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ESSAYS IN LITTLE.

by
ANDREW LANG.

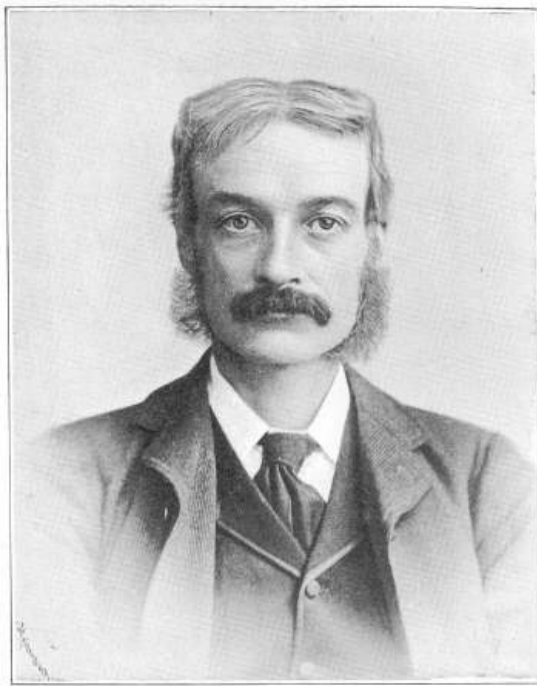
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7. with the truly given
A. L. Aug.

PREFACE

Of the following essays, five are new, and were written for this volume. They are the paper on Mr. R. L. Stevenson, the "Letter to a Young Journalist," the study of Mr. Kipling, the note on Homer, and "The Last Fashionable Novel." The article on the author of "Oh, no! we never mention Her," appeared in the *New York Sun*, and was suggested by Mr. Dana, the editor of that journal. The papers on Thackeray and Dickens were published in *Good Words*, that on Dumas appeared in *Scribner's Magazine*, that on M. Théodore de Banville in *The New Quarterly Review*. The other essays were originally written for a newspaper "Syndicate." They have been re-cast, augmented, and, to a great extent, re-written.

A. L.

ALEXANDRE DUMAS

Alexandre Dumas is a writer, and his life is a topic, of which his devotees never weary. Indeed, one lifetime is not long enough wherein to tire of them. The long days and years of Hilpa and Shalum, in Addison—the antediluvian age, when a picnic lasted for half a century and a courtship for two hundred years, might have sufficed for an exhaustive study of Dumas. No such study have I to offer, in the brief seasons of our perishable days. I own that I have not read, and do not, in the circumstances, expect to read, all of Dumas, nor even the greater part of his thousand volumes. We only dip a cup in that sparkling spring, and drink, and go on,—we cannot hope to exhaust the fountain, nor to carry away with us the well itself. It is but a word of gratitude and delight that we can say to the heroic and indomitable master, only an *ave* of friendship that we can call across the bourne to the shade of the Porthos of fiction. That his works (his best works) should be even still more widely circulated than they are; that the young should read them, and learn frankness, kindness, generosity—should esteem the tender heart, and the gay, invincible wit; that the old should read them again, and find forgetfulness of trouble, and taste the anodyne of dreams, that is what we desire.

Dumas said of himself ("Mémoires," v. 13) that when he was young he tried several times to read forbidden books—books that are sold *sous le manteau*. But he never got farther than the tenth page, in the

"scrofulous French novel
On gray paper with blunt type;"

he never made his way so far as

"the woful sixteenth print."

"I had, thank God, a natural sentiment of delicacy; and thus, out of my six hundred volumes (in 1852) there are not four which the most scrupulous mother may not give to her daughter." Much later, in 1864, when the *Censure* threatened one of his plays, he wrote to the Emperor: "Of my twelve hundred volumes there is not one which a girl in our most modest quarter, the Faubourg Saint-Germain, may not be allowed to read." The mothers of the Faubourg, and mothers in general, may not take Dumas exactly at his word. There is a passage, for example, in the story of Miladi ("Les Trois Mousquetaires") which a parent or guardian may well think undesirable reading for youth. But compare it with the original passage in the "Mémoires" of D'Artagnan! It has passed through a medium, as Dumas himself declared, of natural delicacy and good taste. His enormous popularity, the widest in the world of letters, owes absolutely nothing to prurience or curiosity. The air which he breathes is a healthy air, is the open air; and that by his own choice, for he had every temptation to seek another kind of vogue, and every opportunity.

Two anecdotes are told of Dumas' books, one by M. Edmond About, the other by his own son, which show, in brief space, why this novelist is so beloved, and why he deserves our affection and esteem. M. Villaud, a railway engineer who had lived much in Italy, Russia, and Spain, was the person whose enthusiasm finally secured a statue for Dumas. He felt so much gratitude to the unknown friend of lonely nights in long exiles, that he could not be happy till his gratitude found a permanent expression. On returning to France he went to consult M. Victor Borie, who told him this tale about George Sand. M. Borie chanced to visit the famous novelist just before her death, and found Dumas' novel, "Les Quarante Cinq" (one of the cycle about the Valois kings) lying on her table. He expressed his wonder that she was reading it for the first time.

"For the first time!—why, this is the fifth or sixth time I have read 'Les Quarante Cinq,' and the others. When I am ill, anxious, melancholy, tired, discouraged, nothing helps me against moral or physical troubles like a book of Dumas." Again, M. About says that M. Sarcey was in the same class at school with a little Spanish boy. The child was homesick; he could not eat, he could not sleep; he was almost in a decline.

"You want to see your mother?" said young Sarcey.

"No: she is dead."

"Your father, then?"

"No: he used to beat me."

"Your brothers and sisters?"

"I have none."

"Then why are you so eager to be back in Spain?"

"To finish a book I began in the holidays."

"And what was its name?"

"'Los Tres Mosqueteros!'"

He was homesick for "The Three Musketeers," and they cured him easily.

That is what Dumas does. He gives courage and life to old age, he charms away the half-conscious *nostalgie*, the *Heimweh*, of childhood. We are all homesick, in the dark days and black towns, for the land of blue skies and brave adventures in forests, and in lonely inns, on the battlefield, in the prison, on the desert isle. And then Dumas comes, and, like Argive Helen, in Homer, he casts a drug into the wine, the drug nepenthe, "that puts all evil out of mind." Does any one suppose that when George Sand was old and tired, and near her death, she would have found this anodyne, and this stimulant, in the novels of M. Tolstoï, M. Dostoiefsky, M. Zola, or any of the "scientific" observers whom we are actually requested to hail as the masters of a new art, the art of the future? Would they make her laugh, as Chicot does? make her forget, as Porthos, Athos, and Aramis do? take her away from the heavy, familiar time, as the enchanter Dumas takes us? No; let it be enough for these new authors to be industrious, keen, accurate, *précieux*, pitiful, charitable, veracious; but give us high spirits now and then, a light heart, a sharp sword, a fair wench, a good horse, or even that old Gascon rouncy of D'Artagnan's. Like the good Lord James Douglas, we had liefer hear the lark sing over moor and down, with Chicot, than listen to the starved-mouse squeak in the *bouge* of Thérèse Raquin, with M. Zola. Not that there is not a place and an hour for him, and others like him; but they are not, if you please, to have the whole world to themselves, and all the time, and all the praise; they are not to turn the world into a dissecting-room, time into tedium, and the laurels of Scott and Dumas into crowns of nettles.

There is no complete life of Alexandre Dumas. The age has not produced the intellectual athlete who can gird himself up for that labour. One of the worst books that ever was written, if it can be said to be written, is, I think, the English attempt at a biography of Dumas. Style, grammar, taste, feeling, are all bad. The author does not so much write a life as draw up an indictment. The spirit of his work is grudging, sneering, contemptuous, and pitifully peddling. The great charge is that Dumas was a humbug, that he was not the author of his own books, that his books were written by "collaborators"—above all, by M. Maquet. There is no doubt that Dumas had a regular system of collaboration, which he never concealed. But whereas Dumas could turn out

books that *live*, whoever his assistants were, could any of his assistants write books that live, without Dumas? One might as well call any barrister in good practice a thief and an impostor because he has juniors to “devil” for him, as make charges of this kind against Dumas. He once asked his son to help him; the younger Alexandre declined. “It is worth a thousand a year, and you have only to make objections,” the sire urged; but the son was not to be tempted. Some excellent novelists of to-day would be much better if they employed a friend to make objections. But, as a rule, the collaborator did much more. Dumas’ method, apparently, was first to talk the subject over with his *aide-de-camp*. This is an excellent practice, as ideas are knocked out, like sparks (an elderly illustration!), by the contact of minds. Then the young man probably made researches, put a rough sketch on paper, and supplied Dumas, as it were, with his “brief.” Then Dumas took the “brief” and wrote the novel. He gave it life, he gave it the spark (*l’étincelle*); and the story lived and moved.

It is true that he “took his own where he found it,” like Molère and that he took a good deal. In the gallery of an old country-house, on a wet day, I came once on the “Mémoires” of D’Artagnan, where they had lain since the family bought them in Queen Anne’s time. There were our old friends the Musketeers, and there were many of their adventures, told at great length and breadth. But how much more vivacious they are in Dumas! M. About repeats a story of Dumas and his ways of work. He met the great man at Marseilles, where, indeed, Alexandre chanced to be “on with the new love” before being completely “off with the old.” Dumas picked up M. About, literally lifted him in his embrace, and carried him off to see a play which he had written in three days. The play was a success; the supper was prolonged till three in the morning; M. About was almost asleep as he walked home, but Dumas was as fresh as if he had just got out of bed. “Go to sleep, old man,” he said: “I, who am only fifty-five, have three *feuilletons* to write, which must be posted to-morrow. If I have time I shall knock up a little piece for Montigny—the idea is running in my head.” So next morning M. About saw the three *feuilletons* made up for the post, and another packet addressed to M. Montigny: it was the play *L’Invitation à la Valse*, a chef-d’oeuvre! Well, the material had been prepared for Dumas. M. About saw one of his novels at Marseilles in the chrysalis. It was a stout copy-book full of paper, composed by a practised hand, on the master’s design. Dumas copied out each little leaf on a big leaf of paper, *en y semant l’esprit à pleines mains*. This was his method. As a rule, in collaboration, one man does the work while the other looks on. Is it likely that Dumas looked on? That was not the manner of Dumas. “Mirecourt and others,” M. About says, “have wept crocodile tears for the collaborators, the victims of his glory and his talent. But it is difficult to lament over the survivors (1884). The master neither took their money—for they are rich, nor their fame—for they are celebrated, nor their merit—for they had and still have plenty. And they never bewailed their fate: the reverse! The proudest congratulate themselves on having been at so good a school; and M. Auguste Maquet, the chief of them, speaks with real reverence and affection of his great friend.” And M. About writes “as one who had taken the master red-handed, and in the act of collaboration.” Dumas has a curious note on collaboration in his “Souvenirs Dramatiques.” Of the two men at work together, “one is always the dupe, and *he* is the man of talent.”

There is no biography of Dumas, but the small change of a biography exists in abundance. There are the many volumes of his “Mémoires,” there are all the tomes he wrote on his travels and adventures in Africa, Spain, Italy, Russia; the book he wrote on his beasts; the romance of *Ange Pitou*, partly autobiographical; and there are plenty of little studies by people who knew him. As to his “Mémoires,” as to all he wrote about himself, of course his imagination entered into the narrative. Like Scott, when he had a good story he liked to dress it up with a cocked hat and a sword. Did he perform all those astonishing and innumerable feats of strength, skill, courage, address, in revolutions, in voyages, in love, in war, in cookery? The narrative need not be taken “at the foot of the letter”; great as was his force and his courage, his fancy was greater still. There is no room for a biography of him here. His descent was noble on one side, with or without the bend sinister, which he said he would never have disclaimed, had it been his, but which he did not happen to inherit. On the other side he *may* have descended from kings; but, as in the case of “The Fair Cuban,” he must have added, “African, unfortunately.” Did his father perform these mythical feats of strength? did he lift up a horse between his legs while clutching a rafter with his hands? did he throw his regiment before him over a wall, as Guy Heavystone threw the mare which refused the leap (“Mémoires,” i. 122)? No doubt Dumas believed what he heard about this ancestor—in whom, perhaps, one may see a hint of the giant Porthos. In the Revolution and in the wars his father won the name of Monsieur de l’Humanité, because he made a bonfire of a guillotine; and of Horatius Cocles, because he held a pass as bravely as the Roman “in the brave days of old.”

This was a father to be proud of; and pluck, tenderness, generosity, strength, remained the favourite virtues of Dumas. These he preached and practised. They say he was generous before he was just; it is to be feared this was true, but he gave even more freely than he received. A regiment of seedy people sponged on him always; he could not listen to a tale of misery but he gave what he had, and sometimes left himself short of a dinner. He could not even turn a dog out of doors. At his Abbotsford, “Monte Cristo,” the gates were open to everybody but bailiffs. His dog asked other dogs to come and stay: twelve came, making thirteen in all. The old butler wanted to turn them adrift, and Dumas consented, and repented.

“Michel,” he said, “there are some expenses which a man’s social position and the character which he has had the ill-luck to receive from heaven force upon him. I don’t believe these dogs ruin me. Let them bide! But, in the interests of their own good luck, see they are not thirteen, an unfortunate number!”

"Monsieur, I'll drive one of them away."

"No, no, Michel; let a fourteenth come. These dogs cost me some three pounds a month," said Dumas. "A dinner to five or six friends would cost thrice as much, and, when they went home, they would say my wine was good, but certainly that my books were bad." In this fashion Dumas fared royally "to the dogs," and his Abbotsford ruined him as certainly as that other unhappy palace ruined Sir Walter. He, too, had his miscellaneous kennel; he, too, gave while he had anything to give, and, when he had nothing else, gave the work of his pen. Dumas tells how his big dog, Mouton once flew at him and bit one of his hands, while the other held the throat of the brute. "Luckily my hand, though small, is powerful; what it once holds it holds long—money excepted." He could not "haud a guid grip o' the gear." Neither Scott nor Dumas could shut his ears to a prayer or his pockets to a beggar, or his doors on whoever knocked at them.

"I might at least have asked him to dinner," Scott was heard murmuring, when some insufferable bore at last left Abbotsford, after wasting his time and nearly wearing out his patience. Neither man *preached* socialism; both practised it on the Aristotelian principle: the goods of friends are common, and men are our friends.

* * * * *

The death of Dumas' father, while the son was a child, left Madame Dumas in great poverty at Villers Cotterets. Dumas' education was sadly to seek. Like most children destined to be bookish, he taught himself to read very young: in Buffon, the Bible, and books of mythology. He knew all about Jupiter—like David Copperfield's Tom Jones, "a child's Jupiter, an innocent creature"—all about every god, goddess, fawn, dryad, nymph—and he never forgot this useful information. Dear Lemprière, thou art superseded; but how much more delightful thou art than the fastidious Smith or the learned Preller! Dumas had one volume of the "Arabian Nights," with Aladdin's lamp therein, the sacred lamp which he was to keep burning with a flame so brilliant and so steady. It is pleasant to know that, in his boyhood, this great romancer loved Virgil. "Little as is my Latin, I have ever adored Virgil: his tenderness for exiles, his melancholy vision of death, his foreboding of an unknown God, have always moved me; the melody of his verses charmed me most, and they lull me still between asleep and awake." School days did not last long: Madame Dumas got a little post—a licence to sell tobacco—and at fifteen Dumas entered a notary's office, like his great Scotch forerunner. He was ignorant of his vocation for the stage—Racine and Corneille fatigued him prodigiously—till he saw *Hamlet*: *Hamlet* diluted by Ducis. He had never heard of Shakespeare, but here was something he could appreciate. Here was "a profound impression, full of inexplicable emotion, vague desires, fleeting lights, that, so far, lit up only a chaos."

