under stress of new interests, changed feelings, and unforeseen contingencies; it is very serviceable for the exposure of errors, but its own demonstrations are in time proved to be erroneous or inadequate. Moreover, to explain the ills that afflict a society, and to declare them incurable except by patience and slow alterative medicines, is often to render them intolerable; nor is it of much practical importance to lay out, on hard scientific principles, the methodical operation of causes and effects that have always been understood in a rough experimental way.

> 'The truth that scarcity meant dearness was apparently well known to Joseph in Egypt, and applied very skilfully for his purpose. Economists have framed a theory of value which explains more precisely the way in which this is brought about. A clear statement may be valuable to psychologists; but for most purposes of political economy Joseph's knowledge is sufficient,'

If Joseph had written a treatise on the agrarian tenures of Egypt he might not have bought them up so easily at famine prices, and he might have entangled himself in a discussion upon peasant properties. The economist who makes an inductive demonstration of unalterable natural laws and propensities may be likened to the scientific legislator who undertakes to codify prevailing usages: he turns an elastic custom, constantly modified in practice by needs and sentiments, into an unbending statute, when the bare unvarnished statement of the principle produces an outcry. Natural processes will not bear calm philosophic

explanations that are understood to imply approval of them as cruel but inevitable; not even in such an essentially moralistic argument as that of Butler's 'Analogy,' which some have regarded as a plea of ambiguous advantage to the cause of natural religion. Malthus, for example, proved undeniably the pernicious consequences of reckless propagation; but he who forces a great evil upon public attention is expected to find the practical remedy; and Malthus had little to prescribe beyond a few palliative measures and the expediency of self-restraint, while his proposal to abolish the poor laws in the interest of pauperism was interpreted as a recommendation that poor folk should be starved into prudential and self-reliant habits. Malthus held, indeed, that the improvement of the condition of the labouring classes should be considered as the main interest of society. But he also thought that

> 'to improve their condition, it is essential to impress them with the conviction that they can do much more for themselves than others can do for them, and that the *only* source of their permanent improvement is the improvement of their moral and religious habits. What government can do, therefore, is to maintain such institutions as may strengthen the *vis medicatrix*, or desire to better our condition, which poor laws had directly tended to weaken.'

There is much wisdom to be found in these counsels; but good advice rather excites than allays the ignorant impatience of acute suffering, and popular opinion soon began to inquire whether the *vis medicatrix* might not be administered in some more

drastic form by the State. The conception of a rational government superintending, without interference, the slow evolution of morals, had a kind of correspondence, in the religious sphere, with the doctrine of pre-established harmonies so clearly ordained that to suggest any need of further Divine interposition to readjust them occasionally was a reflection upon the wisdom and foresight of Providence. But the stress and exigencies of modern party politics has rendered this attitude untenable for the temporal ruler.

The pure economists, however, prescribed moral remedies without investigating the elements of morality. They settled the laws of production and distribution as eliminated from the observation of ordinary facts; they corrected errors and registered the mechanical working of human desires and efforts. It is Mr. Stephen's plan, throughout this book, to show the bearing of philosophical speculation on practical conduct; and accordingly, after his chapter on Malthus and the Ricardians, he turns back again to philosophy and ethics. His clear and cogent exposition of the views and conclusions put forward on these subjects by Thomas Brown, with the express approval of James Mill, is an illustration of Coleridge's dictum regarding the connection between abstract theories and political movements. Admitting the connection, we may again observe that there is a certain danger in stating the theories too scientifically. Neither morals nor religion are much aided by digging down into their foundations. Yet the logical constructor of a new system usually finds himself driven by controversy into a discussion of ultimate ideas, though the Utilitarians refused to be forced back into metaphysics. No professor of philosophy, however, can altogether avoid asking

himself what underlies experience and the formation of beliefs; and Brown did his best for the Utilitarians by defining Intuition as a belief that passes analysis, a principle independent of human reasoning, which 'does not allow us to pass a single step beyond experience, but merely authorises us to interpret experience.' It was James Mill's mission to cut short and to simplify philosophical aberrations for his practical purposes:

> 'As a publicist, a historian, and a busy official, he had not much time to spare for purely philosophic reading. He was not a professor in want of a system, but an energetic man of business, wishing to strike at the root of superstitions to which his political opponents appealed for support. He had heard of Kant, and seen "what the poor man would be at".'

His own views are elaborated in his book on the *Analysis of the Phenomena of the Human Mind*, for a close criticism of which we must refer readers to Mr. Stephen's second volume. The connection of these dissertations with the social and political ends of the Utilitarians lies, it may be said briefly, in the support which a purely experiential psychology gives to the doctrine that human character depends on external circumstance, and that such vague terms as the 'moral sense' only disguise the true identity of rules of morality with the considerations that can be shown to produce general happiness. Whenever there appears to be a conflict between these rules and considerations, utility is the only sure criterion. To the extreme situations in which casuistry revels, as when a man is called upon to sacrifice his life or his personal honour for his country's good, the

Utilitarian would apply this unfailing test inexorably; in such cases a man ought to decide upon a calculation of the greatest happiness of the majority. He does not, in fact, apply this reckoning; he may possibly not have time, at the urgent moment, to work it out; his heroism is inspired by the universal praise or blame that reward self-devotion or punish shrinking from it, and thus render acts moral or immoral by the habitual association of ideas. The martyr or patriot does not, indeed, stop to calculate; he does not feel the subtle egoism that is hidden in the desire for applause; he believes himself to be acting with the perfect disinterestedness which can only be accounted for by superficial reasoners on the assumption of some such abstract notion as religion, moral sense, or duty. Since the behaviour of mankind at large, therefore, is invariably guided by a remote or proximate consideration of utility; since conduct depends upon character, and character is shaped by external conditions and positive sanctions, it is possible to frame, on utilitarian principles, scientific rules of behaviour which can be powerfully, though indirectly, promoted by legislation and a system of enlightened polity. For morality, it is argued, can be materially assisted by pointing to, or even providing, the serious consequences that are inseparable from human misdeeds, by proving that pain or pleasure follows different kinds of behaviour; while motives are so complex that they can never be verified with certainty, and must therefore be left out of account. This anatomy of the springs of action obviously lays bare some truths, although they fit in much better with the department of the legislator than of the moralist. As Mr. Stephen forcibly shows, although the consideration of motive may fall very seldom within the sphere of legislation, yet no theory which

should exclude its influence on the moral standard could be tolerated, since the motive is of primary importance in our ethical judgment of conduct. Nor has motive, as discriminated from intention, ever been kept entirely outside the criminal law, notwithstanding the danger of admitting, as an extenuation of some violent crime, that the offender had convinced himself that some religious or patriotic cause would be served by it. James Mill's view of morals as theoretically coordinate with law —because in both departments the intention is the essential element in measuring actions according to their consequences—operated in practical contradiction to his principle of restraining State interference within narrow limits. It is this latter principle which has since given way. For the general trend of later political opinion has evidently been towards bringing public morality more and more under administrative regulation; and this manifestly indicates a growing expansion of ideas upon the legitimate duties and jurisdiction of the State.

Upon James Mill's psychology Mr. Stephen's conclusion, with which we may agree, is that his analysis of virtue into enlightened self-interest is unsuccessful, and we have seen that his conception of government, as an all-powerful machine resting upon, yet strictly limited by, public opinion, has failed on the side of the limitations. Yet although Mill could not explain virtue, he was, after his fashion, a virtuous man, whose life was conscientiously devoted to public objects.

> 'His main purpose, too, was to lay down a rule of duty, almost mathematically ascertainable, and not to be disturbed by any sentimentalism, mysticism, or rhetorical

> foppery. If, in the attempt to free his hearers from such elements, he ran the risk of reducing morality to a lower level, and made it appear as unamiable as sound morality can appear, it must be admitted that in this respect, too, his theories reflected his personal character.'

It is also probable that his theories, and his bitter controversies in defence of them, reacted on his personal character, and that both influences are to be traced beyond James Mill's own life, in the mental and social prepossessions which he bequeathed to his son.

Mr. Stephen's third volume is chiefly occupied by the history of the later Utilitarians, and the expansion of their cardinal principle in its application to a changing temper of the times, under the leadership of John Stuart Mill. We have, first, a closely written and critical description of this remarkable man's early life, his stringent educational training, the development of his opinions, and their influence upon the orthodox tenets of the sect. Upon all these subjects Mill has left us, under his own hand, more intimate and circumstantial particulars than are to be found, perhaps, in any other personal memoir. The writer who tells his own story usually passes hastily over boyhood; the ordinary biographer gives some family details, or endeavours to amuse us with trivial anecdotes of the child who became an important man. J. S. Mill hardly alludes to any member of his family except his father, and his early days are marked by a total absence of triviality. He was bound over to hard intellectual labour at home during the years that for most of us pass so lightly and unprofitably at a public school; he was a

voracious and indefatigable reader and writer from his youth up, with a wolfish hunger (as Browning calls it) for knowledge; he plunged into all the current discussions of philosophy and politics; he became a practised writer and made a good figure at debating clubs; he became so intent on the solution of complex social problems as to acquire a distaste for general society; his mental concentration blunted his sensibility to the physical passions that so powerfully sway mankind.

Nevertheless, Mill's outlook upon the world was much wider than his father's, and his aim was so to adjust the Utilitarian creed as to bring it into closer working accord with the advancing ideas and projects of the political parties to whom he was nearest in sympathy. He allied himself in the beginning with the Philosophical Radicals, in the hope of organising them for active service in the cause. But this group soon broke up, and Mr. Stephen ascribes their failure in part to their name, observing that the word '"Philosophical" in English is synonymous with visionary, unpractical, and perhaps simply foolish.' There would be less satire, and possibly more justice, in saying that the word gives a chill to the energetic hot-gospeller of active Radicalism, who pushes past the philosopher as one standing too far behind the fighting line, although he may be useful in forging explosives in some quiet laboratory. Mill himself was continually hampered, as an ardent combatant, by the impedimenta which he brought into the field in the shape of abstract speculations, which could not be made to fit in with the immediate demands of thorough-going partisans. His democratic fervour was tempered by his conviction of the incapacity of the masses. He was a Socialist 'in the sense that he looked forward to a

complete, though distant, revolution in the whole structure of society'; he discovered that the Chartists had crude views upon political economy; his attitude toward factory legislation was very dubious. Yet in the main purpose of his life and writings, which was to mend and guide public opinion on social and political questions by theoretical treatment—that is, by a logically connected survey of the facts—he was undoubtedly successful, as is shown by the popularity of his two great works on *Logic* and *Political Economy*, which became the text-books of higher study on these subjects for a whole generation. On the other hand, he exposed himself to the distrust and hostility that are always aroused by philosophical arguments which strike at the roots of established beliefs and prejudices, and are discovered to be really more dangerous to them than a direct assault.

It was the philosophic strategy of J. S. Mill to prosecute the Utilitarian war against metaphysics, and finally to exterminate Intuitions, being convinced, as he said, that the *a priori* and spiritualistic thinkers still far exceeded the partisans of experience, and that a great majority of Englishmen were still Intuitionists. Is this actually a true account of English thought? Mr. Stephen thinks not, for he believes that if Mill had not lived much apart from ordinary folk he would have found Englishmen practically, though not avowedly, predisposed to empiricism, which has been the philosophic tradition in this country since Hobbes. We so far agree with Mr. Stephen that we believe Englishmen, in general, to practise a great deal more of empiricism than they avow. But Mill proposed to demonstrate and declare it as a weapon in polemics and an engine of action, and it was here, probably,

that the main body of Englishmen deserted him. They were not ready to cut themselves off from theology and from all ideas that transcend experience, and they demurred to the paramount jurisdiction of logic in temporal affairs. To every section of Churchmen the relegation of moral sanctions within the domain of verifiable consequences was a doctrine to be resisted strenuously. With the high sacerdotalist it amounted to a denial of the Christian mysteries; to the Broad Churchman it was ethically inadequate and ignoble; to the scholastic professor of divinity it meant ruinous materialism.

That a vigorous thinker should have begun by striking at what seemed to him the root of obstructive fallacies was natural enough. He supposed that a logical demonstration would clear the ground for his plans of reform; whereas, on the contrary, it entangled him in preliminary disputations, and his inflexible reasoning alarmed people who followed experience as the guide of life, but instinctively felt that there must be something beyond phenomenal existence. In political economy Mill relied upon common sense and practice in affairs to make the requisite allowance for general laws founded on human propensities regarded abstractedly. His conviction was, in short, that nothing should be taken for granted because everything might be explained; and he desired to tie men down to accepting no belief, or even feeling, that could not be justified by reason. His *System of Logic* was, as he has himself written, a text-book for the doctrine 'which derives all knowledge from experience, and all moral and intellectual qualities principally from the direction given to the associations.' When he proceeded to construct a

systematic psychology upon this basis, he fell into the fundamental perplexities that are concisely brought out by Mr. Stephen in his scrutiny of Mill's doctrine of Causation. He followed Hume in severing any necessary connection between cause and effect, and even invariable sequence became incapable of proof. But when he resolved Cause into a statement of existing conditions that can never be completely known until we have mastered the whole series of physical phenomena, and showed that all human induction is fallible because necessarily imperfect, it became clear that Mill had very little to offer in substitution for those grounds of ordinary belief that he was bent on demolishing. The word Cause is reduced, for ordinary use, to a signification not unlike that which is understood in loose popular language by the word Chance, since Chance means no more than ignorance of how an event came to pass; and in no case, according to Mill, can we ever calculate with security what undiscoverable conditions may suddenly bring about an unexpected event contrary to previous experience. The uniformity of Nature, as Mr. Stephen remarks, is thus made exceedingly precarious; and to the practical intelligence, which looks for some basis that cannot be argued about, there is still something to be said for Intuition. And when Mill, still in search of some precise formula, undertook to interpret persistent sequences by his theory of Real Kinds possessing an indeterminate number of coherent properties—so that our belief in the invariable blackness of crows is justified as a collocation of these visible properties—he merely throws the problem of Causation farther backward. We have to be content with direct observation of phenomena that can be classified as co-existent; we can perceive that things accompany

each other, but we can never be sure that they follow each other, as they appear to do.

It may be doubted whether Mill's treatment of these problems has materially affected subsequent psychological speculation, which has since taken different and deeper courses. His main objective was social and political.

'The notion,' he has written, 'that truths external to the mind may be known by intuition, or consciousness, independently of observation and experience, is, I am persuaded, in these times the great intellectual support of false doctrines and bad institutions.' In confounding the metaphysicians, and eliminating all mysterious assumptions or axioms, he aimed at clearing the ground for a demonstrable science of character, and to establish the great principle that character can be indefinitely modified. The way is thus opened to questions of conduct, to positive remedies for social and political evils which, as they have been generated and fostered by external circumstances, can be removed by a change of those circumstances.

> 'The greatest problems of the time were either economical or closely connected with economical principles. Mill had followed the political struggles with the keenest interest; he saw clearly their connection with underlying social movements; and he had thoroughly studied the science—or what he took to be the science—which must afford guidance for a satisfactory working out of the great problems. The Philosophical Radicals were deserting the old cause, and becoming insignificant as a party. But Mill

> had not lost his faith in the substantial soundness of their economic doctrines. He thought, therefore, that a clear and full exposition of their views might be of the highest use in the coming struggle.... The *Political Economy* speedily acquired an authority unapproached by any work published since the *Wealth of Nations*.'

We cannot follow Mr. Stephen through his elaborate and effective review of this celebrated book. Its appearance marked an epoch in the history of Utilitarianism, for it took a much wider survey of social and political considerations, and the author undertook to expand the orthodox economic theories so that they might embrace and be reconciled with some daring projects of comprehensive reform. But Mill had to put some strain on the principles to which he adhered, and to accommodate certain inconsistencies in order to keep pace with moving ideas. He held on with some effort to the cardinal tenets of the older Utilitarians, to a dislike of interference by governments, to reliance on individual effort, to protest against the deadening influence of paternal administration, to his own trust in the gradual effect of educational agencies, and in the slow emancipation of the popular mind from unreasoning prejudices. On the other hand, he advocated a radical reform of the land laws, peasant proprietorship, the acquisition by the State of railways and canals, the limitation of the right of bequest; and he went even so far as to speak with approval of laws in restraint of improvident marriages. All these proposals could only be carried out by arbitrary and drastic legislation. As he put it, the State must interfere for the purpose of making the people independent of further interference; and

he overlooked or set aside the question whether the eventual result of thus calling in the State's agency would not be contrary to the principles and professed intentions of the Utilitarian school, whether the provisional *régime* would not become permanent, as, in fact, it has been rapidly becoming ever since.

We can see, moreover, that while J. S. Mill's sympathy with the popular cause and with the most ardent reformers was sincere, he was at issue with them in regard to the means, though not in regard to the ends; he wished to better the intelligence of the people as the first step toward bettering their condition. But when he had convinced himself, as he said, that no great improvements in the lot of mankind are possible until a great change takes place in the fundamental constitution of their modes of thought, he had still to persuade men who were stirring and pressing for immediate action that gradual methods were the best. Most of them may have preferred to try whether, if the lot of mankind were improved materially, the moral changes and mental habits would not follow; for indeed Mill's proposition might stand examination and hold good either way. It may be argued that an elevation or widening of intellectual views is the consequence, as often as it is the cause, of increasing comfort and leisure. He thought that all reading and writing which does not tend to promote a renovation of the world's belief is of very little value beyond the moment, which is, of course, true in a general sense; though literature can act much more directly than by dealing with first principles. He welcomes Free Trade as one triumph of Utilitarian doctrines, yet he sadly observes that the English public are quite as raw and undiscerning on subjects of political economy since the nation was converted to Free Trade as before.

The nation, in fact, went straight at the immediate point, got what it wanted at the moment, and was satisfied.

Mr. Stephen's criticism of Mill's later writings exhibits further his difficulties in adjusting the essential Utilitarian principles to closer contact with the urgent questions of the day. Mill still held to competition, to the full liberty of individuals, to the inevitable mechanical working of economic laws; he still doubted the expediency of factory legislation, and condemned any laws in restraint of usury. He was opposed, broadly, to all authoritative intrusion upon human existence wherever its necessity could not be proved conclusively to be in the interest of a self-reliant community. Yet he was forced to make concessions and exceptions in the face of actual needs and grievances; and especially he found himself more and more impelled to tolerate and even advocate interference by the State as the only effective instrument for demolishing obstacles to the moral and material betterment of the people. Since unjust social inequalities could be traced to an origin in force or fraud, the legislature might be logically called in to remove them; and as this is manifestly the revolutionary argument (as embodied, for example, in the writings of Thomas Paine), it enabled him to join hands with Radicalism in proposing some very thorough-going measures. 'Landed property in Europe derives its origin from force;' so the legislature is entitled to interpose for the reclamation of rights unjustly usurped from the community; while, as economical science shows that the value of land rises from natural causes, the conclusion is that the State may confiscate the unearned increment. But it was not so easy to convince the hungry mechanic, by rather fine-drawn distinctions, that the capitalist

had a better right to monopolise profits than the landlord; for the rise of value in manufactured commodities has very complex causes, some of them superficially natural. So here, again, is a plausible case of social injustice. Again, it may be affirmed that all powerful associations, private as well as public, operate in restriction of individual liberty. You may argue that great industrial companies are voluntary; the question is whether they are innocuous to the common weal, and we may add that this point is coming seriously to the front at the present time. The distinction, as Mr. Stephen remarks, drawn by the old individualism between State institutions and those created by private combination is losing its significance; and, what is more, public bodies are now continually encouraged to absorb private enterprise in all matters that directly concern the people.

In short, we are on the high road to State Socialism, though Mill helps us to console ourselves with having taken that road on strictly scientific principles. It is the not unusual result of stating large benevolent theories for popular application; the principle is accepted and its limitations are disregarded. Nevertheless Mill contends gallantly in his later works for intellectual liberty, complete freedom of discussion, and the utility of tolerating the most eccentric opinions. Into what practical difficulties and questionable logical distinctions he was drawn by the necessity of fencing round his propositions and making his reservations is well known; and Mr. Stephen hits the weak points with keen critical acumen. We all agree that persecution has done frightful mischief, at times, by suppressing the free utterance of unorthodox opinions. But Mill argues that contradiction, even of truth, is desirable

in itself, because a doctrine, true or false, becomes a dead belief without the invigorating conflict of opposite reasonings. Resistance to authority in matters of opinion is a sacred privilege essential to the formation of belief; wherefore originality, even when it implies stupidity, is to be carefully protected as a factor of human progress. We need not follow Mr. Stephen in his victorious analysis of the arguments wherewith Mill seeks to uphold this uncompromising individualism, and to guard human perversity against the baneful influence of authority. It is clear enough that society cannot waste its time in perpetual wrangling over issues upon which an authoritative verdict has been delivered; and for most of us a reasonable probability, founded on the judgment of experts, is sufficient in moral or physical questions as well as in litigation. The religious arena still remains open, where experts differ and decisions are always disputable. Yet Mr. Arthur Balfour devotes a chapter in his *Foundations of Belief* to the contention that our convictions on all the deeper subjects of thought are determined not by reason but by authority; whereby he provides us with an escape from the scepticism that menaces a philosopher who has proved all experience to be at bottom illusory. Mill, on the other hand, would make short work with authority wherever it checks or discourages the unlimited exercise of free individual inquiry; and in politics he would entrust the sovereign power to a representation of the entire aggregate of the community, with the most ample encouragement of incessant discussion. This is, indeed, the system actually in force, and in England it has answered very well; but Mill hardly foresaw that its tendency would be to make the State, as the embodiment of popular will, not less but more authoritative, with a

tendency to encroach steadily upon the sphere of individual effort and private enterprise.

It may be said that the abstract Utilitarian doctrine reached its high-water mark in Mill's book on the Subjection of Women, to which Mr. Stephen allots one section of a chapter. The book is a particular enlargement upon Mill's general view that it is a pestilent error to regard such marked distinctions of human character as sex or race as innate and in the main indelible. What is called the nature of women he treats as an artificial thing, an isolated fact which need not at any rate be recognised by law; the proper test was, he argued, to leave free competition to determine whether the distinction is radical or merely the result of external circumstance. But, as Mr. Stephen answers, such a plain physiological difference is at least not negligible; and competition between the sexes may favour the despotism of the stronger, while complete independence on both sides implies freedom to separate at will; and Mill had only glanced evasively at the question of divorce. Here, again, is a theory which the pressure of social conditions, much more than abstract reasoning, is bringing more and more into prominence with our own generation. On the wider and more complicated question of race distinctions Mill never worked out his argument against their indelibility into a regular treatise; nor could he foresee the increasing influence upon contemporary politics that is now exercised by racial feelings and their claims to recognition. In the eighteenth century the French Encyclopédistes, who were the direct philosophic ancestors of the Utilitarians, regarded frontiers, classes, and races as so many barriers against the spread of universal fraternity; and the revolutionary government took up the idea as a war-cry. The armies of the French

Republic proclaimed the rights of the people in all countries, until Napoleon turned the democratic doctrine into the form of Imperialism. M. Eugène de Vogüé has told us recently that this armed propaganda produced a reaction in Europe toward that strong sentiment of nationality which has been vigorously manifested during the second half of the nineteenth century. The assertion of separate nationalities, by the demand for political autonomy and by the attempt to revive the public teaching of obscure languages, is the form taken in western and central Europe by the problem of race. No movement could be more contrary to the views or anticipations of the Utilitarians, for whom it would have been merely a recrudescence of one of those inveterate and unreasoning prejudices which still retard human progress, a fiction accepted by indolent thinkers to avoid the trouble of investigating the true causes that modify human character. Yet not only is national particularism making a fresh stir in Europe, but the spread of European dominion over Asia has forced upon our attention the immense practical importance of racial distinctions. We find that they signify real and profound characteristics; the European discovers that in Asia he is himself one of a ruling race, and thereby isolated among the other groups into which the population is subdivided. If he is a sound Utilitarian he will nevertheless cherish the belief that economical improvements, public instruction, good laws, and regular administration will obliterate antipathies, eradicate irrational prejudices, and reconcile Asiatic folk to the blessings of scientific civilisation. But he will confess that it is a stubborn element, if not innate yet very like such a quality; if not ineffaceable yet certain to outlast his dominion. It is at least remarkable that Mill's protest against

explaining differences of character by race, to which Buckle 'cordially subscribed,' should have been answered in our time by a clamorous demand for the recognition of those very differences, and by an increasing tendency to admit them.

Upon Mill's theological speculations Mr. Stephen has written an interesting chapter, illustrating Mill's desire to treat religion more sympathetically, with a deeper sense of its importance in life, than in the absolute theories of the older Utilitarians. Bentham had declared that the principle of theology, of referring everything to God's will, was no more than a covert application of the test of utility. You must first know whether a thing is right in order to discover whether it is conformable to God's pleasure; and a religious motive, he said, is good or bad according as the religious tenets of the person acting upon it approach more or less to a coincidence with the dictates of utility. The next step, as Bentham probably knew well, is to throw aside an abstraction that has become virtually superfluous, and to march openly under the Utilitarian standard. But there was in Mill a moral and emotional instinct that deterred him from resting without uneasiness upon such a bare empirical conclusion. He rejected all transcendental conceptions; yet he did his best, as Mr. Stephen shows, to find reasonable proofs of a Deity whose existence and attributes may be inferred by observation and experience. He agreed that such an inference is not inconsistent, *a priori*, with natural laws, and the argument from design was admitted as providing by analogy, or even inductively, a large balance of probability in favour of creation by Intelligence. The difficulty is to attain by these methods the idea of a Deity perfect in power, wisdom, and goodness; for the order of Nature, apart

from human intervention and contrivances for making the earth habitable, discloses no tincture of morality. We are thus reduced to the dilemma propounded by Hume, between an omnipotent Deity who cannot be benevolent because misery is permitted, and a benevolent Deity with limited powers; and Mill sums up the discussion, doubtfully, in favour of a Being with great but limited powers, whose motives cannot be satisfactorily fathomed by the human intellect.

This halting conclusion indicates a departure from the pure empiricism of his school, and even the inadequacy of the argument shows the effort that Mill was making towards some fellow-feeling with spiritual conceptions. As Mr. Stephen points out, there is a curious approximation, on some points, between Mill and his arch-enemy Mansel—between the conditioned and unconditioned philosophies. Both of them lay stress on the moral perplexities involved in arguing from the wasteful and relentless course of Nature to an estimate of the divine attributes. And both agree that the existence of evil is a serious difficulty; though Mansel's solution, or evasion, of it is by insisting that the ways of the unconditioned are necessarily for the most part unknowable, while Mill leans to the possibility that God's power or intelligence may be incomplete. Upon either hypothesis we must confess that our knowledge is imperfect and very fallible. Mr. Stephen has no trouble in exposing the philosophical weakness of Mill's attitude; but we are mainly concerned to compare it briefly with the position of his predecessors, for the purpose of continuing a rapid survey of the course and filiation of Utilitarian doctrines. When the orthodox Utilitarians definitely rejected all theology—though until Philip

Beauchamp appeared, in 1822, they made no direct attack upon it—they believed that the fall of theology would also bring down religion, which they regarded as the source of motives that were fictitious, misleading, and profoundly unscientific. Mill agreed that a supernatural origin could not be ascribed to received maxims of morality without harming them, because to consecrate rules of conduct was to interdict free examination of them, and to paralyse their natural development in accordance with changes of circumstance. Looking back over the interminable controversies, and the successive variations in form and spirit that every great religion has undergone, this objection does not seem to us very formidable. But Mill's evident object was to reconcile the cultivation of religious feelings with his principle of free thought for individuals. In accepting Comte's ideal of a religion of humanity, he had entirely condemned Comte's reproduction of the spiritual authority in the shape of a philosophical priesthood. And it is remarkable, as indicating a radical discordance between the French and the English moralist, that while Comte's adoration, in his later years, of a woman led him to ordain a formal worship of the feminine representative of the Family, coupled with the strict seclusion of women from politics, Mill's lifelong attachment greatly strengthened his ardour for the complete emancipation of the whole sex.

Our readers will bear in mind that we are endeavouring to measure the permanent influence of Utilitarian doctrines, to determine how far they have fixed the direction, and shaped the ends, of contemporary thought and political action. It cannot be said that these doctrines are now predominant in either of these two closely interacting departments.

National instincts and prepossessions have lost none of their force; national character now divides neighbouring peoples more sharply, perhaps, than a hundred years ago. Militarism is stronger than ever; cosmopolitan philanthropy is overridden by the growth of national interests; political economy is overruled by political necessities; nor have ethical systems displaced the traditional religions. Empiricism has fallen into discredit as a narrow and inadequate philosophy; it is superseded in the spiritual world by transcendental interpretations of dogmas as metaphysical representations of underlying realities. Mr. Stephen's most instructive work draws to its close with a dissertation on Liberalism and Dogmatism, showing how and why Utilitarianism failed in convincing or converting Englishmen to a practical assent to its principles and modes of thought. Upon many minds they produced more repulsion than attraction. Maurice earnestly protested that we were to believe in God, not in a theory about God, though the distinction, as Mr. Stephen says, is vague; he appealed to the inner light, to the conscience of mankind; he went back into the slough of Intuitionism. Carlyle cried aloud against materialistic views and logical machinery; he denounced 'the great steam-engine, Utilitarianism'; he was for the able despot and hero-worship against grinding competition and government by discussion. In theology the mystical spirit rose again with its immemorial power of enchanting human imagination; the moral law is discerned to be the vesture of Divinity, in which He arrays Himself to become apprehensible by the finite intellect; and a Science that tries to understand everything explains nothing. Authority, instead of being discarded, is invoked to deliver men out of the great waters of

spiritual and political anarchy. The Tractarians struck in with a fierce attack on Rationalism, propounding Faith and Revelation as imperative grounds of belief. You must accept the dogmas, not as useful, not as moral or reasonable, not even as derived intuitively, but as the necessary fundamental truths declared by the infallible Church to be essential to salvation. Those who could not find infallibility in a State Church went over to Rome, abandoning the Via Media; others were content with the high sacramental position of Anglicanism; the moderate Rationalists took shelter with the Broad Church; a few retreated into the cloudy refuge of transcendental idealism. The two extreme parties, the Broad Church and the Sacerdotalists, were at bitter feud with each other; yet they both denounced the common enemy. Arnold 'agreed with Carlyle that the Liberals greatly overrate Bentham, and the political economists generally; the *summum bonum* of their science is not identical with human life ... and the economical good is often, from the neglect of other points, a social evil.' Newman held that to allow the right of private judgment was to enter upon the path of scepticism; and the latest infidel device, he says, is to leave theology alone. He set up the argument, well-worn but always impressive, that science gives no certainty; and Mr. Stephen contends against it with the weapons of empiricism:—

> 'The scientific doctrines must lay down the base to which all other truth, so far as it is discoverable, must conform. The essential feature of contemporary thought was just this: that science was passing from purely physical questions to historical, ethical, and social problems. The dogmatist objects to private judgment or free thought on the

> ground that, as it gives no criterion, it cannot lead to certainty. His real danger was precisely that it leads irresistibly to certainty. The scientific method shows how such certainty as is possible must be obtained. The man of science advocates free inquiry precisely because it is the way to truth, and the only way, though a way which leads through many errors.'

Mr. Stephen is himself a large-minded Utilitarian. He will have nothing to do with a transcendental basis of morals; and the dogmatist who dislikes cross-examination is out of his court. Dogmatic authority, he says, stands only on its own assertions; and if you may not reason upon them, the inference is that on those points reason is against them. You may withdraw beyond this range by sublimating religion into a philosophy, but then it loses touch with terrestrial affairs, and has a very feeble control over the unruly affections of sinful men. Newman himself resorted to scientific methods in his theory of Development, that is, of the growth and evolution of doctrine. We may agree that these destructive arguments have much logical force, yet on the other hand such certitude as empiricism can provide brings little consolation to the multitude, who require some imperative command; they look for a pillar of cloud or fire to go before them day and night, and a land of promise in the distance. Scientific exposition works slowly for the improvement of ethics, which to the average mind are rather weakened than strengthened by loosening their foundations; and religious beliefs suffer from a similar constitutional delicacy. Conduct is not much fortified by being treated as a function of character and circumstance; for in religion and morals ordinary humanity demands something

impervious to reasoning, wherein lies the advantage of the intuitionist.

Mr. Stephen, however, is well aware that empirical certitude will not supply the place of religion. In his concluding pages he states, fairly and forcibly, the great problems by which men are still perplexed. Religion, as J. S. Mill felt, is a name for something far wider than the Utilitarian views embrace.

> 'Men will always require some religion, if religion corresponds not simply to their knowledge, but to the whole impression made upon feeling and thinking beings by the world in which they must live. The condition remains that the conception must conform to the facts; our imagination and our desires must not be allowed to over-ride our experience, or our philosophy to construct the universe out of *a priori* guesses.... To find a religion which shall be compatible with all known truth, which shall satisfy the imagination and the emotions, and which shall discharge the functions hitherto assigned to the churches, is a problem for the future.'

The Utilitarian doctrines, in short, though propagated by leaders of high intellectual power, and inspired by a pure unselfish morality, achieved little success in the enterprise of providing new and firmer guidance and support to mankind in their troubles and perplexities. But they were not content to look down from serene heights upon the world, leaving the crowd

> 'Errare atque viam palantes quærere vitæ.'

They laboured devotedly to dispel ignorance and to advance knowledge; they spared no pains to promote the material well-being of society. They helped to raise the wind that filled the sails of practical reform; they headed the attack upon legal and administrative abuses; they stirred up the national conscience against social injustice; they proclaimed a lofty standard of moral obligation. They laid down principles that in the long run accord with human progress, yet in their hopes of rapidly modifying society by the application of those principles they were disappointed; for their systematic theories were blocked by facts, feelings, and misunderstandings which had not been taken into calculation. They were averse to coercion, as an evil in itself; but though they would have agreed with Mr. Bright's dictum that 'Force is no remedy,' they were latterly brought to perceive that in another sense there is no remedy except force, and that the vested interests and preconceptions of society make a stiff and prolonged opposition to enlightened persuasion. They were disposed to rely too confidently upon the spread of intelligence by general education for preparing the minds of people to accept and act upon doctrines that were logically demonstrable, and to reject what could not be proved. Mr. Stephen has somewhere written that to support a religion by force instead of by argument is to admit that argument condemns it. The proposition is too absolutely stated even for the domain of spiritual authority, since it might be replied that no great religion, certainly no organised Church, has existed by argument alone, and it has usually been supported by laws. But at any rate the temporal power subsists and operates by coercion, and the sphere of the State's direct action, instead of

diminishing, as the earlier Utilitarians expected it to do, with the spread of education and intelligence, is perceptibly extending itself. The Utilitarians demurred to religion as an ultimate authority in morals, and substituted the plain unvarnished criterion of utility. Upon this ground the State steps in, replaces religious precept by positive law, and public morality is enforced by Acts of Parliament. They were for entrusting the people with full political power, to be exercised in vigilant restraint of the interference by Government with individual rights and conduct; the people have obtained the power, and are using it more and more to place their affairs and even their moral interests under the control of organised authority. We do not here question the expediency of the movement; we are simply registering the tendency.

There are few literary enterprises more arduous than the task of following and demarcating from the written record of a period the general course of political and philosophic movements. The tendencies are so various, the conditions which determine them are so complicated, that it is difficult to keep hold of the clue which guides and connects them. Mr. Leslie Stephen's *History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century* took the broad ground that is denoted by its title; but, as he now tells us in his preface, he has found it expedient to reduce his present work within less comprehensive limits, by confining it to 'an account of the compact and energetic school of the English Utilitarians.' This reduction of its scope has not, however, damaged the continuity of the narrative, since in the great departments of morals, religion, and political philosophy the Utilitarians were mainly the lineal heirs of the characteristic English writers in the preceding century. It is true

that Mr. Stephen has not been able to bring within the compass of his three volumes the subject of general literature, especially of poetry and novels, which in the nineteenth century have given their vivid expression to the doubts and the hopes, to the aims and aspirations of the time. But we can see that such an enlargement of his plan would have rendered it unmanageable, and that Mr. Stephen may have wisely considered the example of Buckle's *History of Civilisation in England*, which was projected on too large a scale, exhausted the author's strength, and remains unfinished. Mr. Stephen's present work fulfils its promise and completes its design. The Utilitarians are very fortunate in having found a historian whose vivacity of style, consummate literary knowledge, and masculine power of thought will have revived their declining reputations, and secured to them their proper place in the literature of the nineteenth century.

FOOTNOTES:

[28] *The English Utilitarians.* By Leslie Stephen. 3 vols. London, Duckworth and Co., 1900.—*Edinburgh Review*, April 1901.

[29] *The Greek Theory of the State*, by Charles John Shebbeare, B.A., 1895.

[30] Sir Robert Peel's speech on Reform, March 1831.

CHARACTERISTICS OF MR.