Oddly enough, his earliest literary essay was the translation of Bürger's "Lenore." Here, again, he encounters Scott; but Scott translated the ballad, and Dumas failed. *Les mortes vont vite!* the same refrain woke poetry in both the Frenchman and the Scotchman.

"Ha! ha! the Dead can ride with speed:
Dost fear to ride with me?"

So Dumas' literary career began with a defeat, but it was always a beginning. He had just failed with "Lenore," when Leuven asked him to collaborate in a play. He was utterly ignorant, he says; he had not succeeded in gallant efforts to read through "Gil Blas" and "Don Quixote." "To my shame," he writes, "the man has not been more fortunate with those masterpieces than the boy." He had not yet heard of Scott, Cooper, Goethe; he had heard of Shakespeare only as a barbarian. Other plays the boy wrote—failures, of course—and then Dumas poached his way to Paris, shooting partridges on the road, and paying the hotel expenses by his success in the chase. He was introduced to the great Talma: what a moment for Talma, had he known it! He saw the theatres. He went home, but returned to Paris, drew a small prize in a lottery, and sat next a gentleman at the play, a gentleman who read the rarest of Elzevirs, "Le Pastissier Français," and gave him a little lecture on Elzevirs in general. Soon this gentleman began to hiss the piece, and was turned out. He was Charles Nodier, and one of the anonymous authors of the play he was hissing! I own that this amusing chapter lacks verisimilitude. It reads as if Dumas had chanced to "get up" the subject of Elzevirs, and had fashioned his new knowledge into a little story. He could make a story out of anything—he "turned all to favour and to prettiness." Could I translate the whole passage, and print it here, it would be longer than this article; but, ah, how much more entertaining! For whatever Dumas did he did with such life, spirit, wit, he told it with such vivacity, that his whole career is one long romance of the highest quality. Lassagne told him he must read—must read Goethe, Scott, Cooper, Froissart, Joinville, Brantôme. He read them to some purpose. He entered the service of the Duc d'Orléans as a clerk, for he wrote a clear hand, and, happily, wrote at astonishing speed. He is said to have written a short play in a cottage where he went to rest for an hour or two after shooting all the morning. The practice in a notary's office stood him, as it stood Scott, in good stead. When a dog bit his hand he managed to write a volume without using his thumb. I have tried it, but forbear—in mercy to the printers. He performed wild feats of rapid caligraphy when a clerk under the Duc d'Orléans, and he wrote his plays in one "hand," his novels in another. The "hand" used in his dramas he acquired when, in days of poverty, he used to write in bed. To this habit he also attributed the *brutalité* of his earlier pieces, but there seems to be no good reason why a man should write like a brute because it is in bed that he writes.

In those days of small things he fought his first duel, and made a study of Fear and Courage. His

earliest impulse was to rush at danger; if he had to wait, he felt his courage oozing out at the tips of his fingers, like Bob Acres, but in the moment of peril he was himself again. In dreams he was a coward, because, as he argues, the natural man *is* a poltroon, and conscience, honour, all the spiritual and commanding part of our nature, goes to sleep in dreams. The animal terror asserts itself unchecked. It is a theory not without exceptions. In dreams one has plenty of conscience (at least that is my experience), though it usually takes the form of remorse. And in dreams one often affronts dangers which, in waking hours, one might probably avoid if one could.

* * * * *

Dumas' first play, an unimportant vaudeville, was acted in 1825. His first novels were also published then; he took part of the risk, and only four copies were sold. He afterward used the ideas in more mature works, as Mr. Sheridan Le Fanu employed three or four times (with perfect candour and fairness) the most curious incident in "Uncle Silas." Like Mr. Arthur Pendennis, Dumas at this time wrote poetry "up to" pictures and illustrations. It is easy, but seldom lucrative work. He translated a play of Schiller's into French verse, chiefly to gain command of that vehicle, for his heart was fixed on dramatic success. Then came the visit of Kean and other English actors to Paris. He saw the true *Hamlet*, and, for the first time on any stage, "the play of real passions." Emulation woke in him: a casual work of art led him to the story of Christina of Sweden, he wrote his play *Christine* (afterward reconstructed); he read it to Baron Taylor, who applauded; the Comédie Française accepted it, but a series of intrigues disappointed him, after all. His energy at this moment was extraordinary, for he was very poor, his mother had a stroke of paralysis, his bureau was always bullying and interfering with him. But nothing could snub this "force of nature," and he immediately produced his *Henri Trois*, the first romantic drama of France. This had an instant and noisy success, and the first night of the play he spent at the theatre, and at the bedside of his unconscious mother. The poor lady could not even understand whence the flowers came that he laid on her couch, the flowers thrown to the young man—yesterday unknown, and to-day the most famous of contemporary names. All this tale of triumph, checkered by enmities and diversified by duels, Dumas tells with the vigour and wit of his novels. He is his own hero, and loses nothing in the process; but the other characters—Taylor, Nodier, the Duc d'Orléans, the spiteful press-men, the crabbed old officials—all live like the best of the persons in his tales. They call Dumas vain: he had reason to be vain, and no candid or generous reader will be shocked by his pleasant, frank, and artless enjoyment of himself and of his adventures. Oddly enough, they are small-minded and small-hearted people who are most shocked by what they call "vanity" in the great. Dumas' delight in himself and his doings is only the flower of his vigorous existence, and in his "Mémoires," at least, it is as happy and encouraging as his laugh, or the laugh of Porthos; it is a kind of radiance, in which others, too, may bask and enjoy themselves. And yet it is resented by tiny scribblers, frozen in their own chill self-conceit.

There is nothing incredible (if modern researches are accurate) in the stories he tells of his own success in Hypnotism, as it is called now, Mesmerism or Magnetism as it was called then. Who was likely to possess these powers, if not this good-humoured natural force? "I believe that, by aid of magnetism, a bad man might do much mischief. I doubt whether, by help of magnetism, a good man can do the slightest good," he says, probably with perfect justice. His dramatic success fired Victor Hugo, and very pleasant it is to read Dumas' warm-hearted praise of that great poet. Dumas had no jealousy—no more than Scott. As he believed in no success without talent, so he disbelieved in genius which wins no success. "Je ne crois pas au talent ignoré, au génie inconnu, moi." Genius he saluted wherever he met it, but was incredulous about invisible and inaudible genius; and I own to sharing his scepticism. People who complain of Dumas' vanity may be requested to observe that he seems just as "vain" of Hugo's successes, or of Scribe's, as of his own, and just as much delighted by them.

He was now struck, as he walked on the boulevard one day, by the first idea of *Antony*—an idea which, to be fair, seems rather absurd than tragic, to some tastes. "A lover, caught with a married woman, kills her to save her character, and dies on the scaffold." Here is indeed a part to tear a cat in!

* * * * *

The performances of M. Dumas during the Revolution of 1830, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of Alexandre the Great? But they were not literary excellences which he then displayed, and we may leave this king-maker to hover, "like an eagle, above the storms of anarchy."

Even to sketch his later biography is beyond our province. In 1830 he had forty years to run, and he filled the cup of the Hours to the brim with activity and adventure. His career was one of unparalleled production, punctuated by revolutions, voyages, exiles, and other intervals of repose. The tales he tells of his prowess in 1830, and with Garibaldi, seem credible to me, and are borne out, so far, by the narrative of M. Maxime Ducamp, who met him at Naples, in the Garibaldian camp. Like Mr. Jingle, in "Pickwick," he "banged the field-piece, twanged the lyre," and was potting at the foes of the republic with a double-barrelled gun, when he was not composing plays, romances, memoirs, criticisms. He has told the tale of his adventures with the Comédie Française, where the actors laughed at his *Antony*, and where Madame Mars and he quarrelled and made it up again. His plays often won an extravagant success; his novels—his great novels, that is—made all Europe his friend. He gained large sums of money, which flowed out of his fingers, though it is said by some that his Abbotsford, Monte Cristo, was no more a

palace than the villa which a retired tradesman builds to shelter his old age. But the money disappeared as fast as if Monte Cristo had really been palatial, and worthy of the fantasy of a Nero. He got into debt, fled to Belgium, returned, founded the *Mousquetaire*, a literary paper of the strangest and most shiftless kind. In "Alexandre Dumas à la Maison d'Or," M. Philibert Audebrand tells the tale of this Micawber of newspapers. Everything went into it, good or bad, and the name of Dumas was expected to make all current coin. For Dumas, unluckily, was as prodigal of his name as of his gold, and no reputation could bear the drafts he made on his celebrity. His son says, in the preface to *Le Fils Naturel*: "Tragedy, dramas, history, romance, comedy, travel, you cast all of them in the furnace and the mould of your brain, and you peopled the world of fiction with new creations. The newspaper, the book, the theatre, burst asunder, too narrow for your puissant shoulders; you fed France, Europe, America with your works; you made the wealth of publishers, translators, plagiarists; printers and copyists toiled after you in vain. In the fever of production you did not always try and prove the metal which you employed, and sometimes you tossed into the furnace whatever came to your hand. The fire made the selection: what was your own is bronze, what was not yours vanished in smoke."

The simile is noble and worthy of the Cyclopean craftsman, Dumas. His great works endured; the plays which renewed the youth of the French stage, the novels which Thackeray loved to praise, these remain, and we trust they may always remain, to the delight of mankind and for the sorrow of prigs.

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So much has been written of Dumas' novels that criticism can hardly hope to say more that is both new and true about them. It is acknowledged that, in such a character as Henri III., Dumas made history live, as magically as Scott revived the past in his Louis XI., or Balfour of Burley. It is admitted that Dumas' good tales are told with a vigour and life which rejoice the heart; that his narrative is never dull, never stands still, but moves with a freedom of adventure which perhaps has no parallel. He may fall short of the humour, the kindly wisdom, the genial greatness of Sir Walter at his best, and he has not that supernatural touch, that tragic grandeur, which Scott inherits from Homer and from Shakespeare. In another Homeric quality, *χαρμη*, as Homer himself calls it, in the "delight of battle" and the spirit of the fray, Scott and Dumas are alike masters. Their fights and the fights in the Icelandic sagas are the best that have ever been drawn by mortal man. When swords are aloft, in siege or on the greensward, or in the midnight chamber where an ambush is laid, Scott and Dumas are indeed themselves. The steel rings, the bucklers clash, the parry and lunge pass and answer too swift for the sight. If Dumas has not, as he certainly has not, the noble philosophy and kindly knowledge of the heart which are Scott's, he is far more swift, more witty, more diverting. He is not prolix, his style is not involved, his dialogue is as rapid and keen as an assault at arms. His favourite virtues and graces, we repeat it, are loyalty, friendship, gaiety, generosity, courage, beauty, and strength. He is himself the friend of the big, stupid, excellent Porthos; of Athos, the noble and melancholy swordsman of sorrow; of D'Artagnan, the indomitable, the trusty, the inexhaustible in resource; but his heart is never on the side of the shifty Aramis, with all his beauty, dexterity, bravery, and brilliance. The brave Bussy, and the chivalrous, the doomed La Mole, are more dear to him; and if he embellishes their characters, giving them charms and virtues that never were theirs, history loses nothing, and romance and we are the gainers. In all he does, at his best, as in the "Chevalier d'Harmenthal," he has movement, kindness, courage, and gaiety. His philosophy of life is that old philosophy of the sagas and of Homer. Let us enjoy the movement of the fray, the faces of fair women, the taste of good wine; let us welcome life like a mistress, let us welcome death like a friend, and with a jest—if death comes with honour.

Dumas is no pessimist. "Heaven has made but one drama for man—the world," he writes, "and during these three thousand years mankind has been hissing it." It is certain that, if a moral censorship could have prevented it, this great drama of mortal passions would never have been licensed, at all, never performed. But Dumas, for one, will not hiss it, but applauds with all his might—a charmed spectator, a fortunate actor in the eternal piece, where all the men and women are only players. You hear his manly laughter, you hear his mighty hands approving, you see the tears he sheds when he had "slain Porthos"—great tears like those of Pantagruel.

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His may not be the best, nor the ultimate philosophy, but it *is* a philosophy, and one of which we may some day feel the want. I read the stilted criticisms, the pedantic carplings of some modern men who cannot write their own language, and I gather that Dumas is out of date. There is a new philosophy of doubts and delicacies, of dallings and refinements, of half-hearted lookers-on, desiring and fearing some new order of the world. Dumas does not dally nor doubt: he takes his side, he rushes into the smoke, he strikes his foe; but there is never an unkind word on his lip, nor a grudging thought in his heart.

It may be said that Dumas is not a master of words and phrases, that he is not a *raffiné* of expression, nor a jeweller of style. When I read the maunderings, the stilted and staggering sentences, the hesitating phrases, the far-sought and dear-bought and worthless word-juggles; the sham scientific verbiage, the native pedantries of many modern so-called "stylists," I rejoice that Dumas was not one of these. He told a plain tale, in the language suited to a plain tale, with abundance of wit and gaiety, as in the reflections of his Chicot, as in all his dialogues. But he did not gnaw the end of his pen in search of some word that nobody had ever used in this or that connection before. The right word came to him, the simple straightforward phrase. Epithet-

hunting may be a pretty sport, and the bag of the epithet-hunter may contain some agreeable epigrams and rare specimens of style; but a plain tale of adventure, of love and war, needs none of this industry, and is even spoiled by inopportune diligence. Speed, directness, lucidity are the characteristics of Dumas' style, and they are exactly the characteristics which his novels required. Scott often failed, his most loyal admirers may admit, in these essentials; but it is rarely that Dumas fails, when he is himself and at his best.

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In spite of his heedless education, Dumas had true critical qualities, and most admired the best things. We have already seen how he writes about Shakespeare, Virgil, Goethe, Scott. But it may be less familiarly known that this burly man-of-all-work, ignorant as he was of Greek, had a true and keen appreciation of Homer. Dumas declares that he only thrice criticised his contemporaries in an unfavourable sense, and as one wishful to find fault. The victims were Casimir Delavigne, Scribe, and Ponsard. On each occasion Dumas declares that, after reflecting, he saw that he was moved by a little personal pique, not by a disinterested love of art. He makes his confession with a rare nobility of candour; and yet his review of Ponsard is worthy of him. M. Ponsard, who, like Dumas, was no scholar, wrote a play styled *Ulysse*, and borrowed from the Odyssey. Dumas follows Ponsard, Odyssey in hand, and while he proves that the dramatist failed to understand Homer, proves that he himself was, in essentials, a capable Homeric critic. Dumas understands that far-off heroic age. He lives in its life and sympathises with its temper. Homer and he are congenial; across the great gulf of time they exchange smiles and a salute.

"Oh! ancient Homer, dear and good and noble, I am minded now and again to leave all and translate thee—I, who have never a word of Greek—so empty and so dismal are the versions men make of thee, in verse or in prose."

How Dumas came to divine Homer, as it were, through a language he knew not, who shall say? He *did* divine him by a natural sympathy of excellence, and his chapters on the "Ulysse" of Ponsard are worth a wilderness of notes by learned and most un-Homeric men. For, indeed, who can be less like the heroic minstrel than the academic philologist?

This universality deserves note. The Homeric student who takes up a volume of Dumas at random finds that he is not only Homeric naturally, but that he really knows his Homer. What did he nor know? His rapidity in reading must have been as remarkable as his pace with the pen. As M. Blaze de Bury says: "Instinct, experience, memory were all his; he sees at a glance, he compares in a flash, he understands without conscious effort, he forgets nothing that he has read." The past and present are photographed imperishably on his brain, he knows the manners of all ages and all countries, the names of all the arms that men have used, all the garments they have worn, all the dishes they have tasted, all the terms of all professions, from swordsmanship to coach-building. Other authors have to wait, and hunt for facts; nothing stops Dumas: he knows and remembers everything. Hence his rapidity, his facility, his positive delight in labour: hence it came that he might be heard, like Dickens, laughing while he worked.

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This is rather a eulogy than a criticism of Dumas. His faults are on the surface, visible to all men. He was not only rapid, he was hasty, he was inconsistent; his need of money as well as his love of work made him put his hand to dozens of perishable things. A beginner, entering the forest of Dumas' books, may fail to see the trees for the wood. He may be counselled to select first the cycle of d'Artagnan—the "Musketeers," "Twenty Years After," and the "Vicomte de Bragelonne." Mr. Stevenson's delightful essay on the last may have sent many readers to it; I confess to preferring the youth of the "Musketeers" to their old age. Then there is the cycle of the Valois, whereof the "Dame de Monsereau" is the best—perhaps the best thing Dumas ever wrote. The "Tulipe Noire" is a novel girls may read, as Thackeray said, with confidence. The "Chevalier d'Harmenthal" is nearly (not quite) as good as "Quentin Durward." "Monte Cristo" has the best beginning—and loses itself in the sands. The novels on the Revolution are not among the most alluring: the famed device "L. P. D." (*lilia pedibus destrue*) has the bad luck to suggest "London Parcels Delivery." That is an accident, but the Revolution is in itself too terrible and pitiful, and too near us (on both sides!) for fiction.

On Dumas' faults it has been no pleasure to dwell. In a recent work I find the Jesuit Le Moyne quoted, saying about Charles V.: "What need that future ages should be made acquainted so religious an Emperor was not always chaste!" The same reticence allures one in regard to so delightful an author as Dumas. He who had enriched so many died poor; he who had told of conquering France, died during the Terrible Year. But he could forgive, could appreciate, the valour of an enemy. Of the Scotch at Waterloo he writes: "It was not enough to kill them: we had to push them down." Dead, they still stood "shoulder to shoulder." In the same generous temper an English cavalry officer wrote home, after Waterloo, that he would gladly have given the rest of his life to have served, on that day, in our infantry or in the French cavalry. These are the spirits that warm the heart, that make us all friends; and to the great, the brave, the generous Dumas we cry, across the years and across the tomb, our *Ave atque vale!*

Perhaps the first quality in Mr. Stevenson's works, now so many and so various, which strikes a reader, is the buoyancy, the survival of the child in him. He has told the world often, in prose and verse, how vivid are his memories of his own infancy. This retention of childish recollections he shares, no doubt, with other people of genius: for example, with George Sand, whose legend of her own infancy is much more entertaining, and perhaps will endure longer, than her novels. Her youth, like Scott's and like Mr. Stevenson's, was passed all in fantasy: in playing at being some one else, in the invention of imaginary characters, who were living to her, in the fabrication of endless unwritten romances. Many persons, who do not astonish the world by their genius, have lived thus in their earliest youth. But, at a given moment, the fancy dies out of them: this often befalls imaginative boys in their first year at school. "Many are called, few chosen"; but it may be said with probable truth, that there has never been a man of genius in letters, whose boyhood was not thus fantastic, "an isle of dreams." We know how Scott and De Quincey inhabited airy castles; and Gillies tells us, though Lockhart does not, that Scott, in manhood, was occasionally so lost in thought, that he knew not where he was nor what he was doing.

The peculiarity of Mr. Stevenson is not only to have been a fantastic child, and to retain, in maturity, that fantasy ripened into imagination: he has also kept up the habit of dramatising everything, of playing, half consciously, many parts, of making the world "an unsubstantial fairy place." This turn of mind it is that causes his work occasionally to seem somewhat freakish. Thus, in the fogs and horrors of London, he plays at being an Arabian tale-teller, and his "New Arabian Nights" are a new kind of romanticism—Oriental, freakish, like the work of a changeling. Indeed, this curious genius, springing from a family of Scottish engineers, resembles nothing so much as one of the fairy children, whom the ladies of Queen Proserpina's court used to leave in the cradles of Border keeps or of peasants' cottages. Of the Scot he has little but the power of touching us with a sense of the supernatural, and a decided habit of moralising; for no Scot of genius has been more austere with Robert Burns. On the other hand, one element of Mr. Stevenson's ethical disquisitions is derived from his dramatic habit. His optimism, his gay courage, his habit of accepting the world as very well worth living in and looking at, persuaded one of his critics that he was a hard-hearted young athlete of iron frame. Now, of the athlete he has nothing but his love of the open air: it is the eternal child that drives him to seek adventures and to sojourn among beach-combers and savages. Thus, an admiring but far from optimistic critic may doubt whether Mr. Stevenson's content with the world is not "only his fun," as Lamb said of Coleridge's preaching; whether he is but playing at being the happy warrior in life; whether he is not acting that part, himself to himself. At least, it is a part fortunately conceived and admirably sustained: a difficult part too, whereas that of the pessimist is as easy as whining.

Mr. Stevenson's work has been very much written about, as it has engaged and delighted readers of every age, station, and character. Boys, of course, have been specially addressed in the books of adventure, children in "A Child's Garden of Verse," young men and maidens in "Virginibus Puerisque,"—all ages in all the curiously varied series of volumes. "Kidnapped" was one of the last books which the late Lord Idlesleigh read; and I trust there is no harm in mentioning the pleasure which Mr. Matthew Arnold took in the same story. Critics of every sort have been kind to Mr. Stevenson, in spite of the fact that the few who first became acquainted with his genius praised it with all the warmth of which they were masters. Thus he has become a kind of classic in his own day, for an undisputed reputation makes a classic while it lasts. But was ever so much fame won by writings which might be called scrappy and desultory by the *advocatus diaboli*? It is a most miscellaneous literary baggage that Mr. Stevenson carries. First, a few magazine articles; then two little books of sentimental journeyings, which convince the reader that Mr. Stevenson is as good company to himself as his books are to others. Then came a volume or two of essays, literary and social, on books and life. By this time there could be no doubt that Mr. Stevenson had a style of his own, modelled to some extent on the essayists of the last century, but with touches of Thackeray; with original breaks and turns, with a delicate freakishness, in short, and a determined love of saying things as the newspapers do not say them. All this work undoubtedly smelt a trifle of the lamp, and was therefore dear to some, and an offence to others. For my part, I had delighted in the essays, from the first that appeared in *Macmillan's Magazine*, shortly after the Franco-German war. In this little study, "Ordered South," Mr. Stevenson was employing himself in extracting all the melancholy pleasure which the Riviera can give to a wearied body and a mind resisting the clouds of early malady,

"Alas, the worn and broken board,
How can it bear the painter's dye!
The harp of strained and tuneless chord,
How to the minstrel's skill reply!
To aching eyes each landscape lowers,
To feverish pulse each gale blows chill,
And Araby's or Eden's bowers
Were barren as this moorland hill,"—

wrote Scott, in an hour of malady and depression. But this was not the spirit of "Ordered South": the younger soul rose against the tyranny of the body; and that familiar glamour which, in illness, robs Tintoretto of his glow, did not spoil the midland sea to Mr. Stevenson. His gallant and cheery stoicism were already with him; and so perfect, if a trifle overstudied, was his style, that one already foresaw a new and charming essayist.

But none of those early works, nor the delightful book on Edinburgh, prophesied of the story teller. Mr. Stevenson's first published tales, the "New Arabian Nights," originally appeared in a

quaintly edited weekly paper, which nobody read, or nobody but the writers in its columns. They welcomed the strange romances with rejoicings: but perhaps there was only one of them who foresaw that Mr. Stevenson's *forte* was to be fiction, not essay writing; that he was to appeal with success to the large public, and not to the tiny circle who surround the essayist. It did not seem likely that our incalculable public would make themselves at home in those fantastic purlieus which Mr. Stevenson's fancy discovered near the Strand. The impossible Young Man with the Cream Tarts, the ghastly revels of the Suicide Club, the Oriental caprices of the Hansom Cabs—who could foresee that the public would taste them! It is true that Mr. Stevenson's imagination made the President of the Club, and the cowardly member, Mr. Malthus, as real as they were terrible. His romance always goes hand in hand with reality; and Mr. Malthus is as much an actual man of skin and bone, as Silas Lapham is a man of flesh and blood. The world saw this, and applauded the "Noctes of Prince Floristan," in a fairy London.

Yet, excellent and unique as these things were, Mr. Stevenson had not yet "found himself." It would be more true to say that he had only discovered outlying skirts of his dominions. Has he ever hit on the road to the capital yet? and will he ever enter it laurelled, and in triumph? That is precisely what one may doubt, not as without hope. He is always making discoveries in his realm; it is less certain that he will enter its chief city in state. His next work was rather in the nature of annexation and invasion than a settling of his own realms. "Prince Otto" is not, to my mind, a ruler in his proper soil. The provinces of George Sand and of Mr. George Meredith have been taken captive. "Prince Otto" is fantastic indeed, but neither the fantasy nor the style is quite Mr. Stevenson's. There are excellent passages, and the Scotch soldier of fortune is welcome, and the ladies abound in subtlety and wit. But the book, at least to myself, seems an extremely elaborate and skilful *pastiche*. I cannot believe in the persons. I vaguely smell a moral allegory (as in "Will of the Mill"). I do not clearly understand what it is all about. The scene is fairyland; but it is not the fairyland of Perrault. The ladies are beautiful and witty; but they are escaped from a novel of Mr. Meredith's, and have no business here. The book is no more Mr. Stevenson's than "The Tale of Two Cities" was Mr. Dickens's.

It was probably by way of mere diversion and child's play that Mr. Stevenson began "Treasure Island." He is an amateur of boyish pleasures of masterpieces at a penny plain and twopence coloured. Probably he had looked at the stories of adventure in penny papers which only boys read, and he determined sportively to compete with their unknown authors. "Treasure Island" came out in such a periodical, with the emphatic woodcuts which adorn them. It is said that the puerile public was not greatly stirred. A story is a story, and they rather preferred the regular purveyors. The very faint archaism of the style may have alienated them. But, when "Treasure Island" appeared as a real book, then every one who had a smack of youth left was a boy again for some happy hours. Mr. Stevenson had entered into another province of his realm: the king had come to his own again.

They say the seamanship is inaccurate; I care no more than I do for the year 30. They say too many people are killed. They all died in fair fight, except a victim of John Silver's. The conclusion is a little too like part of Poe's most celebrated tale, but nobody has bellowed "Plagiarist!" Some people may not look over a fence: Mr. Stevenson, if he liked, might steal a horse,—the animal in this case is only a skeleton. A very sober student might add that the hero is impossibly clever; but, then, the hero is a boy, and this is a boy's book. For the rest, the characters live. Only genius could have invented John Silver, that terribly smooth-spoken mariner. Nothing but genius could have drawn that simple yokel on the island, with his craving for cheese as a Christian dainty. The blustering Billy Bones is a little masterpiece: the blind Pew, with his tapping stick (there are three such blind tappers in Mr. Stevenson's books), strikes terror into the boldest. Then, the treasure is thoroughly satisfactory in kind, and there is plenty of it. The landscape, as in the feverish, fog-smothered flat, is gallantly painted. And there are no interfering petticoats in the story.

As for the "Black Arrow," I confess to sharing the disabilities of the "Critic on the Hearth," to whom it is dedicated. "Kidnapped" is less a story than a fragment; but it is a noble fragment. Setting aside the wicked old uncle, who in his later behaviour is of the house of Ralph Nickleby, "Kidnapped" is all excellent—perhaps Mr. Stevenson's masterpiece. Perhaps, too, only a Scotchman knows how good it is, and only a Lowland Scot knows how admirable a character is the dour, brave, conceited David Balfour. It is like being in Scotland again to come on "the green drive-road running wide through the heather," where David "took his last look of Kirk Essendean, the trees about the manse, and the big rowans in the kirkyard, where his father and mother lay." Perfectly Scotch, too, is the mouldering, empty house of the Miser, with the stamped leather on the walls. And the Miser is as good as a Scotch Trapbois, till he becomes homicidal, and then one fails to recognise him unless he is a little mad, like that other frantic uncle in "The Merry Men." The scenes on the ship, with the boy who is murdered, are better—I think more real—than the scenes of piratical life in "The Master of Ballantrae." The fight in the Round House, even if it were exaggerated, would be redeemed by the "Song of the Sword of Alan." As to Alan Breck himself, with his valour and vanity, his good heart, his good conceit of himself, his fantastic loyalty, he is absolutely worthy of the hand that drew Callum Bey and the Dougal creature. It is just possible that we see, in "Kidnapped," more signs of determined labour, more evidence of touches and retouches, than in "Rob Roy." In nothing else which it attempts is it inferior; in mastery of landscape, as in the scene of the lonely rock in a dry and thirsty land, it is unsurpassed. If there are signs of laboured handling on Alan, there are none in the sketches of Cluny and of Rob Roy's son, the piper. What a generous artist is Alan! "Robin Oig," he said, when it was done, "ye are a great piper. I am not fit to blow in the same kingdom with you. Body

of me! ye have mair music in your sporran than I have in my head."

"Kidnapped," we said, is a fragment. It ends anywhere, or nowhere, as if the pen had dropped from a weary hand. Thus, and for other reasons, one cannot pretend to set what is not really a whole against such a rounded whole as "Rob Roy," or against "The Legend of Montrose." Again, "Kidnapped" is a novel without a woman in it: not here is Di Vernon, not here is Helen McGregor. David Balfour is the pragmatic Lowlander; he does not bear comparison, excellent as he is, with Baillie Nicol Jarvie, the humorous Lowlander: he does not live in the memory like the immortal Baillie. It is as a series of scenes and sketches that "Kidnapped" is unmatched among Mr. Stevenson's works.

In "The Master of Ballantrae" Mr. Stevenson makes a gallant effort to enter what I have ventured to call the capital of his kingdom. He does introduce a woman, and confronts the problems of love as well as of fraternal hatred. The "Master" is studied, is polished *ad unguem*; it is a whole in itself, it is a remarkably daring attempt to write the tragedy, as, in "Waverley," Scott wrote the romance, of Scotland about the time of the Forty-Five. With such a predecessor and rival, Mr. Stevenson wisely leaves the pomps and battles of the Forty-Five, its chivalry and gallantry, alone. He shows us the seamy side: the intrigues, domestic and political; the needy Irish adventurer with the Prince, a person whom Scott had not studied. The book, if completely successful, would be Mr. Stevenson's "Bride of Lammermoor." To be frank, I do not think it completely successful—a victory all along the line. The obvious weak point is Secundra Dass, that Indian of unknown nationality; for surely his name marks him as no Hindoo. The Master could not have brought him, shivering like Jos Sedley's black servant, to Scotland. As in America, this alien would have found it "too dam cold." My power of belief (which verges on credulity) is staggered by the ghastly attempt to reanimate the buried Master. Here, at least to my taste, the freakish changeling has got the better of Mr. Stevenson, and has brought in an element out of keeping with the steady lurid tragedy of fraternal hatred. For all the rest, it were a hard judge that had anything but praise. The brilliant blackguardism of the Master; his touch of sentiment as he leaves Durisdeer for the last time, with a sad old song on his lips; his fascination; his ruthlessness; his irony;—all are perfect. It is not very easy to understand the Chevalier Bourke, that Barry Lyndon, with no head and with a good heart, that creature of a bewildered kindly conscience; but it is easy to like him. How admirable is his undeflected belief in and affection for the Master! How excellent and how Irish he is, when he buffoons himself out of his perils with the pirates! The scenes are brilliant and living, as when the Master throws the guinea through the Hall window, or as in the darkling duel in the garden. It needed an austere artistic conscience to make Henry, the younger brother, so unlovable with all his excellence, and to keep the lady so true, yet so much in shadow. This is the best woman among Mr. Stevenson's few women; but even she is almost always reserved, veiled as it were.