SWINBURNE'S POETRY[31]

There is probably some foundation for the belief, often held in these days, that the production of high poetry is becoming more difficult, partly because the environment of modern civilisation lends itself less and less to artistic treatment, as mechanism supersedes human effort, and partly through the operation of other causes. It has been plausibly argued that most things worth saying have been said already; that even the words best fitted for poetic expression have been worn out, have been weakened by familiar usage or soiled by misuse, and that the resources of language for adequate presentation of ideas and feelings are running very low. Nevertheless, we all look forward hopefully to the coming of the original genius who is to strike a fresh note and inaugurate a new era, as pious Mohammedans expect another Imam. Yet his coming may not be in our time, and meanwhile the poetic lamp is burning dimly; it is just kept alight by the assiduous trimming of the disciples of the great men who have passed or are passing away, by the minor poets who strike a few musical chords that catch the ear, but who are not recalled by the audience when they have played their part and left the stage. The stars that shone in the bright constellation of Victorian poets have been setting one by one, until two only remain of those who were the pride of the generation to which they belong, for whom we may predict that they will hold a permanent place in English literature. It is now nearly sixty years since Mr. Meredith's first poems were published. Mr. Swinburne is about ten years his junior, both in age and in authorship; one may perhaps assume that the work upon which their reputations will rest is

finished for both of them. Mr. Meredith's poetry has very recently been the subject of a very complete and sympathetic study by Mr. George Trevelyan. In this article we shall make an attempt to delineate, briefly of necessity and therefore inadequately, the characteristic qualities of form and thought, the technical methods and intellectual temperament which distinguish the younger poet, who may be destined to be the last survivor of an illustrious company.

If we accept the theory that art, like nature, follows the principle of continuous development, that its existing state is closely linked with its past, it is not easy to affiliate Mr. Swinburne to any direct literary predecessors. Undoubtedly we may assign to him poetical kinship with Shelley; he has the same love for classical myths and allegories, for the embodiment of nature in the beautiful figures of the antique. Light and shade, a quiet landscape, a tumultuous storm, stir him with the same sensuous emotion. He has Shelley's passion for the sea; he is fond of invoking the old divinities who presided over the fears, hopes, and desires of mankind. He has also Shelley's rebellious temper, the unflinching revolt against dogmatic authority and fundamental beliefs which rightly shocked our grandfathers in 'Queen Mab' and a few other poems; he is even less disposed than Shelley to the hypocrisy which does unwilling homage to virtue. On the other hand, Mr. Swinburne's pantheism has not Shelley's metaphysical note; the conception of an indwelling spirit guiding and moulding the phenomenal world has dropped out; there is no pure idealism of this sort in Mr. Swinburne's verse.

It may be said, truly, that some of Mr. Swinburne's

poetry shows the influence of the later French Romanticists, of the reaction toward mediævalism which is represented in England by Scott, and which culminated in France with Victor Hugo, for whom the English poet's admiration is unmeasured. That movement, however, had almost ceased on our side of the Channel at the time when it had reached, or was just passing, its climax in France. And, indeed, by 1835 the style and sentiment of English poetry was undergoing a remarkable change. Its magnificent efflorescence, which the first quarter of the nineteenth century had seen in full bloom, had faded away. It had sprung up in an era of great wars and revolution, amid the struggles of nations to shake off the incubus of despotisms, to free themselves from the yoke of foreigners. The cause of political liberty inspired the noblest verse of Shelley, Coleridge, and Byron:

> Yet Freedom, yet, thy banner, torn but
> flying,
> Streams like a thunderstorm against the
> wind—'

But in England this ardent spirit had evaporated during the years of industrial prosperity and mechanical progress which came in with a long peace after twenty years of fighting; and during the next generation a milder tone prevailed. For an interval we had only second-rate artists in verse. The fiery enthusiasts, the despisers of respectability, were succeeded by poets who were decently emotional, pensive in thought, tame or affected in style, domestic in theme, with feeble echoes of the true romantic note in Mrs. Hemans and others. Next, in the fulness of time, came Tennyson and Browning, to raise the level of English poetry by their deeper

views of life, their elevation of thought, and their incomparably greater imaginative power. Tennyson's composition is pellucid and exquisitely refined. Browning is rugged and often obscure; he cares more for the force than for the form of expression. The great problems of religion and politics are seriously and cautiously handled. Browning analyses them with caustic irony, while Tennyson, after making vain attempts to solve them, finds consolation in the 'Higher Pantheism.' They are soon joined by Matthew Arnold and Clough, who represent the melancholy resignation of sensitive minds that have discarded the creeds, for whom the miraculous history of Christianity is an illusion that has faded into the common light of day. Meredith, poet and novelist, falls back upon communion with Nature; he preaches the doctrine of duty, of working while the light lasts; he is a high moralist who accepts stoically the conclusion that nothing beyond terrestrial existence is knowable.

Thus Mr. Swinburne's elder contemporaries and precursors in poetry were all in different modes and fashions optimists; at any rate in their earlier writings. They stood outside the Churches; dogmatic beliefs they tacitly put away; they were in sympathy with the Christian ideal apart from its supernatural element; they professed a vague trust in an unseen Power, chequered here and there by intimations of pantheism; they made no frontal assault upon the central positions of theology. When we turn to their emotional poetry we find that they were always decorous; there is much discourse of love, often passionate, never erotic, no tearing aside of drapery, not a line to scare modesty. In Tennyson's most impassioned lyrics the principal figure is the broken-hearted lover, jilted by Cousin Amy, or caught in the

garden with Maud—with intentions strictly honourable in both cases. The treatment of love by Browning and Meredith is chiefly psychological; they are usually concerned with the tragic situations that it can involve, though the comic aspect of sexual infatuation occasionally provokes cynicism. In politics all these poets are no friends to democracy or seething radicalism; they adore liberty, yet they are votaries of law and order; they have a hatred of misrule, and generally a cheerful confidence in the world's evolution toward better things. On social ethics the poets of the mid-Victorian period wrote with philosophic sobriety; they maintained a strict moral standard. In their wildest emotional flights they abstained from irreverence or indecorum. They undoubtedly represented the prevailing cast of thought, the taste and tendencies of the society to which they belonged; the growing scepticism, the influence on established ideas of advancing science and philosophy. Literature had been showing distinct signs of sympathy with these novelties, but in the early 'sixties an open revolt was generally discountenanced.

Mr. Swinburne's first publications were two historic plays, of which something will be said hereafter. In 1864 he turned suddenly from modern history to ancient legend for his dramatic subject, when he aroused immediate attention by *Atalanta in Calydon*, which reproduced the structure and metrical arrangement of a Greek tragedy. The dialogue has the purity of tone, the clear-cut concision that belong to its Hellenic model. At the beginning we have a joyous chant full of sound and colour, gradually changing into the elegiac strain of foreboding, the dread of pitiless divinities, the lamentation for the hero's unmerited fate. The exquisite modulations of

the verse, the splendid choral antiphonies captivated all who were susceptible to the enchantment of poetry. The delicate adaptation of the English language to quantitative harmonies in high resonant lyrics showed extraordinary skill in the difficult enterprise of communicating the charm and cadences of the antique masterpieces. It is a heroic drama, severe in style and character as the *Antigone* of Sophocles. Then in 1865 came *Chastelard*, conceived and partly written, as Mr. Swinburne has told us, when he was yet at Oxford, a play in which he turns from the Greek tragedians to rejoin the historical dramatists. The turn is abrupt, for no character could have been more alien to the Greek notions of heroism than that of the love-sick knight who joyfully throws away his life for an hour in his lady's chamber, tears up the warrant reprieving him from execution, and accepts death to save Queen Mary's fragile reputation. But although the keynote of Mr. Swinburne's coming poetry is struck in *Chastelard*—the overpowering enthralment of Love, a joy to live and die for—

> 'The mistress and mother of pleasure,
> The one thing as certain as death'—

yet it gave the British public no fair warning of what followed almost immediately.

Into the midst of a well-regulated, self-respecting modern society, much moved by Tennyson's 'Idylls,' and altogether sympathetic with the misfortunes of the blameless king—justly appreciative of the domestic affection so tenderly portrayed by Coventry Patmore's 'Angel in the House'—Mr. Swinburne charged impetuously with his *Poems and Ballads*, waving the banner of revolt against conventional

reticence, kicking over screens and rending drapery —a reckless votary of Astarte, chanting the 'Laus Veneris' and the worship of 'Dolores, Our Lady of Pain.' From the calm and bright aspect of paganism he is turning toward its darker side, to the mystic rites and symbolism which cloaked the fierce primitive impulses of the natural man. The burden of these first poems is chiefly the bitter sweetness of love, the sighs and transports of those who writhe in the embrace of the dread goddess, known by many names in all lands, or the glory of man's brief springtide, when the veins are hot, soon to be cooled and covered by frost and fallen leaves. In the clear ringing stanzas of the 'Triumph of Time,' who sweeps away the brief summer of lovers' delight, bringing them to autumnal regrets 'for days that are over and dreams that are done,' and lastly to wintry oblivion, we have almost a surfeit of voluptuous melancholy. In this, as in other poems, the sea, changeful in mood, alternately fair and fierce, a bright smiling surface covering a thousand graves, fascinating and treacherous, is the mythical Aphrodite, the fatal woman, merciless to men. All this is set out in lyrics which amaze the reader by their exuberance of language, profusion of metaphor, and classic allusion; in rhymes that strike on the ear like the clashing of cymbals. It is as if Atys and his wild Mænads were flying through the quiet English woodlands. The long-drawn, undulating lines, in a quieter strain, of the 'Hymn to Proserpine' and of 'Hesperia,' with their subtle music, lay the reader under their charm; but too many of these poems are tainted by a flavour of morbidity, and the average Englishman is not easily thrown by the most potent spells into a state of amorous delirium.

It is not surprising, therefore, that this first volume of

poems, saturated with intoxicating Hedonism, had, as Mr. Swinburne wrote in the Dedicatory Preface appended to the full collection of his works, 'as quaint a reception and as singular a fortune as I have ever heard or read of.' The eruption of neo-paganism was sudden and unexpectedly violent—the rumblings of scientific and philosophic scepticism had given no warning of a volcanic explosion in this direction. The current literature of 1865 was much more prudish and less outspoken than it is at the present day; the gentlemanly licentiousness of Byron's time had been completely suppressed; the moral tone of the middle class was still outwardly Puritanic. English folk were by no means prepared to rebuild the altars of the primitive deities who presided over man's unquenchable desire, or to be otherwise than somewhat aghast at the invocations of Astarte or Ashtaroth, or the cry to Our Lady of Pain, the 'noble and nude and antique.' The result was that the first edition of the *Poems and Ballads* was withdrawn, though they were reissued in the same year, when Mr. Swinburne published a reply to his critics. Nevertheless, although the graver and, we may say, the higher judges of what was admissible to a nineteenth-century poet were entirely against him, it cannot be denied that the impulsive youth of that generation felt the enchantment of Mr. Swinburne's intoxicating love-potions—were sorely tempted to dash down Tennyson on the drawing-room table, and to join the wild dance round the shrine of Aphrodite Pandemia.

In the *Poems and Ballads* Mr. Swinburne keeps on some terms, so to speak, with theology. In the poem entitled 'A Litany' the Lord God discourses with Biblical sternness to His people, who tremble before Him, and threatens them with 'the inevitable Hell,'

while the people implore mercy—a strange excursion into the Semitic desert out of the flowery field of paganism. And another poem is a pathetic rendering of the story of St. Dorothy, a Christian martyr. It is true that he looks back with æsthetic regret to the triumph of Christianity over the picturesque polytheism, and that perhaps the finest poem in this volume is the 'Hymn to Proserpine,' where a votary of the ancient divinities confesses sorrowfully that a new and austere faith has triumphed, but predicts that its kingdom will not last, will decline and fall like the empire of the elder gods—

> 'All ye as a wind shall go by, as a fire shall
> ye pass and be past;
> Ye are gods, and behold, ye shall die, and
> the waves be upon you at last.
> In the darkness of time, in the deeps of the
> years, in the changes of things,
> Ye shall sleep as a slain man sleeps, and
> the world shall forget you for
> kings.'

The 'Hymn to Proserpine' is a fine conception of the champion of a lost cause standing unmoved among the ruins of his Pantheon. But the quiet dignity of his attitude is marred by the lines in which the votary of fair forms turns with loathing from the new faith which has conquered by the blood and agony of saints and martyrs. The violent invective is like a red streak across the canvas of a picturesque and highly imaginative composition. Yet if he had been reminded that Lucretius, standing in the midst of paganism, sternly denounced the evils and cruelties of religion, Mr. Swinburne would probably have replied that the Roman poet, could he have been born again fourteen or fifteen centuries later in his

native country, would have found these evils enormously increased, and that the sacrifice of Iphigenia in Aulis was as nothing to the hecatombs of the Inquisition.

His intense imagination summons up a bright and luxurious vision of the pre-Christian civilisation in Greece and Rome, as yet little affected by the deeper spiritualism of Asia; he is absorbed in contemplation of the beautiful sensuous aspect of the old nature-worship, as it is represented by poetry and the plastic arts, by singers and sculptors who (one may remark) knew better than to deal with its darker and degrading side, its orgies and unabashed animalism. And we may add that Mr. Swinburne would have done well to follow the example, in this respect, of these great masters of his own art; since his early defects and excesses are mainly due to his having missed their lesson by disregarding the limitations which they scrupulously observed.

When he reissued the *Poems and Ballads*, Mr. Swinburne took occasion, as we have said, to reply, in a pamphlet, to the strictures and strong protests which they had aroused. He was at some trouble to discover the passages or phrases 'that had drawn down such sudden thunder from the serene heavens of public virtue': he was comically puzzled to comprehend why the reviewers were scandalised. He trampled with sarcasm and scorn upon canting critics, and retorted that the prurient prudery of their own minds suggested the impurities which they found in works of pure art. There is nothing, he insists, lovelier, as there is nothing more famous in later Hellenic art, than the statue of Hermaphroditus, yet his translation of a sculptured poem into written verse has given offence! One might reply that a

subject which is irreproachable, on the score of purity, in cold marble, may take a very different colour when it is dilated upon in burning verse.

The controversy had its humorous side; but we have no intention of stirring up again the smoke and fire of battles fought long ago. Mr. Swinburne held his ground defiantly, and the appearance of *Songs and Ballads*, published in 1871, showed no signs of contrition, or of concession to inveterate prejudices. In the course of the intervening five years the empire of Napoleon III. had fallen with a mighty crash; Italy had been united under one Italian dynasty; Garibaldi had become famous, and the Papal States had been absorbed into the Italian kingdom. This volume, which was dedicated to Joseph Mazzini, shows the ardent enthusiasm for the triumph of liberty, intellectual and political, which runs through all Mr. Swinburne's poetry. The 'Song of the Standard,' the 'Halt before Rome,' the 'Marching Song,' the 'Insurrection of Candia,' are poems that reflect current events; and the 'Litany of Nations' is the national anthem of peoples striving for freedom. But his verse rises to its highest pitch of exultation in the glorification of emancipation of Man. The final line of the 'Hymn to Man' is

'Glory to Man in the highest, for Man is
the master of things';

and in one stanza of 'Hertha' is condensed all the wild declamation against deities and despots that pervades his poetry at this stage, with his joy in the deification of humanity:

'A creed is a rod,
And a crown is of

night;
But this thing is God,
To be man with thy
might,
To grow straight in the strength of thy
spirit, and live out thy life
As the light.'

There are no love-lyrics in this volume. He now stands forth as the uncompromising enemy of established religions, a fierce assailant of tyrannies, spiritual or temporal, an iconoclast who denounces churches and tabernacles, priests and kings, the Roman Pope and the Jewish Jehovah; one for whom the Papacy is, as it was to Hobbes, the Kingdom of Darkness, its record blotted with tears and stained with blood, the 'grey spouse of Satan,' as he styled her in a later poem, sitting by a fire that is fed with the bones of her victims. From this time forward he declares open war upon theology, and even upon Theism; he is the mortal foe of bigots and tyrants; his praise is for Giordano Bruno, for Pelagius the British monk, born by the northern sea; for Voltaire, for all who have fought and suffered in the cause of intellectual emancipation. The prevailing religious beliefs seem to him relics of mediæval superstition, sophistry, and metaphysic—he contrasts them with the bright and free nature worship of the old world; he is a bitter enemy of the lofty spiritualism, the mighty world-religion, before which the fair humanities of the *juventus mundi* had faded away. His delight is in the virile qualities of the earlier civilisations, the patriotism, the heroic temper, the ardour for civic liberties, the Hellenic delight in noble form and in physical beauty. He is fretted by the restraint which Christian authority imposes upon

the unruly affections of sinful men; he scorns the terrors of judgment to come, the prostration of the multitude before the threat of eternal punishment, and the promise of celestial recompense for terrestrial misery. Death is the 'sleep eternal in an eternal night'; and the one thing as certain as death is pleasure. He is the prophet of Hedonism; he is for giving the passions a loose rein, for drinking the wine of rapture to the lees before we lie

> 'Deep in dim death, beneath the grass
> Where no thought stings.'

Nevertheless, as the years go on, the note of regret and despair quiets down, the restless spirit of the poet is subdued to the calmer influences of nature; the charm of scenery, the association of places with memories more frequently bring softer inspirations. In his earlier poems his imaginative power found full scope in rendering the impressions of natural beauty, the glory of elemental strife; as in the 'Songs of the Four Seasons,' where the approach of a storm from the sea is likened to a descent of the Norse pirates on to the peaceful coast, and the metaphor produces a spirited picture:

> 'As men's cheeks faded
> On shores invaded
> When shorewards waded
> The lords of fight;
> When churl and craven
> Saw hard on haven
> The wide-winged raven
> At mainmast height;
> When monks affrighted
> To windward sighted
> The birds full-flighted

Of swift sea-kings;
So earth turns paler
When Storm the sailor
Steers in with a roar in the race of his
wings.'

But more frequently the outlook on sea and land induces reverie, vague yearnings, retrospective sadness, and, like all true artists, he transposes into the landscape his own personal emotions, what he sees, feels, and remembers. In the poem of 'Hesperia' the view of the sunset over the sea stirs tender memories; the 'deep-tide wind blowing in with the water' seems to be wafting his absent love back to him, and his heart floats out toward her 'as the refluent seaweed moves in the languid exuberant stream.' In such pieces the fierce amorous obsession has been shaken off; he is no longer vexed by Shakespeare's[32] hyperbolic fiend, his mood is comparatively gentle and pathetic, as in the beautiful verses of 'A Forsaken Garden,' where his consummate faculty of metrical expression, wherein sense and sound are matched and inseparable, reaches, perhaps, its highest watermark:

'Over the meadows that blossom and
wither
Rings but the note of a sea-bird's
song;
Only the sun and the rain come hither
All year long.'

In the series of landscape sketches grouped under the title of *A Midsummer Holiday*, published nearly twenty years after the *Poems and Ballads*, the treatment of his subject has become more impersonal. The impression or idea is still coloured

by transmission through the spectator's mind. Mr. Swinburne has himself observed, very truly, that

> 'mere descriptive poetry of the prepense and formal kind is exceptionally liable to incur and to deserve the charge of dulness: it is unnecessary to emphasise or obtrude the personal note, the presence or emotion of a spectator, but it is necessary to make it felt and keep it perceptible if the poem is to have life in it or even a right to live.'[33]

This is the right doctrine, and we may add that it is applicable as a criticism to some of his earlier descriptive pieces, where the intense personal feeling is somewhat too intense and disproportionate; so that a reader gifted with less keenness of sensibility is disconcerted by insistence on effusive moods with which he cannot be expected to be in full sympathy. Mr. Swinburne might reply that for such dullards he does not write; but the finest wines are too heady for a morning's draught. In his more mature poems he appears to have deliberately held back what may be termed the subjective emotion; the landscapes are no longer peopled by figures or memories of the past; the thoughts which they suggest are such as find response in all minds that are in accord with the deeper and more subtle relations of human life to its environment. He himself has indeed told us[34] that to many of his studies of English land and sea no intimacy of years and no association with the past has given any colour of emotion, that only so much of the personal note is retained as is sufficient to bring these various poems into touch with each other. And we can perceive that their inspiration is drawn, chiefly if not exclusively, from the spiritual influence of inanimate nature, the effects of inland or

woodland solitude, of the land silent under the noontide heat, of the sterile shore, or the raging of the sea. The *Midsummer Holiday* group has two pictures of sweet homeliness—'The Mill Garden' and 'On a Country Road'—the harvest of a quiet eye (in Wordsworth's phrase), such as a rambling artist might jot down in his travelling sketch book, of value the more remarkable because they are not in Mr. Swinburne's usual manner. They give relief to the breadth and grandeur of the other descriptions of the ocean, the crags, and the storms. For to Swinburne, as to all the romantic English poets, the ocean stream which encircles their island is an inexhaustible source of delight and pride; it is our ever present defence in time of trouble; the fountain of our country's wealth and honour; it is our traditional battlefield; the winds and the waves are the breath and the force of our national being. And through Mr. Swinburne's poetry runs a vein of undiluted love for his native land. In his poem 'On the South Coast' he looks out from 'the green, smooth-swelling downs' over the broad blue water, and his thought is expressed in its final stanza:

> Fair and dear is the land's face here, and
> fair man's work as a man's may be:
> Dear and fair as the sunbright air is here
> the record that speaks him free;
> Free by birth of a sacred earth, and regent
> ever of all the sea.'

The 'Autumn Vision' is an ode to the south-west wind, which has so often filled the sails of the English warships:

> 'Wind beloved of earth and sky and sea

beyond all winds that blow,
Wind whose might in fight was England's
on her mightiest warrior day,
South-west wind, whose breath for her
was life, and fire to scourge her foe,
Steel to smite and death to drive him
down an unreturning way,
Well-beloved and welcome, sounding all
the clarions of the sky,
Rolling all the marshalled waters toward
the charge that storms the shore.'

Charles Kingsley, like a hardy Norseman, preferred the north-east gale. To him the south-west wind is

'The ladies' breeze,
Bringing back their lovers
Out of all the seas,'

while Mr. Swinburne hears in the rushing south-western gale

'the sound of wings
gigantic,
Wings whose measure is the measure of
the measureless Atlantic,'

and, after the storm,

'The grim sea swell, grey, sleepless and
sad as a soul estranged.'

'A Swimmer's Dream' gives us the poetry of floating on the slow roll of the waves, some cloudy November morning.

'Dawn is dim on the dark soft water,
Soft and passionate, dark and sweet.'

'Loch Torridon' preserves the charm of what might be a landlocked lake, if it were not that the rippling tide flows in by an almost invisible inlet from the sea. From his earliest to his latest poems the magic of nature's changing aspects fascinates him; they inspire him with a kind of ecstasy that finds utterance in the variety of his verse, which reflects all the lights and shades of earth, sea, and atmosphere. One may remark, by the way, that in proportion as his poetic strength matures, the pagan gods and goddesses, who disported themselves so freely in his juvenile verse, visit him much more rarely; his imagery draws much less profusely upon the classic mythology for symbols and figures of divinities whose diaphanous robes are ill suited to our northern climate and Puritanic traditions, in the wolds and forests once sacred to Thor and Woden.

It will be admitted by Mr. Swinburne's least indulgent critics that his poetry displays throughout a marvellous power of execution. He runs over all the lyrical and elegiac chords with unabated facility; his metrical variations and musical phrasing bring out and extend the capacity and fertility of our language as a poetic instrument; he is master of his materials. No doubt there is some repetition, some iteration, which becomes slightly wearisome, of his favourite rhymes, indicating, what has been observed independently of reference to this particular writer, that the resources of the English language for terminal assonance, under the stringent conditions required by the modern rules of versification, are inevitably limited and show signs of exhaustion.

In a Note on Poetry appended to his latest volume of verses,[35] Mr. John Davidson has classed rhyme as a kind of disease of poetry. Rhyme, he says, is probably more than seven hundred years old—in Europe, he must mean, for it is far older in Asia, whence it originally came—and since the days of the troubadours and Minnesingers it has corrupted, in his opinion, the ear of the world. At best it is, he thinks, a decadent mode, imposing shackles on free poetic expression; and though in these fetters great poets have done magnificent work, in their finest rhymed verse he finds a feeling of effort. They have always been obliged to throw in something that need not have been said, some words inserted under compulsion, to bring the rhyme about. Mr. Davidson declares that the true glory of free untrammelled poetry shines out in the rhythmic periods of blank verse. That there may be some truth, or at least some convenience, in this theory of the poetic art, the modern poet may not be concerned to deny; for, as we have already said, rhymes will not withstand incessant and familiar usage; they become commonplaces, and the rhymer wanders away from the natural direction of his thought in search of fresh ones. The most devout admirers of Browning must admit that his verse is often distorted in this way—so that a fine stanza sometimes finishes with a jolt and ends with a tag—and it must be allowed that this necessity of making both ends meet is bad for the poetic conscience, a temptation to indefensible laxities. Even Mr. Swinburne, the inventor of exquisite harmonies, whose work is indisputably sincere, can be occasionally observed to be diverging from the straight line of his impetuous flight, hovering and making circuits that lead up skilfully to the indispensable rhyme. More frequently, perhaps,

there is a tendency to interpose some metaphor, or rather far-fetched allusion, for the sake of the clear, full, recurrent intonation of echoing words that can only be marshalled into their places by artistic ingenuity.

We may so far agree with Mr. Davidson that most of the sublime passages in English poetry are in blank verse, though it may be noticed that the four lines which he quotes from *Macbeth*,[36] as containing the 'topmost note in the stupendous agony of the drama,' are rhymed. The management of rhyme is a difficult and very delicate art; it is an instrument that requires a first-class performer, like Mr. Swinburne, to bring out its potency; to this art the English lyric, the ode and the song, owe their musical perfection. Mr. Swinburne, in an essay upon Matthew Arnold's *New Poems* (1867), has said, truly, that 'rhyme is the native condition of lyric verse in England'; and that 'to throw away the natural grace of rhyme from a modern song is a wilful abdication of half the charm and half the power of verse.' To this general rule he might possibly admit one exception—Tennyson's short poem beginning with 'Tears, idle tears,' which is so delicately modulated that the absence of rhyme is not missed. At any rate it is certain that all popular verse needs this terminal note; for a ballad in blank verse is inconceivable. On the other hand, the proper use of rhyme demands a fine ear, which is a rare gift; for our language has no formal rules of prosody, so that in maladroit hands rhyme becomes an intolerable jingle. At the present day, however, there is a tendency to run into excessive elaboration, largely due to superficial imitation of such masters of the poetic art as Tennyson, and especially Swinburne, so that we have a copious outpouring of feeble melodies.

Mr. Swinburne, on the contrary, is never feeble; he combines technical excellence with the power of vehement, often much too violent, expression. His character may be defined by the French word 'entier'; he is uncompromising in praise or blame. He insists (to quote his own words) that 'the worship of beauty, though beauty be itself transformed and incarnate in shapes diverse without end, must be simple and absolute'; nor will he tolerate reserve or veiled intimations of a poet's inmost thought.

> 'Nothing,' he has written, 'in verse or out of verse is more wearisome than the delivery of reluctant doubt, of half-hearted hope and half-incredulous faith. A man who suffers from the strong desire either to believe or disbelieve something he cannot, may be worthy of sympathy, is certainly worthy of pity, until he begins to speak; and if he tries to speak in verse, he misses the implement of an artist.'

He is pained by Matthew Arnold's 'occasional habit of harking back and loitering in mind among the sepulchres.... Nothing which leaves us depressed is a true work of art.' Yet, it may be answered, the habit of musing among tombs has inspired good poetry; and when doubt and dejection, perplexed meditation over insoluble problems, are in the air, a poet does well to express the dominant feelings of his time; and a modern Hamlet is no inartistic figure.

In this respect, however, Mr. Swinburne may have found reason to qualify, latterly, the absoluteness of his poetic principles. He has been from the first a generous critic of those contemporary poets whom he recognised as kindred souls. He awards

unmeasured praise to Matthew Arnold, while of his defects and shortcomings he speaks plainly. He does loyal homage to Browning in a sequence of sonnets, and his tribute to Tennyson was paid in a lofty 'Threnody,' when that noble spirit passed away. For Victor Hugo he proclaimed, as all know, nothing short of unbounded adoration—he is 'the greatest writer whom the world has seen since Shakespeare'; though it may be doubted whether in his own country Hugo now stands upon so supreme a pinnacle. To other eminent men of his time his poetry accords admiration, chiefly to the champions of free thought and of resistance to oppression; and, in a poem entitled 'Two Leaders,' he salutes two antagonists as he might do before crossing swords with them. The leaders are not named; the first is evidently Newman:

'O great and wise, clear-souled and high of heart,
One the last flower of Catholic love, that grows
Amid bare thorn their only thornless rose,
From the fierce juggling of the priest's loud mart
Yet alien, yet unspotted and apart
From the blind hard foul rout whose shameless shows
Mock the sweet heaven whose secret no man knows
With prayers and curses and the soothsayers' art.'

The second is

'Like a storm-god of the northern

foams
Strong, wrought of rock that breasts and
breaks the sea,'

in whom we recognise Carlyle. They are the powers of darkness, doomed to fall and to vanish before the light; yet their genius commands respect and even sympathy.

'With all our hearts we praise you whom
ye hate,
High souls that hate us; for our hopes
are higher,

Honour not hate we give you, love not
fear,
Last prophets of past kind, who fill
the dome
Of great dead Gods with wrath and wail,
nor hear
Time's word and man's: "Go honoured
hence, go home,
Night's childless children; here your hour
is done;
Pass with the stars, and leave us with the
sun."'

The concise energy of these lines, their slow metrical movement, invest them with singular weight and dignity. The poet is confronting two representatives, in principle, of Force and Authority, whose prototypes in bygone times would undoubtedly have sent him to the scaffold or to the stake; nor is it improbable that both Carlyle and Newman, though

in all other opinions they differed widely, would have agreed that a revolutionary firebrand and a pestilent infidel deserved some such fate. The poet might console himself with the reflection that they must have abhorred each other's principles quite as much as they detested his own.

In his later verse Mr. Swinburne still continues to wield his flaming sword against priests and despots, against intellectual and political servility. What may be termed the historical plea, the excuse for ideas and institutions that they are the relics of evil days long past, is no palliation for them to his mind; he would stamp them out and utterly destroy them. In this respect his temperament has unconsciously a strong tincture of the intolerance which he denounces; he would sweep away Christianity as Christianity swept away polytheism. Toward its Founder, as the type of human love and purity, he is uniformly reverential; there is nothing in that supreme figure that jars with that Religion of Humanity, which 'The Altar of Righteousness' proclaims with high dithyrambic enthusiasm:

'Christ the man lives yet, remembered of
man as dreams that leave
Light on eyes that wake and know not if
memory bids them grieve.

Far above all wars and gospels, all ebb
and flow of time,
Lives the soul that speaks in silence, and
makes mute the earth sublime.'

But of theology reigning by force and terror he is the

implacable enemy; and his intemperate violence leaves a stain on the bright radiance of his poetry. It amounts to an artistic fault, undiminished even in the later years which should have brought the philosophic mind. Moreover, it has materially lessened the influence which so fine a poetic genius should have exercised over the present generation, among whom polemical ardour and bitterness may be thought to have perceptibly cooled down, and to have become much less aggressive, in science, philosophy, and literature, than among the preceding generation. An age of tacit indifference, content with rationalistic explanations, with the slow working of disillusion, dislikes and discountenances outrageous scorn poured upon things that are traditionally sacred; and to the English character extremes are always distressing.

Mr. Swinburne's dramatic work, at any rate, takes us out of the strife and turmoil of theologic war; we are on firm historic ground, dealing with authentic events and persons. The plays of *Chastelard*, *Bothwell*, and *Mary Stuart* form a trilogy in which the most romantic and eventful period of Scottish history is presented; they constitute the epic-drama of Scotland, to adopt a definition applied by Victor Hugo to the tragedy of *Bothwell*. It is impossible, in this article, to find space for an adequate criticism of these remarkable productions. Every leading poet of the nineteenth century has made excursions into the dramatic field. We doubt whether any of them has come out of the adventure much better than Mr. Swinburne. All of them have given us, each in his own way, fine poetry, and, if we except Byron, they have shown that the masters of lyrical music can strike with power the high chords of blank verse. None of them have produced plays that took any

hold of a theatrical audience; in most cases they were not intended for the stage.

The play of *Chastelard* is too deeply saturated with amorous essences throughout to be forcibly dramatic. The hero is in a high love-fever from first to last, the passionate strain becomes monotonous, and though he dies to save the Queen's honour, our minds are not purged with much pity for him. In the long historical drama of *Bothwell*, which has twenty-one scenes in its two acts, we have spirited portraits of the fierce nobles who surrounded Mary Stuart during her brief and distracted reign. The love passages are pauses in a course of violent action, the assassination of Rizzio, the murder of Darnley are not overcoloured melodramatically, and the scenes in and about the Kirk of Field are darkened with the shadow of Darnley's imminent fate. But Darnley's dream, presaging his coming doom, inevitably recalls the dream of Clarence, and cannot but suffer from the reminiscence. We might have something to say on the metrical construction of Swinburne's blank verse, for he shares with Tennyson, though in a minor degree, the distinction of having enlarged its scope and varied its measure. But the subject would demand careful comparative examination and analysis of different styles, such as is to be read, with profit to all students of the art poetic, in Mr. J. B. Mayor's *Chapters on English Metres*.

It will be understood that this article attempts no more than to review the salient characteristics of Mr. Swinburne's poetry, to indicate in some degree their connexion and development. It cannot but fall far short, obviously, of being a comprehensive survey of his contributions to English literature. We have made no reference, for lack of space, to his treatment of

chivalrous romance in *Tristram of Lyonesse*, which Mr. Swinburne has rightly called 'the deathless legend,' though, since its fascination has made it a subject for three other contemporary poets, a comparison of their diverse manners of handling the story would be interesting. It is with regret that we have been compelled, also, to refrain from any adequate notice of Mr. Swinburne's prose writings, for in regard to the poetry of his own period the dissertations and judgments of one who combines high imaginative faculty with scientific mastery of the metrical art must have special value. Of the ordinary untrained criticism, the 'chorus of indolent reviewers,' to use Tennyson's phrase, he is, we think, too impatient. From a passage in his Dedicatory Epistle we gather that some of the tribe have ventured so far as to insinuate that poetry ought not to become a mere musical exercise. Mr. Swinburne's rejoinder is that

> 'except to such ears as should always be closed against poetry, there is no music in verse which has not in it sufficient fulness and ripeness of meaning, sufficient adequacy of emotion or of thought, to abide the analysis of any other than the purblind scrutiny of prepossession or the squint-eyed inspection of malignity.'

Apart from the wrathful form, the substance of what is here said merits consideration, for undoubtedly the most musical of our poets, from Shakespeare and Milton to Coleridge and Shelley, are those whose verse has embodied the richest thought and has been instinct with the deeper emotions. We must muster up courage to remark, nevertheless, that while in Mr. Swinburne's finest poems the musical setting

accompanies and illuminates the thought or feeling, in some others the underlying idea is too unsubstantial; its real presence is only visible to the eye of implicit faith. Toward his fellow poets, his equals and contemporaries, Mr. Swinburne's attitude is that of generous enthusiasm, not excluding outspoken, yet courteous, indication of defects, as may be seen in the essay[37] on Matthew Arnold's *New Poems*, which is full of important observations on poetry in general, beside some well-deserved strictures on Arnold's shortcomings, in criticism as well as in verse. For Victor Hugo he has nothing but panegyric. His articles on Byron and Coleridge are luminous appreciations of the very diverse excellences belonging to two illustrious predecessors; while in his *Notes on the Text of Shelley*, high-soaring and incomparable, an unlucky emendation of a line in 'The Skylark—the insertion of a superfluous word conjecturally—by an editor whose work he commends on the whole, provokes him to sheer exasperation:

> 'For the conception of this atrocity the editor is not responsible; for its adoption he is. A thousand years of purgatorial fire would be insufficient expiation for the criminal on whose deaf and desperate head must rest the original guilt of defacing the text of Shelley with this damnable corruption.'

'Fas est et ab hoste doceri.' Mr. Swinburne has borrowed the style of sacerdotal anathema from his mortal enemies, and pronounces it no less inexorably. But these Notes were written nigh forty years ago, so we may hope that by this time he has cast out, or at least subdued by diligent exorcism, that same hyperbolic fiend which entered in and rent

him at certain seasons of his youth.

Mr. Swinburne has, indeed, the defects of his qualities. He is an ardent friend and an unflinching adversary, but we have seen that in prose no less than in poetry, in polemics as in politics, his style is liable to become overheated and thunderous. He has no patience with mediocrity in art; he disdains the *via media* in thought and action. In these respects he stands alone among the Victorian poets, most of whom anticipate with misgivings the evaporation of faith in the supernatural, while they acknowledge that for themselves such faith has little meaning, and are inclined to melancholy musing over the 'doubtful doom of human kind' which haunted the imagination of Tennyson. And his attitude is still further apart from the intellectual tendencies discernible at the present moment in pure literature, which is now less concerned, we think, with these questions than when Mr. Arnold wrote *Literature and Dogma*, and seems more disposed to leave theology in the hands of the physical scientists and the professional metaphysicians. However this may be, it is to be seriously regretted that Mr. Swinburne's peremptory, unscrupulous manner of dealing with religious forms and beliefs which the world, perhaps, would not unwillingly let die, though by painless extinction rather than by violence, has alienated reverent minds from him, and has tarnished the brilliancy of his strenuous verse. The sensuous frenzy of his juvenile poems is still remembered against him; it betrayed a lack of moral dignity, of what the Greek poets, whom he so much admired, meant by the word αιδοσ. But we very willingly acknowledge that of these excesses hardly a trace is to be found in the very numerous pieces that fill the later volumes of his collected poetry.

From these causes it has resulted that Mr. Swinburne does not, in our opinion, now hold the position or command the influence which would otherwise be accorded to one who may be reckoned the chief lyrical poet of the second half of the nineteenth century; for after the publication, in 1855, of *Maud*, Tennyson had passed his lyrical climax, and Mr. Swinburne's superiority, as a lyrist, over all other writers of that period is incontestable. His neo-paganism, moreover, jars upon the realistic modernity of a generation for whom primitive symbolism is obsolete as a form of expression, and whose prevailing thought is too profoundly rationalistic to be attracted by a pagan paradise. All this is to be regretted, since Mr. Swinburne undoubtedly has the pagan virtues. His aspirations are concentrated on ideals that ennoble the present life, on justice, inflexible courage, patriotism, the unsophisticated intelligence; he loves liberty and he hates oppression in all their shapes. He is throughout an optimist, who believes and predicts that a clearer and brighter prospect is before humanity. To Mr. Swinburne, in short, may be applied the words with which Matthew Arnold summed up his essay upon Heine: 'He is not an adequate interpreter of the modern world; he is a brilliant soldier in the liberation war of humanity.' And future generations may remember him as the poet who passed on to them the message of his spiritual forefather, Shelley:

'O man, hold thee on in courage of soul
Through the stormy shades of thy worldly way;
And the billows of clouds that round thee roll
Shall sleep in the light of a wondrous day,
When heaven and hell shall leave thee free
To the universe of destiny.'

FOOTNOTES:

[31] *The Poems of Algernon Charles Swinburne.* In six volumes. With a dedicatory epistle to Theodore Watts-Dunton. London, Chatto and Windus, 1904.—*Edinburgh Review*, October 1906.

[32] 'Out, hyperbolic fiend! how vexest thou this man?'—*Twelfth Night.*

[33] Dedicatory Preface.

[34] Dedicatory Preface.

[35] *Holiday and Other Poems*, 1906.

[36] Note on Poetry, p. 144.

[37] *Essays and Studies*, 1867.

FRONTIERS ANCIENT AND MODERN[38]

It may be doubted whether many students of history are aware that the demarcation of frontiers, of precise lines dividing the possessions of adjacent sovereignties and distinguishing their respective jurisdictions, is a practice of modern origin. At the present time it is the essential outcome of territorial disputes, it is the operation by which they are formally settled at the end of a war: it registers conquests and cessions; and occasionally it has been the result of pacific arbitration. Among compact and civilised nationalities an exterior frontier, thus carefully defined, remains, like the human skin, the most sensitive and irritable part of their corporate constitution. The slightest infringement of it by a neighbouring Power is instantly resented; to break through it violently is to be inflicting a wound which may draw blood; and even interference with any petty State that may lie between the frontiers of two great governments is regarded as a serious menace.

The whole continent of Europe has now been laid out upon this system of strict delimitation. Yet it may be maintained that among the kingdoms of the ancient world no such exact and recognised distribution of territory existed; and, further, that up to a very recent period none of the great empires in Asia had any boundaries that could be traced on a map. Their landmarks were incessantly shifting forward or backward as their military strength rose or fell; and where their territories marched with some rough mountainous tract inhabited by warlike tribes, they were perpetually plagued by petty warfare on a zone of debateable land. On both sides some temporary intrusion upon or occupation of country held by a neighbour, which would now be the signal for mobilising an army, was treated as a trespass of small importance, to be resented and rectified at

leisure. It is true that in earlier times the Romans marked off distinct frontiers, and guarded them by military posts; but their policy was to acknowledge no frontier power with equal rights, and their actual political jurisdiction usually extended far beyond their lines of defence, which were advanced or withdrawn as political or military considerations might require. In fact, the Roman empire, like the British empire in Asia, was a great organised State, surrounded, for the most part, by small and weak principalities, or by warlike tribal communities, and it grew by a natural process of inevitable expansion. The emperors were often reluctant to enlarge their possessions; but the raids and incursions of intractable barbarians, or the revolt of some protected chiefship, frequently left them no option but to conquer and annex. They soon found themselves compelled to overstep the limits of empire prescribed by the policy of Augustus, and to lay down an advanced frontier in the lands beyond the Rhine and the Danube.

In Europe, where, as we have said, all national frontiers are now fixed and registered, the position of a civilised government entangled in chronic border warfare has long been unknown; the tradition of such a state of things is preserved in popular recollection mainly by local records and old ballads. Yet for Englishmen the subject possesses peculiar interest, since it is connected with their earlier history; and moreover our dominion in India invests it with special importance, for it is there a matter of immediate experience and active concern. We may recollect, in the first place, that Britain was an outlying province of the Roman empire, for at this moment we are excavating the ruins of the wall built by the Romans to protect their northern frontier

from the incursions of the warlike tribes beyond it, by the first administration that established, for a time, peace and civilisation in England. Then, in the middle ages, and long afterwards, the border between the kingdoms of England and Scotland which ran northward of the old Roman line, was for centuries the scene of plundering raids, punitive expeditions, and internecine feuds that often laid waste the countryside with fire and sword. We may observe, in this instance, how shifting and indeterminate was the exact frontier line between the two kingdoms, and how the local fighting, the inroads from one side or the other, did not necessarily involve a rupture of their formal relations. The wardens on each side executed rough justice upon marauding clans; they wasted and slaughtered in reprisal for raids; the great nobles engaged in a kind of private warfare; but all this might go on without embroiling the two governments in a national war. On the western English border the Welsh hillmen kept the neighbouring counties in continual alarm; and their chiefs played an important part in the civil wars and rebellions of England. They were at last quieted by Edward I., who succeeded in subduing Wales though he failed in Scotland. Lastly, though the union of the two kingdoms brought peace to the Anglo-Scottish border, the Highland line along the Forth river still kept up, though in a much less serious degree, the troubles of a regular government in contact with restless tribes. Nor was it until the middle of the eighteenth century that these relics of an archaic condition of society, which had long ago disappeared in other parts of western Europe, were finally effaced in Great Britain. Long afterwards, in the nineteenth century, when the conquest of the Punjab carried the

north-western frontier of British India up to the slopes of the Afghan mountains, the scene of perpetual strife between a strong settled administration and turbulent borderers which had passed away on the Tweed or the Forth, and on the Welsh Marches, reappeared in the districts beyond the Indus.

To Englishmen, therefore, whose experience of this situation is long, varied, and actual, Mr. Baddeley's book on the Russians in the Caucasus should be of exceptional interest. It is indeed well worth studying by those upon whom, whether at home or in India, has been imposed the arduous duty of superintending our policy in dealing with the Afghan tribes for the protection of our Indian districts. It is true that the conditions and circumstances, military and political, under which Russia prosecuted her long war with the Caucasian mountaineers, rendered her position in many respects different from that in which the English found themselves when they first came into contact with Afghanistan, and which has changed very little in the course of sixty years. The aims and purposes of the two governments were by no means the same. Yet in both cases we have a story of the obstinate resistance opposed by fierce and free clans to the arms of a powerful empire, of perilous campaigns amid rugged hills and passes, of the hazards and misfortunes to which disciplined troops are always liable when they encounter resolute and fanatical defenders of a difficult country.

Mr. Baddeley's book contains an authentic narrative, founded on diligent study of official documents and on the accounts of those who took part in the fighting, of the operations by which the

Mohammedan tribes of the Caucasus were finally subdued, after fierce and protracted resistance, by Russian armies, and their country was annexed to the dominions of the Czar. His knowledge of this region is evidently derived from personal exploration; and in the Introduction to his book he has spared no pains to explain to his readers its geographical position, its topography, its physical features, and the extraordinary diversity of races and languages which it contained. We learn that the chain of mountains which was originally known by the name of the Caucasus stretches, with a total length of 650 miles, from the Caspian to the Black Sea. Toward the north is a tract of dense forest, intersected by numerous streams flowing down from the mountains; and beyond lies the high plateau of Daghestan, 'through which the rivers have cut their way to a depth often of thousands of feet, the whole backed and ribbed, south and west, by mountain ranges having many peaks often over 13,000 feet in height.' In the forest tract, to which the Russians gave the name of Tchetchnia, their armies were constantly entangled; and their difficulties in reducing the inhabitants to subjection were quite as great as in conquering the highland tribes of Daghestan. Throughout the eighteenth century, and even earlier, the Russians had been pushing southward toward the Black Sea and the Caspian, and had gradually taken under their authority and protection the Cossack tribes who were settled on the steppes that spread along the northern border of the Caucasus. On this border they had established by the end of the century the Cossack line of forts, military colonies and plantations of armed cultivators, linked together to form a barrier against the incursions and marauding raids of the wild folk in the woods and

mountains in front of them, and gradually strengthened and supported by stations of regular troops in the background. On the south of the central mountain ranges the Russians held Georgia, inhabited by Christian races whom the Russians had liberated from the Turkish or Persian yoke before the close of the eighteenth century, and who ever afterwards remained loyal subjects of the Czar. The Georgian road which traversed the whole Caucasian region from north to south, formed a most important line of communication which was never seriously interrupted. To the south-east, when the nineteenth century opened, lay Mohammedan khanates, vassals of Persia; on the south-west were the semi-independent pachaliks of the Ottoman empire.

We must pass over, reluctantly, Mr. Baddeley's very interesting sketch of the gradual approach made by Russia toward the Caucasus during the eighteenth century, which may be said to have begun in earnest with the expedition of Peter the Great, who led an army to the Caspian shore and captured Derbend about 1722. This threatening movement upon the confines of Asia inevitably involved Russia in war with the Turks and with the Persians, for whom the Caucasian mountains represented a great fortress, barring the onward march of a powerful Christian empire toward their dominions. For the Russians, on their side, it became of vital importance to break through the barrier that separated them from Georgia, to occupy the country between the two seas, and to make an end of the perpetual warfare with the tribes, who kept their frontier on the Cossack line in unceasing agitation and disorder, and were a standing menace to the Christian population of Georgia. It should be understood, however, that the Cossacks discharged their duties of watch and ward

after a very rough fashion, raiding and fighting on their own account, making incursions upon their Mohammedan neighbours in retaliation for attacks and forays, and laying waste the enemy's country with the bitter vindictiveness of antagonistic races and religions.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century Georgia and some other Christian principalities in Trans-Caucasia—that is, on the southern border of the mountains—had been absorbed into the Russian empire, which now held continuous territory on this line from the Black Sea to the Caspian. Along the Caspian shore the vassal States of Persia had been reduced to submission, while the Turks had been driven back from their fortified posts on the Black Sea. The Turkish and Persian governments naturally took alarm at the approach of a military power whom they had already good reason to mistrust and dread; the Russian viceroys and generals on the frontier treated these Oriental kingdoms with high-handed arrogance, and gave ample provocation for the wars which speedily broke out with both of them. The annals of the next few years record many vicissitudes of fortune. The Russian armies achieved some brilliant victories, and suffered some heavy disasters. By disease and the strain of forced marches through rugged and almost pathless country, by the storming of petty fortresses, by incessant skirmishing and treacherous surprises, the troops were reduced in number and gradually worn out; they were outnumbered by the Persian and Turkish soldiery, whose military qualities were at that time by no means despicable; while at this time the great European wars against Napoleon made reinforcements hard to obtain. In 1811 the Russians could barely hold their ground against the combined

forces of Turkey and Persia; but just when the whole situation was at its worst the Russian Government, under the imminent emergency of Napoleon's march upon Moscow, patched up a peace (May 1812) with Turkey that reinstated the Sultan in some important positions on the Black Sea coast, and made considerable retrocessions of territory. By strenuous exertion the Persians were defeated and beaten off, and next year there was comparative peace on the Caucasian border. Yet it was but a calm interval before storms, for Mr. Baddeley remarks that nearly half a century of fighting was to elapse before the conquest of the mountains could be completed.

This era of long and sanguinary contest may be said to have begun, on a deliberate plan, with the appointment of General Yermoloff, in 1816, to be commander-in-chief in Georgia, with jurisdiction over the whole Caucasus. It was carried on with undaunted courage, hardihood, and obstinate endurance on both sides; and in the matter of merciless ferocity there was little to choose between the two antagonists. Yermoloff appears to have belonged to the type of military commander whom the Russian soldier follows with complete trust and unhesitating devotion—a leader inured to hardship and perils, treating his men as comrades but unsparing of their lives, rigid in discipline, reckless of bloodshed, a relentless conqueror yet capable of occasional generosity. His stern and implacable temper recognised but one method of dealing with barbarian enemies—the unflinching use of fire and sword, the policy of devastation and massacre. 'I desire,' said Yermoloff, 'that the terror of my name shall guard our frontiers more potently than chains of fortresses; that my word shall be for the natives a law more inevitable than death. Condescension in

the eyes of Asiatics is a sign of weakness, and out of pure humanity I am inexorably severe. One execution saves hundreds of Russians from destruction, and thousands of Mussulmans from treason.' He demanded unconditional submission from all the tribes of the Caucasus; and he substituted for the former system of bribery and subsidies the policy of treating all resistance as rebellion, and suppressing it with cruel severity, 'but' (says one writer) 'always combined with justice and magnanimity.' Upon this Mr. Baddeley remarks that it is difficult to see where justice came in, 'but in this respect Russia was only doing what England and all other civilised States have done, and still do, wherever they come into contact with savage or semi-savage races. By force or fraud a portion of the country is taken and sooner or later, on one excuse or another, the rest is sure to follow.' To this it may be rejoined that on the north-west frontier of India, and nowhere else, England has come into contact with a race quite as savage and untamable as the Caucasian mountaineers, but that it would be a great mistake to suppose that the methods of Yermoloff have ever been adopted in dealing with the turbulent fanaticism of the Afghan tribes.

On the Cossack line, when Yermoloff assumed charge of operations, 'there was no open warfare, but there was continual unrest. No man's life was safe outside the forts and stanitzas; robbery and murder were rife; raiding parties, great and small, harried the fields, the farms and the weaker settlements.' To this state of things he was resolved to put an end. He built fortresses, pushed forward his outposts, formed moving columns of troops, and assiduously trained his soldiers to the peculiar conditions of warfare on this borderland. The Russian regiments, like the

Roman legions, were often stationed in their camps or garrisons for twenty-five years; and for the service required of them their efficiency was admirable. For ten years Yermoloff carried on this tribal war with inflexible rigour, by expeditions to punish some marauding village, which was razed to the ground, and most of the men, women and children burnt or killed after defending the place with the fury of despair; by night marches to surprise and storm the hill forts; by exterminating bands of brigands; and more than once by laying deathtraps for notorious rebels or fanatics. There can be no doubt that this system of ruthless chastisement, of beating down the enemy's defences by sharp and rapid strokes, by sudden and daring inroads into the heart of their country, intimidated the tribes, and went far toward compelling them to sullen acquiescence in the Russian overlordship. Of the petty independent chiefships some were seized forcibly, others submitted and paid tribute. The Russians were advancing step by step into the interior of the country, piercing it with roads and riveting their hold on it by throwing forward their chain of connected forts. By 1820 Yermoloff appears to have convinced himself that in a few years the whole of the Caucasus—mountain and forest—would be permanently conquered and pacified; and for some time after that date there was little or no fighting, though the border was frequently disquieted by outbreaks that were sternly crushed. With the Persians and the Turks there was an interval of peace.

But the harsh measures taken by the Russians to bring the forest tribes under their authority were bitterly resented; and in 1824 two of their generals were fatally stabbed in Tchetchnia by one of several

villagers whom they were disarming. This murder was avenged by Yermoloff, as usual, relentlessly, but it was his last campaign in the Caucasus. In 1826 the Persians, who had been incensed by Yermoloff's rough ways on their frontier and by his insolent diplomacy, invaded Russian territory with a strong army. The Russians were unprepared, and at first could only act on the defensive. The flames of insurrection at once broke out among the tribes; the whole country fell back into confusion, and the Emperor Nicholas, holding Yermoloff responsible for this disastrous state of affairs, reprimanded and recalled him. He lived in retirement until 1861, revered by the Russian nation as the type and model of a valiant soldier and a devoted patriot who won brilliant victories and conquered large territories for the empire. But on his system and its consequences Mr. Baddeley pronounces a judgment which in fact points the moral of his whole narrative, and explains the history of the events that followed Yermoloff's departure:

> 'He gained brilliant victories at slight cost; and brought for a time the greater part of Daghestan under Russian dominion.... He absorbed the Persian and Tartar khanates, and treated Persia with astonishing arrogance. But it was these very measures and successes that led, on the one hand, to the Persian War and the revolt of the newly-acquired provinces; on the other, to that great outburst of religious and racial fanaticism which, under the banner of Muridism, welded into one powerful whole so many weak and antagonistic elements in Daghestan and Tchetchnia, thereby initiating the bloody struggle waged unceasingly for

> the next forty years. Daghestan speedily threw off the Russian yoke, and defied the might of the mother empire until 1859. In Tchetchnia mere border forays conducted by independent partisan leaders ... developed into a war of national independence under a chieftain as cruel, capable, and indomitable as Yermoloff himself.'

The Persian War ended in 1828, but in the same year hostilities broke out with Turkey, involving the Russian troops on the Georgian frontier in hard and hazardous fighting, which lasted, with a great expenditure of men and money, until peace was concluded in 1829. From that year until 1854, when the Crimean War began, Russia had a free hand in the Caucasus, and applied her strength with inexorable energy to its subjugation. And it is to the rise and spread of the ferocious enthusiasm which Mr. Baddeley has called *Muridism* that he attributes the striking fact that the complete conquest of the country was only accomplished in 1864—that the tribes held out against the forces of the Russian empire for more than thirty years.

Muridism, in which this spirit of heroic and hopeless resistance by armed peasants against the Russian armies was, so to speak, incarnate, is a word employed by Mr. Baddeley with a special purpose and meaning, which he explains at some length. For our present purpose it may be sufficient to say that *Murshid* denotes a religious teacher who expounds the mystic Way of Salvation to his *Murids*, or disciples, who gather round him, adopt his doctrines, obey his commands, and cheerfully accept martyrdom in his service. Muridism, therefore, may

be taken to signify the passionate fanaticism of religious devotees, of warriors who follow a spiritual leader and fight in the sacred cause of Islam against the infidel. It was this movement that united the Mohammedan tribes in a holy war against the Russians, who, as our author observes, had never gauged correctly the latent forces of the twin passions, religious fanaticism and the love of liberty —two elements which always form a very dangerous compound, and which became heated up to the point of explosion as the tribes found the iron framework of Russian administration steadily closing up around them. Any attempt to break out of this house of bondage was repulsed with inflexible severity. In this inflammable atmosphere, charged with ferocious suspicion, hatred, and superstition, one Kazi Mullah was elected to the rank of 'Imam'; and on his proclamation of holy war against the infidel oppressor the whole country rose and rallied to his standard. He was, if we may borrow Mr. Baddeley's description of the class, 'one of those strange beings, compounded of fanaticism, military ardour, and a nature prone to adventure, for whom only the dreaming, fighting, tumultuous, ignorant East, in its days of trouble and unrest, can supply a fitting field of action.' He came forward as a man sent by God to deliver the faithful from their servitude, holding in his hands the power of life or death, and those who refused to obey him or denied his authority were denounced and slain without mercy. Under such leadership the war spread again along the border, some Russian detachments were cut to pieces, and even when the insurgents were defeated the troops suffered terribly, for as no quarter was asked or expected none was given on either side. After some two years of incessant fighting Kazi Mullah made his

last stand in a mountain stronghold, where he was surrounded by the Russian troops, who in their first assault were repulsed with heavy loss; but on a second attempt the place was stormed, and Kazi Mullah with a band of devoted Murids died sword in hand on the last breastwork.

Of the sixty men who stood by their chief to the end two only escaped; but one of these was Shamil, who became afterwards the most famous and formidable champion of the Mohammedan tribes in the Caucasus.

> 'His marvellous strength, agility, and swordsmanship served him in good stead. With an Alvarado's leap he landed behind the line of soldiers about to fire a volley through the raised doorway where he stood, and whirling his sword in his left hand he cut down three of them, but was bayoneted by the fourth clean through the breast. Undismayed, he grasped the weapon in one hand, cut down its owner, pulled it out of his own body, and escaped into the forest, though in addition to the bayonet wound he had a rib and shoulder broken by stones.'

Shamil had been born and bred in the same village with Kazi Mullah, whose disciple he became, and whose rules of rigid adherence to the strictest injunctions of Islam he adopted and enforced. He even attempted to put down, as a practice forbidden by the law of Mahomet, the inveterate blood feuds that divided and weakened the tribes, with the politic object of uniting them in the holy war against the infidels; and when the Kazi had been killed his mantle fell upon Shamil, who soon proved himself a

far more able and terrible leader of fanatic insurrection. The Russians, who at first believed that the Kazi's death was a decisive and final blow to the cause of Muridism, soon found that they were grievously mistaken. Mr. Baddeley's narrative shows occasionally some disregard of orderly arrangement, so that the sequence in time and interconnection of incidents is not always clear. We gather from this part of it, however, that very soon after Shamil took command the whole country had risen against the Russians, that their posts were attacked and their detachments cut off, and that expeditions sent to seize the positions or disperse the gatherings of the tribes paid dearly for their victories, while they were more than once repulsed with defeat and disaster. Villages were burnt; the vineyards and orchards were destroyed; desperate fights, hand to hand, ended only with the extermination of the defenders by the exasperated Russian soldiers; and after one campaign, when the Russian Commander-in-Chief led a considerable force against Shamil's stronghold, he was content to conclude, in the emperor's name, a treaty of peace with the tribal chief, being 'compelled to retire by the total disorganisation of the expeditionary corps, the enormous loss in *personnel*, and the want of ammunition.' A treaty with the Russian emperor raised Shamil's reputation high among the tribes; while the slaughter and devastation inflamed his revengeful temper. When the Emperor Nicholas came next year to the Caucasus, General Klugenau met Shamil and tried to persuade him to tender submission in person, with the result that Klugenau narrowly escaped assassination at the interview. He was saved by Shamil's intervention. In 1839 almost all the tribes were united under Shamil's command; and the

Russian Government, seriously alarmed, determined that he must be effectively crushed. In the story of this campaign we have a signal and striking example of the perils that beset regular troops who encounter fierce and fearless barbarians on their own ground. The Russians had a powerful artillery; they were led by experienced commanders; their officers and soldiers fought with astonishing courage and endurance. After several bloody actions Shamil was shut up in the hill fort of Akhlongo, and here the undaunted Murids turned to bay. It was a stronghold surrounded by ravines and sheer precipices, accessible only along narrow ridgeways. Mr. Baddeley has related in full detail the operations and incidents of this eventful siege. The first assault failed after a prolonged and desperate struggle. 'Only at nightfall,' writes an eye-witness, 'and at the word of command, did our troops retire from the bloodstained rock.' The bombardment went on 'until the castle was reduced to a heap of ruins, in which the heroic defenders seemed literally buried.' After a siege which lasted eighty days the place was at last taken with a total loss of 3000 Russians, including 116 officers, killed and wounded. The defenders were slaughtered almost to the last man; many women and children were killed; but Shamil again escaped miraculously.

> 'Vanquished, wounded, a homeless fugitive, without means, with hardly a follower, it might well seem that nothing was left to the indomitable chieftain but the life of a hunted outlaw ... yet within a year Shamil was again the leader of a people in arms; within three he had inflicted a bloody defeat on his present victor; yet another, and all northern Daghestan was reconquered, every Russian

> garrison there beleaguered or destroyed, and Muridism triumphant in the forest and on the mountain, from the Samour to the Terek river, from Vladikavkaz to the Caspian.'

By 1840 the Tchetchnia tribes of the wooded lowlands under the mountains had broken out into outrageous rebellion, for Shamil had established himself in the forests, and was harassing the whole Russian border. 'We have never,' wrote General Golovine, 'had in the Caucasus an enemy so savage and dangerous as Shamil'; and it was again decided to send an overwhelming army against him. The two first expeditions virtually failed. Between 1839 and 1842 the Russians had lost in killed or wounded 436 officers and 7930 men, and 'had accomplished little or nothing.' In 1844 the Emperor Nicholas had despatched large reinforcements to the Caucasus, with stringent orders to make an end of Shamil's 'terrible despotism' and to subdue the whole country. On his side Shamil mustered all his forces for an energetic defence. His mounted bands traversed the borderlands with amazing rapidity, rushing in suddenly upon the Russian outposts, waylaying detachments, and bewildering the commanders by the speed and secrecy of their movements. Count Vorontzoff marched against him with an army of about 18,000, horse, foot, and artillery. Shamil retreated gradually before him, drawing on the Russians, and abandoning his forward positions after a show of defending them. He had laid waste the country on the line of the Russian advance; so, as supplies were running very short, Vorontzoff pushed on hastily toward Shamil's headquarters at Dargo. This place, surrounded by forests,

> 'lay along the crest of a steep wooded spur of

> the Betchel ridge, nowhere very broad, narrowed here and there to a few feet, and consisting of a series of long descents with shorter intervening rises. Abattis of giant trunks with branches cunningly interlaced barred the way at short intervals, and the densely-wooded ravines on either side swarmed with hidden foes.'

Mr. Baddeley's vivid description of the hurried advance upon Dargo, and of the Russian retreat after capturing it, has all the tragic interest of a situation where heroic valour strives vainly against calamitous misfortune, and brave men, caught in a well-laid snare, tear their way out of it with the energy of despair. The six barriers of twisted branches were attacked and carried without serious loss, though at one point, where the path along the hill-top was narrowest, the troops fell into confusion, suffered heavily, and were rescued with some difficulty. Dargo was then occupied without resistance; but the army had only food for a few days, and Vorontzoff, instead of retiring immediately, resolved to wait for a convoy that was coming up from the rear and had reached the edge of the forest. But the force despatched to protect and bring it into camp had to pass again over the strait ridgeway, where all the barriers had been reconstructed; and the Russians again ran the gauntlet of incessant and murderous fire, losing one of their generals with many officers and men. There still remained the most arduous task of all, to force a way for the third time along the ridge with weakened and disheartened troops encumbered by the provision train that they were escorting to Dargo.

'The enemy were in greater numbers than

> before; the barriers had once more been renewed, and a heavy rain added greatly to the difficulties of the march.... On the narrow neck the advance guard found the breastwork of trees faced with the Russian dead of the previous day, stripped, mutilated, and piled up; it was enfiladed by four smaller breastworks on each side.'

Passek, a daring and fearless commander, was killed in leading the attack with other officers and many men. The foremost regiments fell back in disorder. Yet the main body, with their general, who charged at the head of companies like any captain, struggled along the ridge, fighting all the way, though the Mohammedans kept up an unceasing rifle-fire, and from time to time they dashed right into the Russian line. Nevertheless the predicament of the Russians was becoming hopeless, when a fresh regiment sent out to their rescue from Dargo threw itself between the exhausted troops and their assailants, and thus enabled them to reach the camp. But most of the convoy had been lost, the total list of casualties was frightful, and for Vorontzoff, with little to eat, surrounded by victorious hordes, encumbered with more than a thousand wounded men, the only prospect of saving the rest of his army lay in cutting his way homeward through many miles of forest. Mr. Baddeley's description of the retreat is intensely dramatic. After fighting every step of the road the starving and demoralised army was brought to a standstill, and was eventually saved from annihilation by fresh troops that arrived just in time under the Russian commander on the frontier, who had foreseen the emergency, and made forced marches to the rescue of his chief.

Thus the attempt to piece the heart of Shamil's country had been completely foiled; and Vorontzoff now confined himself to strengthening his fortified posts, linking up more effectively their connection, and improving his communications. But in this situation the Russians were acting upon the outer circle of Shamil's central position in the mountains, whereas their enemy held the interior lines, and could choose his point of attack. Shamil's strategy was directed toward keeping the whole Russian frontier in constant alarm, breaking in upon various and distant parts of the line by incessant raids and surprises, in order to prevent concentration of the Russian forces on either flank. He made a daring attempt to seize Kabarda, on the extreme west of the border, but was hunted out of it by the activity of Freytag, the general whose foresight and promptitude had extricated Vorontzoff from destruction. This desultory warfare went on until in 1847 Vorontzoff, having secured his base, again tried conclusions with Shamil, being resolved that it was necessary to reduce the fortified village (or *aoul*) of Ghergebil, which Shamil was no less determined to defend. On the morning of the assault the Russians, in their camps below the precipitous rocks, above which stood the aoul, 'heard the melancholy, long-drawn notes of the death-chant rising from behind its wall as from an open grave,' the sure prelude to a stubborn and sanguinary fight.

The forlorn hope rushed forward, but lost its way and suffered severely; the supports kept the right direction and made for the breach.

> 'A withering fire from hundreds of rifles mowed down the troops like grass. Their gallant commander, Yeodskeemoff, fell dead,

> pierced by a dozen bullets. The captain of the grenadier company strode over his body and gained the top of the breach, to fall in turn; the men were exasperated rather than daunted; a Danish officer, more fortunate and not less brave than his predecessors, led them forward, and the wall was won. In front was the first row of low *saklias* (stone houses) and, climbing their walls, the attackers rushed forward, when to their horror the ground gave way beneath their feet, and amid shouts of demoniac laughter they fell on to the swords and daggers of the Murids below. The flat roofs had been taken off the whole row of houses and replaced by layers of brushwood thinly covered with earth; every house, in fact, was a death-trap.'

Nevertheless the troops came on, and most of them got inside the village, but they were entangled in the labyrinth of narrow streets, and were obliged to retire. Another assault ended with another repulse, 'and the victorious Murids, driving the broken columns before them, followed until stopped by the bayonets of the reserve.'

Vorontzoff had now been twice beaten off by Shamil: he had been repulsed, and had nearly lost his army in the forests; his troops had been hurled back with slaughter from the mountain fort. Next year he despatched another large army, furnished with heavy artillery, against Ghergebil, which drove out the Murid garrison by a tremendous bombardment, but retired without occupying the place. During the next few years, though wild work went on as usual along the border, where a sharp guerilla warfare was kept up, neither Shamil nor Vorontzoff attempted to strike

any decisive blow. But the lowlands were devastated by perpetual incursions and reprisals, and the forest tribes, placed between two fires, driven to choose between the Murids and the Russians, gradually transferred their allegiance to the side best able to protect them, and migrated northward across the Russian line. The uninhabited woodlands became a kind of neutral ground which neither side cared to occupy; and from this time Shamil's sphere of action was confined to the mountains of Daghestan. Then, in 1854, began the war in the Crimea, when according to Mr. Baddeley the Allies might have ruined Russia in the Caucasus by making common cause with Shamil and supporting him vigorously. But England and France were absorbed in besieging Sebastopol, and Omar Pasha's Transcaucasian campaign was undertaken too late for any effective result. Mr. Baddeley considers that in neglecting their opportunity of backing Shamil the Allies made a strategic blunder; yet we agree with him that this is not to be regretted. For the credit of civilisation it is well that they did not let loose the savage Mohammedan fanatics upon Christian Georgia and the peaceful Russian settlements beyond the frontier, to their own dishonour, and to the misery of the people whom Russia was protecting. Shamil did make one foray into Georgia, when a party of his men carried off two Georgian princesses, the wife and sister of the Viceroy, who were kept by Shamil in rigorous captivity and treated cruelly for eight months while negotiations went on for their release. His object was to exchange them for his son, who had been captured by the Russians some fourteen years earlier, had been brought up from childhood among them, and at this time was a lieutenant in a Russian lancer regiment. As Shamil demanded not

only his son but a large ransom for the princesses, there was long haggling over the money, but this point was at last settled, and the exchange took place on the banks of the river. The princesses and Jamal-ud-deen crossed from opposite banks to the escorts appointed to deliver and receive them; the youth was then made to change his Russian uniform for a native dress and rode up the hill to his father, who welcomed him with tears and embraces.

The scene must have been strangely picturesque; and the whole story illustrates the accidents and incongruities of warfare between nations whose standard of morals and manners is entirely different. The abduction and brutal treatment of the princesses were altogether contrary to the rules and ideas of modern belligerents; but what would have been to the Russians a foul disgrace was to the rude Caucasian chief no more than a simple and justifiable method of extorting his son's release. On the other hand the Russians had bred up their captive at their capital; they had converted him to their own social habits and ways of life. And the sequel is instructive for those who have yet to learn how completely European education may incapacitate an Asiatic from returning to associate with his own people, how effectually it may obliterate the early influences of race and religion.

> 'The fate of Jamal-ud-deen was indeed a sad one. Brought up from the age of twelve years in St. Petersburg and entered in the Russian army, he was now a stranger to his own father, an alien in the land of his birth, and totally unfitted to resume his place among a semi-barbarous people. He had looked forward to his return with the gloomiest

> forebodings, which were fully justified by the event. As a matter of fact, there could be little real sympathy between his fellow-countrymen and himself; they soon began to look upon him with suspicion and distrust. Even Shamil was estranged when he found his son imbued with Russian ideas, and convinced of Russia's right to the extent of counselling surrender.' ... Nothing 'could reconcile him to the change from civilisation to barbarism; he grew melancholy, fell into a decline, and died within three years.'

After the end of the Crimean War the Russian Government could turn its undivided attention to the enterprise of finishing the conquest of the Caucasus. The preliminary work of cutting roads through the forests, throwing bridges over rivers and ravines, destroying the enemy's petty forts, and throwing forward detachments to occupy important points, was carried out actively during 1857; and in the next summer three separate columns, under one supreme command, drove back Shamil's bands, and took up strong positions in the heart of his country. The inhabitants, severely harried by the Murids, who maltreated ferociously all villages that would not join them, took refuge under Russian protection; and though Shamil made several bold attempts to break through the circle that was gradually encompassing him, he was compelled to abandon Vedén, so long his home, which was taken in April 1859. The forest tracts were now entirely under Russian control, and the highland tribes were rapidly surrendering to the Russian commanders, whose strategy it was to avoid frontal attacks upon large bodies prepared to fight behind entrenchments, but to make resistance impossible by enveloping movements. In the

mountains, which had so long defied the armies of the Czar, the local chiefs and their clansmen were now falling away from Shamil, who was forced to retreat hastily with a few hundred followers to his stronghold at Gooneeb, where he entrenched himself for a final stand, knowing well that defence was hopeless, yet resolved to die fighting. But his men were almost exterminated by the overpowering numbers which the Russians threw upon the fortifications in their assault. When the outworks had fallen, and the place was practically won, the Russian commander, who desired to capture Shamil alive, suspended the final rush upon the spot where he still held out, and sent him a message that his life would be spared on surrender. He yielded, and rode out to meet the Russian lines; but a burst of cheering from the Russian soldiers at sight of him so startled him that he went back. A Russian officer persuaded him to turn again.

> 'Followed by about fifty of his Murids, the sole remnant of his once mighty hosts, he rode towards where Bariatinsky, surrounded by his staff, sat waiting on a stone. Shamil dismounted and was led to the feet of his conqueror, who told him that he answered for his personal safety and that of his family; but he had refused terms when offered, and all else must now depend on the will of the emperor. The stern Imam bowed his head in silence and was led off captive. Next day he was sent to Shoura, and thence to Russia, where later on his family was allowed to join him.'

In the foregoing pages we have run rapidly over Mr. Baddeley's narrative of the long and laborious

operations by which the Russians gradually made good their footing in the Caucasus, and at last consolidated their dominion. We have necessarily omitted many curious incidents and exploits characteristic of a deadly struggle between antagonists representing the collision of archaic with modern societies, the clash of two religions eternally irreconcilable, the deadly wrestle of assailants and defenders unlike in everything but their tenacious intrepidity. The story, until Mr. Baddeley wrote it, has hitherto been little known in England. Yet Englishmen should be interested in this singular and striking example of the obstinate resistance that can be opposed by free and warlike tribes to the organised military forces of a first-class European Government; for they are not without similar experiences of their own. And moreover the long contest for possession of the tracts lying between the Black Sea and the Caspian, on the borderland between Europe and Asia, had its effect in the wider sphere of Asiatic politics. If the Russians, in their wars with Turkey and Persia, had not been constantly distracted by the raids and revolts of the Caucasian highlanders, the consequences to these two Eastern kingdoms might have been much more serious. It will be remembered that at this period (1826-8) we were actively concerned in preserving Persia's independence insomuch that the Russians had accused us of fomenting hostilities against them. At a later time also Sir Henry Rawlinson, writing in 1849, when Shamil was still formidable and undefeated, observes that it would have been impossible for Russia, with her communications at the mercy of such an enemy, to carry her arms farther eastward into Asia, or to contemplate territorial extension in that direction. And in a

subsequent Note, of 1873, he points out that not until after Shamil's surrender in 1859 did Russia begin to push her way continuously along the upper course of the Jaxartes river toward Tashkend and the Asiatic midlands. So long, indeed, as the mountains between the two seas were unsubdued, they formed an effectual barrier to the expansion of Russia into Central Asia; but when that frontier fortress of Islam had been captured, and when the Circassians had emigrated into Turkish territory, the onward march of Russia went on securely and speedily. Tashkend was taken and Kokand annexed in 1866; and soon afterward the communications between the Russian base in Georgia and the Russian garrisons in Turkestan were firmly established. Thereafter the flood of Russian conquest overflowed irresistibly the plains of Central Asia, until it was arrested by another breakwater, the kingdom of Afghanistan. It is true that the North-western Afghan borderlands were comparatively open and easily penetrable by an invading force; but beyond them lie lofty ranges with passes at high altitudes, guarded by a hard-fighting and intractable people, and on the farther side of these mountains stands the rival European Power whose policy it had been always to retard and obstruct the Russian advance across the Asiatic Continent. We may conjecture that if Afghanistan had been left, as the Caucasus was left after the Crimean War, isolated and obliged to rely on its own resources for defence, the drama of the Caucasian wars would have been repeated. The Russians would have besieged and reduced without great difficulty this second mountain fortress; and after another similar though less protracted struggle the Afghans would have undergone the same fate as the Daghestanis. The Czar's rulership, solidly established

in the two natural strongholds that stand on either side of the great central plains, and command, east and west, the exits and entrances, would have been supreme throughout Mohammedan Asia.