The old Lord, again, is a portrait as lifelike as Scott could have drawn, and more delicately touched than Scott would have cared to draw it: a French companion picture to the Baron Bradwardine. The whole piece reads as if Mr. Stevenson had engaged in a struggle with himself as he wrote. The sky is never blue, the sun never shines: we weary for a "westland wind." There is something "thrown," as the Scotch say, about the story; there is often a touch of this sinister kind in the author's work. The language is extraordinarily artful, as in the mad lord's words, "I have felt the hilt dirl on his breast-bone." And yet, one is hardly thrilled as one expects to be, when, as Mackellar says, "the week-old corpse looked me for a moment in the face."

Probably none of Mr. Stevenson's many books has made his name so familiar as "Dr. Jekyll and Mr Hyde." I read it first in manuscript, alone, at night; and, when the Butler and Mr. Urmson came to the Doctor's door, I confess that I threw it down, and went hastily to bed. It is the most gruesome of all his writings, and so perfect that one can complain only of the slightly too obvious moral; and, again, that really Mr. Hyde was more of a gentleman than the unctuous Dr. Jekyll, with his "bedside manner."

So here, not to speak of some admirable short stories like "Thrown Janet," is a brief catalogue—little more—of Mr. Stevenson's literary baggage. It is all good, though variously good; yet the wise world asks for the masterpiece. It is said that Mr. Stevenson has not ventured on the delicate and dangerous ground of the novel, because he has not written a modern love story. But who has? There are love affairs in Dickens, but do we remember or care for them? Is it the love affairs that we remember in Scott? Thackeray may touch us with Clive's and Jack Belsize's misfortunes, with Esmond's melancholy passion, and amuse us with Pen in so many toils, and interest us in the little heroine of the "Shabby Genteel Story." But it is not by virtue of those episodes that Thackeray is so great. Love stories are best done by women, as in "Mr. Gilfil's Love Story"; and, perhaps, in an ordinary way, by writers like Trollope. One may defy critics to name a great English author in fiction whose chief and distinguishing merit is in his pictures of the passion of Love. Still, they all give Love his due stroke in the battle, and perhaps Mr. Stevenson will do so some day. But I confess that, if he ever excels himself, I do not expect it to be in a love story.

Possibly it may be in a play. If he again attempt the drama, he has this in his favour, that he will not deal in supernumeraries. In his tales his minor characters are as carefully drawn as his chief personages. Consider, for example, the minister, Henderland, the man who is so fond of snuff, in "Kidnapped," and, in the "Master of Ballantrae," Sir William Johnson, the English Governor. They are the work of a mind as attentive to details, as ready to subordinate or obliterate details which are unessential. Thus Mr. Stevenson's writings breathe equally of work in the study and of inspiration from adventure in the open air, and thus he wins every vote, and pleases every class

THOMAS HAYNES BAYLY

I cannot sing the old songs, nor indeed any others, but I can read them, in the neglected works of Thomas Haynes Bayly. The name of Bayly may be unfamiliar, but every one almost has heard his ditties chanted—every one much over forty, at all events. “I’ll hang my Harp on a Willow Tree,” and “I’d be a Butterfly,” and “Oh, no! we never mention Her,” are dimly dear to every friend of Mr. Richard Swiveller. If to be sung everywhere, to hear your verses uttered in harmony with all pianos and quoted by the world at large, be fame, Bayly had it. He was an unaffected poet. He wrote words to airs, and he is almost absolutely forgotten. To read him is to be carried back on the wings of music to the bowers of youth; and to the bowers of youth I have been wafted, and to the old booksellers. You do not find on every stall the poems of Bayly; but a copy in two volumes has been discovered, edited by Mr. Bayly’s widow (Bentley, 1844). They saw the light in the same year as the present critic, and perhaps they ceased to be very popular before he was breeched. Mr. Bayly, according to Mrs. Bayly, “ably penetrated the sources of the human heart,” like Shakespeare and Mr. Howells. He also “gave to minstrelsy the attributes of intellect and wit,” and “reclaimed even festive song from vulgarity,” in which, since the age of Anacreon, festive song has notoriously wallowed. The poet who did all this was born at Bath in Oct. 1797. His father was a genteel solicitor, and his great-grandmother was sister to Lord Delamere, while he had a remote baronet on the mother’s side. To trace the ancestral source of his genius was difficult, as in the case of Gifted Hopkins; but it was believed to flow from his maternal grandfather, Mr. Freeman, whom his friend, Lord Lavington, regarded as “one of the finest poets of his age.” Bayly was at school at Winchester, where he conducted a weekly college newspaper. His father, like Scott’s, would have made him a lawyer; but “the youth took a great dislike to it, for his ideas loved to dwell in the regions of fancy,” which are closed to attorneys. So he thought of being a clergyman, and was sent to St. Mary’s Hall, Oxford. There “he did not apply himself to the pursuit of academical honours,” but fell in love with a young lady whose brother he had tended in a fatal illness. But “they were both too wise to think of living upon love, and, after mutual tears and sighs, they parted never to meet again. The lady, though grieved, was not heartbroken, and soon became the wife of another.” They usually do. Mr. Bayly’s regret was more profound, and expressed itself in the touching ditty:

“Oh, no, we never mention her,
Her name is never heard,
My lips are now forbid to speak
That once familiar word;
From sport to sport they hurry me
To banish my regret,
And when they only worry me—

[I beg Mr. Bayly’s pardon]

“And when they win a smile from me,
They fancy I forget.

“They bid me seek in change of scene
The charms that others see,
But were I in a foreign land
They’d find no change in me.
’Tis true that I behold no more
The valley where we met;
I do not see the hawthorn tree,
But how can I forget?”

* * * * *

“They tell me she is happy now,

[And so she was, in fact.]

The gayest of the gay;
They hint that she’s forgotten me;
But heed not what they say.
Like me, perhaps, she struggles with
Each feeling of regret:
’Tis true she’s married Mr. Smith,
But, ah, does she forget!”

The temptation to parody is really too strong; the last lines, actually and in an authentic text, are:

“But if she loves as I have loved,
She never can forget.”

Bayly had now struck the note, the sweet, sentimental note, of the early, innocent, Victorian age. Jeames imitated him:

“R. Hangeline, R. Lady mine,
Dost thou remember Jeames!”

We should do the trick quite differently now, more like this:

“Love spake to me and said:
‘Oh, lips, be mute;
Let that one name be dead,
That memory flown and fled,
Untouched that lute!
Go forth,’ said Love, ‘with willow in thy hand,
And in thy hair
Dead blossoms wear,
Blown from the sunless land.

“‘Go forth,’ said Love; ‘thou never more shalt see
Her shadow glimmer by the trysting tree;
But *she* is glad,
With roses crowned and clad,
Who hath forgotten thee!’
But I made answer: ‘Love!
Tell me no more thereof,
For she has drunk of that same cup as I.
Yea, though her eyes be dry,
She garners there for me
Tears saltier than the sea,
Even till the day she die.’
So gave I Love the lie.”

I declare I nearly weep over these lines; for, though they are only Bayly’s sentiment hastily recast in a modern manner, there is something so very affecting, mouldy, and unwholesome about them, that they sound as if they had been “written up to” a sketch by a disciple of Mr. Rossetti’s.

In a mood much more manly and moral, Mr. Bayly wrote another poem to the young lady:

“May thy lot in life be happy, undisturbed by thoughts of me,
The God who shelters innocence thy guard and guide will be.
Thy heart will lose the chilling sense of hopeless love at last,
And the sunshine of the future chase the shadows of the past.”

It is as easy as prose to sing in this manner. For example:

“In fact, we need not be concerned; ‘at last’ comes very soon, and our Emilia quite forgets the memory of the moon, the moon that shone on her and us, the woods that heard our vows, the moaning of the waters, and the murmur of the boughs. She is happy with another, and by her we’re quite forgot; she never lets a thought of us bring shadow on her lot; and if we meet at dinner she’s too clever to repine, and mentions us to Mr. Smith as ‘An old flame of mine.’ And shall I grieve that it is thus? and would I have her weep, and lose her healthy appetite and break her healthy sleep? Not so, she’s not poetical, though ne’er shall I forget the fairy of my fancy whom I once thought I had met. The fairy of my fancy! It was fancy, most things are; her emotions were not steadfast as the shining of a star; but, ah, I love her image yet, as once it shone on me, and swayed me as the low moon sways the surging of the sea.”

Among other sports his anxious friends hurried the lovelorn Bayly to Scotland, where he wrote much verse, and then to Dublin, which completed his cure. “He seemed in the midst of the crowd the gayest of all, his laughter rang merry and loud at banquet and hall.” He thought no more of studying for the Church, but went back to Bath, met a Miss Hayes, was fascinated by Miss Hayes, “came, saw, but did *not* conquer at once,” says Mrs. Haynes Bayly (*née* Hayes) with widow’s pride. Her lovely name was Helena; and I deeply regret to add that, after an education at Oxford, Mr. Bayly, in his poems, accentuated the penultimate, which, of course, is short.

“Oh, think not, Helena, of leaving us yet,”

he carolled, when it would have been just as easy, and a hundred times more correct, to sing—

“Oh, Helena, think not of leaving us yet.”

Miss Hayes had lands in Ireland, alas! and Mr. Bayly insinuated that, like King Easter and King Wester in the ballad, her lovers courted her for her lands and her fee; but he, like King Honour,

“For her bonny face
And for her fair bodie.”

In 1825 (after being elected to the Athenæum) Mr. Bayly “at last found favour in the eyes of Miss

Hayes." He presented her with a little ruby heart, which she accepted, and they were married, and at first were well-to-do, Miss Hayes being the heiress of Benjamin Hayes, Esq., of Marble Hill, in county Cork. A friend of Mr. Bayly's described him thus:

"I never have met on this chilling earth
So merry, so kind, so frank a youth,
In moments of pleasure a smile all mirth,
In moments of sorrow a heart of truth.
I have heard thee praised, I have seen thee led
By Fashion along her gay career;
While beautiful lips have often shed
Their flattering poison in thine ear."

Yet he says that the poet was unspoiled. On his honeymoon, at Lord Ashdown's, Mr. Bayly, flying from some fair sirens, retreated to a bower, and there wrote his world-famous "I'd be a Butterfly."

"I'd be a butterfly, living a rover,
Dying when fair things are fading away."

The place in which the deathless strains welled from the singer's heart was henceforth known as "Butterfly Bower." He now wrote a novel, "The Aylmers," which has gone where the old moons go, and he became rather a literary lion, and made the acquaintance of Theodore Hook. The loss of a son caused him to write some devotional verses, which were not what he did best; and now he began to try comedies. One of them, *Sold for a Song*, succeeded very well. In the stage-coach between Wycombe Abbey and London he wrote a successful little *lever de rideau* called *Perfection*; and it was lucky that he opened this vein, for his wife's Irish property got into an Irish bog of dishonesty and difficulty. Thirty-five pieces were contributed by him to the British stage. After a long illness, he died on April 22nd, 1829. He did not live, this butterfly minstrel, into the winter of human age.

Of his poems the inevitable criticism must be that he was a Tom Moore of much lower accomplishments. His business was to carol of the most vapid and obvious sentiment, and to string flowers, fruits, trees, breeze, sorrow, to-morrow, knights, coal-black steeds, regret, deception, and so forth, into fervid anapæstics. Perhaps his success lay in knowing exactly how little sense in poetry composers will endure and singers will accept. Why, "words for music" are almost invariably trash now, though the words of Elizabethan songs are better than any music, is a gloomy and difficult question. Like most poets, I myself detest the sister art, and don't know anything about it. But any one can see that words like Bayly's are and have long been much more popular with musical people than words like Shelley's, Keats's, Shakespeare's, Fletcher's, Lovelace's, or Carew's. The natural explanation is not flattering to musical people: at all events, the singing world doted on Bayly.

"She never blamed him—never,
But received him when he came
With a welcome sort of shiver,
And she tried to look the same.

"But vainly she dissembled,
For whene'er she tried to smile,
A tear unbidden trembled
In her blue eye all the while."

This was pleasant for "him"; but the point is that these are lines to an Indian air. Shelley, also, about the same time, wrote Lines to an Indian air; but we may "swear, and save our oath," that the singers preferred Bayly's. Tennyson and Coleridge could never equal the popularity of what follows. I shall ask the persevering reader to tell me where Bayly ends, and where parody begins:

"When the eye of beauty closes,
When the weary are at rest,
When the shade the sunset throws is
But a vapour in the west;
When the moonlight tips the billow
With a wreath of silver foam,
And the whisper of the willow
Breaks the slumber of the gnome,—
Night may come, but sleep will linger,
When the spirit, all forlorn,
Shuts its ear against the singer,
And the rustle of the corn
Round the sad old mansion sobbing
Bids the wakeful maid recall
Who it was that caused the throbbing
Of her bosom at the ball."

Will this not do to sing just as well as the original? and is it not true that "almost any man you

please could reel it off for days together"? Anything will do that speaks of forgetting people, and of being forsaken, and about the sunset, and the ivy, and the rose.

"Tell me no more that the tide of thine anguish
Is red as the heart's blood and salt as the sea;
That the stars in their courses command thee to languish,
That the hand of enjoyment is loosened from thee!

"Tell me no more that, forgotten, forsaken,
Thou roamest the wild wood, thou sigh'st on the shore.
Nay, rent is the pledge that of old we had taken,
And the words that have bound me, they bind thee no more!

"Ere the sun had gone down on thy sorrow, the maidens
Were wreathing the orange's bud in thy hair,
And the trumpets were tuning the musical cadence
That gave thee, a bride, to the baronet's heir.

"Farewell, may no thought pierce thy breast of thy treason;
Farewell, and be happy in Hubert's embrace.
Be the belle of the ball, be the bride of the season,
With diamonds bedizened and languid in lace."

This is mine, and I say, with modest pride, that it is quite as good as—

"Go, may'st thou be happy,
Though sadly we part,
In life's early summer
Grief breaks not the heart.

"The ills that assail us
As speedily pass
As shades o'er a mirror,
Which stain not the glass."

Anybody could do it, we say, in what Edgar Poe calls "the mad pride of intellectuality," and it certainly looks as if it could be done by anybody. For example, take Bayly as a moralist. His ideas are out of the centre. This is about his standard:

"CRUELTY.

"Break not the thread the spider
Is labouring to weave.'
I said, nor as I eyed her
Could dream she would deceive.

"Her brow was pure and candid,
Her tender eyes above;
And I, if ever man did,
Fell hopelessly in love.

"For who could deem that cruel
So fair a face might be?
That eyes so like a jewel
Were only paste for me?

"I wove my thread, aspiring
Within her heart to climb;
I wove with zeal untiring
For ever such a time!

"But, ah! that thread was broken
All by her fingers fair,
The vows and prayers I've spoken
Are vanished into air!"