That the Russian armies were forced to halt on the edge of Afghanistan is thus a point of cardinal importance, and it marks a turning-point in the career of her expansion. It also produced a situation that is the outcome of the different strategy adopted by England and Russia respectively, in circumstances not otherwise very dissimilar. For whereas the Russians had been compelled by imperative political and military exigencies to conquer and occupy the Caucasian highlands, the policy of the British Government has always been not to subjugate Afghanistan, but to preserve its independence and to fortify it as an outwork for the protection of the gates of India. It is due to this fundamental distinction of aim and object that the history of the relations of the British with Afghanistan during the nineteenth century, and of their management of the tribes on the Afghan border, differs widely from Mr. Baddeley's narrative of events and transactions in the Caucasus. Nevertheless in both instances the general situation presented a strong resemblance. The Russians, pushing their dominion down from the north to the Black Sea and the Caspian, were checked and baffled for many years by the woods and precipices that lay across the line of their march into Trans-Caspia. The British, moving up by long strides north-westward across India, came to a halt at the foot of the Afghan hills fifty years ago; and to this day they have scarcely moved farther. Here they were met by races almost identical in character and circumstances with the tribes of Daghestan, fanatically attached to the faith of Islam, profoundly

influenced by religious preachers, prizing their liberty above their lives, and looking down from their rugged uplands upon a great military power that had swept away many principalities and subdued all the cities of the plain below. If the British had pressed onward and endeavoured to take possession of Afghanistan [which had indeed been occupied by the Moghul empire in its prime] they would certainly have been involved in a series of sanguinary conflicts, revolts, and costly expeditions not unlike those which put so severe a strain upon the Russian armies in the Caucasus. This, as we know, they did not do; they adopted the alternative of asserting an exclusive protectorate over the country; they were content to remain outside it so long as no rival power was allowed to set foot in it. Yet we know that even this much more prudent policy was carried out at a heavy cost. The British army suffered at least one grave disaster by the total destruction of a division in the retreat from Kabul in the winter of 1842-3. And the Afghan War of 1878-80, with the massacre of the British envoy and his escort at Kabul in 1879, showed us the perils and difficulties of even a temporary and partial occupation.

At the present moment, however, the objects of our policy have been satisfactorily fulfilled. The Russians have settled with us the frontier line between their dominion and Afghanistan, and have bound themselves to respect it. With the Afghan Amir we are on friendly terms, and we have taken up our permanent position on his Eastern border towards India, reserving to ourselves the control of the tribes within a broad belt of territory, otherwise independent, between the Afghan kingdom and British India. This tract is intersected by lofty ridges

running parallel for the most part to our frontier, with precipitous slopes toward India, with a few practicable passes and numerous gorges formed by the drainage from the watershed, enclosing some fertile valleys along the courses of the rivers, inhabited by a hardy population that is broken up into manifold clans and sects by the configuration of their country. The Caucasus, as we learn from Mr. Baddeley, 'is peopled by a greater number of different tribes and races than any similar extent on the surface of the globe'; and it is precisely from the same causes, difficulty of intercourse between villages secluded in the valleys or perched on the heights, scarcity of sustenance, inbred jealousy of each other, feuds and factions, that the groups of the Afghan borderland dwell apart, become estranged or hostile, are at constant war with each other, and cannot unite against a common enemy. But while in the Caucasus this trituration of the people has produced a multiplicity of dialects, the Afghan borderers speak a language that is generally the same.

In Dr. Pennell's book, the title of which stands at the head of this article, we have a vivid description, drawn from life, of the names, habits, and peculiarities of these primitive communities, with many incidental examples of the relations existing between them and the British officers who are in touch with them on the frontier. Lord Roberts, in a short introduction that may be taken as a guarantee of the accuracy and authenticity of the volume's contents, tells us that it is a valuable record of sixteen years' good work by a medical missionary in charge of a mission station at Bannu, on the north-western frontier of India. And Dr. Pennell's experience, acquired in the prodigious enterprise of

taming and converting to Christianity some of the most murderous ruffians and inveterate robbers in Asia, has provided him with a rare insight into their character, and furnished him with numerous anecdotes of their strange inconsistencies and wayward, impulsive nature. On the Afghan frontier, indeed, we may survey a situation that has frequently recurred in the history of organised governments, whenever they have found themselves in contact, and therefore in collision, with intractable barbarism. Immediately across the border line may be seen in the Afridi tribes a complete and living picture of man in his aboriginal condition of perpetual war, under no government at all, in daily peril of ending by a violent death a life that in the pithy words of Hobbes is 'poor, nasty, brutish, and short.' A few steps back into the British district brings us among men, often of the same breed and tribe, dwelling without arms in peace and security, pleading before regular law courts, learning in English schools, occupied in commerce and industry under the protection of magistrates and police. The contrast in morals and manners is as abrupt as the transition from the Afghan hills to the Indian plains. Such is the frontier along which British officers are charged with duties of watch and ward. Their business is to guard the Indian districts that march with the wild borderland, to prevent or punish incursions by the marauding tribes who have continued from time immemorial to live in practical anarchy. They obey no laws and acknowledge no ruler, though in emergencies they appeal alternately to the Afghan Amir for assistance against the British and to the British Government against any encroachments by the Amir.

The Afghan character, writes Dr. Pennell, is a strange

medley of contradictory qualities, in which courage blends with stealth, the basest treachery with the most touching fidelity, intense religious fanaticism with an avarice that will even induce a man to play false with his faith, and a lavish hospitality with an irresistible propensity for thieving. It will be remembered how 'Muridism,' the spirit of religious enthusiasm inflaming political hostility, was stirred up by the Mullahs of the Caucasus against the Russians, and embittered the resistance of the tribes. The same elements of fiery hatred lie close below the surface on the Afghan borderland. Dr. Pennell tells us that there is no section of the Afghan people which has a greater influence on their life than the Mullahs, who sometimes use their power to rouse the tribes to join in warfare against the English infidels; and that a prelude to one of the little frontier wars has often been some ardent Mullah going up and down the frontier, like Peter the Hermit, inciting them to break out. The notorious Mullah Powindah, who is still a firebrand on the border, is reported to possess a magical charm that renders his followers invulnerable before English bullets. Whether he led them in person to battle is not mentioned; though he could hardly adopt the excuse of Friar John, who, as Rabelais tells us, made a liberal distribution of mirific amulets to his soldiers, assuring them that those who had firm faith in their efficacy would come to no harm. He added, however, that to himself the charm would be useless, because unfortunately he could not believe in it. Such an explanation would be coldly received among the Afghans.

Under the exhortations of these Mullahs their students often became Ghazis.

'The Ghazi is a man who has taken an oath to

> kill some non-Mohammedan, preferably a European, as representing the ruling race, but, failing this, a Hindu or a Sikh is a lawful object of his fanaticism.... When the disciple has been worked up to the requisite degree of religious excitement, he is usually further fortified by copious draughts of intoxicating drugs.... Not a year passes on the frontier but some young officer falls a victim to one of these Ghazis.'

It is manifest that this sporadic Muridism might become epidemic under serious and widespreading excitement, but the provocation that leads to petty frontier wars comes entirely from the tribes, who make predatory incursions upon the Indian villages and refuse all reparation. In every tribe, as Dr. Pennell tells us, the outlaws who live by raiding and robbery, and the Mullahs who detest the infidel and fear his rule, are the fomenters of crime and outrage.

The vendetta, or blood-feud, our author tells us, has eaten into the very core of Afghan life. At present some of the best and noblest families in Afghanistan are on the verge of extermination through this wretched system. Even the women are not exempt. In a village which the missionary visited he noticed that the houses communicated laterally by little doors all down one long street; and on inquiry he was told that some time before a great faction fight had been carried on between the two rows of houses. The villagers 'were always in ambush to fire at each other across the street. The only way to get to the supply of water was to go from house to house to the bottom, and in order to do this without exposure the doors had been made, while by common consent they had agreed not to shoot while getting their

supplies from the stream.' Another anecdote relates how a British officer visited a petty chief in his tower, and would have opened a window to look at the country round. 'He was hurriedly and unceremoniously pulled back by the Afghan, who told him that his cousin had been watching that window for months in the hope of an opportunity of shooting him there.' In fact the chief was actually shot at this window a short time after the visit. From the universal enmity existing between cousins in Afghanistan the proverb 'as great an enemy as a cousin' has become a household word. 'The causes of 90 per cent. of these feuds are described by the Afghans as belonging to one of three heads—women, money, and land; and on such matters disputes are more likely to arise between cousins than strangers.' We may compare Mr. Baddeley's account of an almost identical state of things in Daghestan. It was split up (he says) 'into numerous khanates and free communities of many different races and languages, for the most part bitterly hostile one to another. Strife and bloodshed were chronic between village and village, between house and house ... and of many contributory causes none had operated so powerfully in originating and perpetuating this state of things as the elaborate system of blood-feud and vengeance.' And he gives one instance of a quarrel that arose from the theft of a hen from a villager, who retaliated by appropriating a cow. The retort was by taking a horse, upon which the murders began.

> 'The blood-feud was now in full swing, and was kept up for three centuries, during which some scores, some say hundreds, were sacrificed in the name of honour to this terrible custom; and all for a hen.'

But it may be more interesting to remind our readers that these feuds were 'in full swing' not so very long ago in our own island. A remarkable description of the state of the Border between England and Scotland in the sixteenth century and earlier has recently been published.[39] In a chapter headed 'The Deadly Feud' the author tells us that blood-feuds set family against family and clan against clan; and he quotes from a report submitted by Burghley to the English Government a passage in which the term is defined thus:

> 'Deadly Foed, the word of enmytie on the Borders, implacable without the blood and whole family destroyed.'

Feuds of the most bitter and hostile character, we are told, were an everyday occurrence, and were carried on with the most ferocious animosity on both sides. The feud was inherited along with the rest of the family property. It was handed down from generation to generation. The son and grandson maintained it with a bitterness which in some cases seemed year by year to grow more intense. It affected a man's whole social relationship, and gave rise to endless animosities and heart-burnings.

In fact the whole description in Mr. Borland's book of the feuds prevalent three centuries ago on our own Border might be applied to those now actually raging among the Afghans, with the simple alteration of time, places, and names. The comparison is worth making, if only to show that similar conditions and circumstances produce everywhere the same results; and that there is yet hope for the wild Afghan, if hereafter it should be his destiny to fall under a strong government that can enforce laws, though this

is the fate which he most dreads. No axiom is more easily refuted by historic experience than the commonplace saying that men cannot be made moral by statutes; the truth is that respect for a neighbour's purse or person cannot be inculcated by any other method.

It was the political division along the Scottish Border that so long prevented the suppression of lawlessness, and when the two kingdoms were united it gradually ceased. On the frontier between Afghanistan and India the British Government keeps the peace within its own districts, but maintains only a fluctuating and ineffectual control over the tribal territory. Yet it is manifest that no permanent pacification can be accomplished until both sides of the line are brought under the same firm and civilised administration. For such a purpose it would be necessary, and would be practicable, to establish strong posts among the turbulent highlanders, to make roads, and probably to insist on a general disarmament, as the Russians did in the Caucasus. But the British Government has always been reluctant to undertake so arduous and so costly a task; though until some measure of that kind is found possible, the intestine strife and chronic disorder must continue; and in fact it is the natural and inevitable solution of the problem.

> 'No doubt,' Dr. Pennell observes, 'the Government desires not to make any further annexation of this barren, mountainous, and uninviting region, but it is not always easy to avoid doing so; and it is an universal experience of history that when there are a number of disorganised and ill-governed units on the borders of a great power, they

> become inevitably, though it may be gradually and piece by piece, absorbed into the latter.'

In short, to manage a country without occupying it is no less impossible than to steer a boat without taking a seat in it. The process of subordinating the Afghan tribes to effective control will probably go forward slowly and at intervals. It may be that when one part of the country is taken resolutely into hand, the rest will be overawed and quieted; but we doubt whether any other remedy can be found for the feuds and forays that from time immemorial have distracted this borderland, which has preserved the primitive conditions of life and habits that have long disappeared from the frontiers of all other civilised nations. Yet the objections to pushing forward our landmarks into these mountains are great and manifest, while the disadvantages of the present system are equally patent. The attempt to protect our subjects by a line of outposts, to adopt the tactics of stationary defence, varied by occasional sallies forth from our cantonments to pursue assassins or to punish depredators by destroying houses and crops, is to assume a somewhat impotent and undignified attitude, hardly creditable in the case of a mighty empire worried by mere highland caterans. The Indian Government, therefore, finds itself placed in a dilemma: to advance or to stand still is equally difficult; nor is any practicable issue out of this situation to be foreseen.

We are compelled, unwillingly, to pass over without the notice that it undoubtedly deserves Dr. Pennell's very impressive accounts of his intercourse, as medical missionary, with the strange folk whom he was trying to reclaim from savagery, of the risks

which he faced with cool courage and self-command in his travels among them, and of his quaint theological disputations with arrogant Mullahs, whose invincible ignorance easily convinced a congenial audience of their argumentative superiority. His skill in surgery naturally invested him with a high reputation among people who were incessantly fighting—he had more success in healing their wounds than in curing their vices. His general 'Deductions' in regard to the present state and prospect of Christian missions in India are well worth attention, and with his survey of the existing conditions and tendencies of religious movements in India all who have studied the subject will generally agree. He lays stress on the delusion that to assault and overthrow the citadels of Islam and Hinduism, if such an achievement were possible, would be to lay open a clear field for the success of Christianity. 'Much more probably we should find an atheistic and materialistic India, in which Mammon, Wealth, Industrial Success, and Worldliness had become new gods.' Such attacks upon Eastern religion 'may for the moment win a Pyrrhic victory ... but they are at the same time undermining the religious spirit, the ardent faith, the unquestioning devotion which have been the crown and glory of India for ages.' The wisdom and enlightened morality of these warnings are incontestable. But at such questions we can only glance, although from one point of view they may be said to have an important bearing upon the main subject of this article.

In conclusion, we may observe that the frontiers of European dominion in Asia are the battleground upon which the forces of archaic and modern societies meet in arms for decisive conflict. In the ancient world the contest was only ethnical and

political; the rude tribes were coerced into amalgamation with an expanding State, far superior in power and usually more humane. 'The nations of the empire[40] insensibly melted away into the Roman name and people.' But the antique polytheism had no fanatical element; the deities of the victorious Romans were often acknowledged and accepted by the conquered population. Whereas in these latter days the Russians in the Caucasus and the English on the Afghan border have discovered that in the passionate religious animosity between Islam and Christendom lies the mainspring of the stubborn energy and fierce hatred that so long held their armies in check, and that still prevents the establishment of even a pacific *modus vivendi* on the most important frontier of India.

FOOTNOTES:

[38] (1) *The Russian Conquest of the Caucasus.* By John F. Baddeley. London, Longmans, Green and Co., 1908. (2) *Among the Wild Tribes of the Afghan Frontier.* By J. L. Pennell, M.D., F.R.C.S. London, Seeley and Co., 1909.—*Edinburgh Review*, July 1909.

[39] *Border Raids and Reivers*, by Robert Borland, Minister of Yarrow (1898). This valuable work, founded entirely on the study of original documents, may be heartily commended to all who are interested in the political and social life, the customs and traditions, of the old Border.

[40] Gibbon.

L'EMPIRE LIBÉRAL[41]

The fourteenth volume of *L'Empire Libéral*, issued in 1909, carries M. Émile Ollivier's very interesting reminiscences of that eventful period up to the outbreak of the Franco-German War in July 1870. It contains many curious particulars of the incidents and transactions culminating in the rupture with Prussia that brought about the downfall of his ministry and the ruin of the Second Empire. Autobiographies by men who have taken a prominent part in the momentous scenes which they describe have often the powerful effect of a dramatic representation: the actors reappear on the stage; they plead for themselves; they give vivid impressions of the scenes; they repeat the very words that were spoken; they revive the intense emotion of the audience during the contest between those who are hurrying on toward some fatal catastrophe and those who are striving to prevent it. M. Ollivier's volume is the story of a great historic tragedy; the principal *dramatis personæ* are celebrities of the first rank; on their speech and action depend the destinies of France, and the spectators are the nations of Europe. If we make due allowance for the fact that the author's main object is to explain and defend the part which he himself played in these important affairs, we may credit him with an honest desire to set a strange, complicated, and oft-told story in a clear light before the present generation.

M. Ollivier cites, in the first page of this volume, Machiavelli's observation that mankind at large judges those who give advice in affairs of state not

by the wisdom of their counsels but by the results. He agrees that this method is not rational, looking to the haphazard course of human affairs, but he admits that the multitude can judge by no other standard; and he appeals to historians for an impartial revision of the popular verdict, founded on careful examination of the real facts and circumstances. Yet he fears lest in his own country the decline of patriotic enthusiasm, the cooling of military ardour, that he notices in France at the present time, may have rendered Frenchmen incapable of realising the hot resentment, the intense susceptibility to affronts, the element of heroism, which were dominant forty years ago in the national character. And he therefore has little or no expectation that the falsehood of legends which have been circulated regarding the events of 1870 will be proved, to his countrymen, even by the most irrefragable demonstration. All political parties in France, he says, have combined to hold their own ministry responsible for that calamitous war; he despairs of obtaining from them a hearing. He awaits with resignation the time when some inquisitive student of history may light upon a dusty copy of his book in the recesses of a library, and may set himself to explain how these things actually happened to readers of the future.

The story of the decline and fall of the second French empire has often been told; yet it may be worth while to remind English readers of the political situation in France just forty years ago. The Emperor Napoleon III., importuned by reformers and reactionaries, by those who pressed him to step forward into Liberalism, and by those who insisted that he must stand still, had at last decided upon making those changes in the form of his government that inaugurated the Liberal Empire; and on January

3, 1870, the new ministry took office, supported by the goodwill of the moderate party in the Chamber of Deputies and by the general approval of the country. M. Ollivier was recognised as its leader and spokesman, chosen by the emperor, and enjoying his particular confidence; though he was not prime minister in the English constitutional sense, for the power of issuing direct orders, and of overruling the Cabinet, was still reserved to the sovereign; nor was he always consulted in important military or foreign affairs. The complex and enigmatic character of Napoleon III. is becoming gradually intelligible to the world at large, and public opinion has lately been veering round to a less unfavourable conclusion upon it than heretofore. He had long been reviled as a truculent despot, artful and dangerous, powerful and perfidious; the genius of Victor Hugo had set on him a brand of infamy. In reality, if we may trust later French writers, there was much that was good in his nature, and they are disposed to regard him with compassion. M. de la Gorce says that throughout his life Napoleon had been a humane prince. From the entertaining memoirs of General du Barail, whose military services brought him into frequent relations with the emperor, we should draw the impression that the emperor was affable, considerate, and sincerely well-intentioned. Giuseppe Pasolini, the Italian statesman, found him simple and easy in conversation, naturally right-minded and kindly,[42] though weak and irresolute. He was equally capable of forming bold projects or adopting cautious decisions; but he was apt to hesitate and turn round at the moment for action; and it was just here that he was so unlike his uncle, Napoleon I., who would have classed him among the *idéologues* whom he despised. He invented the theory of

nationalities to justify his polity of encouraging the unification of Italy, and of permitting the aggrandisement of Germany; in the former instance he alienated the Italians by refusing obstinately to allow them to occupy Rome; in the latter case his neutrality when Prussia attacked Austria in 1866 was the proximate cause of his ruin. He might have read in Machiavelli's *Principe* a warning of the danger of standing aside when the neighbouring potentates come to blows. The result, it is there said, is that the winner in such a contest becomes doubly formidable, while the loser resents your neutral attitude, and will not help you when the victor turns upon you with all his strength. Machiavelli declares that this policy has always been *perniciosissimo*; and so it proved to be in the case of the French Empire. In domestic affairs also the Liberal Empire took up a kind of half-way position, which was assailed by the extreme parties on both sides; for thorough-going Imperialists like Rouher asserted that a Napoleon could only rule by retaining absolute authority; while uncompromising Liberals demanded full parliamentary control. Ollivier's ministry took office with the avowed object of gradually extending constitutional administration; but he found that, as Tocqueville had said in his *Ancien Régime*, the most dangerous moment for an absolute government is when it endeavours to introduce reforms.

General du Barail, in the memoirs already quoted, gives M. Ollivier full credit for his honesty, ability, and sincere patriotism in undertaking his difficult task, which was begun in an evil hour, and failed through adverse circumstance. In May 1870, Ollivier, who was holding the portfolio of Foreign Affairs, transferred it to the Duc de Gramont, foreseeing no troubles abroad, and desiring to give his whole

attention to politics at home. The external policy of the ministry was decidedly pacific; they relied on a quiet moment for developing the new constitutional system; they had no notion of changing horses in mid-stream, yet most unluckily they were caught by a sudden flood. At the end of June it was announced in Madrid that Leopold of Hohenzollern, son of the Roumanian prince, had accepted the crown of Spain that had been secretly offered to him by Marshal Prim; and the news, M. Ollivier says, startled all France like the bursting of a bomb. It had always, we must remember, been a cardinal maxim of French statesmanship that the maintenance of a preponderant influence in Spain was essential to the security of France; while, on the other hand, a complete subordination of Spanish to French interests has been held by other governments to be dangerous to the balance of power in Europe. The collision between these two principles had been the cause of great wars and diplomatic quarrels. Louis XIV. only succeeded in securing the Spanish throne for his grandson after a long war. When Napoleon I. made his nefarious attempt to impose his brother on the Spaniards as their king, his pretext was that under the Bourbon dynasty Spain had always been a dependency of France; and it had been the invariable aim of English policy to prevent a close association of the two kingdoms. The question had long been regarded on all sides as one of vital importance; and in 1869, when some information of secret negotiations between Bismarck and Marshal Prim had leaked out, the French ambassador at Berlin, Benedetti, had warned Bismarck that France would oppose the election of a Prussian prince to the vacant throne of Spain. Bismarck had treated the information as an improbable rumour, yet he had

carefully abstained from a formal assurance that the king would forbid Prince Leopold to accept any such offer.[43] It was therefore quite certain that in 1870, when the relations between France and Prussia were in a very critical state, the announcement that Prince Leopold had been chosen for Spain would be treated as a most threatening move on the political chessboard. Italy was under deep obligation to Prussia for aid in expelling the Austrians from Venice; the St. Gothard railway had been openly promoted and subsidised by Germany for direct and secure communication with Italy in case of need; and now the family connection which was obviously contemplated would bring Spain into the circle of alliances that Bismarck was drawing round the French frontier. It was a strategical manœuvre that the imperial government was bound to resist. Within France all factions were for once unanimous in demanding immediate and resolute protest; and the clerical party, very powerful in that country, were especially vehement in denouncing the project of placing the scion of a great Protestant dynasty on the 'throne of Charles V.' M. Ollivier tells us that when the news first reached him it brought upon him suddenly and painfully the presentiment of impending war, to the discomfiture of all his efforts for the preservation of peace until the Liberal Empire should have been consolidated in France.

The plot—for it was nothing less—had been skilfully concerted between Berlin and Madrid; and even the parts to be played in anticipation of French remonstrances had been rehearsed. When Benedetti went to the Berlin Foreign Office for explanations, he found that Bismarck was absent at his country house and the king at Ems; and Von Thiele, the Under-Secretary, cut short his interrogation by replying at

once that the Prussian Government knew nothing of, and had no concern with, the Hohenzollern candidature, adding that the Spanish people had a right to choose their own king. At Madrid, notwithstanding the French ambassador's attempts to check Prim's jubilant activity, Leopold's acceptance of the crown was proclaimed to all the foreign courts as a matter for joyful congratulation; and the Cortes were summoned for July 20 to elect their new monarch. To demand satisfaction from Spain would have been to fall into Bismarck's net; for the Hohenzollern prince would have been elected nevertheless, and if French troops had then marched into Spain the Prussian army would have crossed the Rhine, whereby the French would have been placed between two fires. It was necessary to fix the responsibility for these proceedings upon Prussia, and to act promptly; but the precise line to be adopted was the subject of anxious deliberation in the emperor's council—that is, in a meeting of the Cabinet presided over by him. Finally, Ollivier proposed, as he has told us, to speak out so plainly that Prussia must understand France to be in earnest, and to say that the Hohenzollern could not be permitted to reign at Madrid. Marshal Le Bœuf had assured the council that the army was in the highest condition of efficiency and readiness; and when M. Ollivier inquired whether, in the event of war, any help from other governments could be relied upon, Napoleon produced certain letters from the Austrian emperor and the King of Italy, which he interpreted as distinct assurances of armed support in the case of a rupture with Prussia. The wording of a declaration to be made before the French Chamber of Deputies was carefully settled—it was delivered next day (July 6) by the Duc de Gramont, and received with

immense enthusiasm. Some objection was taken, then and afterwards, to its menacing tone; but we may agree with M. Ollivier that this outspoken warning to Prussia was at the moment judicious and effective; and we may admit that up to this point no exception could be taken to the procedure of the French Government.

M. Ollivier dates from July 6 the first of five phases, or alternating changes (*péripéties*), which the diplomatic campaign, as he terms it, traversed in its headlong course. They are successively described and commented upon in the chapters of his volume; and they may be here set down in his own language, for the guidance of our readers through the complicated transactions that ensued:

> 'Le premier moment est la déclaration ministérielle du 6 juillet; le second, la renonciation du Prince Antoine (11 juillet); le troisième, la demande de garanties de la droite (12 juillet); le quatrième, le soufflet de Bismarck et la fabrication de la dépêche d'Ems; le cinquième, notre réponse au soufflet de Bismarck par notre déclaration de guerre du 15 juillet.'

These are, in fact, the five acts of a portentous drama, full of shifting scenes and striking situations, on the issues of which depended the fortunes of France and of Germany; it was played out with ill-omened rapidity in nine days. In regard to the train of causes and consequences that brought France to the tremendous disaster upon which the curtain fell, diverse accounts have been given to the world by the leading actors—by M. de Gramont, by Bismarck, Benedetti, and, the latest by many years, by M.

Ollivier. His narrative does raise somewhat higher the veil which has hitherto kept in partial obscurity certain dark corners of the stage upon which these things went on. We know more now of the precise motives and considerations, the personal influences and impulses which diverted the Cabinet, after starting on the right path, into leaving it for rash and perilous adventures. On some points of interest he is, indeed, still reticent, and on others his evidence is in conflict with different narratives; but in regard to facts actually known to him we may accept his testimony, though in matters of opinion we may sometimes differ from him.

M. Ollivier insists that Gramont's declaration of July 6 was altogether *irréprochable*; he writes that he has read it again after so many years with satisfaction. He admits that it contained, substantially, an intimation to Prussia that she must choose between withdrawing the Hohenzollern candidate and accepting war with France; but he argues that this straightforward and peremptory warning was justified by its effects; that Bismarck was taken aback and discomfited by the resolute attitude of the French ministry, supported enthusiastically by the Chamber of Deputies; and that Prince Antoine was thereby so intimidated as to compel his son Leopold to retract his acceptance of the Spanish crown. On the other hand, this stern language alarmed cautious deputies, and though it stirred Paris to a pitch of wild excitement it was read with uneasiness in the cooler air of the French provinces, where the prospect of imminent war met with scanty welcome. [44] The foreign governments were startled. Bismarck, in his *Reminiscences*, says that it was an 'official international threat, uttered with the hand on the sword-hilt,' From the Austrian chancellor,

Count Beust, came earnest advice against marching hastily into Prussia; while the British Cabinet, in particular, doubted the wisdom of taking up such high ground, from which it might be difficult to retreat, at the opening of a grave and complicated question. And our ambassador in Paris, Lord Lyons, whose calm judgment and friendly counsels M. Ollivier acknowledges unreservedly, exerted himself throughout this critical time to deprecate precipitate words and deeds.

Simultaneously Benedetti, the French ambassador at Berlin, had been ordered to seek an interview with the Prussian king, and to impress upon him the necessity of appeasing the just indignation of the French people by forbidding Leopold to accept the crown of Spain. The king replied, as is well known, that he had treated the candidature entirely as a family matter, quite apart from the sphere of international politics; that he had nevertheless communicated with Leopold, and could give Benedetti no positive answer until he should have heard from that prince. If, as has been asserted, the king had been cognisant of Bismarck's secret negotiations, this reply was more evasive than ingenuous; and we may note that he immediately directed his own ambassador, Werther, who was present at Ems, to return at once to Paris. M. Ollivier scores the king's order to the credit of Benedetti's diplomacy, since it amounted to an admission that the question in debate was much more than a mere family concern. And he adds that he immediately urged Gramont to allow no more equivocation upon this essential point, but to press Werther for a straightforward reply upon it. It will be seen that this pressure was carried rather too far at the French Foreign Office, with an important effect upon the

course of negotiations.

But at this juncture supervened the *coup de théâtre*, as M. Ollivier styles it, which opens the second act of the drama. Olozaga, the Spanish ambassador at Paris, had been left in complete ignorance of the privy correspondence between Prim and Bismarck for procuring the nomination of a king from the Hohenzollern family, and this sudden revelation of its result by no means pleased him. He proposed to the Emperor Napoleon to despatch to Prince Antoine at Sigmaringen (in Prussian territory) an agent of his own, who should use every effort to convince the prince that his son must be imperatively commanded to withdraw his acceptance of Prim's offer. The emperor, whose sincere wish was for peace, consented willingly, and the mission was entirely successful. By long and strenuous argument the envoy had finally persuaded the father that his son, Leopold, would find himself in a precarious position on the Spanish throne, with France alienated and openly hostile; and the result was that Prince Antoine not only laid on his son a positive command to withdraw, but also telegraphed the decision to the principal German newspapers, to Olozaga at Paris, and to Madrid. According to M. Ollivier, Bismarck felt the blow keenly; it shattered his carefully organised plans; he found himself baffled and humiliated; he has himself said that his first thought was to resign office.[45] To the king, on the other hand, the news brought welcome relief; he supposed that he had now only to await Prince Antoine's letter confirming the public telegram, when the dispute would naturally drop with the disappearance of its cause. This was, moreover, the expectation at that moment of the French emperor, who observed that, if France and England were preparing to fight for the

possession of an island in the Channel, it would be absurd to go to war after discovering that the island had sunk to the bottom of the sea.

In those days, M. Ollivier explains, any telegram of political interest that passed over the Paris wires was communicated, by special arrangement, to the Ministère de l'Intérieur; and accordingly he received a copy of Prince Antoine's message to Olozaga before it reached its address. The contents filled him with exultation—he could feel no doubt that peace had now been triumphantly secured, mainly by the unflinching tone of the Cabinet's declaration. He carried the paper with him to the Chamber, where Olozaga rushed up to him in the lobby, drew him into a corner, read to him with much obvious excitement the telegram which Ollivier had already in his pocket, and hurried on to the Foreign Office. Naturally the incident aroused general curiosity; the deputies surrounded the minister, and eagerly pressed him for information. M. Ollivier tells us that he hesitated for some time before divulging his secret; but that on the whole he found no good reason for withholding news that would certainly appear within a few hours in the evening papers, so he read out the telegram to all present. We believe that few men, who had not been trained by experience to the cautious habits of official life, would have done otherwise. But M. de la Gorce[46] has pointed out that the chief minister ought to have kept silence until the renunciation had been approved and confirmed by the King of Prussia, who was in hourly expectation of Prince Antoine's letter, and whose acquiescence, transmitted through Benedetti to the French Government, would have probably brought the whole affair to an honourable termination. It may be objected that this is to argue

from consequences, since known, which could hardly be foreseen at the moment; yet one must admit that reticence would have been preferable, for we have to remember that M. Ollivier was disclosing a telegram intercepted, so to speak, on its passage to a foreign embassy, thereby forestalling not only the Spanish ambassador but also the French Foreign Office.

The news ran round the Palais Législatif, inside and outside, and spread through Paris with electrical rapidity.

> 'En même temps débouchait du Palais Législatif une bande agitée; c'était à qui envahirait les fiacres de la place, à qui les escaladerait, à qui les prendrait d'assaut. À la Bourse, criaient les hommes d'affaires; nous doublons le prix de la course, et au triple galop. Parmi les journalistes, même empressement et concert de même nature, et on voyait les haridelles de la place sortir l'une après l'autre et s'élancer rapides comme des flèches.'

Apparently all this stir and hurry had already affected M. Ollivier with some misgivings; for when, on going into one of the committee-rooms, he met Gressier, formerly a minister, he assured him that he (Ollivier) had no intention of making the renunciation a stepping-stone toward further demands. 'To take up that ground,' replied Gressier, 'will be a proof of courage, but it will bring down your ministry, for the country will never be content with this degree of satisfaction.' M. Ollivier soon found that he was right; for a crowd of deputies began to protest against the faint-heartedness of a government that seemed willing to drop the whole

affair, leaving Prussia to escape scot-free; and M. Ollivier had scarcely entered the Chamber when Clément Duvernois rose with an interpellation asking what guarantees the Cabinet proposed to require for the purpose of restraining Prussia from inventing more complications of this sort.

Olozaga had taken his telegram to M. de Gramont, who by no means shared M. Ollivier's joy over it. He observed that the effect was rather to embarrass his negotiations with Prussia, since that government could now make the renunciation a pretext for disowning the responsibility which he desired to fix upon the king with regard to the whole business; and, moreover, he added, public opinion in France will consider such a conclusion unsatisfactory. He was at that moment engaged in colloquy with Werther, the Prussian ambassador, who had presented himself at the Foreign Office, where presently M. Ollivier joined them, Olozaga having departed. What followed is treated by some French writers as the most ill-conceived of all the false moves made by the French players in this hazardous diplomatic game. Gramont had been urging Werther to advise the Prussian king to write a letter to the emperor, to the effect that in authorising the acceptance of the Spanish throne by Leopold he had no idea of giving umbrage to France; that the king associated himself with the prince's renunciation, and hoped that all causes of misunderstanding between the two governments were thereby removed. Gramont sketched out what he thought the king might say, and actually made over his note to the Prussian ambassador, by way of *aide-mémoire*; precisely as in 1867 Benedetti had trusted Bismarck with his draft of the secret treaty proposed for the annexation of Belgium to France, which Bismarck

afterwards published in the *Times* of July 1870. M. Ollivier, who agreed with and supported Gramont, now maintains that his arrival changed the character of the conference, that it ceased to be an official interview between the Minister of Foreign Affairs and an ambassador, and thenceforward became merely one of those free unofficial conversations in which politicians explain their views without compromising their respective governments. But we are obliged to remark that in our judgment this plea is inadmissible, for M. de Gramont has explicitly stated that the interview, so far as he was concerned, was official,[47] and Werther could not have been expected to appreciate this subtle yet important distinction—of which nothing seems to have been said to him—while M. Ollivier should have foreseen that Bismarck would certainly ignore it. The result was that Werther did transmit to his king the suggestion of the two French ministers; that the king was deeply offended at having been required to send what he called, not unreasonably, a letter of excuses; that Bismarck used Werther's despatch to kindle national indignation throughout Germany; and that Werther himself was reprimanded and recalled.

The scene now shifts to St. Cloud, where the poor emperor, who had supposed that Prince Antoine's telegram signified peace with honour, found a military party eager for war, and hotly asserting that the empire would be totally discredited unless satisfaction were demanded from Prussia for conniving at the Hohenzollern candidature. The interpellation of Duvernois in the Chamber was cited as a forcible expression of public opinion. M. Gramont now arrived at the palace with his report of the interview with Werther, in which the latter had persistently declared that the king had nothing

whatever to do with Leopold's withdrawal. The emperor's unstable mind began to waver; he forgot or put aside his arrangement with M. Ollivier—that the ministers should meet him next morning for consultation over this new aspect of the affair—and he proceeded then and there to hold a Cabinet Council.

What passed at this Council has never been exactly known. The reproach of a ruinous blunder lies heavy on those who took part in it. Gramont says no more than that the deliberations were conscientious, and that every one, including the emperor, earnestly desired peace.[48] M. Ollivier tells us, in the volume now before us, that of all the Cabinet ministers the Duc de Gramont alone was summoned; whether he learnt subsequently who were also present, and what share they took in promoting the decision, he leaves his readers to guess. It is clear that the proceeding was irregular and totally unconstitutional, and other French writers hint that Gramont's silence is intended to shield *une personne auguste* from responsibility for a decision that was fatally wrong. When the Council broke up at 7 P. M. (July 12) Gramont immediately despatched from the Foreign Office his famous telegram to Benedetti at Ems, instructing him to require from the Prussian king a positive assurance that he would not authorise the renewal of Leopold's candidature—a demand, in short, for guarantees. At his office he met Lord Lyons, to whom he expounded his reasons for treating the single renunciation as inadequate, to the great surprise of our ambassador, who objected so strenuously to Gramont's views and intentions that the minister, somewhat shaken, merely said that the formal decision would be made public next morning. While the emperor and two councillors were then

taking irrevocable steps toward a collision, and were unconsciously playing into the hands of their arch-enemy, the leaders of the warlike faction in the Chamber and the Parisian press were clamouring with fury and vitriolic sarcasm against a faint-hearted and contemptible ministry that shrank from seizing the opportunity of humbling Prussia.