Did Bayly write that ditty or did I? Upon my word, I can hardly tell. I am being hypnotised by Bayly. I lisp in numbers, and the numbers come like mad. I can hardly ask for a light without abounding in his artless vein. Easy, easy it seems; and yet it was Bayly after all, not you nor I, who wrote the classic—

"I'll hang my harp on a willow tree,
And I'll go to the war again,
For a peaceful home has no charm for me,
A battlefield no pain;
The lady I love will soon be a bride,
With a diadem on her brow.
Ah, why did she flatter my boyish pride?
She is going to leave me now!"

It is like listening, in the sad yellow evening, to the strains of a barrel organ, faint and sweet, and far away. A world of memories come jiggling back—foolish fancies, dreams, desires, all beckoning and bobbing to the old tune:

“Oh had I but loved with a boyish love,
It would have been well for me.”

How does Bayly manage it? What is the trick of it, the obvious, simple, meretricious trick, which somehow, after all, let us mock as we will, Bayly could do, and we cannot? He really had a slim, serviceable, smirking, and sighing little talent of his own; and—well, we have not even that. Nobody forgets

“The lady I love will soon be a bride.”

Nobody remembers our cultivated epics and esoteric sonnets, oh brother minor poet, *mon semblable, mon frère!* Nor can we rival, though we publish our books on the largest paper, the buried popularity of

“Gaily the troubadour
Touched his guitar
When he was hastening
Home from the war,
Singing, “From Palestine
Hither I come,
Lady love! Lady love!
Welcome me home!”

Of course this is, historically, a very incorrect rendering of a Languedoc crusader; and the impression is not mediæval, but of the comic opera. Any one of us could get in more local colour for the money, and give the crusader a cithern or citole instead of a guitar. This is how we should do “Gaily the Troubadour” nowadays:—

“Sir Ralph he is hardy and mickle of might,
Ha, la belle blanche aubépine!
Soldans seven hath he slain in fight,
Honneur à la belle Isoline!

“Sir Ralph he rideth in riven mail,
Ha, la belle blanche aubépine!
Beneath his nasal is his dark face pale,
Honneur à la belle Isoline!

“His eyes they blaze as the burning coal,
Ha, la belle blanche aubépine!
He smiteth a stave on his gold citole,
Honneur à la belle Isoline!

“From her mangonel she looketh forth,
Ha, la belle blanche aubépine!
‘Who is he spurreth so late to the north?’
Honneur à la belle Isoline!

“Hark! for he speaketh a knightly name,
Ha, la belle blanche aubépine!
And her wan cheek glows as a burning flame,
Honneur à la belle Isoline!

“For Sir Ralph he is hardy and mickle of might,
Ha, la belle blanche aubépine!
And his love shall ungirdle his sword to-night,
Honneur à la belle Isoline!”

Such is the romantic, esoteric, old French way of saying—

“Hark, ’tis the troubadour
Breathing her name
Under the battlement
Softly he came,
Singing, “From Palestine
Hither I come.
Lady love! Lady love!
Welcome me home!”

The moral of all this is that minor poetry has its fashions, and that the butterfly Bayly could versify very successfully in the fashion of a time simpler and less pedantic than our own. On the whole, minor poetry for minor poetry, this artless singer, piping his native drawing-room notes, gave a great deal of perfectly harmless, if highly uncultivated, enjoyment.

It must not be fancied that Mr. Bayly had only one string to his bow—or, rather, to his lyre. He wrote a great deal, to be sure, about the passion of love, which Count Tolstoï thinks we make too much of. He did not dream that the affairs of the heart should be regulated by the State—by the Permanent Secretary of the Marriage Office. That is what we are coming to, of course, unless the enthusiasts of “free love” and “go away as you please” failed with their little programme. No doubt there would be poetry if the State regulated or left wholly unregulated the affections of the future. Mr. Bayly, living in other times, among other manners, piped of the hard tyranny of a mother:

“We met, ’twas in a crowd, and I thought he would shun me.
He came, I could not breathe, for his eye was upon me.
He spoke, his words were cold, and his smile was unaltered,
I knew how much he felt, for his deep-toned voice faltered.
I wore my bridal robe, and I rivalled its whiteness;
Bright gems were in my hair,—how I hated their brightness!
He called me by my name as the bride of another.
Oh, thou hast been the cause of this anguish, my mother!”

In future, when the reformers of marriage have had their way, we shall read:

“The world may think me gay, for I bow to my fate;
But thou hast been the cause of my anguish, O State!”

For even when true love is regulated by the County Council or the village community, it will still persist in not running smooth.

Of these passions, then, Mr. Bayly could chant; but let us remember that he could also dally with old romance, that he wrote:

“The mistletoe hung in the castle hall,
The holly branch shone on the old oak wall.”

When the bride unluckily got into the ancient chest,

“It closed with a spring. And, dreadful doom,
The bride lay clasped in her living tomb,”

so that her lover “mourned for his fairy bride,” and never found out her premature casket. This was true romance as understood when Peel was consul. Mr. Bayly was rarely political; but he commemorated the heroes of Waterloo, our last victory worth mentioning:

“Yet mourn not for them, for in future tradition
Their fame shall abide as our tutelary star,
*To instil by example the glorious ambition
Of falling, like them, in a glorious war.*
Though tears may be seen in the bright eyes of beauty,
One consolation must ever remain:
Undaunted they trod in the pathway of duty,
Which led them to glory on Waterloo’s plain.”

Could there be a more simple Tyrtæus? and who that reads him will not be ambitious of falling in a glorious war? Bayly, indeed, is always simple. He is “simple, sensuous, and passionate,” and Milton asked no more from a poet.

“A wreath of orange blossoms,
When next we met, she wore.
*The expression of her features
Was more thoughtful than before.*”

On his own principles Wordsworth should have admired this unaffected statement; but Wordsworth rarely praised his contemporaries, and said that “Guy Mannering” was a respectable effort in the style of Mrs. Radcliffe. Nor did he even extol, though it is more in his own line,

“Of what is the old man thinking,
As he leans on his oaken staff?”

My own favourite among Mr. Bayly’s effusions is not a sentimental ode, but the following gush of true natural feeling:—

“Oh, give me new faces, new faces, new faces,
I’ve seen those around me a fortnight and more.
Some people grow weary of things or of places,
But persons to me are a much greater bore.
I care not for features, I’m sure to discover
Some exquisite trait in the first that you send.
My fondness falls off when the novelty’s over;
I want a new face for an intimate friend.”

This is perfectly candid: we should all prefer a new face, if pretty, every fortnight:

“Come, I pray you, and tell me this,
All good fellows whose beards are grey,
Did not the fairest of the fair
Common grow and wearisome ere
Ever a month had passed away?”

For once Mr. Bayly uttered in his “New Faces” a sentiment not usually expressed, but universally felt; and now he suffers, as a poet, because he is no longer a new face, because we have welcomed his juniors. To Bayly we shall not return; but he has one rare merit,—he is always perfectly plain-spoken and intelligible.

“Farewell to my Bayly, farewell to the singer
Whose tender effusions my aunts used to sing;
Farewell, for the fame of the bard does not linger,
My favourite minstrel’s no longer the thing.
But though on his temples has faded the laurel,
Though broken the lute, and though veiled is the crest,
My Bayly, at worst, is uncommonly moral,
Which is more than some new poets are, at their best.”

Farewell to our Bayly, about whose songs we may say, with Mr. Thackeray in “Vanity Fair,” that “they contain numberless good-natured, simple appeals to the affections.” We are no longer affectionate, good-natured, simple. We are cleverer than Bayly’s audience; but are we better fellows?

THÉODORE DE BANVILLE

There are literary reputations in France and England which seem, like the fairies, to be unable to cross running water. Dean Swift, according to M. Paul de Saint-Victor, is a great man at Dover, a pigmy at Calais—“Son talent, qui enthousiasme l’Angleterre, n’inspire ailleurs qu’un morne étonnement.” M. Paul De Saint-Victor was a fair example of the French critic, and what he says about Swift was possibly true,—for him. There is not much resemblance between the Dean and M. Théodore de Banville, except that the latter too is a poet who has little honour out of his own country. He is a charming singer at Calais; at Dover he inspires *un morne étonnement* (a bleak perplexity). One has never seen an English attempt to describe or estimate his genius. His unpopularity in England is illustrated by the fact that the London Library, that respectable institution, does not, or did not, possess a single copy of any one of his books. He is but feebly represented even in the collection of the British Museum. It is not hard to account for our indifference to M. De Banville. He is a poet not only intensely French, but intensely Parisian. He is careful of form, rather than abundant in manner. He has no story to tell, and his sketches in prose, his attempts at criticism, are not very weighty or instructive. With all his limitations, however, he represents, in company with M. Leconte de Lisle, the second of the three generations of poets over whom Victor Hugo reigned.

M. De Banville has been called, by people who do not like, and who apparently have not read him, *un saltimbanque littéraire* (a literary rope-dancer). Other critics, who do like him, but who have limited their study to a certain portion of his books, compare him to a worker in gold, who carefully chases or embosses dainty processions of fauns and mænads. He is, in point of fact, something more estimable than a literary rope-dancer, something more serious than a working jeweller in rhymes. He calls himself *un raffiné*; but he is not, like many persons who are proud of that title, *un indifférent* in matters of human fortune. His earlier poems, of course, are much concerned with the matter of most early poems—with Lydia and Cynthia and their light loves. The verses of his second period often deal with the most evanescent subjects, and they now retain but a slight petulance and sparkle, as of champagne that has been too long drawn. In a prefatory plea for M. De Banville’s poetry one may add that he “has loved our people,” and that no poet, no critic, has honoured Shakespeare with brighter words of praise.

Théodore de Banville was born at Moulin, on March 14th 1823, and he is therefore three years younger than the dictionaries of biography would make the world believe. He is the son of a naval officer, and, according to M. Charles Baudelaire, a descendant of the Crusaders. He came much too late into the world to distinguish himself in the noisy exploits of 1830, and the chief event of his youth was the publication of “Les Cariatides” in 1842. This first volume contained a selection from the countless verses which the poet produced between his sixteenth and his nineteenth year. Whatever other merits the songs of minors may possess, they have seldom that of permitting themselves to be read. “Les Cariatides” are exceptional here. They are, above all things, readable. “On peut les lire à peu de frais,” M. De Banville says himself. He admits that his lighter works, the poems called (in England) *vers de société*, are a sort of intellectual cigarette. M. Emile de Girardin said, in the later days of the Empire, that there were too many cigarettes in the air. Their stale perfume clings to the literature of that time, as the odour of pastilles yet hangs about the verse of Dorat, the designs of Eisen, the work of the Pompadour

period. There is more than smoke in M. De Banville's ruling inspiration, his lifelong devotion to letters and to great men of letters—Shakespeare, Molière, Homer, Victor Hugo. These are his gods; the memory of them is his muse. His enthusiasm is worthy of one who, though born too late to see and know the noble wildness of 1830, yet lives on the recollections, and is strengthened by the example, of that revival of letters. Whatever one may say of the *renouveau*, of romanticism, with its affectations, the young men of 1830 were sincere in their devotion to liberty, to poetry, to knowledge. One can hardly find a more brilliant and touching belief in these great causes than that of Edgar Quinet, as displayed in the letters of his youth. De Banville fell on more evil times.

When "Les Cariatides" was published poets had begun to keep an eye on the Bourse, and artists dabbled in finance. The new volume of song in the sordid age was a November primrose, and not unlike the flower of Spring. There was a singular freshness and hopefulness in the verse, a wonderful "certitude dans l'expression lyrique," as Sainte-Beuve said. The mastery of musical speech and of various forms of song was already to be recognised as the basis and the note of the talent of De Banville. He had style, without which a man may write very nice verses about heaven and hell and other matters, and may please thousands of excellent people, but will write poetry—never. Comparing De Banville's boy's work with the boy's work of Mr. Tennyson, one observes in each—"Les Cariatides" as in "The Hesperides"—the *timbre* of a new voice. Poetry so fresh seems to make us aware of some want which we had hardly recognised, but now are sensible of, at the moment we find it satisfied.

It is hardly necessary to say that this gratifying and welcome strangeness, this lyric originality, is nearly all that M. De Banville has in common with the English poet whose two priceless volumes were published in the same year as "Les Cariatides?" The melody of Mr. Tennyson's lines, the cloudy palaces of his imagination, rose

"As Ilion, like a mist rose into towers,"

when Apollo sang. The architecture was floating at first, and confused; while the little theatre of M. De Banville's poetry, where he sat piping to a dance of nixies, was brilliantly lit and elegant with fresh paint and gilding. "The Cariatides" support the pediment and roof of a theatre or temple in the Graeco-French style. The poet proposed to himself

"A côté de Vénus et du fils de Latone
Peindre la fée et la péri."

The longest poem in the book, and the most serious, "La Voie Lactée," reminds one of the "Palace of Art," written before the after-thought, before the "white-eyed corpses" were found lurking in corners. Beginning with Homer, "the Ionian father of the rest,"—

"Ce dieu, père des dieux qu'adore Ionie,"—

the poet glorifies all the chief names of song. There is a long procession of illustrious shadows before Shakespeare comes—Shakespeare, whose genius includes them all.

"Toute création à laquelle on aspire,
Tout rêve, toute chose, émanent de Shakespeare."

His mind has lent colour to the flowers and the sky, to

"La fleur qui brode un point sur les manteau des plaines,
Les nénuphars penchés, et les pâles roseaux
Qui disent leur chant sombre au murmure des eaux."

One recognises more sincerity in this hymn to all poets, from Orpheus to Heine, than in "Les Baisers de Pierre"—a clever imitation of De Musset's stories in verse. Love of art and of the masters of art, a passion for the figures of old mythology, which had returned again after their exile in 1830, gaiety, and a revival of the dexterity of Villon and Marot,—these things are the characteristics of M. De Banville's genius, and all these were displayed in "Les Cariatides." Already, too, his preoccupation with the lighter and more fantastic sort of theatrical amusements shows itself in lines like these:

"De son lit à baldaquin
Le soleil de son beau globe
Avait l'air d'un arlequin
Étalant sa garde-robe;

"Et sa soeur au front changeant
Mademoiselle la Lune
Avec ses grands yeux d'argent
Regardait la terre brune."

The verse about "the sun in bed," unconsciously Miltonic, is in a vein of bad taste which has always had seductions for M. De Banville. He mars a fine later poem on Roncevaux and Roland by a similar absurdity. The angel Michael is made to stride down the steps of heaven four at a time, and M. De Banville fancies that this sort of thing is like the simplicity of the ages of faith.

In "Les Cariatides," especially in the poems styled "En Habit Zinzolin," M. De Banville revived old measures—the *rondeau* and the "poor little triolet." These are forms of verse which it is easy to write badly, and hard indeed to write well. They have knocked at the door of the English muse's garden—a runaway knock. In "Les Cariatides" they took a subordinate place, and played their pranks in the shadow of the grave figures of mythology, or at the close of the procession of Dionysus and his Mænads. De Banville often recalls Keats in his choice of classical themes. "Les Exilés," a poem of his maturity, is a French "Hyperion." "Le Triomphe de Bacchus" reminds one of the song of the Bassarids in "Endymion"—

"So many, and so many, and so gay."

There is a pretty touch of the pedant (who exists, says M. De Banville, in the heart of the poet) in this verse:

"Il rêve à Cama, l'amour aux cinq flèches fleuries,
Qui, lorsque soupire au milieu des roses prairies
La douce Vasanta, parmi les bosquets de santal,
Envoie aux cinq sens les flèches du carquois fatal."

The Bacchus of Titian has none of this Oriental languor, no memories of perfumed places where "the throne of Indian Cama slowly sails." One cannot help admiring the fancy which saw the conquering god still steeped in Asiatic ease, still unawakened to more vigorous passion by the fresh wind blowing from Thrace. Of all the Olympians, Diana has been most often hymned by M. De Banville: his imagination is haunted by the figure of the goddess. Now she is manifest in her Hellenic aspect, as Homer beheld her, "taking her pastime in the chase of boars and swift deer; and with her the wild wood-nymphs are sporting the daughters of Zeus; and Leto is glad at heart, for her child towers over them all, and is easy to be known where all are fair" (Odyssey, vi.). Again, Artemis appears more thoughtful, as in the sculpture of Jean Goujon, touched with the sadness of moonlight. Yet again, she is the weary and exiled spirit that haunts the forest of Fontainebleau, and is a stranger among the woodland folk, the *faades* and *nixies*. To this goddess, "being triple in her divided deity," M. De Banville has written his hymn in the characteristic form of the old French *ballade*. The translator may borrow Chaucer's apology—

"And eke to me it is a grete penaunce,
Syth rhyme in English hath such scarsete
To folowe, word by word, the curiosite
Of *Banville*, flower of them that make in France."

"BALLADE SUR LES HÔTES MYSTÉRIEUX DE LA FORÊT

"Still sing the mocking fairies, as of old,
Beneath the shade of thorn and holly tree;
The west wind breathes upon them pure and cold,
And still wolves dread Diana roving free,
In secret woodland with her company.
Tis thought the peasants' hovels know her rite
When now the wolds are bathed in silver light,
And first the moonrise breaks the dusky grey,
Then down the dells, with blown soft hair and bright,
And through the dim wood Dian thrids her way.

"With water-weeds twined in their locks of gold
The strange cold forest-fairies dance in glee;
Sylphs over-timorous and over-bold
Haunt the dark hollows where the dwarf may be,
The wild red dwarf, the *nixies'* enemy;
Then, 'mid their mirth, and laughter, and affright,
The sudden goddess enters, tall and white,
With one long sigh for summers passed away;
The swift feet tear the ivy nets outright,
And through the dim wood Dian thrids her way.

"She gleans her sylvan trophies; down the wold
She hears the sobbing of the stags that flee,
Mixed with the music of the hunting rolled,
But her delight is all in archery,
And nought of ruth and pity wotteth she
More than the hounds that follow on the flight;
The tall nymph draws a golden bow of might,
And thick she rains the gentle shafts that slay,
She tosses loose her locks upon the night,
And Dian through the dim wood thrids her way.

ENVOI.

"Prince, let us leave the din, the dust, the spite,
The gloom and glare of towns, the plague, the blight;
Amid the forest leaves and fountain spray

There is the mystic home of our delight,
And through the dim wood Dian thrids her way."

The piece is characteristic of M. De Banville's genius. Through his throng of operatic nixies and sylphs of the ballet the cold Muse sometimes passes, strange, but not unfriendly. He, for his part, has never degraded the beautiful forms of old religion to make the laughing-stock of fools. His little play, *Diane au Bois*, has grace, and gravity, and tenderness like the tenderness of Keats, for the failings of immortals. "The gods are jealous exceedingly if any goddess takes a mortal man to her paramour, as Demeter chose Iasion." The least that mortal poets can do is to show the Olympians an example of toleration.

"Les Cariatides" have delayed us too long. They are wonderfully varied, vigorous, and rich, and full of promise in many ways. The promise has hardly been kept. There is more seriousness in "Les Stalactites" (1846), it is true, but then there is less daring. There is one morsel that must be quoted,—a fragment fashioned on the air and the simple words that used to waken the musings of George Sand when she was a child, dancing with the peasant children:

"Nous n'irons plus au bois: les lauries sont coupés,
Les amours des bassins, les naïades en groupe
Voient reluire au soleil, en cristaux découpés
Les flots silencieux qui coulaient de leur coupe,
Les lauriers sont coupés et le cerf aux abois
Tressaille au son du cor: nous n'irons plus au bois!
Où des enfants joueurs riait la folle troupe
Parmi les lys d'argent aux pleurs du ciel trempés,
Voici l'herbe qu'on fauche et les lauriers qu'on coupe;
Nous n'irons plus au bois; les lauriers sont coupés."

In these days Banville, like Gérard de Nerval in earlier times, RONSARDISED. The poem 'À la Font Georges,' full of the memories of childhood, sweet and rich with the air and the hour of sunset, is written in a favourite metre of Ronsard's. Thus Ronsard says in his lyrical version of five famous lines of Homer—

"La gresle ni la neige
N'ont tels lieux pour leur siège
Ne la foudre oncques là
Ne dévala."

(The snow, and wind, and hail
May never there prevail,
Nor thunderbolt doth fall,
Nor rain at all.)

De Banville chose this metre, rapid yet melancholy, with its sad emphatic cadence in the fourth line, as the vehicle of his childish memories:

"O champs pleins de silence,
Où mon heureuse enfance
Avait des jours encor
Tout filés d'or!"

O ma vieille Font Georges,
Vers qui les rouges-gorges
Et le doux rossignol
Prenaient leur vol!

So this poem of the fountain of youth begins, "tout filé d'or," and closes when the dusk is washed with silver—

"À l'heure où sous leurs voiles
Les tremblantes étoiles
Brodent le ciel changeant
De fleurs d'argent."

The "Stalactites" might detain one long, but we must pass on after noticing an unnamed poem which is the French counterpart of Keats' "Ode to a Greek Urn":

"Qu'autour du vase pur, trop beau pour la Bacchante,
La verveine, mêlée à des feuilles d'acanthé,
Fleurisse, et que plus bas des vierges lentement
S'avancent deux à deux, d'un pas sur et charmant,
Les bras pendants le long de leurs tuniques droites
Et les cheyeux tressés sur leurs têtes étroites."

In the same volume of the definite series of poems come "Les Odelettes," charming lyrics, one of which, addressed to Théophile Gautier, was answered in the well-known verses called "L'Art." If there had been any rivalry between the writers, M. De Banville would hardly have cared to print

Gautier's "Odelette" beside his own. The tone of it is infinitely more manly: one seems to hear a deep, decisive voice replying to tones far less sweet and serious. M. De Banville revenged himself nobly in later verses addressed to Gautier, verses which criticise the genius of that workman better, we think, than anything else that has been written of him in prose or rhyme.

The less serious poems of De Banville are, perhaps, the better known in this country. His feats of graceful metrical gymnastics have been admired by every one who cares for skill pure and simple. "Les Odes Funambulesques" and "Les Occidentales" are like ornamental skating. The author moves in many circles and cuts a hundred fantastic figures with a perfect ease and smoothness. At the same time, naturally, he does not advance nor carry his readers with him in any direction. "Les Odes Funambulesques" were at first unsigned. They appeared in journals and magazines, and, as M. de Banville applied the utmost lyrical skill to light topics of the moment, they were the most popular of "Articles de Paris." One must admit that they bore the English reader, and by this time long *scholia* are necessary for the enlightenment even of the Parisian student. The verses are, perhaps, the "bird-chorus" of French life, but they have not the permanent truth and delightfulness of the "bird-chorus" in Aristophanes. One has easily too much of the Carnival, the masked ball, the *débardeurs*, and the *pierrots*. The people at whom M. De Banville laughed are dead and forgotten. There was a certain M. Paul Limayrac of those days, who barked at the heels of Balzac, and other great men, in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*. In his honour De Banville wrote a song which parodied all popular aspirations to be a flower. M. Limayrac was supposed to have become a blossom:

"Sur les côteaux et dans les landes
Vultigeant comme un oiseleur
Buloz en ferait des guirlandes
Si Limayrac devenait fleur!"

There is more of high spirits than of wit in the lyric, which became as popular as our modern invocation of Jingo, the god of battles. It chanced one night that M. Limayrac appeared at a masked ball in the opera-house. He was recognised by some one in the crowd. The turbulent waltz stood still, the music was silent, and the dancers of every hue howled at the critic

"Si Paul Limayrac devenait fleur!"

Fancy a British reviewer, known as such to the British public, and imagine that public taking a lively interest in the feuds of men of letters! Paris, to be sure, was more or less of a university town thirty years ago, and the students were certain to be largely represented at the ball.

The "Odes Funambulesques" contain many examples of M. De Banville's skill in reviving old forms of verse—*triolet*s, *rondeaux*, *chants royaux*, and *ballades*. Most of these were composed for the special annoyance of M. Buloz, M. Limayrac, and a M. Jacquot who called himself De Mirecourt. The *rondeaux* are full of puns in the refrain: "Houssaye ou c'est; lyre, l'ire, lire," and so on, not very exhilarating. The *pantoum*, where lines recur alternately, was borrowed from the distant Malay; but primitive *pantoum*, in which the last two lines of each stanza are the first two of the next, occur in old French folk-song. The popular trick of repetition, affording a rest to the memory of the singer, is perhaps the origin of all refrains. De Banville's later satires are directed against permanent objects of human indignation—the little French debauchée, the hypocritical friend of reaction, the bloodthirsty *chauviniste*. Tired of the flashy luxury of the Empire, his memory goes back to his youth—

"Lorsque la lèvre de l'aurore
Baisait nos yeux soulevés,
Et que nous n'étions pas encore
La France des petits crevés."

The poem "Et Tartufe" prolongs the note of a satire always popular in France—the satire of Scarron, Molière, La Bruyère, against the clerical curse of the nation. The Roman Question was Tartufe's stronghold at the moment. "French interests" demanded that Italy should be headless.

"Et Tartufe? Il nous dit entre deux crémus
Que pour tout bon Français l'empire est à Rome,
Et qu'ayant pour aïeux Romulus et Rémus
Nous tetterons la louve à jamais—le pauvre homme."

The new Tartufe worships St. Chassepot, who once, it will not be forgotten, "wrought miracles"; but he has his doubts as to the morality of explosive bullets. The nymph of modern warfare is addressed as she hovers above the Geneva Convention,—

"Quoi, nymphe du canon rayé,
Tu montres ces pudeurs risibles
Et ce petit air effrayé
Devant les balles exploisibles?"

De Banville was for long almost alone among poets in his freedom from *Weltschmerz*, from regret and desire for worlds lost or impossible. In the later and stupider corruption of the Empire, sadness and anger began to vex even his careless muse. She had piped in her time to much wild dancing, but could not sing to a waltz of mushroom speculators and decorated capitalists. "Le

Sang de la Coupe" contains a very powerful poem, "The Curse of Venus," pronounced on Paris, the city of pleasure, which has become the city of greed. This verse is appropriate to our own commercial enterprise:

"Vends les bois où dormaient Viviane et Merlin!
L'Aigle de mont n'est fait que pour ta gibecière;
La neige vierge est là pour fournir ta glacière;
Le torrent qui bondit sur le roc sybillin,
Et vole, diamant, neige, écume et poussière,
N'est plus bon qu'à tourner tes meules de moulin!"

In the burning indignation of this poem, M. De Banville reaches his highest mark of attainment. "Les Exilés" is scarcely less impressive. The outcast gods of Hellas, wandering in a forest of ancient Gaul, remind one at once of the fallen deities of Heine, the decrepit Olympians of Bruno, and the large utterance of Keats's "Hyperion." Among great exiles, Victor Hugo, "le père là-bas dans l'île," is not forgotten:

"Et toi qui l'accueillis, sol libre et verdoyant,
Qui prodigues les fleurs sur tes côteaux fertiles,
Et qui sembles sourire à l'océan bruyant,
Sois bénie, île verte, entre toutes les îles."

The hoarsest note of M. De Banville's lyre is that discordant one struck in the "Idylles Prussiennes." One would not linger over poetry or prose composed during the siege, in hours of shame and impotent scorn. The poet sings how the sword, the flashing Durendal, is rusted and broken, how victory is to him—

" . . . qui se cela
Dans un trou, sous la terre noire."

He can spare a tender lyric to the memory of a Prussian officer, a lad of eighteen, shot dead through a volume of Pindar which he carried in his tunic.

It is impossible to leave the poet of gaiety and good-humour in the mood of the prisoner in besieged Paris. His "Trente Six Ballades Joyeuses" make a far more pleasant subject for a last word. There is scarcely a more delightful little volume in the French language than this collection of verses in the most difficult of forms, which pour forth, with absolute ease and fluency, notes of mirth, banter, joy in the spring, in letters, art, and good-fellowship.

"L'oiselet retourne aux forêts;
Je suis un poète lyrique,"—

he cries, with a note like a bird's song. Among the thirty-six every one will have his favourites. We venture to translate the "Ballad de Banville":

"AUX ENFANTS PERDUS

"I know Cythera long is desolate;
I know the winds have stripped the garden green.
Alas, my friends! beneath the fierce sun's weight
A barren reef lies where Love's flowers have been,
Nor ever lover on that coast is seen!
So be it, for we seek a fabled shore,
To lull our vague desires with mystic lore,
To wander where Love's labyrinths, beguile;
There let us land, there dream for evermore:
'It may be we shall touch the happy isle.'

"The sea may be our sepulchre. If Fate,
If tempests wreak their wrath on us, serene
We watch the bolt of Heaven, and scorn the hate
Of angry gods that smite us in their spleen.
Perchance the jealous mists are but the screen
That veils the fairy coast we would explore.
Come, though the sea be vexed, and breakers roar,
Come, for the breath of this old world is vile,
Haste we, and toil, and faint not at the oar;
'It may be we shall touch the happy isle.'

"Grey serpents trail in temples desecrate
Where Cypris smiled, the golden maid, the queen,
And ruined is the palace of our state;
But happy loves flit round the mast, and keen
The shrill wind sings the silken cords between.
Heroes are we, with wearied hearts and sore,
Whose flower is faded and whose locks are hoar.
Haste, ye light skiffs, where myrtle thickets smile;

Love's panthers sleep 'mid roses, as of yore:
'It may be we shall touch the happy isle.'

ENVOI.

"Sad eyes! the blue sea laughs, as heretofore.
All, singing birds, your happy music pour;
Ah, poets, leave the sordid earth awhile;
Flit to these ancient gods we still adore:
'It may be we shall touch the happy isle.'"

Alas! the mists that veil the shore of our Cythera are not the summer haze of Watteau, but the smoke and steam of a commercial time.

It is as a lyric poet that we have studied M. De Banville. "Je ne m'entends qu'à la méurique," he says in his ballad on himself; but he can write prose when he pleases.

It is in his drama of *Gringoire* acted at the Théâtre Français, and familiar in the version of Messrs. Pollock and Besant, that M. De Banville's prose shows to the best advantage. Louis XI. is supping with his bourgeois friends and with the terrible Olivier le Daim. Two beautiful girls are of the company, friends of Pierre Gringoire, the strolling poet. Presently Gringoire himself appears. He is dying of hunger; he does not recognise the king, and he is promised a good supper if he will recite the new satirical "Ballade des Pendus," which he has made at the monarch's expense. Hunger overcomes his timidity, and, addressing himself especially to the king, he enters on this goodly matter:

"Where wide the forest boughs are spread,
Where Flora wakes with sylph and fay,
Are crowns and garlands of men dead,
All golden in the morning gay;
Within this ancient garden grey
Are clusters such as no mail knows,
Where Moor and Soldan bear the sway:
This is King Louis' orchard close!