Again the scene changes, this time to the Foreign Office, where M. Ollivier, in total ignorance of that evening's Council at St. Cloud, sought and found the Duc de Gramont about midnight. He had come to ask whether any fresh news had been received from Benedetti at Ems; and Gramont answered by showing him the telegram just despatched by the Council's order to Benedetti, with a letter to himself from the emperor desiring that its language should be stiffened. Naturally M. Ollivier could hardly control his resentment at discovering that an extremely grave resolution had been adopted and acted upon without consulting or even warning him beforehand; that the emperor, in spite of his promises to govern constitutionally, had reverted to such an extreme use of autocratic power; and that Gramont had made no attempt to check it, had even abetted the irregularity. However, the telegram had gone to Ems —it was too late to remedy that mischief—but the Cabinet would have to answer before the Chamber for its despatch. He said to Gramont:

> 'On va vous accuser d'avoir prémédité la guerre et de n'avoir vu dans l'incident Hohenzollern qu'un prétexte de la provocation. N'accentuez pas votre première dépêche comme vous le prescrit l'Empereur, atténuez la. Benedetti aura déjà accompli sa mission lorsque cette atténuation lui

> parviendra, mais devant la Chambre vous y trouverez un argument pour établir vos intentions pacifiques.'[49]

And he at once drafted a telegram instructing Benedetti to require from the king no more than that he should agree not to permit Leopold to retract the particular renunciation which his father had obtained from him; instead of requiring a general assurance against *any future* retractation. Gramont telegraphed accordingly, but in continuation, not in correction, of his earlier message, so that the latter part of the instructions to Benedetti was inconsistent with the former part. But this second telegram reached Ems, as M. Ollivier had foreseen, too late, for Benedetti had already seen the king, and had been urging him persistently to satisfy the French Government by conceding the general assurance.

M. Ollivier's description of the distress and perplexity that kept him without sleep during the rest of that eventful night will be read with a feeling of sincere commiseration. This, then, he reflected, was the first fruit of imperial liberalism, that the chief minister was slighted by his sovereign, ill-served and even betrayed by his colleagues, and committed, behind his back, to a most hazardous policy. He had been too soft-hearted to insist on making a clean sweep of the old official class in forming his Cabinet; he had thought to replace the decrepit absolutism by a young and liberal empire; and here was the personal power reappearing at the first crisis. The idea of having given the signal for war was abhorrent to him; he felt violently tempted to resign and retire. Yet, on reflection, to tender his resignation at such a moment would be, he felt, an act of culpable egoism, it would inevitably bring on the war; for the

government would pass into the hands of a rash and impetuous war-party, manifestly bent on marching against Prussia if the king persisted in refusing, as on hearing of Ollivier's resignation he would assuredly refuse, the guarantees that had been demanded by the Council held at St. Cloud. On the other hand, by remaining in the ministry he might still command a majority in the Cabinet; nor did he despair of a majority in the Chamber to support him in cancelling, at some future stage of the negotiations, this demand for guarantees if he could recover the emperor's confidence. He might fail, but then he would fall honourably, having subordinated personal susceptibilities to considerations of his country's interest; so he finally determined not to resign office.

Our sympathies are unquestionably due to a minister who, finding himself placed, by no act of his own, in a situation of the utmost perplexity, resolves to take no account of his political reputation and personal interests, and to choose the course that he believes to be necessary, in arduous circumstances, for the honour and safety of his country. To a British prime minister his duty would have been clear, he would have tendered his resignation immediately; but under the Liberal Empire the ultimate decision upon questions before the Cabinet still lay with the sovereign, and thus the responsibilities of his principal minister remained ambiguous and indefinite. Nevertheless, though it is easy to be wise after the event, our opinion must be that M. Ollivier would have done his country better service by resigning office; for though it is very probable that war could not have been thereby averted, yet unqualified disapproval of the demand for guarantees might have rallied to his side all those

who, in the Cabinet, the Chamber, and the country, were undoubtedly opposed to incurring terrible risks in order to obtain pledges against future contingencies. Among the late Lord Acton's *Historical Essays* there is a remarkable paper on 'The Causes of the Franco-Prussian War,' in which the considerations that may justify Gramont's demand for guarantees are fairly stated. It is there argued that the Prussian king, who had first 'sanctioned' Prince Leopold's candidature, and afterwards its withdrawal, had left the initiative in both cases to Prince Leopold. He had thus kept himself quite free to sanction a second acceptance as he had done the first—'he held in his hands a convenient *casus belli*, to be used or dropped at pleasure'; remembering that the Hohenzollern candidature had been 'a meditated offence, long and carefully prepared, insolently denied, which demanded reparation.'[50] But one might reply that the best way of foiling these deep and deliberate designs, manifestly contrived to provoke war, was to give the adversary no such plausible pretext for driving France into hostilities as was furnished to Bismarck by Gramont's demand. It is evident, however, that in July 1870 all Paris was in a state of irrepressible agitation, that the Imperialists in the Chamber were determined to push the Government into a defiant and warlike policy, and that they were acting in the foolhardy conviction that the French army could beat the Prussians, and that a victorious campaign would consolidate the Napoleonic dynasty.

The next day, July 13, is an evil date in the history of France, when she was hurried into war by a swift succession and very unlucky conjunction of incidents. The Council met early, and decided by a majority not to call out the army reserves, although

Marshal Le Bœuf energetically declared that if there were any prospect of war, not an hour should be lost in preparation. M. de la Gorce relates that four of the councillors passed grave censure on the irregular proceedings of the previous evening, and condemned Gramont's telegram. M. Ollivier says that it was resolved not to insist further if the guarantees were refused by the king, and for the moment to keep the demand for them secret, merely informing the Chamber that negotiations with Prussia were in progress. Ollivier took his *déjeuner* at the palace, where the household staff greeted him very coldly, and the empress, by whom he sat, turned her back on him. In the Chamber Duvernois asked in a surly tone when the debate on his interpellation would come on, and July 15 was fixed for it. Everything now depended on the issue of Benedetti's interview with the king at Ems, which took place early on the morning of the 13th, when they met as the king was returning by the public promenade from taking the waters. What followed is well known. The king was surprised and disappointed at learning from the ambassador that Prince Leopold's resignation had not settled everything; Benedetti pressed on him Gramont's new demand for ulterior guarantees; the king positively refused to give them, and parted from him coldly though courteously, promising, however, to see him again after receiving the letter expected from Prince Antoine. But in the course of that day came Werther's report of his conversation with the two French ministers, which the king's private secretary opened and carried, in some trepidation, to his majesty. The king was grievously offended; he wrote to Queen Augusta that to require him to stand before the world as a repentant sinner was nothing less than impertinence, and he sent his aide-de-camp,

Prince Radziwill (one of the highest Prussian nobles), to inform Benedetti that Leopold's letter of resignation had arrived, and that, as the affair was thus completely ended, no further audience was necessary. The ambassador replied that he was particularly instructed to obtain the king's specific approbation of Leopold's action, and was therefore obliged to solicit another interview. The king replied by his aide-de-camp that so far as he had approved Leopold's acceptance of the crown he approved the retractation; but the request for another interview, though it was twice repeated during the day, was civilly and firmly refused.

M. Ollivier argues that Werther's report in no way affected the king's behaviour to Benedetti; he affirms that it made no difference at all, and that the king's determination to hold no further intercourse with him was entirely due to Benedetti's indiscreet importunity at the morning's meeting, which was witnessed, it may be noted, by a crowd of observant bystanders. We may assume that the king had at no time the slightest intention of acceding to the demand for guarantees; but it seems to us impossible to maintain that Werther's report, which was put into his majesty's hand at such a critical moment, and which undeniably gave serious offence, did not exacerbate relations which had already been strained, or induce the king to break off abruptly the personal negotiations with the French minister. And we may add that if Benedetti had been cognisant of this report, he might have understood the king's sudden change of temper, and might have spared himself some rebuffs. When the matter came afterwards to his knowledge, he declared that the effect on the king of Werther's report had been deplorable.

Bismarck had been telegraphing from Berlin to Ems that if the king accorded to Benedetti any more interviews he must resign office; and the news of Prince Leopold's renunciation seemed to cut away the ground upon which he had been manœuvring for a quarrel with France. But his spirits revived on receiving by telegraph from the king a brief summary of the Ems incidents, stating that Benedetti's importunate requisition for guarantees had been rejected by his majesty, who had subsequently resolved

> 'de ne plus recevoir le comte Benedetti à cause de sa prétention, et de lui faire dire simplement par un aide de camp ... que sa Majesté avait reçu du prince Léopold confirmation de la nouvelle mandée de Paris, et qu'elle n'avait plus rien à dire à l'ambassadeur.'

The telegram also authorised Bismarck to communicate this statement to the foreign courts and to the press, whereupon Bismarck gave it immediate publication, having made (to use his own phrase) 'some suppressions'; having, in fact, maliciously tampered with the text and falsified the tone, according to M. Ollivier and other French writers. His official organ, the *North German Gazette*, was directed to print off a supplement and to paste it up all over Berlin, and copies of this supplement were distributed gratis in the streets. A thrill of patriotic enthusiasm electrified the nation, who were unanimous in applauding the king in defying the French, and mocking at their ambassador's humiliation.

> 'Dans toutes les langues, dans tous les pays,

> courait la falsification offensée lancée par Bismarck. L'effet de cette publicité effroyable se produisit d'abord en Allemagne avec autant d'intensité qu'à Berlin. Les journaux faisaient rage.'

This is what M. Ollivier has called 'Le soufflet de Bismarck'; and never was the art of changing the tone and import of words without altering their substance more effectively employed; for it must be acknowledged that the communication to the press was an accurate rendering of the facts contained in the king's telegram, which was stiff but not actually discourteous; whereas Bismarck put the sting into it by little more than adroit condensation. We are told that when the king received this revised edition of his message he read it twice, was much moved, and said, 'This means war'; and that it rang throughout Europe like an alarm-bell. At the same time, and before Bismarck's action had been known in Paris, M. Ollivier, as he tells us, was struggling vigorously against the torrent of reproaches and imputations of cowardice which threatened to overthrow his Cabinet if they flinched from the demand for guarantees.

Late on July 13 came a telegram from Benedetti that the king had consented to approve unreservedly Prince Leopold's renunciation, but distinctly refused any further concession. This, cried the war-party at St. Cloud, is totally insufficient; the emperor was irresolute, and merely summoned his Council for next day. Ollivier was determined, for his part, to accept the king's assurance as conclusively satisfactory; and he relates how, on the morning of the 14th, he was engaged in drafting, for approval by the Council, a ministerial declaration to that effect,

when the Duc de Gramont entered his room with a copy of Bismarck's circular telegram, and said:

> '"Mon cher, vous voyez un homme qui vient de recevoir une gifle." Il me tend alors une petite feuille de papier jaune que je verrai éternellement devant mes yeux.... On n'échoua jamais plus près du port. Je restai quelques instants silencieux et atterré.'

At the Council, which was immediately summoned, Gramont threw his portfolio on the table, saying that after what had happened a Foreign Minister who should not vote for war would be unworthy to hold office; and Marshal Le Bœuf informed his colleagues that they had not a moment to lose, for Prussia was already arming. Nevertheless the Council set themselves to a deliberate investigation of the actual facts. Their conclusion, after six hours of discussion, was that, according to diplomatic rule and international custom, no exception could have been taken to the king's refusal, courteously worded, of the interview which Benedetti had, it seemed to them, rather pertinaciously desired; but that a reasonable refusal had been converted into one that was offensive by its publication in terms that were intentionally curt and stinging. Nevertheless Ollivier, clinging to any slight chance of avoiding war, persuaded the emperor and the Council to agree that Leopold's resignation, as approved by the Prussian king, should be accepted by France, and that, on the further question, whether members of a reigning family in one country could be permitted to become kings in another, an appeal for some authoritative ruling should be made to a general congress. But in the course of that day the ministers received from various quarters more evidence that Bismarck's

inflammatory telegram had been sent officially to the Prussian diplomatists at all the foreign courts; and they heard that Paris was literally foaming with exasperation at their dilatory indecision, while the temper of the Chamber convinced them that the proposal for a congress would be rejected with fiery scorn. Berlin and Paris vied with each other in turbulent patriotism and warlike fury, and Marshal Le Bœuf, being again and for the last time questioned by the Council, replied positively that the French army was quite ready, and that no better opportunity of settling accounts with Prussia could be expected. The Council rescinded its former decision, and voted unanimously for war. The empress alone (Ollivier notes particularly) expressed no opinion and gave no vote.

On July 15 Ollivier pronounced in the Chamber the declaration that had been drawn up by himself and the Duc de Gramont. It was to the effect that the Cabinet had throughout made every possible exertion to preserve peace, but that their patience was exhausted when they found that the King of Prussia had sent an aide-de-camp to the French ambassador informing him that no more interviews could be granted, and that the Prussian Government, by way of giving point and unequivocal significance to this message, had circulated it to all other foreign governments in Europe. Having spared no pains to avoid war, the ministers would now accept the challenge, and prepare for the consequences.

M. Ollivier has given a vivid description of the scene that ensued. His final words were barely audible in the storm of applause that swept through the assembly, and the vote of urgency for the motion to

provide the necessary war-funds was demanded with enthusiastic outcries, varied by angry vituperation of the few deputies who stood up to oppose it. But Thiers immediately arose and, in spite of many disorderly interruptions, made a passionate appeal to the assembly to reflect before precipitating the country into war. His speech, with the violent cries of dissent interjected by the war-party, is reproduced by M. Ollivier in order, as he says, that his readers may judge for themselves how far it merited the unstinted eulogy that has since been bestowed upon it; for M. Ollivier evidently considers that those who have credited Thiers with heroic patriotism in making this strenuous effort to avert the catastrophe have over-praised him. Yet with this view we believe that few of those who read the pages in this volume which contain the speech will agree. They will admire, rather, the courage and fervid eloquence of a veteran statesman who vainly strove to persuade a frantic assembly that it was fatally misled, that it was plunging the nation into war on a mere point of form, grasping at a shadow after the substantial and reasonable demand for satisfaction had been obtained by Leopold's renunciation; who reminded the deputies that the official papers authenticating the supposed insult had never been laid before them, and implored them not to risk the issues of a terrible contest upon a doubtful question of national susceptibility. M. Ollivier goes so far as to affirm that no one could be more justly accused of having brought on the war of 1870 than Thiers himself, because it was his vehement condemnation of the policy which allowed Prussia to beat down Austria in 1866, and to set up a formidable military power on the frontier of France, that inspired the whole French people with the suspicion, jealous animosities, and

alarm which rendered a war on the Rhine between the two nations eventually unavoidable. But Thiers in his speech emphatically repeated his conviction that sooner or later France must fight Prussia to redress the balance of military power between the rival countries; and the whole point of his speech lay in one sentence: 'Je trouve l'occasion détestablement choisie' ('Your *casus belli* is ill chosen and utterly indefensible'). It cannot be denied that in 1870 the public opinion of Europe was on his side: for England and Austria, whose goodwill toward France was unquestionable, were foremost in their efforts to deter the French ministers from war and in deploring their infatuation when it had been proclaimed. At St. Petersburg the Russian emperor told the French ambassador plainly that the demand for guarantees was unreasonable. Nor is it likely that the general judgment of the time—that Thiers did his best to save the empire from a disastrous blunder—will have been revoked by posterity, or affected by anything that has since been pleaded in extenuation.

'If (said Thiers) the Hohenzollern candidature had not been withdrawn, all France would have rallied to the support of your declaration, and all Europe would have held you to be in the right; but it *has* been withdrawn with the approbation of the Prussian king, and you had absolutely no pretext for making any further demand. What will Europe say when you shed torrents of blood on a point of form?' M. Thiers concluded his speech by urging the ministers to lay before the Chamber the actual documents which, as they asserted, rendered war inevitable.

M. Ollivier, in his reply, declined to communicate certain documents which, he said, were confidential and could not be produced without infringement of

diplomatic rules; and he laid stress on the impossibility of tolerating the affront which had been intentionally put upon France by Bismarck's circular telegram. And it was at the end of this speech that he made use of the phrase which has become historical as the typical expression of the levity and rashness with which his ministry threw their nation into a tremendous war, insomuch that it has become one main cause why he is so commonly charged, very unfairly, with the whole responsibility for the blind haste that led to the defeat and dismemberment of his country. 'Oui, de ce jour commence pour les ministres mes collègues et pour moi, une grande responsabilité. Nous l'acceptons le cœur léger.' The words were at once taken up sharply and severely; and M. Ollivier went on to explain that he meant a heart not weighted by remorse, since he and his colleagues had done everything that was consistent with humanity and with honour to avert a dire necessity; and since the armies of France would be upholding a cause that was just. He now comments bitterly on the malignity which has fastened this stigma on his name, merely because in the heat and flurry of debate, which left him not a moment to pick his words or arrange his sentences, he said something that he is sure no honest man who listened to his explanation could misconstrue into unfeeling frivolity. And in his criticism of the speech in which M. Thiers so vehemently condemned the conduct of the ministers he repeats emphatically that the war was not brought on by the demand for guarantees, but by Bismarck's false and insulting publication of the king's refusal to consider that demand. This affront, he maintains, was insufferable. Yet we learn from his narrative that before entering the Chamber on this eventful day M. Ollivier had

found at the Foreign Office Benedetti, just arrived from Ems, who had already seen Bismarck's telegram in a newspaper, and could have assured the ministers that it was a perfidious misrepresentation, since the king had not treated him with actual discourtesy. Nevertheless M. Ollivier quotes and entirely adopts the 'proud and manly' utterances of the Duc de Gramont who stood up and addressed the assembly towards the close of the debate.

'After what you have just heard,' he said, 'one fact is enough. The Prussian Government has informed all the Cabinets of Europe of the refusal to receive our ambassador or to continue the discussion with him. That is an affront to the emperor and to France, and if (*par impossible*) a Chamber could be found in my country to bear or suffer it, I would not remain Minister of Foreign Affairs for five minutes.'

These haughty words (we are told) electrified the Chamber, and a committee to examine the papers on which the ministers relied to prove their case was immediately appointed. These were brought by Gramont, who, however, said that he would not lay before the committee the precise words of Bismarck's insulting telegram, because his knowledge of it came only from a very confidential communication made to him by the French representatives at certain foreign courts who had been permitted to see the original, so that the authentic text was not in his possession. This excuse was accepted, somewhat imprudently, by the committee; and their chairman proceeded to question Gramont closely on one point —whether, after Leopold's retirement had become known, the King of Prussia had been required at one and the same time to approve it formally and to promise that the candidature should never be

revived. During the debate it had been objected by those who opposed the war-party that after obtaining the king's approval, and not till then, the Foreign Secretary demanded this promise, and that on this new demand the king took offence and briefly declined any further interview with Benedetti. Gramont answered the chairman with a direct affirmative; he stated that the two concessions had been required simultaneously, and M. Ollivier undertakes to prove that this statement was correct. He argues, if we understand him rightly, that before Leopold had withdrawn his candidature, the king had been pressed to advise or order him to do so, and that this requisition included by implication the demand for a guarantee against its renewal. When Leopold had retired without the king's intervention, the royal order became unnecessary; but the implied demand still remained in force, and was merely repeated in subsequent telegrams.[51] On this we must remark that both Benedetti and the Prussian king entirely missed the alleged implication; that the question of guarantees was never raised by the telegrams interchanged between Gramont and Benedetti before Leopold's retirement had become public, when both the king and the ambassador treated it as entirely new; and that at any rate such an important and highly contentious demand should obviously have been stated with unequivocal distinctness, since any other course was quite certain to produce misunderstandings and recriminations. And it is no matter for surprise that various French writers have since accused the Duc de Gramont of misstating the facts upon which the committee reported to the Chamber that the papers laid before them amply sustained the ministerial request for the grant of an urgent war-subsidy, which was thereupon

voted by an immense majority. In the Senate, where the money was granted with even more promptitude and with zealous unanimity, the proceedings were expedited by a report from Marshal Le Bœuf that the enemy had already crossed the French frontier, and M. Rouher, a thorough Imperialist, headed a deputation of senators to congratulate the emperor, in the name of the Senate, on having drawn the sword when the Prussian king rejected the demand for guarantees. M. Ollivier reasonably complains that this unauthorised demonstration was awkward and mischievous; for while the Senate was thus made to attribute the rupture to the king's refusal, the ministry was declaring war on account of the 'soufflet de Bismarck'—the insult embodied in the Prussian telegram. Yet M. Ollivier, looking back in the calm evening of life on these stormy days, might have brought himself by reflection to admit that between these two pretexts there was little to choose—that neither of them justified a government in staking the fortunes of the nation and the empire on the hazard of a great war. When Rouher had read his address, the sovereigns conversed with the senators, and it was remarked that while the empress was lively and confident of success, the emperor spoke sadly of the long and difficult task, requiring a most violent effort, that lay before them.

Having brought his narrative up to the moment when the Chamber by voting the subsidy had practically determined upon war, M. Ollivier stops to comment upon and explain the strenuous opposition made to the vote by M. Thiers and by the small section of deputies who represented the Radical Left. He is convinced that this latter party were mainly actuated in their ardent protests by a desire to embarrass and, if possible, to overthrow his

Government, of which they had been consistent adversaries. They had calculated, he explains, on the probability that the ministry would flinch from the rupture with Prussia, would adopt some pacific compromise that would be rejected with indignation by the Chamber, and would be contemptuously expelled from office. When this calculation had been foiled by the resolutely courageous attitude of the Cabinet, they foresaw (he believes) that a triumphant campaign would greatly strengthen the Government and would utterly discredit the Opposition, so they changed their tactics and fought against the ministerial proposals with accusations of criminal recklessness and prophecies of disaster. It is hardly possible, after so long an interval of time, to form any opinion upon these somewhat invidious suggestions. The action of those who opposed the war, whatever may have been their motives, was outwardly consistent enough, and the construction placed upon it by M. Ollivier may seem rather subtle and far-fetched. At the present day, however, this question does not particularly concern any one, though we may agree that at that moment no one in France contemplated the possibility of defeat in the field. The French army was assumed by all parties to be invincible, and the minority in opposition did undoubtedly believe and fear that the empire would be consolidated by victories. M. Thiers in his speech only touched generally upon the chances and perils of war, and even Gambetta voted with the Government upon the conviction that success was beyond doubt; while not only in Paris, but in all the great towns, the determination to fight was acclaimed because a triumphant campaign was supposed to be certain. It was to be anticipated, indeed, that a brave and high-spirited nation, very

sensitive on the point of honour, and confident in its military superiority, would respond enthusiastically to the signal of war against a rival whose ill-will was notorious, who was accused of plotting the injury of their country and of deliberately insulting their Government.

A public declaration of hostilities was sent to Berlin, though M. Ollivier tells us that his ministry regarded it as a superfluous formality which they would have preferred leaving to Prussia.

> 'La déclaration fut libellée d'une manière assez maladroite par les commis des Affaires étrangères, et elle ne fut pas même lue au Conseil. Elle fut communiquée uniquement par la forme et sans discussion aux Assemblées, et envoyée à la Prusse le 19 juillet.'

This perfunctory method of composition is characteristic of the prevailing official atmosphere.

The document was delivered by the French chargé d'affaires to Bismarck, and in the dialogue that followed between the two diplomatists, which M. Ollivier relates in full, we have an excellent sample of the Prussian Chancellor's sardonic and incisive manner. Bismarck asserted that if he had been present at the interviews with Benedetti he might have prevented the war, whereas the king's conciliatory tone at Ems had misled the French ministers into the blunder of using threats and making intolerable demands, until at last they found themselves confronted by a strong Government, backed by the Prussian nation in the firm resolution to defend itself. In reporting this conversation to the Foreign Office the chargé d'affaires said that

Bismarck appeared to be sincerely afflicted with regret for the rupture between the two countries, that he evidently saw, too late, his error in having secretly encouraged the Hohenzollern candidature, and that the result of all these unhappy complications had left the well-meaning chancellor inconsolable. Such a candid confession of remorse and regret moved the Frenchman's compassion to a degree that profoundly irritates M. Ollivier:

> 'Un tel excès de crédulité finit par exaspérer. Et la plupart des diplomates de ce temps-là étaient de cette force. Bien piètre serait l'histoire qui se modélerait sur leurs appréciations.'

We may agree that the sympathy of the chargé d'affaires with Bismarck's ingenuous contrition was ill-bestowed. But the tendency to fix upon French diplomacy a responsibility for national calamities that is much more justly chargeable to the account of the Imperial Government, is somewhat unduly prominent in certain parts of M. Ollivier's otherwise fair and conscientious narrative of the transactions that culminated in the war.

When Bismarck announced to the Prussian Reichstag that war had been declared, he was interrupted by an outburst of long and enthusiastic cheering. He said, briefly, that he had no papers to lay before them, because the single official document received from the French Government was the declaration of war; and the only motive for hostilities he understood to be his own circular *télégramme de journal* addressed to Prussian envoys abroad and to other friendly Powers for the purpose of explaining what had occurred. This, he observed, was not at all

an official document. He added that a demand for a letter of excuses had been made through Werther to the king; and the real origin of the war he alleged to be the hatred and jealousy with which the independence and prosperity of Germany were regarded in France. Upon this adroit but incomplete exposition of causes and circumstances M. Ollivier comments with intelligible severity, laying stress on the fact that afterwards Bismarck threw off his disguise, and openly took to himself the credit of having deliberately contrived to bring on the war at his own time. In fact, the later German historians have confirmed this statement by their critical examination of the records and other evidence; though instead of concluding that his conduct was immoral they unite, according to M. Ollivier, in applauding his political genius. Almost the whole story of the connected machinations by which France was led step by step into war have since been disclosed, and the only part which is still unrevealed relates to the original devices by which Bismarck and Marshal Prim concerted the preliminaries to the offer of the Spanish throne to Leopold.[52]

It is cheerfully admitted by the German historians who are cited in this volume that the train of incidents which produced so well-timed an explosion was scientifically laid by the Prussian chancellor. But they maintain that he was only countermining the underground combinations of the French, who were known to be organising a triple alliance with Italy and Austria for a combined assault upon Prussia; and that the journey of the Austrian Archduke Albert to Paris in March 1870 convinced Bismarck that he had no time to lose, because war must be provoked before these alliances were consummated. And they cite the example of Frederick the Great, who

disconcerted the secret preparations of his enemies by the sudden dash upon Dresden which opened the Seven Years' War. This defence of his own very skilful and not less astute manœuvres was endorsed by Bismarck in a speech before the Chamber in 1876; nor does it appear to us so untenable as M. Ollivier holds it to be. He argues that the fear of being attacked by France, if it had really influenced Bismarck's conduct in 1870, must have been a wild hallucination, for the chancellor must have been well aware that the emperor's policy at that time was decidedly pacific, and that his own (Ollivier's) views were still more so. He assures us that the project of a triple alliance was intended to be exclusively defensive, that it never passed beyond the 'academic' stage, or reached any practical form. The confidential negotiations of 1869 with Austria and Italy had been left, he says, in the stage of unfinished outline, nor was it even suspected either by the French or by the Italian ministry that they had been carried further. On the other hand, it cannot be denied that in 1869 these negotiations had been carried quite far enough to inspire the Prussian chancellor with serious disquietude, if, as is very probable, he had good information of them. We know, from M. Ollivier's very interesting account of what passed at the first meeting of the Cabinet on July 6, when the ministers resolved to announce to the Chamber their determination to resent and resist the Hohenzollern candidature, that the emperor and M. de Gramont regarded the understanding with Italy and Austria as being much more than academic. It is there stated that when Ollivier hesitated to accept Gramont's assurance that the assistance of these two Powers, in the event of hostilities with Prussia, had been virtually secured, the Emperor

Napoleon took from a drawer in his bureau certain letters written in 1869 by the Austrian emperor and the King of Italy, and, after reading them aloud, told the ministers that these writings undoubtedly amounted to promises of help in the circumstances that were then actually under discussion. The Cabinet accepted these proofs that the alliances might be reckoned upon as substantial, so that it is not unreasonable to suppose that Bismarck had drawn the same conclusion from the intimations that had reached him, and had set himself to provoke a war before the secret combinations against him should be ready for action. It must be borne in mind that from 1866 he had been deliberately preparing for it, being convinced, as he said later, that until France had been defeated in the field, his grand design of founding a German empire, with its capital at Berlin, could not be realised.

We may therefore be permitted to suggest that the discussion with which M. Ollivier closes this volume is to some extent superfluous, for it is incontestable that Bismarck had reasons for desiring the war, and that France was inveigled into declaring it. In the final section he returns to the question whether France or Prussia were responsible for the rupture; and after summing up the evidence he pronounces judgment against Prussia. It was Prussia that invented the Hohenzollern candidature, against which France was bound to protest forcibly; and even if it be admitted, he says, that the French Cabinet was wrong in taking mortal offence at the insolent official version of the king's refusal to receive the French ambassador, there can be no doubt that this public affront infuriated the French nation, and drove it to the extremity of war. That the explosion was instantaneous he regards as a proof

that it had not been expected nor premeditated by France. All these things are, indeed, neither denied nor deniable, for Bismarck's own arrogant revelations leave no doubt that the war had been desired and premeditated by that astute and far-seeing politician; and though upon the methods by which the Hohenzollern candidature was originally started Bismarck is judiciously silent, we may be morally certain that the instigation came from Berlin. The maxim *Fecit cui prodest* affords fair ground for this inference, particularly when we remember the obvious improbability that the Spanish ministry would have gratuitously set up a candidature which must infallibly have brought their country into collision with its formidable neighbour.

How the French Government fell into a net that had been spread for them is to most of us sufficiently clear. Whether the emperor and his ministers ought to have detected and avoided it, is the real question, and it is practically the only question that concerns M. Ollivier. In the final pages of his book, which touch in dignified and pathetic words upon the injustice of the reproaches that have been heaped upon him and the rancorous calumnies by which he has been pursued, his readers are told that, having done his best to defend the cause of his nation, he will terminate his work without taking up his personal justification, though on one point he desires not to be misunderstood. It has been pleaded on his behalf, he says, that he was in fact opposed to the declaration of war, but agreed to it under the violent pressure of public opinion, or else from reluctance to betray internal dissensions that would have broken up the ministry, or for other reasons. M. Ollivier insists, on the contrary, that after Bismarck's 'soufflet' he was convinced that peace could be maintained

only at the price of his country's abject humiliation; and that he chose the alternative of war as infinitely preferable, without the least regard to his personal reputation or interests. We may willingly agree that M. Ollivier acted throughout from motives of high-minded patriotism, and although we cannot acquit him on the charge of grave imprudence we may freely admit that he was entangled in a situation of extraordinary difficulty. To Englishmen, who are familiar with the regular and recognised working of constitutional government, it will be plain that he was the victim of a system that had placed him before the public as the nominal head of a Cabinet that he was supposed to have formed, and of a party in the Chamber that he was expected to lead. Whereas in fact he had no proper control over the policy of the Cabinet, and no solid support in the Chamber. The emperor presided at the meetings of the Cabinet; and it is clear that the ultimate decision in the supremely important departments of the army and of foreign affairs was still reserved to the sovereign, on whom the Foreign Secretary (as we should call him) could urge his views separately, and from whom he could take orders independently of the first minister. In this radically false position M. Ollivier found himself committed to measures on which he had not been consulted, and hurried into dangerous courses of action for which he had no recognised official responsibility, since they were sanctioned by the emperor's unquestionable authority. We have to remember, also, that in July 1870, liberal institutions had been no more than six months under trial after eighteen years of autocratic rule, that the advocates of the old *régime* were numerous and openly hostile to the reforms, and that all the ministers of the new *régime* lacked experience

in the art and practice of constitutional administration. It is among those conditions and circumstances that we must find some explanation of their imprudence, and of their inability to make a stand against the emperor's weakness, the clamour of hot-headed deputies, and the war-cries of journalists; some excuse, in short, for the heedlessness with which a well-meaning ministry stepped into the snare that had been laid for them.

When, in 1871, the ex-emperor was told of M. Ollivier's earnest protest against the cruel injustice of holding him alone answerable for the national disasters, Napoleon is reported to have replied that this responsibility must be shared by the ministry, the Chamber, and himself.

> 'Si je n'avais pas voulu la guerre, j'aurais renvoyé mes ministres; si l'opposition était venue d'eux, ils auraient donné leur démission; enfin, si la Chambre avait été contraire à l'entreprise, elle eût voté contre.'[53]

In a broad and general sense this conclusion may be accepted, for all parties concerned were heavily to blame; and manifestly the disasters were the outcome of a situation in which weakness and rashness were matched against unscrupulous statecraft and the deep-laid combinations of a consummate strategist.

FOOTNOTES:

[41] *L'Empire Libéral: Études, Récits, Souvenirs.* Par Émile Ollivier. Vol. xiv.: La Guerre. 1909. —*Edinburgh Review*, January 1910.

[42] 'Animo retto e buono' (*Memorie*, p. 407).

[43] Benedetti, *Ma Mission en Prusse*.

[44] *Papiers Secrets: Les Préfets.*

[45] *Reflections and Reminiscences of Prince Bismarck.*

[46] *Histoire du Second Empire*, vi. 258.

[47] 'Rien n'était plus officiel que l'entretien qui se poursuivait en ce moment entre le ministre des affaires étrangères et l'ambassadeur de Prusse.'—Gramont, *La France et la Prusse*, p. 168.

[48] *La France et la Prusse* (1872), pp. 131-2.

[49] *L'Empire Libéral*, p. 270.

[50] *Historical Essays*, p. 222.

[51] 'Au début nous avions demandé au Roi de conseiller ou d'ordonner à son parent de renoncer, ce qui entraînait implicitement une garantie que la candidature ne se reproduirait plus. Le Roi ayant refusé d'intervenir, et la candidature ayant disparu à son insu, nous avions réclamé sous une forme explicite, notre première demande.'—*L'Empire Libéral*, p. 453.

[52] Some light is thrown on these obscure intrigues by Lord Acton in the essay already cited. He writes that in 1869 Bismarck learned from Florence that Napoleon was preparing a triple alliance against him, and sent a Prussian officer, Bernhardi, to Madrid. 'What he did in Spain has been committed to oblivion. Seven volumes of his diary have been published; the family assures me (Acton) that the Spanish portion will never appear.... The Austrian First Secretary said that he betrayed his secret one day at dinner. Somebody spoke indiscreetly on the subject, and Bernhardi aimed a kick at him under the table, which caught the shin of the Austrian instead. He was considered to have mismanaged the thing, and it was whispered that he had gone too far—I infer that he offered a heavy bribe to secure a majority in the Cortes. Fifty thousand pounds of Prussian bonds were sent to Spain at midsummer 1870.... I know the bankers through whose hands they passed.'—*Historical Essays*, p. 214.

[53] *L'Empire Libéral*, p. 475, footnote. Prince Napoleon told M. Ollivier that the emperor repeated this to him several times.

SIR SPENCER WALPOLE[54]

1839-1907

Sir Spencer Walpole's death in 1907 left a gap in the front rank of contemporary English Historians. To a volume of his collected essays, published in the following year, his daughter, Mrs. F. Holland, prefixed an admirable memoir of his private life and character, with affectionate reminiscences of her father's 'strenuous work, his universal kindliness, and his simplicity of soul.' On this personal subject, therefore, little or nothing remains to be said. I will only add that during several years of intimacy with him I had every reason to feel honoured by his friendship, to set high value on his literary judgments, and to appreciate his scrupulous intellectual integrity.

From that memoir I take the main incidents that belong to Sir Spencer Walpole's personal biography. After leaving Eton he entered the Civil Service at an early age, and worked for some time in the War Office, until he was transferred to a position of larger independence. He was subsequently appointed to the Governorship of the Isle of Man, where he remained for about twelve years; and afterwards he became Secretary to the Post Office until his retirement in 1899. In the discharge of the duties of these offices he was indefatigable; his services were fully approved by all with whom he came into public relations; yet throughout these years he found time for hard and unceasing literary work. In his earlier days he was a regular contributor to the periodical press, mainly on questions of finance; he wrote the lives of two Prime Ministers—his grandfather

Spencer Perceval and Lord John Russell—while from 1876 up to the year of his death he was engaged upon his *History of England*. Five volumes were published, at intervals, on the period between 1815 and 1857; and four subsequent volumes, under the title of the *History of Twenty-five Years*, brought the whole narrative up to 1880. But the proofs of the two final volumes had not been revised by his hand, when he was struck down by a sudden and fatal malady of the brain. Other recent publications were a small book on the Isle of Man, entitled the *Land of Home Rule; Studies in Biography*; and the collection of essays to which I have already referred.