"These wretched folk wave overhead,
With such strange thoughts as none may say;
A moment still, then sudden sped,
They swing in a ring and waste away.
The morning smites them with her ray;
They toss with every breeze that blows,
They dance where fires of dawning play:
This is King Louis' orchard close!

"All hanged and dead, they've summonèd
(With Hell to aid, that hears them pray)
New legions of an army dread,
Now down the blue sky flames the day;
The dew dies off; the foul array
Of obscene ravens gathers and goes,
With wings that flap and beaks that flay:
This is King Louis' orchard close!

ENVOI.

"Prince, where leaves murmur of the May,
A tree of bitter clusters grows;
The bodies of men dead are they!
This is King Louis' orchard close!

Poor Gringoire has no sooner committed himself, than he is made to recognise the terrible king. He pleads that, if he must join the ghastly army of the dead, he ought, at least, to be allowed to finish his supper. This the king grants, and in the end, after Gringoire has won the heart of the heroine, he receives his life and a fair bride with a full dowry.

Gringoire is a play very different from M. De Banville's other dramas, and it is not included in the pretty volume of "Comédies" which closes the Lemerre series of his poems. The poet has often declared, with an iteration which has been parodied by M. Richepin, that "comedy is the child of the ode," and that a drama without the "lyric" element is scarcely a drama at all. While comedy retains either the choral ode in its strict form, or its representative in the shape of lyric enthusiasm (*le lyrisme*), comedy is complete and living. *Gringoire*, to our mind, has plenty of lyric enthusiasm; but M. De Banville seems to be of a different opinion. His republished "Comédies" are more remote from experience than *Gringoire*, his characters are ideal creatures, familiar types of the stage, like Scapin and "le beau Léandre," or ethereal persons, or figures of old mythology, like Diana in *Diane au Bois*, and Deidamia in the piece which shows Achilles among women. M. De Banville's dramas have scarcely prose enough in them to suit the modern taste. They are masques for the delicate diversion of an hour, and it is not in the nature of things that they should rival the success of blatant buffooneries. His earliest pieces—*Le Feuilleton*

d'Aristophane (acted at the Odéon, Dec. 26th, 1852), and *Le Cousin du Roi* (Odéon, April 4th, 1857)—were written in collaboration with Philoxène Boyer, a generous but indiscreet patron of singers.

“Dans les salons de Philoxène
Nous étions quatre-vingt rimeurs,”

M. De Banville wrote, parodying the “quatre-vingt ramuers” of Victor Hugo. The memory of M. Boyer’s enthusiasm for poetry and his amiable hospitality are not unlikely to survive both his compositions and those in which M. De Banville aided him. The latter poet began to walk alone as a playwright in *Le Beau Léandre* (Vaudeville, 1856)—a piece with scarcely more substance than the French scenes in the old Franco-Italian drama possess. We are taken into an impossible world of gay non-morality, where a wicked old bourgeois, Orgon, his daughter Colombine, a pretty flirt, and her lover Léandre, a light-hearted scamp, bustle through their little hour. Léandre, who has no notion of being married, says, “Le ciel n’est pas plus pur que mes intentions.” And the artless Colombine replies, “Alors marions-nous!” To marry Colombine without a dowry forms, as a modern novelist says, “no part of Léandre’s profligate scheme of pleasure.” There is a sort of treble intrigue. Orgon wants to give away Colombine dowerless, Léandre to escape from the whole transaction, and Colombine to secure her *dot* and her husband. The strength of the piece is the brisk action in the scene when Léandre protests that he can’t rob Orgon of his only daughter, and Orgon insists that he can refuse nothing except his ducats to so charming a son-in-law. The play is redeemed from sordidness by the costumes. Léandre is dressed in the attire of Watteau’s “L’Indifférent” in the Louvre, and wears a diamond-hilted sword. The lady who plays the part of Colombine may select (delightful privilege!) the prettiest dress in Watteau’s collection.

This love of the glitter of the stage is very characteristic of De Banville. In his *Déidamie* (Odéon, Nov. 18th, 1876) the players who took the roles of Thetis, Achilles, Odysseus, Deidamia, and the rest, were accoutred in semi-barbaric raiment and armour of the period immediately preceding the Graeco-Phoenician (about the eighth century B.C.). Again we notice the touch of pedantry in the poet. As for the play, the sombre thread in it is lent by the certainty of Achilles’ early death, the fate which drives him from Déidamie’s arms, and from the sea king’s isle to the leagues under the fatal walls of Ilion. Of comic effect there is plenty, for the sisters of Déidamie imitate all the acts by which Achilles is likely to betray himself—grasp the sword among the insidious presents of Odysseus, when he seizes the spear, and drink each one of them a huge beaker of wine to the confusion of the Trojans. [70] On a Parisian audience the imitations of the tone of the Odyssey must have been thrown away. For example, here is a passage which is as near being Homeric as French verse can be. Déidamie is speaking in a melancholy mood:

“Heureux les époux rois assis dans leur maison,
Qui voient tranquillement s’enfuir chaque saison—
L’époux tenant son sceptre, environné de gloire,
Et l’épouse filant sa quenouille d’ivoire!
Mais le jeune héros que, la glaive à son franc!
Court dans le noir combat, les mains teintes de sang,
Laisse sa femme en pleurs dans sa haute demeure.”

With the accustomed pedantry, M. De Banville, in the scene of the banquet, makes the cup-bearer go round dealing out a little wine, with which libation is made, and then the feast goes on in proper Homeric fashion. These overwrought details are forgotten in the parting scenes, where Déidamie takes what she knows to be her last farewell of Achilles, and girds him with his sword:

“La lame de l’épée, en sa forme divine
Est pareille à la feuille austère du laurier!”

Let it be noted that each of M. De Banville’s more serious plays ends with the same scene, with slight differences. In *Florise* (never put on the stage) the wandering actress of Hardy’s troupe leaves her lover, the young noble, and the shelter of his castle, to follow where art and her genius beckon her. In *Diane au Bois* the goddess “that leads the precise life” turns her back on Eros, who has subdued even her, and passes from the scene as she waves her hand in sign of a farewell ineffably mournful. Nearer tragedy than this M. De Banville does not care to go; and if there is any deeper tragedy in scenes of blood and in stages strewn with corpses, from that he abstains. His *Florise* is perhaps too long, perhaps too learned; and certainly we are asked to believe too much when a kind of etherealised Consuelo is set before us as the *prima donna* of old Hardy’s troupe:

“Mais Florise n’est pas une femme. Je suis
L’harmonieuse voix que berce vos ennuis;
Je suis la lyre aux sons divers que le poète
Fait résonner et qui sans lui serait muette—
Une comédienne enfin. Je ne suis pas
Une femme.”

An actress who was not a woman had little to do in the company of Scarron’s Angélique and Mademoiselle de l’Estoile. *Florise*, in short, is somewhat too allegorical and haughty a creature; while Colombine and Nérine (Vaudeville, June 1864) are rather tricky imps than women of flesh

and blood. M. De Banville's stage, on the whole, is one of glitter and fantasy; yet he is too much a Greek for the age that appreciates "la belle Hélène," too much a lyric dramatist to please the contemporaries of Sardou; he lends too much sentiment and dainty refinement to characters as flimsy as those of Offenbach's drama.

Like other French poets, M. De Banville has occasionally deigned to write *feuilletons* and criticisms. Not many of these scattered leaves are collected, but one volume, "La Mer de Nice" (Poulet-Malassis et De Broise, Paris, 1861), may be read with pleasure even by jealous admirers of Gautier's success as a chronicler of the impressions made by southern scenery.

To De Banville (he does not conceal it) a journey to a place so far from Paris as the Riviera was no slight labour. Even from the roses, the palms, the siren sea, the wells of water under the fronds of maiden-hair fern, his mind travels back wistfully to the city of his love.

"I am, I have always been, one of those devotees of Paris who visit Greece only when they gaze on the face, so fair and so terrible, of the twice-victorious Venus of the Louvre. One of those obstinate adorers of my town am I, who will never see Italy, save in the glass that reflects the tawny hair of Titian's *Violante*, or in that dread isle of *Alcinous* where *Lionardo* shows you the mountain peaks that waver in the blue behind the mysterious *Monna Lisa*. But the Faculty of Physicians, which has, I own, the right to be sceptical, does not believe that neuralgia can be healed by the high sun which Titian and Veronese have fixed on the canvas. To me the Faculty prescribes the real sun of nature and of life; and here am I, condemned to learn in suffering all that passes in the mind of a poet of Paris exiled from that blessed place where he finds the *Cyclades* and the islands blossoming, the vale of *Avalon*, and all the heavenly homes of the fairies of experience and desire."

Nice is *Tomis* to this Ovid, but he makes the best of it, and sends to the editor of the *Moniteur* letters much more diverting than the "*Tristia*." To tell the truth, he never overcomes his amazement at being out of Paris streets, and in a glade of the lower Alps he loves to be reminded of his dear city of pleasure. Only under the olives of Monaco, those solemn and ancient trees, he feels what surely all men feel who walk at sunset through their shadow—the memory of a mysterious twilight of agony in an olive garden.

"Et ceux-ci, les pâles oliviers, n'est-ce pas de ces heures désolées où, comme torture suprême, le Sauveur acceptait en son âme l'irréparable misère du doute, n'est-ce pas alors qu'il ont appris de lui à courber le front sous le poids impérieux des souvenirs?"

The pages which M. De Banville consecrates to the Villa Sardou, where Rachel died, may disenchant, perhaps, some readers of Mr. Matthew Arnold's sonnet. The scene of Rachel's death has been spoiled by "improvements" in too theatrical taste. All these notes, however, were made many years ago; and visitors of the Riviera, though they will find the little book charming where it speaks of seas and hills, will learn that France has greatly changed the city which she has annexed. As a practical man and a Parisian, De Banville has printed (pp. 179-81) a recipe for the concoction of the Marseilles dish, *bouillabaisse*, the mess that Thackeray's ballad made so famous. It takes genius, however, to cook *bouillabaisse*; and, to parody what De Banville says about his own recipe for making a mechanical "ballade," "en employment ce moyen, on est sûr de faire une mauvaise, irrémédiablement mauvaise *bouillabaisse*." The poet adds the remark that "une bouillabaisse réussie vaut un sonnet sans défaut."

There remains one field of M. De Banville's activity to be shortly described. Of his "Emaux Parisiens," short studies of celebrated writers, we need say no more than that they are written in careful prose. M. De Banville is not only a poet, but in his "Petit Traité de Poésie Française" (Bibliothèque de l'Echo de la Sorbonne, s.d.) a teacher of the mechanical part of poetry. He does not, of course, advance a paradox like that of Baudelaire, "that poetry can be taught in thirty lessons." He merely instructs his pupil in the material part—the scansion, metres, and so on—of French poetry. In this little work he introduces these "traditional forms of verse," which once caused some talk in England: the *rondel*, *rondeau*, *ballade*, *villanelle*, and *chant royal*. It may be worth while to quote his testimony as to the merit of these modes of expression. "This cluster of forms is one of our most precious treasures, for each of them forms a rhythmic whole, complete and perfect, while at the same time they all possess the fresh and unconscious grace which marks the productions of primitive times." Now, there is some truth in this criticism; for it is a mark of man's early ingenuity, in many arts, to seek complexity (where you would expect simplicity), and yet to lend to that complexity an infantine naturalness. One can see this phenomenon in early decorative art, and in early law and custom, and even in the complicated structure of primitive languages. Now, just as early, and even savage, races are our masters in the decorative use of colour and of carving, so the nameless master-singers of ancient France may be our teachers in decorative poetry, the poetry some call *vers de société*. Whether it is possible to go beyond this, and adapt the old French forms to serious modern poetry, it is not for any one but time to decide. In this matter, as in greater affairs, *securus judicat orbis terrarum*. For my own part I scarcely believe that the revival would serve the nobler ends of English poetry. Now let us listen again to De Banville.

"In the *rondel*, as in the *rondeau* and the *ballade*, all the art is to bring in the refrain without effort, naturally, gaily, and each time with novel effect and with fresh light cast on the central idea." Now, you can *teach* no one to do that, and M. De Banville never pretends to give any recipes for cooking *rondels* or *ballades* worth reading. "Without poetic *vision* all is mere marquetery and cabinet-maker's work: that is, so far as poetry is concerned—nothing." It is because he was a poet, not a mere craftsman, that Villon was and remains the king, the absolute

master, of ballad-land." About the *rondeau*, M. De Banville avers that it possesses "nimble movement, speed, grace, lightness of touch, and, as it were, an ancient fragrance of the soil, that must charm all who love our country and our country's poetry, in its every age." As for the *villanelle*, M. De Banville declares that it is the fairest jewel in the casket of the muse Erato; while the *chant royal* is a kind of fossil poem, a relic of an age when kings and allegories flourished. "The kings and the gods are dead," like Pan; or at least we no longer find them able, by touch royal or divine, to reanimate the magnificent *chant royal*.

This is M. De Banville's apology in *pro lyrâ suâ*, that light lyre of many tones, in whose jingle the eternal note of modern sadness is heard so rarely. If he has a lesson to teach English versifiers, surely it is a lesson of gaiety. They are only too fond of rue and rosemary, and now and then prefer the cypress to the bay. M. De Banville's muse is content to wear roses in her locks, and perhaps may retain, for many years, a laurel leaf from the ancient laurel tree which once sheltered the poet at Turbia.

HOMER AND THE STUDY OF GREEK

The Greek language is being ousted from education, here, in France, and in America. The speech of the earliest democracies is not democratic enough for modern anarchy. There is nothing to be gained, it is said, by a knowledge of Greek. We have not to fight the battle of life with Hellenic waiters; and, even if we had, Romaic, or modern Greek, is much more easily learned than the old classical tongue. The reason of this comparative ease will be plain to any one who, retaining a vague memory of his Greek grammar, takes up a modern Greek newspaper. He will find that the idioms of the modern newspaper are the idioms of all newspapers, that the grammar is the grammar of modern languages, that the opinions are expressed in barbarous translations of barbarous French and English journalistic *clichés* or commonplaces. This ugly and undignified mixture of the ancient Greek characters, and of ancient Greek words with modern grammar and idioms, and stereotyped phrases, is extremely distasteful to the scholar. Modern Greek, as it is at present printed, is not the natural spoken language of the peasants. You can read a Greek leading article, though you can hardly make sense of a Greek rural ballad. The peasant speech is a thing of slow development; there is a basis of ancient Greek in it, with large elements of Slavonic, Turkish, Italian, and other imposed or imported languages. Modern literary Greek is a hybrid of revived classical words, blended with the idioms of the speeches which have arisen since the fall of the Roman Empire. Thus, thanks to the modern and familiar element in it, modern Greek "as she is writ" is much more easily learned than ancient Greek. Consequently, if any one has need for the speech in business or travel, he can acquire as much of it as most of us have of French, with considerable ease. People therefore argue that ancient Greek is particularly superfluous in schools. Why waste time on it, they ask, which could be expended on science, on modern languages, or any other branch of education? There is a great deal of justice in this position. The generation of men who are now middle-aged bestowed much time and labour on Greek; and in what, it may be asked, are they better for it? Very few of them "keep up their Greek." Say, for example, that one was in a form with fifty boys who began the study—it is odds against five of the survivors still reading Greek books. The worldly advantages of the study are slight: it may lead three of the fifty to a good degree, and one to a fellowship; but good degrees may be taken in other subjects, and fellowships may be abolished, or "nationalised," with all other forms of property.