It is upon this History of England from 1815 to 1880 that Sir Spencer Walpole's lasting reputation, as a man of letters, will rest. To have combined the writing of such a book with the duties of a very diligent official is no slight achievement; though one may observe that direct contact with administration, with political affairs, and with parliamentary leaders, is for the historian a distinct advantage. It is worth remarking that his family connections, which brought Walpole into the Civil Service, in no way biased his judgment on public questions. The grandson of a high Tory Prime Minister, the son of a Conservative Secretary of State, he was throughout his life an advanced Liberal, with an unswerving trust in popular government as essential to the welfare of his country and to the just and proper management of its affairs at home and abroad. His literary bent was evidently taken from hereditary association with politics, and from his own official training. As an historian he enters with intense interest into the strife of parties, the parliamentary vicissitudes, into the swing backward and forward of reform and reaction, into the exact causes and

incidents that affected the rise and the fall of ministries. In describing the state of manners at certain periods, and the changes wrought in the national life by the efforts of philosophic writers and philanthropists, his facts and figures are always ample and accurate; he pays close attention to financial and economical movements. As a politician he distrusted the spirited policy that involved England in the warlike adventures and hazards of an eventful and stirring time. The Afghan war of 1838-43 was, he said, the most ruinous and unnecessary war which the English had ever waged. The Crimean war he evidently regarded as a useless expenditure of blood and money, which might well have been avoided. On Lord Beaconsfield's Imperialism he passes severe censure: and the interference of that statesman in 1877 to protect the Turkish Sultan against Russia is very sharply condemned. He has even some doubt whether the purchase of the Suez Canal Shares was a wise stroke of policy. This book, in short, is a corroboration of the well-known remark that the history of our country has been mainly written by Whigs and Liberals, with the exception of a few authors who, like Hume and Alison, have hardly preserved an historic reputation. Nevertheless, whether we agree or not with the prudent and pacific views towards which Walpole manifestly leaned, his narrative, his statements of disputable cases, his distribution of the arguments for and against his conclusions, are invariably accurate, fair, and dispassionate. His anxiety to give full authority for facts and opinions is shown in an almost too copious supply of foot-notes. Lord Acton, who found the late Bishop Creighton too economical of these citations, compares his practice to Mr. Walpole's if several hundred references to

Hansard and the Annual Register had been struck out from the History of England.

In his preface to the first volume the author explains briefly the method that he has adopted. History, he says, may be written in two ways—you may relate each event in chronological order, or you may deal with each subject in a separate episode—and he tells us that he has chosen the latter way. This method enabled him to introduce sketches of the state of English society at different periods, by way of illustrating his narrative, which are certainly attractive and impressive. They are composed to a large degree upon the model set by Macaulay, by grouping together a number of characteristic particulars to bring out into strong relief the morals and manners of the time. Walpole's picture of the Eton boy in the early nineteenth century, who could write admirable Greek and Latin verse but knew not a word of any modern language—'who regarded the Gracchi as patriots but had only an obscure notion that Adam Smith was a dangerous character'—is almost a parody of Macaulay's style. Nevertheless these sketches are on the whole truthful and instructive, if we allow for some exuberance of colouring that may have been thought necessary for artistic effect.

But Walpole studied literature, as the measure of intellectual evolution, with the same interest that he devoted to economical and administrative developments. His aim was to show how all kinds of mental and material activity acted and reacted upon each other, how the feelings and aspirations of the nation were reflected in philosophy and in poetry, and how literary genius could stir the imagination of the people. He observes that while English literature

had declined towards the close of the eighteenth century, it rose again rapidly with the opening of the nineteenth century. For a short time, indeed, the furious outbreak of the French Revolution had scared men of letters into recoil from the optimistic speculations of the preceding age—they abandoned the worship of Liberty. But the storm blew over; and a general revival of literary animation signalised the end of the long war-time, with a magnificent efflorescence of poetry. Walpole records, as notable signs of this intellectual expansion, the appearance of women in the field of literature, the immediate success of the two famous reviews, the *Edinburgh* and the *Quarterly*, and the rapid growth of journalism. The whole subject of mental progress has, indeed, a peculiar charm for him. He insists that 'the history of human thought is the most comprehensive and the most difficult subject which can occupy the student's attention, far more interesting and important than the progress of society.' He would probably have agreed with Coleridge that knowledge of current speculative opinions is the surest ground for political prophecy; and he delights in tracing back to distant sources the religious movements of the nineteenth century. He declares that the heroic measures introduced by legislation within our own recollections are the links of a continuous chain extending from a prehistoric past to an invisible future. We have here a writer who in one chapter handles complicated statistics and economical calculations with obvious relish, and turns from them with equal pleasure to abstruse disquisitions on the filiation of ideas and the march of mind.

There are at least two chapters in the History that exemplify the attention given by Walpole to ecclesiastical controversies, and to the significance of

the antagonism between the New Learning and dogmatic orthodoxy. In his fourth volume the story of the Oxford Tractarians is related at some length, and he remarks on the singular coincidence, that almost simultaneously with the secession of the English High Churchmen the Free Church was established by disrupture from the Established Church in Scotland. He affirms that both these schisms, so different in motive and direction, had their origin in events dating from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The disintegrating forces of geology, astronomy, and scientific research generally upon the received tradition are examined; the beginning of modern Church reform is noted; and in a chapter of the final volume of the *History of Twenty-five Years* it is maintained that the great question before the religious world in the middle of the nineteenth century was the possibility of resisting the inroads of science. He describes the vigour with which the polemical campaign was conducted on both sides; how the orthodox position was assailed by writers of the *Essays and Reviews*, by the criticism of Bishop Colenso, by Broad Churchmen and the champions of free thought; how it was defended by prosecutions in the ecclesiastical courts and in appeals to the Privy Council from both parties. It was certainly a remarkable epoch in the history of opinions, when the country was agitated by the ardent zeal of disputants over questions of ritual and dogma that now seem to have fallen into cool neglect; and Walpole gives, as usual, a careful array of the particular cases, with the points in debate, and the characteristics of the prominent leaders in each party. To estimate the position of the clergy as a body, and to show, as Walpole undertakes to do, that in the middle of the nineteenth century they were

losing caste as a class, and that between the middle and end of that century they had fallen in social status, was a much more difficult and delicate problem. All generalisations upon the condition of society in times that have passed away, however recently, are of doubtful value, because the evidence of documents must always be incomplete, and even personal recollections are partial and become indistinct; they are all seen in a fading and uncertain light. Moreover the chronicler of disputations over ritual and articles, and of matters concerning churches and the clergy, may be said to move over the surface of the spiritual waters; and Walpole draws nearer to the deeper undercurrents when he appeals to the higher literature for signs of alternating tendencies of religious thought in that generation; though the famous stanzas from Tennyson's 'In Memoriam,' which he quotes at the end of his chapter, represent rather the poetic than the philosophic conclusions of thinkers in the nineteenth century.

But Walpole was quite aware of the difficulties that beset any writer who endeavours to relate the history of a very recent period, especially of that part to which his own lifetime belongs, and to pass judgments on the conduct or opinions of statesmen and writers who may be still living, or have only lately departed. Yet, as Lord Acton has said, the secrets of our own time cannot be learnt from books, but from men; and Walpole's social relations, his personal popularity, his familiarity with official business, and his literary culture, provided him with valuable opportunities for composing his last four volumes from direct impressions of his subject, for preserving the right atmosphere. His studies in biography show an aptitude for personal delineation;

and in one of his earlier volumes there is a full-length portrait of Sir Robert Peel, executed with much skill and comprehension. Therein lay the artistic quality of his work; he aimed at the presentation of individual character and action; he laid stress on the influence of remarkable men on their country's fortunes; for true historical art is concerned with bringing prominent figures into formal relief, and with arranging a mass of disorderly facts under some scheme that produces a definite impression. Otherwise Walpole's style was clear, level, and straightforward; with no pretence to be ornamental. Perhaps the best example of his talent for well-ordered and compact narrative is found in two chapters of the fifth volume of the History, which contain an excellent summary of the rise and expansion of British dominion in India during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, with a very correct appreciation of the causes and circumstances to which that memorable episode in the annals of the British Empire is due.

Walpole lived just long enough to bring his historical work, which occupied him for about thirty years, to the end which he had assigned to it. In traversing such an extensive and varied field of arduous labour some errors and shortcomings were inevitable, for the history of England in the nineteenth century is the history of the British Empire at its climacteric, of moral and material changes and developments more numerous and perhaps more important than in any former century. Nor did he limit his survey to the particular period that he had chosen; for his theory, as he has stated it, of the function of history, was that it shall not merely catalogue events but shall go back to an analysis of their causes, and of the general progress of the human family. He believed, with Lord

Acton, that the recent past contained the key to the present time. It has been said that Walpole undertook to do for the nineteenth century what Lecky did for the eighteenth century: and we may agree that both historians have filled up, with distinguished merit and ability, large vacant spaces in the history of our country. Perhaps Lecky had more of the philosophic mind, while the distance of time that lay between that writer and his period enabled him to see men and things in their true proportion, and to judge of events by their outcome. Walpole, on the other hand, wrote under the disadvantages as well as the advantages of close proximity to the scenes which he described; and the conclusion of his history marks the fall of the curtain on a drama of which the final acts are still to be played out.

FOOTNOTES:

[54] *Proceedings of the British Academy*, vol. iii.

REMARKS ON THE READING OF HISTORY[55]

Since I have accepted, at the request of your Warden, the honour of delivering an inaugural address on this occasion, it has appeared to me appropriate to choose, for such an audience, some literary subject. And I propose, with some diffidence, to offer a few observations on the reading of history, because in

these latter days, when education has come in upon us like a flood, rising higher and spreading wider every year among our people, no part of literature is more sedulously studied than the field of history. On the other hand, this field is being very rapidly enlarged. It has been said that the output of histories during the nineteenth century has exceeded in bulk and volume the production of all previous centuries. And in all the countries now standing in the forefront of civilisation, the chief product of their serious literature is at this time historical and biographical—for I take authentic biography to be a kind of handmaid of history. It has been reported that during the ten years ending 1907 there were published in England 5498 books under the head of history, and 1059 biographies. Moreover, of those who are not actually writing history, an important number are occupied in criticising the historians.

Now the first observation that I submit to you is that the production of all history has been almost entirely the work of Europeans, among whom I reckon the American writers, as belonging by language and culture to Europe. So far as the African continent has any trustworthy history, it is in some European language. In Asia there have been annalists, chroniclers, and genealogists, mostly Mohammedan, who narrate the wars and exploits of great conquerors, the succession of kings, and the rise and fall of dynasties. And I believe that in China official record of public events and transactions has been kept up from very early ages. But if we measure these Asiatic narratives by the standard of literary merit and the demand for authentication of facts, I fear that they will be found wanting; though they may be relied upon to give the general course of important events, and an outline of the result of

battles and the upsetting of thrones.

When these Asiatic chroniclers wrote of the times in and near which they were living, they were fairly trustworthy. But whenever they attempted to write of times long past and of countries unknown to them personally, their narratives became for the most part fabulous and romantic, confused and improbable, with some grains of truth here and there. Our best information regarding the earlier ages of Asia is derived, I think, from Greek and Latin literature, and latterly from the researches of quite modern scholars and archæologists. So that it may be affirmed that authentic history began in Europe, and that to Europe it has ever since been practically confined. At this day the history of all parts of the world is being written by Europeans. The result has been that for the last 2500 years historical material, collected from and relating to all parts of the world, has been accumulating in Europe.

Such masses of records and monuments necessarily require methodical treatment by men of trained intelligence and of untiring industry, learned, and accurate. Their systematic labours, their acute and intelligent criticism, have created what is now usually termed the Science of History, which abstracts general conclusions from the mass of particulars. And so, I think, we may agree with Renan, who has declared that to the nineteenth century may be accorded the title of the Age of Historians, and that this has been the special distinction of that century's literature.

Now I believe that the question, whether history is an art or a science, is not yet universally settled. But whatever may be the case in these modern days, I

submit that in earlier times, and certainly when history began to be written, it was mainly an art. Indeed, it could hardly have been otherwise. In all ages and countries, from the time when men first attained to some stage of elementary culture, they have been curious about the past, they have enjoyed hearing of the deeds and fame of their ancestors, of far-off things and battles long ago. But the primitive chronicler had very slight material for his stories of bygone times—he had few, if any, documents—he was himself creating the documentary evidence for those who came after him; he could only compile his narratives from tradition, legends, anecdotes of heroic ancestors, from information picked up by travel to famous places, and so on. Yet from sources of this kind he composed tales of inestimable value as representing the ideas, habits, and social condition of preceding generations that were very like his own. Herodotus, who is our best example of the class, reconstructs, revives, and relates conversations that neither he nor his informants could have actually heard; but he does this in order to give a dramatic version of great events. In the opening sentence of his first book he says that he has written in order that the actions of men may not be effaced by time, nor great and wondrous deeds be deprived of renown. And one may notice the same style and method in the historical books of the Old Testament. In both these ancient histories the narratives represent life, action, speech, situations.

It is futile, I may suggest, to subject work of this sort to critical analysis by attempting to sift out what is probably true from what is certainly false. You only break up the picture, you destroy the artistic effect, which is at least a true reflection of real life. Moreover, it is dangerous for learned men sitting in

libraries to regard as incredible facts stated by these old writers. The legend of Romulus and Remus having been suckled by a wolf has been dismissed as a childish fable. Yet it is certain that this very thing has happened more than once in the forests of India within the memory of living men. You cannot be particular about details, you must take the story as a whole.

From this standpoint we may agree, I think, that in illiterate times, and, indeed, throughout the middle ages of Europe, history-writing was practised as an art. The unlearned chronicler wrote in no fear of critics or sceptics; he drew striking scenes and portraits; he described warlike exploits; he related characteristic sayings and dialogues which completely satisfied his audience or his readers. The society in which he lived was not far different, in morals and manners, from that which he portrayed, so that he can have committed very few anachronisms or incongruities; and in sentiments and character-drawing he could not go far astray. He produced, at any rate, vivid impressions of reality, just as Shakespeare's historical plays have stamped upon the English mind the figures of Hotspur or Richard III., which have been thus set up in permanent type for all subsequent ages. At any rate portraits of this kind have not been modernised to suit the taste of a later age, as has been done with King Arthur in Tennyson's 'Idylls of the King.' And when work of this sort has been finely executed, the question whether the details are untrustworthy or even fictitious is immaterial, particularly in cases where the precise facts can never be recovered. We do not know exactly how the battle of Marathon, or, indeed, the battle of Hastings, was fought, but we have in the chronicles something of great value—a

true outline of the general situation, and some stirring narratives of the clash and wrestling of armed men, compiled either at first hand from the recollections of those who were actually on the field, or else taken at second hand from others who made notes of what had been told them by those present at the battles. This, then, is what I meant when I said that in early times history was an art. Its method was picturesque.

Now my next observation is that, although the science of history has since been invented, we have, among quite modern English writers, men of singular genius, who have to some extent followed the example, adopted the manner, of the ancient annalist. Like him, they are artists, their aim has been to depict famous men, to reproduce striking incidents and scenes dramatically. Their technical methods, so to speak, are entirely different from those of the old chronicler, who sketched with a free hand, and trusted largely to his inspirations, to his own experience of what was likely to have been said or done, or to popular tradition, which is always animated and distinct. The modern historian, of what I may call the school of impressionists, has no such experience, he knows nothing personally of violent scenes or fierce deeds; he composes his picture of things that happened long ago from a mass of papers, books, memoirs, that have come down to us. Yet although style and substance are quite different, the chief aim, the design, of the ancient and modern artist in history is the same. They both strive to set before their reader a vision of certain scenes and figures at moments of energetic action—not only to tell him a story, but to make him see it. Let me give an example. Every one here may remember the story in the Old Testament (2nd Book of Kings) of Jehu

driving furiously into Jezreel, how on his way he smote Ahaziah, king of Judah, with an arrow, and how Jezebel, the Phœnician Queen, was hurled down out of her palace window to be devoured by dogs in the street. And some of you may have read in Froude's *History of the Reign of Queen Elizabeth* his description of the murder of David Rizzio by the fierce Scotch nobles, how he was killed clinging to Queen Mary's knees in her chamber in Holyrood Palace. Now the manner, the artistic presentation of ferocious action, are in both cases alike; we have the words spoken and the deeds done; we can look on at the bloody tragedy; we have a dramatic version of the story. The ancient writer of the Old Testament probably did his work naturally, instinctively; he tells the story as he received it by word of mouth, briefly—laying stress only on the things that cut into the imagination of an eye-witness, and remain in the memory of those to whom they were related. He troubles us with no moral reflections, but goes on quietly to the next chapter of incidents. The modern historian has composed his picture from details collected by study of documents; he puts in adjectives as a painter lays on colour; yet the effect, the impression, is of the same quality: it is artistic.

Now the principal English historians of the modern school, who revived what one may call the dramatic presentation of history, I take to be Macaulay, Froude, and Carlyle. They all worked upon genuine material, upon authentic records of the period which they were writing about. Lord Acton mentions that Froude spoke of having consulted 100,000 papers in manuscript, at home and abroad, for one of his histories. Macaulay was industrious and indefatigable. Yet Ranke, the great German historian, said of Macaulay that he could hardly be called a

historian at all, judged by the strict tests of German criticism. And Freeman, the English historian, brought violent charges against Froude of deliberately twisting his facts and misquoting his authorities; though I believe that Freeman's bitter jealousies led him into grave exaggerations. Then take Carlyle. His Cromwell is a fine portrait by an eminent literary artist. But is it a genuine delineation of the man himself, of his motives, of the working of his mind in speech and action? Later investigation, minute scrutiny of old and new material, suggest doubts, different interpretations of conduct and character. Take, again, his description of the battle of Dunbar, Cromwell's great victory. Carlyle explains to us the nature of the ground, the movements of the troops, the tactics, the points of attack, with admirable force and clearness—it is a marvellous specimen of literary execution. Yet recent and very careful examination of the locality, and a comparison of the evidence of eye-witnesses, have proved beyond doubt that Carlyle had not studied the ground, had made some important errors. He was, in fact, giving a dramatic representation of the battle, which, if it had come down to us from some mediæval annalist, would have been universally accepted as genuine. In short, these three artists have all suffered damage under scientific treatment.

Now I am not here to disparage Macaulay, Froude, or Carlyle. They were all, in my opinion, authors of rare genius, whose places in the forefront of the literature of the nineteenth century are permanently secure. Yet I fear that the tendency of the twentieth century is unfavourable to the artistic historian. It seems to me probable, much to my personal regret, that the scientific writing of history, based upon exhaustive research, accumulation and minute sifting of all

available details, relentless verification of every statement, will gradually discourage and supersede the art of picturesque composition. In the first place the spirit of doubt and distrust is abroad, every statement is scrutinised and tested. The imaginative historian cannot lay on his colours, or fill up his canvas, by effective and lively touches without finding his work placed under the microscope of erudite analysts, some of whom, like Iago, are nothing if not critical, are not only exact but very exacting. In these days a writer who endeavours to illuminate some scene of ages past, to show us, as by a magic lantern, the moving figures brought out in relief against the surrounding darkness, is liable to be set down as an illusionist, possibly even as a charlatan or conjurer. Yet one feels the charm of the splendid vision, though it may fade into the light of common day when it falls under relentless scrutiny, and one is haunted by the doubt whether the scientific historian, with all his conscientious accuracy, is after all much nearer the reality than the literary artist. For it is seriously questionable whether the precise truth about bygone events and men long dead can ever actually be discovered, whether, by piecing together what has come down to us in documents, we can resuscitate from the dust-heap of records the state of society many centuries ago. And in regard to historical portrait painting Lord Acton has warned intending historians to seek no unity of character—to remember that allowance must always be made for human inconsistencies; that a man is never all of one piece. But cautious conclusions, nice weighing of evidence, do not satisfy the ordinary reader. The vivid impressions that are stamped on his mind by the power of style are what he mostly requires and retains; and these we are all

reluctant to lose. We must concede to the writer, as to the painter, some indulgence of his imaginative faculty. Otherwise we must leave the battle scenes and the national portrait gallery to the poets and romancers of genius—to Shakespeare and Walter Scott, whose art had nothing to gain from accuracy, who have only to give us the types, the right colouring and strong outline of life and character in days bygone.

However, I think we shall be compelled to accept the change from the artistic to the scientific school of historians, though we may regret it as unavoidable. It is the vast enlargement of the field of historical study, the strong critical searchlight that is turned on all the dark corners and outlying tracts of this field, that is irresistibly affecting the work of writers, enforcing the need of caution, of scrutinising every point, of weighing evidence in the finest scales, of assaying its precise value. The contemporary writer has to deal with the huge accumulation of material to which I have already referred; he must ransack archives, hunt through records piled up, public and private, must decipher ancient manuscript, must follow the labours of the wandering collector of inscriptions and the excavator of old tombs. He has to make extracts from correspondence, diaries, and notes of travel which are coming for the first time to the light; he must keep abreast of foreign literature and criticism. The mass and multiplicity of documentary evidence now at his disposal, most of which may not have been available to his predecessors, is enormous. Some twelve years ago Lord Acton wrote: 'The honest student has to hew his way through multitudinous transactions, periodicals and official publications, where it is difficult to sweep the horizon or to keep abreast. The result has

been that the classics of historical literature are found inadequate, are being re-written, and the student has to be warned that they have been superseded by later discoveries.'

What has been the effect of this altered situation upon the writer of history at the present time? On such an extensive field of operations, which has to be cultivated so intensely, he finds himself compelled to contract the scope of his operations; he can only take up very narrow ground. So in many instances he limits himself to a period, or even to a single reign, to a particular class of historical personage, or to some special department of human activity. He looks about for a plot that he can work thoroughly; he concentrates his attention upon some line or aspect of a subject in which he may hope that he has not been anticipated by others. Lord Acton has laid down that 'every student ought to know that mastery is acquired by acknowledged limitation'—he must peg out his small holding and keep within its bounds. Histories are now written by many and various hands—as in the case of the Cambridge Modern History, which already counts numerous volumes—and so the general area is divided and subdivided among experts, each of whom dips deeply into his particular allotment, and takes heavy crops off his ground. Yet the productiveness of the field at large seems still inexhaustible, for there is always some new theory to be established, some fresh vein of facts to be opened, some corrections or additions to be made. Moreover, the experts, while they toil at their own special work, while they attack a difficult problem from different sides, must nevertheless co-operate with each other. Sir William Ramsay, a noted archæologist, tells us that for a new study of history there is needed a group of scholars working in

unison; that the solitary historian is doomed to failure. He adds that the history of the Roman empire has still to be re-written. The late Lord Acton, when as Professor of Modern History at Cambridge he drew out his plan for a modern history that would satisfy the scientific demand for completeness and exactitude, proposed to distribute the work among more than a hundred writers. He observed that the entire bulk of new matter which the last forty years have supplied amounts to many thousand volumes. When history becomes the product of many hands and various minds the artistic element is likely to disappear.

One obvious result of this state of things is that we hear no more of the old-fashioned histories embracing vast subjects, the work of a single author —of histories of the world, or a history of Europe like Alison's in thirty volumes. Indeed it is not long since Buckle found his *History of European Civilisation* unmanageable; he died before he could finish it. At the present time historical subjects are divided and subdivided by classes, periods, or even single events. Art, literature, philosophy, war, diplomacy, receive separate treatment. We have colonial histories in numerous thick volumes; though no English colony has a long past. We have histories of the queens who have reigned in their own right, like Queen Elizabeth, and of Queens Consort: we have even a book on the bachelor kings of England, written by a lady who proves undeniably that these unlucky bachelors—there were only three of them—all came to a bad or sad end. As to military historians, Kinglake's *History of the Crimean War* takes up, I think, some eight volumes. The whole course of the recent Boer War has been related in five substantial volumes. Neither of these wars lasted more than two

years, yet both histories are many times larger than Schiller's History of the Thirty Years' War in Germany. The only edition of Schiller's work that I have found in the library of this University is in four small volumes.

Now, the drawback to the composition of histories on this ample and elaborate scale is obviously this—that the ordinary man or woman can hardly be expected to read them, or at most to read more than two or three of them. So there has sprung up a natural demand for something lighter and shorter; the amplification has produced a supply of abbreviation. The massive volumes, the heaps of material, are taken in hand by very capable writers with a clear eye for the main points, for striking incidents and personalities. The big books are sliced up into convenient portions, and served up in attractive form and manageable quantities. The work is often done with admirable skill and judgment. You thus obtain a bird's-eye view of the past; you have the loftier prominences and bold outlines of the historic landscape.

In these serials, which are deservedly popular, you can read short biographies, for example, of English Men of Letters, of English Men of Action, of famous Scotsmen, Rulers of India, Heroes of the Nation. You have also a story of all the nations in series, and thus you can limit your mental survey to separate periods, events, countries, and figures. You are carried swiftly and adroitly over the dry interspaces which lie between startling incidents or between supremely interesting epochs.

Now I have no doubt that these series, which contain much sound information very skilfully condensed,

have been of real service in the propagation of historical knowledge. On the other hand, we have to consider that this kind of reading is disconnected in style and subject. The reader can make a long jump from one period to another, or from the statesman of one century to another who flourished in a very different country and age. And the handling of these diverse subjects is not uniform; the points of view or lines of thought are various, and may be contradictory. It may be expedient to warn those who use these excellent summaries against the habit of neglecting the great English classics for short biographies or compendious sketches of periods and personages, as if one could learn enough of Edmund Burke, or Milton, or Oliver Cromwell, or master the events of some important period, from a well-written serial in some two hundred pages.

The demand for these historical handbooks has evidently been created by the spread of general education, which stimulates the laudable desire to learn something about subjects of which it is hardly respectable, in these days, to be ignorant. Such knowledge is very useful to those who have no leisure for more; and it is far superior to mere desultory reading, to the habit of picking out amusing bits here and there. Yet I hope it is unnecessary to impress on earnest students of history that they must go further; must push up as near as possible to the fountain heads of the rivers of knowledge; must make acquaintance with the masterpieces of literature—that their reading must be continuous and consecutive.

Now those among you who are studying for University honours have no need for any advice from me; they are well aware that the wide expansion, in

these days, of the field of history has raised the standard of examinations, and that they must be prepared for questions testing a candidate's critical acumen, the breadth and depth of his reading, much more closely than was required formerly. But there must also be many here present who have no examinations in front of them, who have no ardent inclination or even leisure for abstruse labours. And I presume that all of you read history for a clear understanding of past ages, of the acts and thoughts of the great men who illustrate those times. You all desire to comprehend the sequence and significance of events. You feel the intellectual pleasure of appreciating rightly the character and motive of the men and women who stand in the foreground of our country's annals, and also of those who are famous in other countries, to know how and why they rose or fell, whether they deserved the success that they won, or won it without deserving it. Moreover, for us English folk, who live at the centre of an empire containing races and communities in various stages of political development, the lessons of history have a special value. They teach us to judge leniently of acts and opinions that appear to us irrational and even iniquitous as we see them in other backward countries at the present day. We learn that manners and morals may not be unchangeable in a nation; that fallacies and prejudices are not ineradicable; that even cruelty, tyranny, reckless bloodshed, are not incurable vices. For history tells us that some of the nations now foremost in the ranks of civilisation have passed through the stages of society in which such things are possible. And thus we can study the circumstances and conditions of political existence which have retarded the upward progress of certain nations and accelerated the advance of others. Such

inquiries belong to the philosophy of history. When we read, for example, the history of England in the fifteenth or sixteenth century, we find that our ancestors, born and bred in this same island, kindly men in private life and sincerely religious, intellectually not our inferiors, yet, when they took sides in politics or Church questions, did things which appear to us utterly cruel, against reason, justice, and humanity. To remember this helps us to realise the difficulty of passing fair judgment not only on the conduct of our forefathers, but upon the actions and character of other peoples and governments that are doing very similar things at the present time in other parts of the world. We shall find it an arduous task to assign motives, to weigh considerations, to acquit or condemn. So that, to the politician of to-day, history ought to be an invaluable guide and monitor for taking an impartial measure of the difficulties of government in troubled or perilous circumstances. Yet one sometimes wishes that the record of the fierce and bitter struggles of former days had been forgotten, for it still breeds rancour and resentment among the descendants of the people that fought for lost causes, and suffered the penalty of defeat. The remembrance keeps alive grievances, and the ancient tale of wrongs that have long been remedied survives to perpetuate national antipathies. Moreover, in some of the most celebrated cases known to our own annals, we are never sure that we have the whole case before us, for the historians give doubtful help, since the best authorities often take opposite views, as, for instance, on the question whether Mary Queen of Scots was her husband's murderess, or a much injured and calumniated lady. The admitted facts are valued differently, interpreted variously, and made to support contradictory

conclusions. The latest historian of Rome, Signor Ferrero, sums up a long and elaborate dissertation on the acts and character of Julius Cæsar by a judgment which differs emphatically from the views of all preceding historians. On some of these disputed questions we may make up our minds after studying the evidence; but many historical problems are in truth insoluble; the evidence is imperfect and untrustworthy.

These, then, are some of the warnings we may take from history. We must not be hasty about condemning misdeeds of past generations, whether of the rulers or their people. The times were hard, so were the men; they were encompassed by dangers, while we who criticise them live in ease and safety. And when we hear at the present day of misrule and strife and bloodshed among other races—in Asia, for example—we may remember our own story, and we may trust that they also will work their way upward to peace and concord.

But the truth is that, as our knowledge of the past is very imperfect, so also our predictions of the future are very fallible. The best observers can see only a very short way ahead. History shows us how frequently the course of affairs has taken quite unexpected turns, for good or for ill, forward or backward. On the whole, we may believe that the main direction is certainly toward the gradual betterment of the world at large, though the theory of progress is quite modern, for the ancients looked behind them for the Golden Age. Nowadays we trumpet the glory of our British empire; yet at intervals our confidence in its fortunes is shaken by some sharp panic; the decline and fall of England is predicted. It is, indeed, perilous to be overconfident,

to live in a fool's paradise, for some of us have seen in our lifetime the sudden catastrophes that have overtaken great empires. But history may comfort us when we read how often the downfall of England has been predicted, how we have been on the brink of shooting down Niagara, as Carlyle declared, or threatened with imminent invasion, with total loss of commerce and colonies, with defeat abroad and bankruptcy at home. And yet our country is still fairly prosperous and free, and as for invasions, we may still trust that, as Coleridge has written:

> 'Ocean 'mid the uproar wild
> Speaks safety to his island child.'

But on the whole history gives political prophets little encouragement—we cannot foretell the future from the past. Nevertheless, there is some truth in the saying that history is like an old almanac, if we may take this to mean that, although the same events never happen again in the same way, yet in the great movements of the tide of the world's affairs a sort of periodical recurrence, an ebb and flow, may be noticed. For example, we know that from the fifteenth until near the end of the seventeenth century the Asiatic armies of the Turkish Sultans were invading and conquering South-Eastern Europe —they reached the gates of Vienna. Then followed a swing backward of the pendulum, and from the eighteenth to the end of the nineteenth century the European Powers, Russia and England, were each extending a great dominion over Asia. Again, up to a few years ago, the Turkish empire was a barbarous despotism, and we all believed that it must break up and be extinguished. Yet it has now revived in a new form, which may possibly restore its power and prosperity. To search for and distinguish the

operating causes, the powers that underlie these incalculable changes, is a task for the student of history.

There must be many of you for whom these high problems have a strong attraction, who enjoy rapid flights over the broad surface of history, wide outlooks over the past and future. Now, I admit that bold generalisations are hazardous, unless founded upon very solid knowledge; but in historical as well as in physical science they are needed to sum up results, to bring facts into focus. They enable us, so the late Lord Acton has said, to fasten on abiding issues, to distinguish the temporary from the transient.

The late Lord Acton, who, as you may remember, was Professor of Modern History at Cambridge, is reckoned by general consent to have surpassed all his contemporaries, at least in England, by his encyclopædic, accurate, and profound knowledge of history. His reading was vast, his learning prodigious, his industry never slackened. Yet the literary production of his life is contained in three volumes of essays, lectures, and articles; he has left us no complete book. Indeed, his writing is so disproportionate to his reading that one is tempted to liken his luminous intellect to a fire on which too much fuel had been heaped; the ardent mind glowed and shot up its streaks of radiance through the weight of erudition that overlaid it. Among Lord Acton's published papers is a 'Note of Advice to Persons about to Write History,' of which the first word is *Don't*. But he then proceeds to jot down some hints and maxims, brief and caustic, for the benefit of those who nevertheless persist in writing; and to some of these I commend the attention of readers,

since upon readers as well as upon writers lies the duty of forming careful opinions, of judging impartially, in working out their conclusions upon the events and personages of past times. For Lord Acton was an indefatigable researcher after truth; his standard of public morality was austere, lofty, and uncompromising. I myself venture to think that he was too rigid; he admitted no excuse for breaches of the moral law on the pretext, however urgent, of political necessity; he refused to allow extenuation of violence or bloodshed even in times of great emergency. 'The inflexible integrity of the moral code,' he said, 'is to me the secret of the authority, the dignity, the utility of history.' Now this is hard doctrine for most of us to follow when we set ourselves, as students, to condemn or acquit, to blame or to praise the prominent actors in the drama of our national history. On that stage, as we all know, the real tragedies that stand on record were sanguinary enough, and the parts occasionally played in them by our ancestors were of a sort that now appear most unnatural and indefensible to their descendants. Yet most of us are disposed to regard with some leniency even the crimes of a violent and lawless age.

But however this may be, some of Lord Acton's counsels are undoubtedly valuable as warnings or for guidance, either as lamps to show the right road, or as lighthouses to keep us from going wrong. His inaugural lecture at Cambridge on the Study of History is full of precepts, maxims, warnings, injunctions, all of which may be pondered by students with advantage. We are enjoined, for example, to beware of permitting our historic judgment to be warped by influences, whether of Country, Class, Church, College, or Party; and it is

said, by way of driving home the warning, that the most respectable of these influences is the most dangerous. But very few writers, and, I suspect, not many readers, can hold their mental balance quite steadily, can weigh testimony on either side of a question quite dispassionately, when our Church, or our Country, perhaps even our University, is concerned. Nor is it easy for students to find historians who are entirely unmoved by bias of these kinds, who have neither a theory to prove, nor a cause to support, nor a hero to be exalted, nor a sinner to be whitewashed. Indeed, the wicked men of history have always found some ingenious advocate to defend them by attempting to justify bad acts on the ground of excellent motives and intentions, of the exigencies of the situation, or other excuses and explanations. It is certain that some of the worst crimes on record, assassinations and savage persecutions, have been defended on pretexts of this kind, by allegations of patriotism or devotion to a faith. Not many weeks have passed since a dastardly murder was perpetrated in London, close to this spot, by a crazy wretch who declared himself a patriot.

So we may profitably lay to mind Lord Acton's stern denunciation, not only of criminals in high places, but of all, high or low, who pretend that foul deeds may be justified by asserting pure motives. Let me quote again from Lord Acton. He has said: 'Of killing, from private motives or from public, *eadem est ratio*, there is no difference. Morally, the worst is the last; the fanatic assassin, the cruel inquisitor, are the worst of all; they are more, not less, infamous, because they use religion or political expediency as a cloak for their crimes.' He affirms elsewhere that crimes by constitutional authorities—by Popes and Kings—are more indefensible than those committed

by private malefactors. And he holds that the theorist is more guilty than the actual assassin; that the worst use of theory is to make men insensible to fact, to the real complexion and true quality of conduct. He would probably have insisted that journalists and others who instigate political crimes are at least quite as bad as the actual criminal. Herein, at any rate, we may thoroughly agree with him, though the question whether the intercourse of nations and their Governments can be strictly regulated by the same moral standard which rules among individuals, does raise difficult points for the conscientious student of history. We have to remember that no power exists to enforce international laws or police, so that every Government has to rely upon its own strength for the defence of its people and the preservation of its rights.

On the whole, I do not know any recent works that may be more profitable for advice and guidance in reading history than these three volumes of Lord Acton's. They contain the essence of his unceasing labours in collecting, comparing, and testing an immense quantity of historic material. They are particularly valuable for the flashes of insight into the deeper relations of events, for brief, sententious observations in which he sums up his judgments upon men and their doings. They are not to be taken lightly; they demand all your attention, for the style is compressed and packed with meaning; and the author seems to expect his readers to be prepared with more knowledge than, I think, most of us possess. His allusions take for granted so much learning that they occasionally puzzle the average man. For example, in one of his essays he makes a passing reference to 'those who in the year 1348 shared the worst crimes that Christian nations have

committed.' What these crimes were he does not say; and how many of us could answer the question off-hand? Certainly I could not. But the lectures and essays abound in far-ranging ideas, and show profound penetration into historic causes and consequences. Some of the essays, written in comparative youth, betray here and there a natural leaning towards the Church of Rome, in which he was born, and against Protestantism; yet his hatred of intolerance and despotism, spiritual or temporal, was sincere and intense. In politics he was a Liberal, yet he saw that Liberal institutions, representative government, are by no means a sure and speedy remedy for misrule in all times and countries, as in our day simple folk are apt to suppose. In writing of the condition of Europe during the earlier middle ages he observes: 'To bring order out of chaotic mire, to rear a new civilisation and blend hostile and unequal races into a nation, the thing wanted was not Liberty, but Force.'

Here is a bold and clear-sighted deduction from the lessons of history, which revolutionary politicians in Asia, where no nationalities have yet been formed, may well take to heart. Parliamentary institutions, as Lord Acton has well said, presuppose unity of a people.

Scattered through these volumes may be found, indeed, certain brief paragraphs which, as they contain the essence of much learning and deep thought, may well set us all thinking. In a remarkable essay on the historical relations of Church and State Lord Acton observes: 'The State is so closely linked with religion, that no nation that has changed its religion has ever survived in its old political form.' Here again is a striking generalisation

which a student might set himself to verify by careful examination of the facts.

And now I will make an end of my address by quoting one more remark of Lord Acton, in which he gives his definition of history taken as a whole. 'By universal history,' he says, 'I understand that which is distinct from the combined history of all countries, which is not a rope of sand, but a continuous development, and is not a burden on the memory, but an illumination of the soul. It moves in a succession to which the nations are subsidiary. Their story will be told, not for their own sake, but in subordination to a higher series, according to the time and the degree in which they contribute to the common fortunes of mankind.'

FOOTNOTES:

[55] Inaugural Address to the Students of King's College for Women, University of London, October 8, 1909.

RACE AND RELIGION[56]

I propose to offer for consideration some very general views upon the effects and interaction of the ideas of Race and Religion upon the political grouping of the population in various countries of Eastern Europe and of Asia, with the object of showing how they unite and divide mankind over a great portion of the earth. It will be understood, I

hope, that it is impossible in a brief discussion to go far or thoroughly over such a wide field. I can only try to indicate some salient points that may be worth attention.

If we look back upon the ancient world, as it was known to Greece and to Rome, and as it can be dimly surveyed through the records of classic antiquity, we find that before the Christian era the populations were divided and subdivided into races or tribes, with names signifying a common origin or descent; at any rate some kind of tribal association. The designation of their country was usually derived from the name of some dominant race, as Gallia from the Gauls or Judea from the Jews; indeed I might say, as France from the Franks or England from the Angles. Religious denominations of any large community were, I venture to suggest, unknown, at any rate in ancient Europe. The polytheism of these ages was too local and miscellaneous to weld together any considerable groups on the basis of a common worship or belief; for although three great religions then existed, Buddhism, Hinduism, and the faith of Zoroaster (still represented by the Parsees), these were confined to Central and Eastern Asia. And, moreover, these religions had not the missionary spirit; I mean that they made no vigorous open attempts to spread and gain proselytes, still less did they use force to convert great multitudes. But after the Christian era a change came over the face of the Western world. The Roman empire—that greatest monument of human power, as Dean Church has called it—began the fusion of races into one vast political society; its dominion extended continuously from Britain on the west to Asia Minor and the countries bordering on the Caspian Sea; it settled the law and language of Southern Europe. The

establishment of the Roman empire is a cardinal epoch of the world's political history. Then followed two events of immense political importance that changed the whole aspect and condition of the religious world—the rise and spread of two powerful missionary and militant religions. First came Christianity to overspread the lands which the empire had levelled politically. Islam followed in the seventh century, and the conflict between these two rival faiths, each claiming universal spiritual dominion, altered not only the spiritual but also the temporal order of things in Europe and Western Asia. In Asia the victorious creed of Mohammed imposed upon immense multitudes a religious denomination; they became Mussulmans. In Western Europe the dominion of the Roman empire had by this time fallen to pieces; it was torn asunder by barbarian invaders; but upon the ruins of that empire was built up the great Catholic Church of Rome, which gathered together all races of the West under the common denomination of Christianity. Beneath the canopies of these two great religions the primitive grouping of the people survived; throughout Europe there were no settled kingdoms or nations, but a jumble of races and tribes contending for land and power. Now we know that in Western Europe this strife and confusion of the Middle Ages at last ended in the formation, on a large scale, of separate nationalities, and perhaps we may take, roughly, the end of the fifteenth century as the period when the great territorial kingdoms were definitely marked out, and when the rulers were rounding off their possessions under designations that may be called national. In these countries the subdivisions according to race had now lost almost all political significance; but in the sixteenth century another

great disturbing element reappeared. The great wars of religion again made a fresh division of the people into two camps of Roman Catholics and Protestants. This ferment has gradually subsided, and at the present time all minor groups of the population in Western Europe have been absorbed under large national designations; the nations are marked off within clearly cut frontiers, and separated by the paramount distinction of languages. In Western Europe you do not now define a man by his original race or by his religion, you ask whose natural-born subject he is, in whose territory he lives, and you class him accordingly as French, English, Spanish or Italian.

Now it has been, I think, one result of this consolidation of the West into States and Nationalities, with religion mostly corresponding to the region, that the persistence in other parts of the world of the earlier ideas of race and religion, the primordial grouping of mankind, has been far too commonly overlooked and undervalued. My present object is to lay stress on the importance of realising and understanding them. And I may begin by throwing out the suggestion that this oversight, this neglect of ideas and facts that still have great strength and vitality, may be connected with the influence, in France and England, of a certain school of political philosophy that arose in the eighteenth century, in France. The Encyclopédistes, as they were called, because their leaders wrote the celebrated French Encyclopædia, treated in theory all notions of separate races, religions, and frontiers as so many barriers against the spread of a common civilisation, which was to unite all peoples on general principles of reason, scientific knowledge, and emancipation from local or national prejudices. As a theory this

might not have had much practical effect; but at the end of the eighteenth century came the French Revolution, when these philosophical notions took a very seriously practical shape; for the French Republican armies invaded the kingdoms of Western Europe with the war-cry of universal fraternity and equality. Revolutionary France ignored both race and religion. It proclaimed, De Tocqueville says, above and instead of all peculiar nationalities, an intellectual citizenship that was intended to include the people of every country to which it extended, superseding all distinctions of language, tradition, and national character. Under Napoleon this fierce impulse of democratic levelling was transformed into Imperialism: he aimed at restoring an Empire in the West. But this aroused equally fierce resistance, and when Napoleon had been beaten down, the national feeling emerged stronger than ever. The doctrines of the French Encyclopédistes were inherited by the English school of Utilitarians, led by Bentham and the two Mills; and John Stuart Mill in particular, declared that one of the chief obstacles to human improvement was the tendency to regard difference of race as indelible. In fact, all this school, which had considerable influence some forty years ago, treated religious and social distinctions as inconvenient and decaying barriers against rational progress, or as fictions invented by indolent thinkers to save themselves the trouble of investigating the true causes that modify human character.

There is undoubtedly a certain degree of truth underlying this view. In the settled nationalities of the West these distinctions of race and religion have a tendency to become unimportant and obsolete for political purposes, although a glance across the water to Ireland will remind us that they have by no means

disappeared. What I wish to lay stress upon is the very serious importance of race and religion, politically, in other parts of the world, and particularly in some Asiatic countries with which England is closely connected and concerned. For, in the first place, there has been a notable revival of the sentiment of race in Eastern Europe. And, secondly, the spread of European dominion over Asia may be regarded as one of the most prominent and powerful movements in the politics of the latter half of the nineteenth century; one which may become the dominant feature of politics in the twentieth century. It is this movement that is forcing upon our serious attention the immense practical importance of race and religion.

The plan which I shall attempt to follow in making a brief survey of my subject, is to begin with a glance at the political condition of Central Europe, and to travel rapidly Eastward. In the West, as I have said, we have compact and permanently established States with national governments. But as soon as we pass to Central Europe we find the Austro-Hungarian empire distracted and threatened by internal feuds, arising out of the contention for ascendency of two races, Germans and Slavonians, and also out of the demands of the various provinces and dependencies for political recognition of their separate identities, founded on claims to represent internal sections or subdivisions of the two chief races. The Slavonic populations in the north-west of the empire are parted asunder from those in the south-east by the Hungarians, who came in from the east, and are of a different stock, and who have succeeded in establishing the federated kingdom of Hungary. I will not trouble you with statistical or geographical details. For my present purpose it is enough to

mention that the subjects of Austria, apart from Hungary, are classed in eight separate sections, differentiated by separate languages, and that Poles, Bohemians, Germans, and Italians, are all and each claiming a kind of home rule within the empire, and show an increasing tendency to group themselves by distinctions of race. In Bohemia the population is nearly equally divided between Germans and Slavs, who speak different languages, have separate schools, and contend violently for political preponderance. In Moravia and Silesia, where the Slav element is stronger, the same conflict goes on. In Galicia the contest is between Poles and Ruthenians, between the Roman Catholic and the Greek churches. In Hungary proper the Magyars have political predominance, but the population of German descent and language is more numerous than the Magyars: in Transylvania, further eastward, the Magyars are politically overriding the Slav races; in Croatia to the southward a similar struggle is going on. Throughout every province of the Austro-Hungarian empire we see the same intermixture of races, religions, and languages—the more numerous and better united sections are striving for political ascendency: the weaker sections contend against them by demanding autonomy. And, as all these various antipathies and jealousies are represented in the Parliament of the empire, the peaceful consolidation of the empire into a large national State is interrupted by resistance under the watchword of separate nationalities. Religious differences between Roman Catholicism, Calvinism, and the Greek Church in the Eastern provinces, accentuate the incoherence. Each separate group takes for its symbol, the standard round which people rally, a language—German, Polish, Tcheque,

Ruthenian, and so on. They are all being energetically maintained and jealously preserved in speech and writing in the schools and the assemblies. Moreover, three different churches, at least, are rallying their adherents and driving in the wedge of religious dissension. All these groups go back to the early traditions and history of the races, they sharpen up old grievances, and oppose each other vigorously in the Imperial Chamber of Representatives. They are, in fact, endeavouring to construct an earlier formation of civil society, and to reverse the order of political amalgamation of small States into large ones which has been operating for centuries in Western Europe. In Western Europe the principle of nationalities has been a method not of disintegration, but of concentration. It has led within the last fifty years to the establishment of two States of first-class magnitude, Germany and Italy; and Louis Napoleon, who had proclaimed the idea of national unification, was ruined by his own policy, for the Germans destroyed his dynasty, and Italy gave him no help. But in Austro-Hungary, on the contrary, the movement is not toward centralisation—it is centrifugal and separatist; and if it continues to increase in force it may threaten with dissolution an ancient and powerful empire.

You will observe that since we entered, in our survey, the Austrian territories, we have found ourselves within the jurisdiction of an empire in the true sense of that word, which I take to mean the dominion of one superior sovereignty over many subordinate races, tribes, or petty States that obey its authority. I may be permitted to regard the German emperor as the military head of a constitutional federation, which is a different thing. Now I think it may be said that from Austria eastward across South-

Eastern Europe and Asia, from Vienna to Pekin, the general form of government is not national but imperial. Every government is holding together a number of different groups, all jealous of each other, all of whom would fall apart and probably fight among themselves, if they were not kept under by one ruler over them. It may be affirmed, broadly, that the structure of modern Europe, as represented by the massing of the populations into great homogeneous nations within fixed limits, has now been completely left behind in the West, and that from the shores of the Adriatic Sea right across Asia to the Pacific Ocean, the real subdivisions of the people, the bonds that unite and separate them into different groups, are denoted by Race and Religion, sometimes by one, sometimes by the other, occasionally by both.

Our first step over the boundaries of the Austro-Hungarian empire, proceeding south-east beyond the Danube and the Carpathian mountains, brings us into the various principalities and provinces that were once under the dominion of the Ottoman empire, though almost all of them are now independent of it. Nearly all of them lie in the region south of the Danube, which is usually known as the Balkan Peninsula. Here the complexities of race and religion are abundantly manifest, and these archaic divisions of political society surround us everywhere. This region has indeed been parcelled out, within our own time, into territories of diverse States, but this is quite a modern formation, and the idea of such political citizenship has been very recently introduced.

If, now, it is asked why, in this corner of South-Eastern Europe, this medley of internal distinctions,

which was the prevailing characteristic of the ancient world, has been so long preserved, the answer is that all this country, the Balkan Peninsula, was under the direct government of the Ottoman empire up to about seventy years ago, and that most of the provinces were only liberated from the Turkish yoke in the latter part of the nineteenth century. The effect of the long dominion of the Turks over this country had been to perpetuate the state of things which existed when they first conquered it. Their policy, the policy of all Asiatic empires, was not to consolidate, or to obliterate differences produced by race and religion, but to maintain them in order to rule more securely. And here I may quote from a book recently published under the title of *Turkey in Europe*, which is unique of its kind, for in no other work can we find so complete and particular a history of the Balkan lands, or so accurate a description of the grouping of the people, taken from personal knowledge and local investigation. The author, who calls himself Odysseus, reminds us that the Ottoman Sultans acquired these territories when they were in the confusion and dismemberment which followed the decay and fall of the Byzantine empire; and he explains that the Turks, who have been always inferior in number to the aggregate of their Christian subjects, could hardly have kept up their dominion if at any time the Christians had united against them. As the Christians were not converted, religious unification, which in Asia was the basis of Mohammedan power, was here impossible, so the Turks divided that they might rule. 'The Turks have thoroughly learned,' he says, 'and daily put into practice with admirable skill, the lesson of *divide et impera*, and hence they have always done, and still do, all in their power to

prevent the obliteration of racial, linguistic, and religious differences.' They have perpetuated and preserved, as if in a museum, the strange medley that was existing when these lands were first conquered by Turkish Sultans nearly five hundred years ago. Their idea of government has always been simply to take tribute and secure their paramount supremacy. The result has been that the confusion, intermixture, and rivalry of race and religion is far more intricate than even in the Austro-Hungarian empire, where the central government has tried to reconcile and amalgamate. In Turkey, Odysseus tells us, 'not only is there a medley of races, but the races inhabit, not different districts, but the same district. Of three villages within ten miles of one another, one will be Turkish, one Greek, one Bulgarian—or perhaps one Albanian, one Bulgarian, and one Servian, each with their own language, dress, and religion, and eight races and languages may be found in one large town.'

What has been the upshot and consequence of this Turkish system? It has been to make the Balkan Peninsula a battlefield, during the last four centuries, of two great militant creeds, Christianity and Islam, collecting the population into two religious camps; while inside these two main religious divisions there are manifold subdivisions of race. Men of the same creed are in different groups of race; nor are the race-groups always of the same creed, for one section may have become fanatic Mohammedans, while the rest have adhered to Christianity. The intermixture is the more complicated because one cannot attempt to distinguish a race by physical characteristics, by their personal appearance or features as marking descent from one stock. The practices of polygamy, slavery, of the purchase of women, and their capture

in the interminable wars, have produced incessant crossing of breeds. It is not often understood or remembered that in former times a tribe or band of foreign invaders, when they had to cross the sea or to make long expeditions, very rarely brought women with them. So when they settled on the conquered lands they must have intermarried, forcibly or otherwise, with the subject race. If they massacred the men, the women were part of their booty. Neither is the test of language a sure one, though it is the best we have, and is becoming more and more the criterion of race; for a kind of struggle for existence goes on among the languages, they spread or contract under various influences, mainly political. The folk may change their language as they may change their creed; and, what is more remarkable, they may even change their race. According to the book I have just quoted, the Ottoman Government classes all its subject population into religious communities. Whatever be a man's race or language, if he professes Islam, he is called a Mohammedan; if he is of the orthodox Greek Church at Constantinople, he is Greek or Rûmi, for Stambul was the capital of the Roman empire; or else he is Katholik, Armenian, or Jew, according to his creed, not according to his birthplace or his blood. So the official designations are religious, while the popular usage is various, sometimes following race, sometimes creed, and it is still constantly shifting, as I shall presently try to explain.

And here it may be interesting to mention a peculiarity of the growth and constitution of the Eastern or Greek Church, in contrast with the Western Church of Rome. The Roman Church has always claimed universality—it has ignored and attempted to trample down all political and national

divisions; it demands of all Roman Catholics, whoever they may be, submission to the supreme spiritual dictation of the Roman pontiff, and those who accept any other authority are outside the pale. From the beginning the Roman Catholic Church has made incessant war upon every kind of heresy or dissent, transforming the old rites and worships where they could not be exterminated. It proclaims independence of the State, it has no local centres or national branches. The Pope at Rome claims spiritual authority over all Roman Catholics everywhere. But the historical fact that the Eastern or Greek Church was always under the control of the Byzantine empire at Constantinople, has kept this Church much more closely allied to the temporal power; and the result has been that throughout its development it has remained closely connected with the State. So that wherever a fresh State has been formed, the Greek Church has become national, and the spiritual authority, adapting itself to political changes, has become a separate institution. The most signal example of this is to be seen in Russia, where the Greek Church, being cut off from Constantinople, had its own independent Patriarch up to the time of Peter the Great; and very lately, when Bulgaria became a State, it set up its own head of the Church, or Exarch. When Bosnia and Herzegovina were ruled by the Turkish Sultan, the chief of the Greek Church in that country was the Patriarch at Constantinople. Now that these provinces have passed under the administration of Austria, the ecclesiastical authority has also been transferred from the Patriarch to local Metropolitans. Each new State shows a tendency to establish what I may call spiritual Home Rule. We know that in Western Europe the establishment of National Churches came in by one great religious

upheaval that is called the Reformation. In Eastern Europe the movement has proceeded gradually, keeping pace with the rise and recognition of separate governments, and the result has been the multiplication of internal ecclesiastical divisions.

I have said that the Ottoman empire recognises only religious denominations in the classification of the people. Apparently this was the general usage in former times. A Greek meant a member of the orthodox Greek Church, who might or might not be an inhabitant of Greece, nor would he necessarily have spoken the Greek tongue. If a Christian changed his religion, as a matter of course he changed his name and his designation; he was placed in another group. But the pressure of political independence has been latterly bringing into prominence the idea of Race. Odysseus, from whose book I quote again, gives us the very curious fact that even race is not immutable, it changes like religion, with the political movement; it has become a question of political expediency. When a separate State has been organised, as in Bulgaria, or when a league for shaking off the Turkish yoke is being organised, as in Macedonia, the plan of the leaders is to induce the people to drop minor distinctions of origin and to unite for the purposes of political combination, under some larger national name, to call themselves Hellenes in Greece, Bulgarians in Bulgaria, and Macedonians in the Turkish province of Macedonia. Moreover, when a new State has been thus formed, like Greece, Servia, Bulgaria, on the principle of Race, the patriotic party begins to discover that many Greeks or Bulgarians are outside the territory, and they set up a claim to enlarge their boundaries in order to bring these people inside. So that the questions of races and churches are used to keep up

continual intrigues, dissensions, and a lively agitation throughout these countries. For since religion is always a powerful uniting force, there is a constant effort to bring the people to congregate under the Established Church of their new State, to renounce their obedience to any spiritual head outside its limits. We have, therefore, the curious spectacle of a frequent shifting of denominations of Race and Creed for the purpose of political consolidation. In fact we are witnessing in the Balkan Peninsula a struggle among the petty States to strengthen themselves by capturing each other's population.

I think I may have said enough to prove, briefly and superficially, the importance, in Central and South-Eastern Europe, of the ideas of Race and Religion, the necessity of understanding their strength and operation. So soon as we cross into Asia we find these ideas universally paramount. It will perhaps be remembered that Henry Maine pointed out long ago, in his book on Ancient Law, that during a large part of what we call modern history no such conception was entertained as that of territorial sovereignty, as indicated by such a title as the King of France. 'Sovereignty,' he said, 'was not associated with dominion over a portion or subdivision of the earth.' Now I do not believe that a territorial title is assumed at this moment by any of the great Asiatic sovereigns in Asia. Here in Europe we talk of the Sultan of Turkey, the Shah of Persia, or the Emperor of China; but these are not the styles or designations which are actually used by these potentates; they are each known, on their coins, and in their public proclamations, by a string of lofty titles, generally religious, like our 'Defender of the Faith,' which make no reference to their territories. Such were the

titles of the Moghul emperors of India, and I may here observe that the term Emperor of India, now borne by the English king, is entirely of British manufacture. The truth is that Asiatic kingdoms have no settled territorial boundaries, they are always changing, just as our Indian frontiers are constantly moving forward; and wherever in Asia there exists a demarcated line of frontier, it has been fixed by the intervention of European governments interested in maintaining order. In Mohammedan lands the basis of a ruler's authority, in theory at least, is religious, and all through Western Asia there is the closest connection between the State and the dominant creed of Islam; for a Mohammedan sovereign's authority is ecclesiastical, so to speak, as well as civil; he is bound, in the words of our Litany, not only to 'execute justice,' but to 'maintain truth'; and the theory of two separate jurisdictions, spiritual and temporal, is practically unknown, though of course in dealing with religious questions the ruler must be supported by the chief expounders of the law of Islam. To borrow a phrase from Hobbes, 'the religion of the Mohammedans is a part of their policy,' as it is also the fundamental bond of their whole society.

We have seen that in South-Eastern Europe there is an intricate intermixture of the distinctions of race and religion, with a tendency of race to win the mastery. This is because the people of those countries were conquered by Islam, but only partially converted, and the Turkish Sultans, as I have already said, encouraged discord among their Christian subjects. But in Western Asia the faith of Islam not only conquered but converted much more completely; it almost extirpated other faiths in Asia Minor and Persia, leaving in Asia Minor only a few obscure sects, like the Nestorians, in a region that

had been wholly Christian, and leaving in Persia only some scattered relics of the great Zoroastrian religion, still represented in two or three towns by those whom we call Parsees. In these lands, therefore, religion has generally mastered race, for the laws that regulate the whole personal condition and property of the people are determined by their religion, with a certain variety of local customs. Nevertheless, beneath the overspreading religious denomination there are a large number of tribal groups, all of whom are known by tribal names. Most of these tribes are fanatic Islamites, but in the midst of them is one group which is distinct by religion and probably by race—I mean the Armenians. They do not form a majority of the population in Armenia, they are scattered about Western Asia, and are divided into two Christian sects, which under the Turkish empire are regarded as two religious communities. Their recent terrible misfortunes afford a signal and melancholy warning of the danger of interfering in Oriental affairs without a full understanding of the complications arising out of these very differences and antagonisms of race and religion that I have been endeavouring to explain. And the whole story is a striking example of the tremendous power of religion in Asiatic politics. In 1895 the European Powers interposed in the name of justice and humanity to press upon the Turkish Government the reforms that had been promised by treaty, and thus to better the condition of the Armenians, by securing to them a certain share in the local and municipal government. But the Armenians are a scattered and subject people, different in race and religion and language from the ruling Turks, and the demand for giving them some kind of independence alarmed the Turkish

Government and inflamed the fanaticism of the Mohammedans. The only result of European intervention was a frightful massacre of the Armenians, which the European Powers witnessed without any serious attempt to stop. Such are the consequences of misunderstanding the real political situation and the forces at work. Probably many people in England had a very hazy notion of what the Armenians were, or what their name signified. We have always to remember that throughout Asia, and indeed over the greater part of the non-Christian world, the various sections of the population very rarely use for themselves, or indeed for the country that they dwell in, the name that is used for them by Europeans. As our own system has become territorial, as we call any natural-born inhabitant of France a Frenchman, and so on, we are led by a false analogy to talk of Turkey and the Turks, Persia and the Persians, India and the Indians, China and the Chinese. But these broad designations denoting modern nationalities are not used in Asia by the people themselves, to whom such a conception is foreign. I know of no terms in the languages of these countries that correspond to our words, Turkey, India, China, as geographical expressions, and I think that the names used by Europeans for outlying countries or peoples often come from some accident or chance, or mistake, or by taking the name of a part of a country for the name of the whole. In Asia the people still class themselves, in their ordinary talk, by names designating religion or race. A curious example of a religious designation still survives, by the way, among Europeans in South Africa. When the first Portuguese explorers of the African coast asked the Arab traders about the indigenous tribes, they, being Mohammedans, said that the natives

were all Kafirs, which means Infidels. This was supposed to be the general name of a people, and it has been handed down to us so that we still call the South African natives Kaffirs. I doubt whether the tribes concerned have ever used or recognised among themselves this unsavoury name. I may note, by the way, that one of the most ancient tribal names in Asia is that by which the Greeks, outside the Turkish empire, are often known—Yunâni, or Ionian—which must have been in use from the days when the Greek colonies settled on the coast of Asia Minor, many centuries before the Christian era.

We are pushing our survey eastward across Asia. The kingdom known to Europe by the name of Persia is styled by its inhabitants *Irân*, though I doubt whether a Persian subject belonging to a particular tribe or sect would call himself *Irâni*. The next independent kingdom, beyond Persia, is Afghanistan; and here we have an example of a designation originally implying race, gradually merging into one that is territorial and political. Afghanistan originally meant, I believe, the great central mass of mountains occupied by a tribe called Afghans; it is now becoming a name that includes the whole territory ruled by the Afghan Amir at Kabul. The causes that are producing this change in the signification of the word are, first, that the Amir of Kabul has subdued, more or less, all the tribes inhabiting the country; and secondly, that the pressure of England and Russia on two sides of that country has necessitated an accurate demarcation of frontiers all round it, in order that the Amir's territories, which are under our protection, may be precisely known. The kingdom is thus acquiring a territorial designation. But this kingdom of Afghanistan is really composed of a number of chiefships and provinces very loosely knit together

under the sway of the Amir, which might fall asunder again if the rulership at Kabul became weak. And the population is all parcelled out into various races and tribes, usually dwelling in separate tracts under local chiefs; they are always known among themselves by names, denoting race or tribe; sometimes patriarchal, like the Children of Israel, or the clans of our own Highlands; sometimes local, and in one case historical, for the dominant tribe to which the Amir belongs has called itself Durâni or royal.

It is therefore the distinction of race or tribe, not of religion, that governs the whole interior population throughout this vast region of high mountains and valleys in the centre, with comparatively open country on the north and south; the whole area has been peopled by a conflux of tribes. Yet Afghanistan has some of the symptoms of national growth—I mean that if it could hold together as one kingdom it might grow into a nationality. In religion the Afghans are almost all fanatical Mohammedans, for Afghanistan is the great bulwark and citadel on the eastern frontier of Islam, and beyond it, in Eastern Asia, there are no independent Mohammedan principalities. The kingdom has a strictly defined territory, and a dynasty which has risen from the chiefship of a powerful tribe to the heritable possession of that territory. This dynasty, moreover, is identical in race and religion with a large majority of its subjects, which is another peculiar source of strength; for almost all the other first-class kingdoms of Asia are ruled by dynasties of alien race, who sometimes profess a religion different from that of many of their subjects. We are frequently reminded of the important fact that in India the English rulers are aliens in race and religion from the people; but

we may also remember that after all this is only a difference of degree, a wider separation between the governors and the governed than elsewhere in Asia. The principal kingdoms of Asia are ruled by foreign families or dynasties that have come in by conquest. The Moghul dynasty that preceded our own government in India was foreign; and it was a Mohammedan rulership over an enormous Hindu population. The Ottoman Turk was a foreign invader from Central Asia, who still governs a variety of races and religions. In Persia the Shah's family is of a Turkish tribe. And the Emperor of China is a Mandchoo Tartar, of a race quite apart from that of the immense majority of the Chinese. Of course the Russians are as much aliens in Central Asia as the English in India; they govern from St. Petersburg as we do from London. I doubt, therefore, whether there is any other kingdom in Asia that has more of the element of national unity than Afghanistan, though unfortunately its political condition is precarious, because there is still much tribal disunion inside it.

Eastward again beyond Afghanistan we enter the Indian empire, a vast dominion stretching south-eastward from the slopes of the outer Afghan hills and the Persian border to the western frontiers of the Chinese empire and of Siam, and controlling the whole seaboard of Southern Asia, from Aden to Singapore. It is the possession of this wide territory that has given to the English a direct and most important interest in the problems of race and religion. For, in the first place, in this empire we have to deal with three out of the four great faiths of the world—Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism—and we have to uphold for ourselves the fourth, Christianity. Secondly, we have also within the borders of our

empire a multiplicity of races and tribes; and we have the peculiar Indian institution of Caste, which marks off all Hindu society into innumerable groups, distinguished one from another by the rules that forbid intermarriage and (in most cases) the sharing of food. Now the word Hindu requires a special explanation, because there is nothing exactly like it elsewhere in the world; it is not exclusively a religious denomination; it denotes also a country and a race. When we speak of a Christian, a Mohammedan, or a Buddhist, we mean a particular religious community without distinction of race or country. When we talk of Persians or Chinese, we indicate country or parentage without any necessary distinction of creed. But when a man tells me he is a Hindu, I know that he means all three things together—religion, race and country. I can be almost sure that he is an inhabitant of India, quite sure that he is of Indian parentage; and as to religion, the word Hindu undoubtedly locates him within one of the manifold groups who follow the ordinances and worship the gods of Hinduism. Next in importance to the Hindus, as a religious community, come the Mohammedans, who number over sixty millions in India. The two faiths, Hinduism and Islam—polytheism and monotheism—are in strong opposition to each other; yet they are not quite clean cut apart, for some Hindu tribes that have been converted to Islam retain in part their primitive customs of worship and caste. And in Burmah, as in Ceylon, the population is almost wholly Buddhist.

In a very able article that has recently appeared in an Indian magazine, the writer, a Hindu, observes: 'The Hindus offer a curious instance of a people without any feeling of nationality.' He finds an explanation in 'the intensity of religiousness, which led to

sectarianism, and allying itself with caste, tended to preserve all local and tribal differences.' Other causes, historical, political, and geographical, might be mentioned, but I agree that the chief separating influence has been religious. And, however this may be, it may be affirmed that within our Indian empire at the present moment the primary superior designation of a man is according to his religion—he is either a Hindu, a Mohammedan, or a Buddhist. But inside these general religious denominations are very many distinctions of caste, race, or tribe. The Sikhs are a sect of Hindus who belong exclusively to the Punjab. The Marathas and Rajpûts are races who profess Hinduism and who always call themselves by their racial names: and there are many aboriginal tribes, like the Bheels and Gonds, who are being gradually absorbed into Hinduism. Race and religion are, in fact, more profoundly intermixed in India than perhaps in any other country of the world; and into such an intricate subject I cannot now enter. My present point is that in India we are governing an empire of the antique pattern, quite different from the western nationalities, a country where complexities of race and creed meet us at every turn in the course of our administration; an empire which, as Mr. Bryce has pointed out in a recent essay that is full of light and knowledge, has many striking resemblances with the dominion of Imperial Rome. [57] There is the same miscellany of tribes and races in diverse stages of civilisation, warlike and half-tamed on the frontiers, softened and reconciled by peace, prosperity, and culture in the older provinces of the empire, wild and barbarous in remote interior tracts. There is just visible in India a similar though much slighter tendency of the language of the ruling race to prevail among the educated classes, because

the English language, like the Latin, has greater literary power, and conveys to the Indians the latest ideas and scientific discoveries of the foremost nations of the world. There is also a certain diffusion of European manners and even dress, resembling in some degree what took place even in such a remote province of the Roman empire as Britain, where, as we know from Tacitus, it was made a reproach against the Romanising Britons that they were abandoning their own costume for the Roman toga and adopting the manners of their conquerors. All these tendencies are slightly affecting distinctions of race and religion; though in India these distinctions are far deeper than they were under the Roman empire, and so far as one can judge they are ineffaceable.

In regard to religious differences, so long as the people were almost universally polytheistic the Romans had little trouble on this score, since every deity and every ritual was tolerated indifferently by their government, provided that public order and decency were observed; and this is the practice of our Government in India. But we have one difficulty in governing India that did not trouble the Romans at the time when they first founded their empire by conquest. I think that religion had then very little influence on politics. It was the advent of two great militant and propagating faiths, first Christianity, next Islam, that first made religion a vital element in politics, and afterwards made a common creed the bond of union for great masses of mankind. It has now become in Asia a powerful instrument of political association. Therefore when we proclaim for our government in India the principle of religious neutrality we do indeed avoid collision with other faiths, but we are without the advantage that is

possessed by a State which represents and is supported by the religious enthusiasm of a great number of its subjects. I take the separation of the State from religion to be a principle that is quite modern in Europe; and outside our Indian empire it is unknown in Asia. Everywhere else the ruler is the head of some dominant church or creed. On the other hand our neutral attitude enables us to arbitrate and keep the peace between the two formidable rivals, Islam and Hinduism, which in a large measure balance and restrain each other. And it is easier to govern a great empire full of diverse castes and creeds when you only demand from them obedience to the civil law, than when the Government takes one side on religious questions. Nevertheless, though in India we proclaim and practise religious neutrality, we must always remember that India is, of all great countries in the world, that in which religious beliefs and antagonisms affect the administration most profoundly, and subdivide the population with the greatest complexity. For the empire contains a wonderful variety of races and tribes, especially on its frontiers; it has the fierce Afghan tribes under our protectorate on the north-west, a cluster of utterly barbarous tribes in the north-east, and in the Far East beyond Burmah we have undertaken the control of a border tract, full of petty rival chiefships, where the language, manners and origins are related to the neighbouring population of China.

In China we have the true type of Asiatic empire, by far the oldest in the world, a sovereignty that, with various changes of dynasty, has governed the Far East of Asia from time almost immemorial; an immense conglomeration of different races under the rulership of a dynasty that is foreign to the great

majority of its subjects. Here again I must remark on the absence of territorial or national designations. The word China, as designating this empire, is not used by the people themselves; the official name means, I believe, the Great Pure Kingdom; and the emperor himself is known by various titles signifying august, lofty, or sacred. I suppose that almost the whole population belongs to the great Mongolian or Tartar family of mankind; but the subdivisions of different tribes, races, and languages must be numerous, as might be expected in such a vastly extended empire, and the tribesmen are all known by their tribal names. In regard to Religion the situation is peculiar, it is without parallel elsewhere in Asia; for three great systems exist in China separately and independently, each of them working in peace side by side with the others: the religion founded by Confucius, which is a great system of morals; Buddhism, which is a Church with a splendid ritual, priesthood, and monastic orders; and Taoism, which is a kind of naturalistic religion, the worship of stars, natural forces, spirits, deified heroes and local gods. It is said to be a common thing for one person to belong to all three religions, and the State superintends them all impartially. One very remarkable and peculiar fact, which I give on excellent authority, is that in China religious denominations are never used to denote sections of the people, except by the Mohammedans, who are not numerous and form a class apart. But any attempt to describe the religion of China would lead me far beyond the scope of this address. My present point is only to lay stress on the enormous political importance, in China as elsewhere in Asia, of the religious idea. For whereas powerful religious movements, affecting the destinies of kingdoms and

causing great wars, have ceased in Western and Central Europe, in Asia all governments have constantly to apprehend some fresh outburst of religious enthusiasm, the appearance of some prophet or new spiritual teacher, who gathers a following, like the Mahdi in the Soudan, and attacks the ruling power. The Taeping rebellion, which devastated China some forty years ago, is a case in point; it was begun by a fanatic leader who denounced the established religions, and it soon became a dangerous revolt against the Imperial dynasty. And the outbreak against the foreigners in China last year is understood to have originated in religious fanaticism. These events go to illustrate the enormous influence on politics which Religion, whether you call it enthusiasm or superstition, exercises everywhere in Asia.

But of all empires in Asia, the Russian empire is the greatest and the most powerful. I have only space to say here that it is of the same type with the others; it is a vast dominion over an infinite variety of races, tribes, and creeds; it is a government which has come in by foreign conquest; a Christian Power which has among its subjects a great number of Mohammedans. It differs from our Indian empire in this respect, that the Russian conquests were made gradually by land, across Central Asia, or by slow immigration and extension, as in Siberia, whereas the English reached India by a long sea-journey. So that in the Asiatic empire of Russia the separation of race between the rulers and their subjects is not so sharply defined as between England and India. Nevertheless the problems that confront Russia in Asia are similar in kind to those which face us in India; she has to reconcile to her permanent dominion a miscellany of alien peoples, whom it is

almost impossible to fuse and consolidate into anything like a nationality.

I have now endeavoured, very imperfectly, to show how Race and Religion still powerfully affect society, and trouble politics, throughout a great part of the world. How far they influence and interact upon each other is a difficult problem; but one may say that some religions seem to accord with the peculiar temperament and intellectual disposition of certain races; that, for instance, the active propagating spirit of Islam flourishes in Western Asia, while in Eastern Asia a quiet and contemplative faith, with little missionary impulse, no strong desire to make converts, has always prevailed. But in the East everywhere Race and Religion still unite and isolate the populations in groups—they are the great dividing and disturbing forces that prevent or delay the consolidation of settled nationalities; and so far as our experience goes, a fixed nationality of the Western type is the most solid and permanent form of political government and social aggregation. An empire is a different and looser mode of binding people together, yet at certain stages of civilisation and the world's progress it is a necessity; and an empire well administered is the best available instrument for promoting civilisation and good order among backward races. So managed it may last long; and its dominion may be practically permanent, for commerce and industry, literature and science, rapid and easy communication by land and sea, spread far more quickly, and connect distant countries far more closely, in modern times than in the ancient world. Yet there is always an element of unrest and insecurity underlying the position of imperial rulership over different and often discordant groups of subjects; and this has been one main cause of the

immemorial weakness of Asiatic empires, and of the indifference of the people to a change of masters, because no single dynasty represented the whole people. It is just this weakness of the native rulers that has enabled the European to make his conquests in Asia; and we have carefully to remember that although our governments are superior in skill and strength, we have inherited the old difficulties. For it is my belief that in many parts of the world, particularly in Asia, the strength of the racial and religious sentiments is rather increasing than diminishing. This is indeed the view—the fact, if I am right—that I especially desire to press home, because it is of the highest importance at the present time, when all the European nations, and England among the foremost, are extending their dominion over peoples of races and creeds different from their own. Our governments are now no longer confined to the continent which we inhabit; we are acquiring immense possessions in Asia and Africa; we can survey the whole earth with its confusion of tongues; its multitude of beliefs and customs, its infinitely miscellaneous populations. We must recognise the variety of the human species; we must acknowledge that we cannot impose a uniform type of civilisation, just as we admit that a uniform faith is beyond mere human efforts to impose, and that to attempt it would be politically disastrous. This is the conclusion upon which I venture to lay stress, because some such warning seems to me neither untimely nor unimportant.

For there is still a dangerous tendency among the enterprising commercial nations of the West to assume that the importation into Asia of economical improvements, public instruction, regular administration, and religious neutrality will conquer

antipathies, overcome irrational prejudices, and reconcile old-world folk to an alien civilisation. Undoubtedly a foreign government that rules wisely, justly, and very cautiously, acquires a strong hold on its subjects, and may stand, like the Roman empire, for centuries. But this can only be achieved by recognising, instead of ignoring, certain ineffaceable characteristics in the origins and history of the people, for whom the tradition and sentiment of race is often their bond of union and the base of their society, as their religion is the embodiment of their spiritual instincts and imaginations.

FOOTNOTES:

[56] Address delivered as President of the Social and Political Education League, May 5, 1902.—*Fortnightly Review*, December 1902.

[57] *Studies in History and Jurisprudence*, vol. I., chap. i.

THE STATE IN ITS RELATION TO EASTERN AND WESTERN RELIGIONS

In considering the subject of my address,[58] I have been confronted by this difficulty—that in the sections which regulate the order of our proceedings, we have a list of papers that range over all the principal religions, ancient and modern, that have

existed and still exist in the world. They are to be treated and discussed by experts whose scholarship, particular studies, and close research entitle them all to address you authoritatively. I have no such special qualifications; and in any case it would be most presumptuous in me to trespass upon their ground. All that I can venture to do, therefore, in the remarks which I propose to address to you to-day, is to attempt a brief general survey of the history of religions from a standpoint which may possibly not fall within the scope of these separate papers.

The four great religions now prevailing in the world, which are historical in the sense that they have been long known to history, I take to be—Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, and Hinduism. Having regard to their origin and derivation, to their history and character, I may be permitted, for my present purpose only, to class the two former as the Religions of the West, and the two latter as the Religions of the East. These are the faiths which still maintain a mighty influence over the minds of mankind. And my object is to compare the political relations, the attitude, maintained toward them, from time to time, by the States and rulers of the people over which these religions have established their spiritual dominion. The religion of the Jews is not included, though its influence has been incalculable, because it has been caught up, so to speak, into Christianity and Islam, and cannot therefore be counted among those which have made a partition of the religious world. For this reason, perhaps, it has retained to this day its ancient denomination, derived from the tribe or country of its origin; whereas the others are named from a Faith or a Founder. The word Nazarene, denoting the birthplace of Christianity, which is said to be still used in that region, was, as

we know, very speedily superseded by its wider title, as the Creed broke out of local limits and was proclaimed universal.

There has evidently been a fore-time, though it is prehistorical, when, so far as we know, mankind was universally polytheistic; when innumerable rites and worships prevailed without restraint, springing up and contending with each other like the trees in a primeval forest, reflecting a primitive and precarious condition of human society. I take polytheism to have been, in this earliest stage, the wild growth of superstitious imagination, varied indefinitely by the pressure of circumstance, by accident, by popular caprice, or by the good or evil fortunes of the community. In this stage it can now be seen among barbarous tribes—as, for instance, in Central Africa. And some traces of it still survive, under different pretexts and disguises, in the lowest strata of civilised nations, where it may be said to represent the natural reluctance of the vagrant human fancy to be satisfied with higher forms and purer conceptions that are always imperfectly assimilated by the multitude.

Among primitive societies the spheres of human and divine affairs were intermixed and identical; they could not be disentangled. But with the growth of political institutions came gradual separation, or at any rate the subordination of religion to the practical necessities of orderly government and public morals. That polytheism can exist and flourish in the midst of a highly intellectual and civilised society, we know from the history of Greece and Rome. But in ancient Greece its direct influence upon political affairs seems to have been slight; though it touched at some

points upon morality. The function of the State, according to Greek ideas, was to legislate for all the departments of human life and to uphold the moral standard. The law prohibited sacrilege and profanity; it punished open impiety that might bring down divine wrath upon the people at large. The philosophers taught rational ethics; they regarded the popular superstitions with indulgent contempt; but they inculcated the duty of honouring the gods, and the observance of public ceremonial. Beyond these limits the practice of local and customary worship was, I think, free and unrestrained; though I need hardly add that toleration, as understood by the States of antiquity, was a very different thing from the modern principle of religious neutrality. Under the Roman government the connection between the State and religion was much closer, as the dominion of Rome expanded and its power became centralised. The Roman State maintained a strict control and superintendence over the official rituals and worships, which were regulated as a department of the administration, to bind the people together by established rites and worships, in order to cement political and social unity. It is true that the usages of the tribes and principalities that were conquered and annexed were left undisturbed; for the Roman policy, like that of the English in India, was to avoid giving offence to religion; and undoubtedly this policy, in both instances, materially facilitated the rapid building up of a wide dominion. Nevertheless, there was a tendency to draw in the worship toward a common centre. The deities of the conquered provinces were respected and conciliated; the Roman generals even appealed to them for protection and favour, yet they became absorbed and assimilated under Roman names; they were often identified with

the gods of the Roman pantheon, and were frequently superseded by the victorious divinities of the new rulers—the strange deities, in fact, were Romanised as well as the foreign tribes and cities. After this manner the Roman empire combined the tolerance of great religious diversity with the supremacy of a centralised government. Political amalgamation brought about a fusion of divine attributes; and latterly the emperor was adored as the symbol of manifest power, ruler and pontiff; he was the visible image of supreme authority.

This *régime* was easily accepted by the simple unsophisticated paganism of Europe. The Romans, with all their statecraft, had as yet no experience of a high religious temperature, of enthusiastic devotion and divine mysteries. But as their conquest and commerce spread eastward, the invasion of Asia let in upon Europe a flood of Oriental divinities, and thus Rome came into contact with much stronger and deeper spiritual forces. The European polytheism might be utilised and administered, the Asiatic deities could not be domesticated and subjected to regulation; the Oriental orgies and strange rites broke in upon the organised State worship; the new ideas and practices came backed by a profound and fervid spiritualism. Nevertheless the Roman policy of bringing religion under authoritative control was more or less successful even in the Asiatic provinces of the empire; the privileges of the temples were restricted; the priesthoods were placed under the general superintendence of the proconsular officials; and Roman divinities gradually found their way into the Asiatic pantheon.

But we all know that the religion of the Roman empire was falling into multitudinous confusion

when Christianity arose—an austere exclusive faith, with its army of saints, ascetics, and unflinching martyrs, proclaiming worship to be due to one God only, and sternly refusing to acknowledge the divinity of the emperor. Against such a faith an incoherent disorderly polytheism could make no better stand than tribal levies against a disciplined army. The new religion struck directly at the sacrifices that symbolised imperial unity; the passive resistance of Christians was necessarily treated as rebellion, the State made implacable war upon them. Yet the spiritual and moral forces won the victory, and Christianity established itself throughout the empire. Universal religion, following upon universal civil dominion, completed the levelling of local and national distinctions. The Churches rapidly grew into authority superior to the State within their own jurisdiction; they called in the temporal government to enforce theological decisions and to put down heresies; they founded a powerful hierarchy. The earlier Roman constitution had made religion an instrument of administration. When one religion became universal, the churches enlisted the civil ruler into the service of orthodoxy; they converted the State into an instrument for enforcing religion. The pagan empire had issued edicts against Christianity and had suppressed Christian assemblies as tainted with disaffection; the Christian emperors enacted laws against the rites and worships of paganism, and closed temples. It was by the supreme authority of Constantine that, for the first time in the religious history of the world, uniformity of belief was defined by a creed, and sanctioned by the ruler's assent.

Then came, in Western Europe, the time when the empire at Rome was rent asunder by the inrush of

barbarians; but upon its ruins was erected the great Catholic Church of the Papacy, which preserved in the ecclesiastical domain the autocratic imperial tradition. The primacy of the Roman Church, according to Harnack, is essentially the transference to her of Rome's central position in the religions of the heathen world; the Church united the western races, disunited politically, under the common denomination of Christianity. Yet Christianity had not long established itself throughout all the lands, in Europe and Asia, which had once been under the Roman sovereignty, when the violent irruptions of Islam upset not only the temporal but also the spiritual dominion throughout Western Asia, and along the southern shores of the Mediterranean. The Eastern empire at Constantinople had been weakened by bitter theological dissensions and heresies among the Christians; the votaries of the new, simple, unswerving faith of Mohammed were ardent and unanimous. In Egypt and Syria the Mohammedans were speedily victorious; the Latin Church and even the Latin language were swept out of North Africa. In Persia the Sassanian dynasty was overthrown, and although there was no immediate and total conversion of the people, Mohammedanism gradually superseded the ancient Zoroastrian cultus as the religion of the Persian State. It was not long before the armies of Islam had triumphed from the Atlantic coast to the Jaxartes river in Central Asia; and conversion followed, speedily or slowly, as the direct result of conquest. Moreover, the Mohammedans invaded Europe. In the south-west they subdued almost all Spain; and in the south-east they destroyed, some centuries later, the Greek empire, though not the Greek Church, and consolidated a mighty rulership at Constantinople.

With this prolonged conflict between Islam and Christianity along the borderlands of Europe and Asia began the era of those religious wars that have darkened the history of the Western nations, and have perpetuated the inveterate antipathy between Asiatic and European races, which the spread of Christianity into both continents had softened and might have healed. In the end Christianity has fixed itself permanently in Europe, while Islam is strongly established throughout half Asia. But the sharp collision between the two faiths, the clash of armies bearing the cross and the crescent, generated fierce fanaticism on both sides. The Crusades kindled a fiery militant and missionary spirit previously unknown to religions, whereby religious propagation became the mainspring and declared object of conquest and colonisation. Finally, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the great secession from the Roman Church divided the nations of Western Europe into hostile camps, and throughout the long wars of that period political jealousies and ambitions were inflamed by religious animosities. In Eastern Europe the Greek Church fell under almost complete subordination to the State.

The history of Europe and Western Asia records, therefore, a close connection and community of interests between the States and the orthodox faiths; a combination which has had a very potent influence, during many centuries, upon the course of civil affairs, upon the fortunes, or misfortunes, of nations. Up to the sixteenth century, at least, it was universally held, by Christianity and by Islam, that the State was bound to enforce orthodoxy; conversion and the suppression or expulsion of heretics were public duties. Unity of creed was thought necessary for national unity—a government

could not undertake to maintain authority, or preserve the allegiance of its subjects, in a realm divided and distracted by sectarian controversies. On these principles Christianity and Islam were consolidated, in union with the States or in close alliance with them; and the geographical boundaries of these two faiths, and of their internal divisions respectively, have not materially changed up to the present day.

Let me now turn to the history of religion in those countries of further Asia, which were never reached by Greek or Roman conquest or civilisation, where the ancient forms of worship and conceptions of divinity, which existed before Christianity and Islam, still flourish. And here I shall only deal with the relations of the State to religion in India and China and their dependencies, because these vast and populous empires contain the two great religions, Hinduism and Buddhism, of purely Asiatic origin and character, which have assimilated to a large extent, and in a certain degree elevated, the indigenous polytheism, and which still exercise a mighty influence over the spiritual and moral condition of many millions.

We know what a tremendous power religion has been in the wars and politics of the West. I submit that in Eastern Asia, beyond the pale of Islam, the history of religion has been very different. Religious wars—I mean wars caused by the conflict of militant faiths contending for superiority—were, I believe, unknown on any great scale to the ancient civilisations. It seems to me that until Islam invaded

India the great religious movements and changes in that region had seldom or never been the consequence of, nor had been materially affected by, wars, conquests, or political revolutions.

Throughout Europe and Mohammedan Asia the indigenous deities and their temples have disappeared centuries ago; they have been swept away by the forces of Church and State combined to exterminate them; they have all yielded to the lofty overruling ideal of monotheism. But the tide of Mohammedanism reached its limit in India; the people, though conquered, were but partly converted, and eastward of India there have been no important Mohammedan rulerships. On this side of Asia, therefore, two great religions, Buddhism and Brahmanism, have held their ground from times far anterior to Christianity; they have retained the elastic comprehensive character of polytheism, purified and elevated by higher conceptions, developed by the persistent competition of diverse ideas and forms among the people, unrestrained by attempts of superior organised faiths to obliterate the lower and weaker species. In that region political despotism has prevailed immemorially; religious despotism, in the sense of the legal establishment of one faith or worship to the exclusion of all others, of uniformity imposed by coercion, of proselytism by persecution, is unknown to history: the governments have been absolute and personal; the religions have been popular and democratic. They have never been identified so closely with the ruling power as to share its fortunes, or to be used for the consolidation of successful conquest. Nor, on the other hand, has a ruler ever found it necessary, for the security of his throne, to conform to the religion of his subjects, and to abjure all others. The political maxim, that the

sovereign and his subjects should be of one and the same religion,[59] has never prevailed in this part of the world. And although in India, the land of their common origin, Buddhism widely displaced and overlaid Brahmanism, while it was in its turn, after several centuries, overcome and ejected by a Brahmanic revival, yet I believe that history records no violent contests or collisions between them; nor do we know that the armed force of the State played any decisive part in these spiritual revolutions.

I do not maintain that Buddhism has owed nothing to State influence. It represents certain doctrines of the ancient Indian theosophy, incarnate, as one might say, in the figure of a spiritual Master, the Indian prince, Sakya Gautama, who was the type and example of ascetic quietism; it embodies the idea of salvation, or emancipation attainable by man's own efforts, without aid from priests or divinities. Buddhism is the earliest, by many centuries, of the faiths that claim descent from a personal founder. It emerges into authentic history with the empire of Asoka, who ruled over the greater part of India some 250 years before Christ, and its propagation over his realm and the countries adjacent is undoubtedly due to the influence, example, and authority of that devout monarch. According to Mr. Vincent Smith, from whose valuable work on the Early History of India I take the description of Asoka's religious policy, the king, renouncing after one necessary war all further military conquest, made it the business of his life to employ his autocratic power in directing the preaching and teaching of the Law of Piety, which he had learnt from his Buddhist priesthood. All his high officers were commanded to instruct the people in the way of salvation; he sent missions to foreign countries; he issued edicts promulgating

ethical doctrines, and the rules of a devout life; he made pilgrimages to the sacred places; and finally he assumed the yellow robe of a Buddhist monk. Asoka elevated, so Mr. Smith has said, a sect of Hinduism to the rank of a world-religion. Nevertheless, I think it may be affirmed that the emperor consistently refrained from the forcible conversion of his subjects, and indeed the use of compulsion would have apparently been a breach of his own edicts, which insist on the principle of toleration, and declare the propagation of the Law of Piety to be his sole object. Asoka made no attempt to persecute Brahmanism; and it seems clear that the extraordinary success of Buddhism in India cannot be attributed to war or to conquest. To imperial influence and example much must be ascribed, yet I think Buddhism owed much more to its spiritual potency, to its superior faculty of transmuting and assimilating, instead of abolishing, the elementary instincts and worships, endowing them with a higher significance, attracting and stimulating devotion by impressive rites and ceremonies, impressing upon the people the dogma of the soul's transmigration and its escape from the miseries of sentient existence by the operation of merits. And of all great religions it is the least political, for the practice of asceticism and quietism, of monastic seclusion from the working world, is necessarily adverse to any active connection with mundane affairs.

I do not know that the mysterious disappearance of Buddhism from India can be accounted for by any great political revolution, like that which brought Islam into India. It seems to have vanished before the Mohammedans had gained any footing in the country. Meanwhile Buddhism is said to have penetrated into the Chinese empire by the first

century of the Christian era. Before that time the doctrines of Confucius and Laotze were the dominant philosophies; rather moral than religious, though ancestral worship and the propitiation of spirits were not disallowed, and were to a certain extent enjoined. Laotze, the apostle of Taoism, appears to have preached a kind of Stoicism—the observance of the order of Nature in searching for the right way of salvation, the abhorrence of vicious sensuality—and the cultivation of humility, self-sacrifice, and simplicity of life. He condemned altogether the use of force in the sphere of religion or morality; though he admitted that it might be necessary for the purposes of civil government. The system of Confucius inculcated justice, benevolence, self-control, obedience and loyalty to the sovereign—all the civic virtues; it was a moral code without a metaphysical background; the popular worships were tolerated, reverence for ancestors conduced to edification; the gods were to be honoured, though it was well to keep aloof from them; he disliked religious fervour, and of things beyond experience he had nothing to say.

Buddhism, with its contempt for temporal affairs, treating life as a mere burden, and the soul's liberation from existence as the end and object of meditative devotion, must have imported a new and disturbing element into the utilitarian philosophies of ancient China. For many centuries Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism are said to have contended for the patronage and recognition of the Chinese emperors. Buddhism was alternately persecuted and protected, expelled and restored by imperial decree. Priesthoods and monastic orders are institutions of which governments are naturally jealous; the monasteries were destroyed or rebuilt,

sacerdotal orders and celibacy suppressed or encouraged by imperial decrees, according to the views and prepossessions of successive dynasties or emperors. Nevertheless the general policy of Chinese rulers and ministers seems not to have varied essentially. Their administrative principle was that religion must be prevented from interfering with affairs of State, that abuses and superstitious extravagances are not so much offences against orthodoxy as matters for the police, and as such must be put down by the secular arm.

Upon this policy successive dynasties appear to have acted continuously up to the present day in China, where the relations of the State to religions are, I think, without parallel elsewhere in the modern world. One may find some resemblance to the attitude of the Roman emperors towards rites and worships among the population, in the Chinese emperor's reverent observance and regulation of the rites and ceremonies performed by him as the religious chief and representative before Heaven of the great national interests. The deification of deceased emperors is a solemn rite ordained by proclamation. As the *Ius sacrum*, the body of rights and duties in the matter of religion, was regarded in Rome as a department of the *Ius publicum*, belonging to the fundamental constitution of the State, so in China the ritual code was incorporated into the statute books, and promulgated with imperial sanction. Now we know that in Rome the established ritual was legally prescribed, though otherwise strange deities and their worships were admitted indiscriminately. But the Chinese Government goes much further. It appears to regard all novel superstitions, and especially foreign worships, as the hotbed of sedition and disloyalty. Unlicensed deities

and sects are put down by the police; magicians and sorcerers are arrested; and the peculiar Chinese practice of canonising deceased officials and paying sacrificial honours to local celebrities after death is strictly reserved by the Board of Ceremonies for imperial consideration and approval. The Censor, to whom any proposal of this kind must be entrusted, is admonished that he must satisfy himself by inquiry of its validity. An official who performs sacred rites in honour of a spirit or holy personage not recognised by the Ritual Code, was liable, under laws that may be still in force, to corporal punishment; and the adoration by private families of spirits whose worship is reserved for public ceremonial was a heinous offence. No such rigorous control over the multiplication of rites and deities has been instituted elsewhere. On the other hand, while in other countries the State has recognised no more than one established religion, the Chinese Government formally recognises three denominations. Buddhism has been sanctioned by various edicts and endowments, yet the State divinities belong to the Taoist pantheon, and their worship is regulated by public ordinances; while Confucianism represents official orthodoxy, and its precepts embody the latitudinarian spirit of the intellectual classes. We know that the Chinese people make use, so to speak, of all three religions indiscriminately, according to their individual whims, needs, or experience of results. So also a politic administration countenances these divisions and probably finds some interest in maintaining them. The morality of the people requires some religious sanction; and it is this element with which the State professes its chief concern. We are told on good authority that one of the functions of high officials is to deliver public

lectures freely criticising and discouraging indolent monasticism and idolatry from the standpoint of rational ethics, as follies that are reluctantly tolerated. Yet the Government has never been able to keep down the fanatics, mystics, and heretical sects that are incessantly springing up in China, as elsewhere in Asia; though they are treated as pestilent rebels and law-breakers, to be exterminated by massacre and cruel punishments; and bloody repression of this kind has been the cause of serious insurrections. It is to be observed that all religious persecution is by the direct action of the State, *not* instigated or insisted upon by a powerful orthodox priesthood. But a despotic administration which undertakes to control and circumscribe all forms and manifestations of superstition in a vast polytheistic multitude of its subjects, is inevitably driven to repressive measures of the utmost severity. Neither Christianity nor Islam attempted to regulate polytheism, their mission was to exterminate it, and they succeeded mainly because in those countries the State was acting with the support and under the uncompromising pressure of a dominant church or faith.

Some writers have noticed a certain degree of resemblance between the policy of the Roman empire and that of the Chinese empire toward religion. We may read in Gibbon that the Roman magistrates regarded the various modes of worship as equally useful, that sages and heroes were exalted to immortality and entitled to reverence and adoration, and that philosophic officials, viewing with indulgence the superstitions of the multitude, diligently practised the ceremonies of their fathers. So far, indeed, his description of the attitude of the State toward polytheism may be applicable to China;

but although the Roman and Chinese emperors both assumed the rank of divinity, and were supreme in the department of worships, the Roman administration never attempted to regulate and restrain polytheism at large on the Chinese system.

The religion of the Gentiles, said Hobbes, is a part of their policy; and it may be said that this is still the policy of Oriental monarchies, who admit no separation between the secular and the ecclesiastic jurisdiction. They would agree with Hobbes that temporal and spiritual government are but two words brought into the world to make men see double and mistake their lawful sovereign. But while in Mohammedan Asia the State upholds orthodox uniformity, in China and Japan the mainspring of all such administrative action is political expediency. It may be suggested that in the mind of these far-Eastern people religion has never been conceived as something quite apart from human experience and the affairs of the visible world; for Buddhism, with its metaphysical doctrines, is a foreign importation, corrupted and materialised in China and Japan. And we may observe that from among the Mongolian races, which have produced mighty conquerors and founded famous dynasties from Constantinople to Pekin, no mighty prophet, no profound spiritual teacher, has arisen. Yet in China, as throughout all the countries of the Asiatic mainland, an enthusiast may still gather together ardent proselytes, and fresh revelations may create among the people unrest that may ferment and become heated up to the degree of fanaticism, and explode against attempts made to suppress it. The Taeping insurrection, which devastated cities and provinces in China, and nearly overthrew the Manchu dynasty, is a striking example of the volcanic fires that underlie the surface of

Asiatic societies. It was quenched in torrents of blood after lasting some ten years. And very recently there has been a determined revolt of the Lamas in Eastern Tibet, where the provincial administration is, as we know, sacerdotal. The imperial troops are said to be crushing it with unrelenting severity. These are the perilous experiences of a philosophic Government that assumes charge and control over the religions of some three hundred millions of Asiatics.

I can only make a hasty reference to Japan. In that country the relations of the State to religions appear to have followed the Chinese model. Buddhism, Confucianism, Shintoism, are impartially recognised. The emperor presides over official worship as high priest of his people; the liturgical ordinances are issued by imperial rescripts not differing in form from other public edicts. The dominant article of faith is the divinity of Japan and its emperor; and Shinto, the worship of the gods of nature, is understood to be patronised chiefly with the motive of preserving the national traditions. But in Japan the advance of modern science and enlightened scepticism may have diminished the importance of the religious department. Shinto, says a recent writer, still embodies the religion of the people; yet in 1877 a decree was issued declaring it to be no more than a convenient system of State ceremonial. [60] And in 1889 an article of the constitution granted freedom of belief and worship to all Japanese subjects, without prejudice to peace, order, and loyalty.

In India the religious situation is quite different. I

think it is without parallel elsewhere in the world. Here we are at the fountain-head of metaphysical theology, of ideas that have flowed eastward and westward across Asia. And here, also, we find every species of primitive polytheism, unlimited and multitudinous; we can survey a confused medley of divinities, of rites and worships incessantly varied by popular whim and fancy, by accidents, and by the pressure of changing circumstances. Hinduism permits any doctrine to be taught, any sort of theory to be held regarding the divine attributes and manifestations, the forces of nature, or the mysterious functions of mind or body. Its tenets have never been circumscribed by a creed; its free play has never been checked or regulated by State authority.

Now, at first sight, this is not unlike the popular polytheism of the ancient world, before the triumph of Christianity. There are passages in St. Augustine's *Civitas Dei*, describing the worship of the unconverted pagans among whom he lived, that might have been written yesterday by a Christian bishop in India. And we might ask why all this polytheism was not swept out from among such a highly intellectual people as the Indians, with their restless pursuit of divine knowledge, by some superior faith, by some central idea. Undoubtedly the material and moral conditions, and the course of events which combine to stamp a particular form of religion upon any great people, are complex and manifold; but into this inquiry I cannot go. I can only point out that the institution of caste has riveted down Hindu society into innumerable divisions upon a general religious basis, and that the sacred books separated the Hindu theologians into different schools, preventing uniformity of worship or of

creed. And it is to be observed that these books are not historical; they give no account of the rise and spread of a faith. The Hindu theologian would say, in the words of an early Christian father, that the objects of divine knowledge are not historical, that they can only be apprehended intellectually, that within experience there is no reality. And the fact that Brahmanism has no authentic inspired narrative, that it is the only great religion not concentrated round the life and teachings of a person, may be one reason why it has remained diffuse and incoherent. All ways of salvation are still open to the Hindus; the canon of their scripture has never been authoritatively closed. New doctrines, new sects, fresh theological controversies, are incessantly modifying and superseding the old scholastic interpretations of the mysteries, for Hindus, like Asiatics everywhere, are still in that condition of mind when a fresh spiritual message is eagerly received. Vishnu and Siva are the realistic abstractions of the understanding from objects of sense, from observation of the destructive and reproductive operations of nature; they represent among educated men separate systems of worship which, again, are parted into different schools or theories regarding the proper ways and methods of attaining to spiritual emancipation. Yet the higher philosophy and the lower polytheism are not mutually antagonistic; on the contrary, they support each other; for Brahmanism accepts and allies itself with the popular forms of idolatry, treating them as outward visible signs of an inner truth, as indications of all-pervading pantheism. The peasant and the philosopher reverence the same deity, perform the same rite; they do not mean the same thing, but they do not quarrel on this account. Nevertheless, it is

certainly remarkable that this inorganic medley of ideas and worships should have resisted for so many ages the invasion and influence of the coherent faiths that have won ascendancy, complete or dominant, on either side of India, the west and the east; it has thrown off Buddhism, it has withstood the triumphant advance of Islam, it has as yet been little affected by Christianity. Probably the political history of India may account in some degree for its religious disorganisation. I may propound the theory that no religion has obtained supremacy, or at any rate definite establishment, in any great country except with the active co-operation, by force or favour, of the rulers, whether by conquest, as in Western Asia, or by patronage and protection, as in China. The direct influence and recognition of the State has been an indispensable instrument of religious consolidation. But until the nineteenth century the whole of India, from the mountains to the sea, had never been united under one stable government; the country was for ages parcelled out into separate principalities, incessantly contending for territory. And even the Moghul empire, which was always at war upon its frontiers, never acquired universal dominion. The Moghul emperors, except Aurungzeb, were by no means bigoted Mohammedans; and their obvious interest was to abstain from meddling with Hinduism. Yet the irruption of Islam into India seems rather to have stimulated religious activity among the Hindus, for during the Mohammedan period various spiritual teachers arose, new sects were formed, and theological controversies divided the intellectual classes. To these movements the Mohammedan governments must have been for a long time indifferent; and among the new sects the principle of

mutual toleration was universal. Towards the close of the Moghul empire, however, Hinduism, provoked by the bigotry of the Emperor Aurungzeb, became a serious element of political disturbance. Attempts to suppress forcibly the followers of Nanak Guru, and the execution of one spiritual leader of the Sikhs, turned the Sikhs from inoffensive quietists into fanatical warriors; and by the eighteenth century they were in open revolt against the empire. They were, I think, the most formidable embodiment of militant Hinduism known to Indian history. By that time, also, the Marathas in South-West India were declaring themselves the champions of the Hindu religion against the Mohammedan oppression; and to the Sikhs and Marathas the dislocation of the Moghul empire may be very largely attributed. We have here a notable example of the dynamic power upon politics of revolts that are generated by religious fermentation, and a proof of the strength that can be exerted by a pacific inorganic polytheism in self-defence, when ambitious rebels proclaim themselves defenders of a faith. The Marathas and the Sikhs founded the only rulerships whose armies could give the English serious trouble in the field during the nineteenth century.

On the whole, however, when we survey the history of India, and compare it with that of Western Asia, we may say that although the Hindus are perhaps the most intensely religious people in the world, Hinduism has never been, like Christianity, Islam, and to some extent Buddhism, a religion established by the State. Nor has it suffered much from the State's power. It seems strange, indeed, that Mohammedanism, a compact proselytising faith, closely united with the civil rulership, should have so slightly modified, during seven centuries of

dominion, this infinitely divided polytheism. Of course, Mohammedanism made many converts, and annexed a considerable number of the population—yet the effect was rather to stiffen than to loosen the bonds that held the mass of the people to their traditional divinities, and to the institution of castes. Moreover the antagonism of the two religions, the popular and the dynastic, was a perpetual element of weakness in a Mohammedan empire. In India polytheism could not be crushed, as in Western Asia, by Islam; neither could it be controlled and administered, as in Eastern Asia; yet the Moghul emperors managed to keep on good terms with it, so long as they adhered to a policy of toleration.

To the Mohammedan empire has succeeded another foreign dominion, which practises not merely tolerance but complete religious neutrality. Looking back over the period of a hundred years, from 1757 to 1857, during which the British dominion was gradually extended over India, we find that the British empire, like the Roman, met with little or no opposition from religion. Hindus and Mohammedans, divided against each other, were equally willing to form alliances with, and to fight on the side of, the foreigner who kept religion entirely outside politics. And the British Government, when established, has so carefully avoided offence to caste or creed that on one great occasion only, the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857, have the smouldering fires of credulous fanaticism broken out against our rule.

I believe the British-Indian position of complete religious neutrality to be unique among Asiatic governments, and almost unknown in Europe. The Anglo-Indian sovereignty does not identify itself with the interests of a single faith, as in Mohammedan

kingdoms, nor does it recognise a definite ecclesiastical jurisdiction in things spiritual, as in Catholic Europe. Still less has our Government adopted the Chinese system of placing the State at the head of different rituals for the purpose of controlling them all, and proclaiming an ethical code to be binding on all denominations. The British ruler, while avowedly Christian, ignores all religions administratively, interfering only to suppress barbarous or indecent practices when the advance of civilisation has rendered them obsolete. Public instruction, so far as the State is concerned, is entirely secular; the universal law is the only authorised guardian of morals; to expound moral duties officially, as things apart from religion, has been found possible in China, but not in India. But the Chinese Government can issue edicts enjoining public morality and rationalism because the State takes part in the authorised worship of the people, and the emperor assumes pontifical office. The British Government in India, on the other hand, disowns official connection with any religion. It places all its measures on the sole ground of reasonable expediency, of efficient administration; it seeks to promote industry and commerce, and material civilisation generally; it carefully avoids giving any religious colour whatever to its public acts; and the result is that our Government, notwithstanding its sincere professions of absolute neutrality, is sometimes suspected of regarding all religion with cynical indifference, possibly even with hostility.

Moreover, religious neutrality, though it is right, just, and the only policy which the English in India could possibly adopt, has certain political disadvantages. The two most potent influences which

still unite and divide the Asiatic peoples, are race and religion; a Government which represents both these forces, as, for instance, in Afghanistan, has deep roots in a country. A dynasty that can rely on the support of an organised religion, and stands forth as the champion of a dominant faith, has a powerful political power at its command. The Turkish empire, weak, ill-governed, repeatedly threatened with dismemberment, embarrassed internally by the conflict of races, has been preserved for the last hundred years by its incorporation with the faith of Islam, by the Sultan's claim to the Caliphate. To attack it is to assault a religious citadel; it is the bulwark on the west of Mohammedan Asia, as Afghanistan is the frontier fortress of Islam on the east. A leading Turkish politician has very recently said: 'It is in Islam pure and simple that lies the strength of Turkey as an independent State; and if the Sultan's position as religious chief were encroached upon by constitutional reforms, the whole Ottoman empire would be in danger.' We have to remember that for ages religious enthusiasm has been, and still is in some parts of Asia, one of the strongest incentives to military ardour and fidelity to a standard on the battlefield. Identity of creed has often proved more effective, in war, than territorial patriotism; it has surmounted racial and tribal antipathies; while religious antagonism is still in many countries a standing impediment to political consolidation.

When, therefore, we survey the history of religions, though this sketch is necessarily very imperfect and inadequate, we find Mohammedanism still identified with the fortunes of Mohammedan rulers; and we know that for many centuries the relations of Christianity to European States have been very close.

In Europe the ardent perseverance and intellectual superiority of great theologians, of ecclesiastical statesmen supported by autocratic rulers, have hardened and beat out into form doctrines and liturgies that it was at one time criminal to disregard or deny, dogmatic articles of faith that were enforced by law. By these processes orthodoxy emerged compact, sharply defined, irresistible, out of the strife and confusion of heresies; the early record of the churches has pages spotted with tears and stained with blood. But at the present time European States seem inclined to dissolve their alliance with the churches, and to arrange a kind of judicial separation between the altar and the throne, though in very few cases has a divorce been made absolute. No State, in civilised countries, now assists in the propagation of doctrine; and ecclesiastical influence is of very little service to a Government. The civil law, indeed, makes continual encroachments on the ecclesiastical domain, questions its authority, and usurps its jurisdiction. Modern erudition criticises the historical authenticity of the scriptures, philosophy tries to undermine the foundations of belief; the governments find small interest in propping up edifices that are shaken by internal controversies. In Mohammedan Asia, on the other hand, the connection between the orthodox faith and the States is firmly maintained, for the solidarity is so close that disruptions would be dangerous, and a Mohammedan rulership over a majority of unbelievers would still be perilously unstable.

I have thus endeavoured to show that the historical relations of Buddhism and Hinduism to the State have been in the past, and are still in the present time, very different from the situation in the West. There has always existed, I submit, one essential

distinction of principle. Religious propagation, forcible conversion, aided and abetted by the executive power of the State, and by laws against heresy or dissent, have been defended in the West by the doctors of Islam, and formerly by Christian theologians, by the axiom that all means are justifiable for extirpating false teachers who draw souls to perdition. The right and duty of the civil magistrate to maintain truth, in regard to which Bossuet declared all Christians to be unanimous, and which is still affirmed in the Litany of our Church, is a principle from which no Government, three centuries ago, dissented in theory, though in practice it needed cautious handling. I do not think that this principle ever found its way into Hinduism or Buddhism; I doubt, that is to say, whether the civil government was at any time called in to undertake or assist propagation of those religions as part of its duty. Nor do I know that the States of Eastern Asia, beyond the pale of Islam, claim or exercise the right of insisting on conformance to particular doctrines, because they are true. The erratic manifestations of the religious spirit throughout Asia, constantly breaking out in various forms and figures, in thaumaturgy, mystical inspiration, in orgies and secret societies, have always disquieted these Asiatic States, yet, so far as I can ascertain, the employment of force to repress them has always been justified on administrative or political grounds, as distinguishable from theological motives pure and simple. Sceptics and agnostics have been often marked out for persecution in the West, but I do not think that they have been molested in India, China, or Japan, where they abound, because they seldom meddle with politics.[61] It may perhaps be admitted, however, that a Government which undertakes to

regulate impartially all rites and worship among its subjects is at a disadvantage by comparison with a Government that acts as the representative of a great church or an exclusive faith. It bears the sole undivided responsibility for measures of repression; it cannot allege divine command or even the obligation of punishing impiety for the public good.

To conclude. In Asiatic States the superintendence of religious affairs is an integral attribute of the sovereignty, which no Government, except the English in India, has yet ventured to relinquish; and even in India this is not done without some risk, for religion and politics are still intermingled throughout the world; they act and react upon each other everywhere. They are still far from being disentangled in our own country, where the theory that a Government in its collective character must profess and even propagate some religion has not been very long obsolete. It was maintained seventy years ago by a great statesman who was already rising into prominence, by Mr. Gladstone. The text of Mr. Gladstone's argument, in his book on the relations of the State with the Church, was Hooker's saying, that the religious duty of kings is the weightiest part of their sovereignty; while Macaulay, in criticising this position, insisted that the main, if not the only, duty of a Government, to which all other objects must be subordinate, was the protection of persons and property. These two eminent politicians were, in fact, the champions of the ancient and the modern ideas of sovereignty; for the theory that a State is bound to propagate the religion that it professes was for many centuries the accepted theory of all Christian rulerships, though I think it now survives only in Mohammedan kingdoms.

As the influence of religion in the sphere of politics declines, the State becomes naturally less concerned with the superintendence of religion; and the tendency of constitutional Governments seems to be towards abandoning it. The States that have completely dissolved connection with ecclesiastical institutions are the two great republics, the United States of America and France. We can discern at this moment a movement towards constitutional reforms in Mohammedan Asia, in Turkey, and Persia, and if they succeed it will be most interesting to observe the effect which liberal reforms will produce upon the relation of Mohammedan Governments with the dominant faith, and on which side the religious teachers will be arrayed. It is certain, at any rate, that for a long time to come religion will continue to be a potent factor in Asiatic politics; and I may add that the reconciliation of civil with religious liberty is one of the most arduous of the many problems to be solved by the promoters of national unity.

FOOTNOTES:

[58] Delivered as President of the Congress for the History of Religions, September 1908.—*Fortnightly Review*, November 1908.

[59] 'Cujus regio ejus religio.'

[60] *The Development of Religion in Japan*, G. W. Knox, 1907.

[61] 'Atheism did never disturb States' (Bacon).

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