Then, why maintain Greek in schools? Only a very minute percentage of the boys who are tormented with it really learn it. Only a still smaller percentage can read it after they are thirty. Only one or two gain any material advantage by it. In very truth, most minds are not framed by nature to excel and to delight in literature, and only to such minds and to schoolmasters is Greek valuable.

This is the case against Greek put as powerfully as one can state it. On the other side, we may say, though the remark may seem absurd at first sight, that to have mastered Greek, even if you forget it, is not to have wasted time. It really is an educational and mental discipline. The study is so severe that it needs the earnest application of the mind. The study is averse to indolent intellectual ways; it will not put up with a "there or thereabouts," any more than mathematical ideas admit of being made to seem "extremely plausible." He who writes, and who may venture to offer himself as an example, is naturally of a most slovenly and slatternly mental habit. It is his constant temptation to "scamp" every kind of work, and to say "it will do well enough." He hates taking trouble and verifying references. And he can honestly confess that nothing in his experience has so helped, in a certain degree, to counteract those tendencies—as the labour of thoroughly learning certain Greek texts—the dramatists, Thucydides, some of the books of Aristotle. Experience has satisfied him that Greek is of real educational value, and, apart from the acknowledged and unsurpassed merit of its literature, is a severe and logical training of the mind. The mental constitution is strengthened and braced by the labour, even if the language is forgotten in later life.

It is manifest, however, that this part of education is not for everybody. The real educational problem is to discover what boys Greek will be good for, and what boys will only waste time and dawdle over it. Certainly to men of a literary turn (a very minute percentage), Greek is of an

inestimable value. Great poets, even, may be ignorant of it, as Shakespeare probably was, as Keats and Scott certainly were, as Alexandre Dumas was. But Dumas regretted his ignorance; Scott regretted it. We know not how much Scott's admitted laxity of style and hurried careless habit might have been modified by a knowledge of Greek; how much of grace, permanence, and generally of art, his genius might have gained from the language and literature of Hellas. The most Homeric of modern men could not read Homer. As for Keats, he was born a Greek, it has been said; but had he been born with a knowledge of Greek, he never, probably, would have been guilty of his chief literary faults. This is not certain, for some modern men of letters deeply read in Greek have all the qualities of fustian and effusiveness which Longinus most despised. Greek will not make a luxuriously Asiatic mind Hellenic, it is certain; but it may, at least, help to restrain effusive and rhetorical gabble. Our Asiatic rhetoricians might perhaps be even more barbarous than they are if Greek were a sealed book to them. However this may be, it is, at least, well to find out in a school what boys are worth instructing in the Greek language. Now, of their worthiness, of their chances of success in the study, Homer seems the best touchstone; and he is certainly the most attractive guide to the study.

At present boys are introduced to the language of the Muses by pedantically written grammars, full of the queerest and most arid metaphysical and philological verbiage. The very English in which these deplorable books are composed may be scientific, may be comprehensible by and useful to philologists, but is utterly heart-breaking to boys.

Philology might be made fascinating; the history of a word, and of the processes by which its different forms, in different senses, were developed, might be made as interesting as any other story of events. But grammar is not taught thus: boys are introduced to a jargon about matters meaningless, and they are naturally as much enchanted as if they were listening to a *chimæra bombinans in vacuo*. The grammar, to them, is a mere buzz in a chaos of nonsense. They have to learn the buzz by rote; and a pleasant process that is—a seductive initiation into the mysteries. When they struggle so far as to be allowed to try to read a piece of Greek prose, they are only like the Marchioness in her experience of beer: she once had a sip of it. Ten lines of Xenophon, narrating how he marched so many parasangs and took breakfast, do not amount to more than a very unrefreshing sip of Greek. Nobody even tells the boys who Xenophon was, what he did there, and what it was all about. Nobody gives a brief and interesting sketch of the great march, of its history and objects. The boys straggle along with Xenophon, knowing not whence or whither:

"They stray through a desolate region,
And often are faint on the march."

One by one they fall out of the ranks; they mutiny against Xenophon; they murmur against that commander; they desert his flag. They determine that anything is better than Greek, that nothing can be worse than Greek, and they move the tender hearts of their parents. They are put to learn German; which they do not learn, unluckily, but which they find it comparatively easy to shirk. In brief, they leave school without having learned anything whatever.

Up to a certain age my experiences at school were precisely those which I have described. Our grammar was not so philological, abstruse and arid as the instruments of torture employed at present. But I hated Greek with a deadly and sickening hatred; I hated it like a bully and a thief of time. The verbs in $\mu\upsilon$ completed my intellectual discomfiture, and Xenophon routed me with horrible carnage. I could have run away to sea, but for a strong impression that a life on the ocean wave "did not set my genius," as Alan Breck says. Then we began to read Homer; and from the very first words, in which the Muse is asked to sing the wrath of Achilles, Peleus' son, my mind was altered, and I was the devoted friend of Greek. Here was something worth reading about; here one knew where one was; here was the music of words, here were poetry, pleasure, and life. We fortunately had a teacher (Dr. Hodson) who was not wildly enthusiastic about grammar. He would set us long pieces of the Iliad or Odyssey to learn, and, when the day's task was done, would make us read on, adventuring ourselves in "the unseen," and construing as gallantly as we might, without grammar or dictionary. On the following day we surveyed more carefully the ground we had pioneered or skirmished over, and then advanced again. Thus, to change the metaphor, we took Homer in large draughts, not in sips: in sips no epic can be enjoyed. We now revelled in Homer like Keats in Spenser, like young horses let loose in a pasture. The result was not the making of many accurate scholars, though a few were made; others got nothing better than enjoyment in their work, and the firm belief, opposed to that of most schoolboys, that the ancients did not write nonsense. To love Homer, as Steele said about loving a fair lady of quality, "is a liberal education."

Judging from this example, I venture very humbly to think that any one who, even at the age of Cato, wants to learn Greek, should begin where Greek literature, where all profane literature begins—with Homer himself. It was thus, not with grammars *in vacuo*, that the great scholars of the Renaissance began. It was thus that Ascham and Rabelais began, by jumping into Greek and splashing about till they learned to swim. First, of course, a person must learn the Greek characters. Then his or her tutor may make him read a dozen lines of Homer, marking the cadence, the surge and thunder of the hexameters—a music which, like that of the Sirens, few can hear without being lured to the seas and isles of song. Then the tutor might translate a passage of moving interest, like Priam's appeal to Achilles; first, of course, explaining the situation. Then the teacher might go over some lines, minutely pointing out how the Greek words are etymologically connected with many words in English. Next, he might take a substantive and

a verb, showing roughly how their inflections arose and were developed, and how they retain forms in Homer which do not occur in later Greek. There is no reason why even this part of the lesson should be uninteresting. By this time a pupil would know, more or less, where he was, what Greek is, and what the Homeric poems are like. He might thus believe from the first that there are good reasons for knowing Greek; that it is the key to many worlds of life, of action, of beauty, of contemplation, of knowledge. Then, after a few more exercises in Homer, the grammar being judiciously worked in along with the literature of the epic, a teacher might discern whether it was worth while for his pupils to continue in the study of Greek. Homer would be their guide into the "realms of gold."

It is clear enough that Homer is the best guide. His is the oldest extant Greek, his matter is the most various and delightful, and most appeals to the young, who are wearied by scraps of Xenophon, and who cannot be expected to understand the Tragedians. But Homer is a poet for all ages, all races, and all moods. To the Greeks the epics were not only the best of romances, the richest of poetry; not only their oldest documents about their own history,—they were also their Bible, their treasury of religious traditions and moral teaching. With the Bible and Shakespeare, the Homeric poems are the best training for life. There is no good quality that they lack: manliness, courage, reverence for old age and for the hospitable hearth; justice, piety, pity, a brave attitude towards life and death, are all conspicuous in Homer. He has to write of battles; and he delights in the joy of battle, and in all the movement of war. Yet he delights not less, but more, in peace: in prosperous cities, hearths secure, in the tender beauty of children, in the love of wedded wives, in the frank nobility of maidens, in the beauty of earth and sky and sea, and seaward murmuring river, in sun and snow, frost and mist and rain, in the whispered talk of boy and girl beneath oak and pine tree.

Living in an age where every man was a warrior, where every city might know the worst of sack and fire, where the noblest ladies might be led away for slaves, to light the fire and make the bed of a foreign master, Homer inevitably regards life as a battle. To each man on earth comes "the wicked day of destiny," as Malory unconsciously translates it, and each man must face it as hardily as he may.

Homer encourages them by all the maxims of chivalry and honour. His heart is with the brave of either side—with Glaucus and Sarpedon of Lycia no less than with Achilles and Patroclus. "Ah, friend," cries Sarpedon, "if once escaped from this battle we were for ever to be ageless and immortal, neither would I myself fight now in the foremost ranks, nor would I urge thee into the wars that give renown; but now—for assuredly ten thousand fates of death on every side beset us, and these may no man shun, nor none avoid—forward now let us go, whether we are to give glory or to win it!" And forth they go, to give and take renown and death, all the shields and helms of Lycia shining behind them, through the dust of battle, the singing of the arrows, the hurtling of spears, the rain of stones from the Locrian slings. And shields are smitten, and chariot-horses run wild with no man to drive them, and Sarpedon drags down a portion of the Achæan battlement, and Aias leaps into the trench with his deadly spear, and the whole battle shifts and shines beneath the sun. Yet he who sings of the war, and sees it with his sightless eyes, sees also the Trojan women working at the loom, cheating their anxious hearts with broidery work of gold and scarlet, or raising the song to Athene, or heating the bath for Hector, who never again may pass within the gates of Troy. He sees the poor weaving woman, weighing the wool, that she may not defraud her employers, and yet may win bread for her children. He sees the children, the golden head of Astyanax, his shrinking from the splendour of the hero's helm. He sees the child Odysseus, going with his father through the orchard, and choosing out some apple trees "for his very own." It is in the mouth of the ruthless Achilles, the fatal, the fated, the swift-footed hero with the hands of death, that Homer places the tenderest of his similes. "Wherefore weepest thou, Patroclus, like a fond little maid, that runs by her mother's side, praying her mother to take her up, snatching at her gown, and hindering her as she walks, and tearfully looking at her till her mother takes her up?—like her, Patroclus, dost thou softly weep."

This is what Chesterfield calls "the porter-like language of Homer's heroes." Such are the moods of Homer, so full of love of life and all things living, so rich in all human sympathies, so readily moved when the great hound Argus welcomes his master, whom none knew after twenty years, but the hound knew him, and died in that welcome. With all this love of the real, which makes him dwell so fondly on every detail of armour, of implement, of art; on the divers-coloured gold-work of the shield, on the making of tires for chariot-wheels, on the forging of iron, on the rose-tinted ivory of the Sidonians, on cooking and eating and sacrificing, on pet dogs, on wasps and their ways, on fishing, on the boar hunt, on scenes in baths where fair maidens lave water over the heroes, on undiscovered isles with good harbours and rich land, on ploughing, mowing, and sowing, on the furniture of houses, on the golden vases wherein the white dust of the dead is laid,—with all this delight in the real, Homer is the most romantic of poets. He walks with the surest foot in the darkling realm of dread Persephone, beneath the poplars on the solemn last beach of Ocean. He has heard the Siren's music, and the song of Circe, chanting as she walks to and fro, casting the golden shuttle through the loom of gold. He enters the cave of the Man Eater; he knows the sunned land of the Cimmerians; in the summer of the North he has looked, from the fiord of the Laestrygons, on the Midnight Sun. He has dwelt on the floating isle of Æolus, with its wall of bronze unbroken, and has sailed on those Phæacian barks that need no help of helm or oar, that fear no stress either of wind or tide, that come and go and return obedient to a thought and silent as a dream. He has seen the four maidens of Circe, daughters of wells and woods, and of sacred streams. He is the second-sighted man, and beholds the shroud that wraps the living

who are doomed, and the mystic dripping from the walls of blood yet unshed. He has walked in the garden closes of Phæacia, and looked on the face of gods who fare thither, and watch the weaving of the dance. He has eaten the honey-sweet fruit of the lotus, and from the hand of Helen he brings us that Egyptian nepenthe which puts all sorrow out of mind. His real world is as real as that in *Henry V.*, his enchanted isles are charmed with the magic of the *Tempest*. His young wooers are as insolent as Claudio, as flushed with youth; his beggar-men are brethren of Edie Ochiltree; his Nausicaa is sister to Rosalind, with a different charm of stately purity in love. His enchantresses hold us yet with their sorceries; his Helen is very Beauty: she has all the sweetness of ideal womanhood, and her repentance is without remorse. His Achilles is youth itself, glorious, cruel, pitiful, splendid, and sad, ardent and loving, and conscious of its doom. Homer, in truth, is to be matched only with Shakespeare, and of Shakespeare he has not the occasional wilfulness, freakishness, and modish obscurity. He is a poet all of gold, universal as humanity, simple as childhood, musical now as the flow of his own rivers, now as the heavy plunging wave of his own Ocean.

Such, then, as far as weak words can speak of him, is the first and greatest of poets. This is he whom English boys are to be ignorant of, if Greek be ousted from our schools, or are to know only in the distorting mirror of a versified, or in the pale shadow of a prose translation. Translations are good only as teachers to bring men to Homer. English verse has no measure which even remotely suggests the various flow of the hexameter. Translators who employ verse give us a feeble Homer, dashed with their own conceits, and moulded to their own style. Translators who employ prose "tell the story without the song," but, at least, they add no twopenny "beauties" and cheap conceits of their own.

I venture to offer a few examples of original translation, in which the mannerisms of poets who have, or have not, translated Homer, are parodied, and, of course (except in the case of Pope), exaggerated. The passage is the speech of the Second-sighted Man, before the slaying of the wooers in the hall:—

"Ah! wretched men, what ill is this ye suffer? In night are swathed your heads, your faces, your knees; and the voice of wailing is kindled, and cheeks are wet with tears, and with blood drip the walls, and the fair main beams of the roof, and the porch is full of shadows, and full is the courtyard, of ghosts that hasten hellward below the darkness, and the sun has perished out of heaven, and an evil mist sweeps up over all."

So much for Homer. The first attempt at metric translation here given is meant to be in the manner of Pope:

"Caitiffs!" he cried, "what heaven-directed blight
Involves each countenance with clouds of night!
What pearly drop the ashen cheek bedews!
Why do the walls with gouts ensanguined ooze?
The court is thronged with ghosts that 'neath the gloom
Seek Pluto's realm, and Dis's awful doom;
In ebon curtains Phoebus hides his head,
And sable mist creeps upward from the dead."

This appears pretty bad, and nearly as un-Homeric as a translation could possibly be. But Pope, aided by Broome and Fenton, managed to be much less Homeric, much more absurd, and infinitely more "classical" in the sense in which Pope is classical:

"O race to death devote! with Stygian shade
Each destined peer impending fates invade;
With tears your wan distorted cheeks are drowned;
With sanguine drops the walls are rubied round:
Thick swarms the spacious hall with howling ghosts,
To people Orcus and the burning coasts!
Nor gives the sun his golden orb to roll,
But universal night usurps the pole."

Who could have conjectured that even Pope would wander away so far from his matchless original? "Wretches!" cries Theoclymenus, the seer; and that becomes, "O race to death devote!" "Your heads are swathed in night," turns into "With Stygian shade each destined peer" (peer is good!) "impending fates invade," where Homer says nothing about Styx nor peers. The Latin Orcus takes the place of Erebus, and "the burning coasts" are derived from modern popular theology. The very grammar detains or defies the reader; is it the sun that does not give his golden orb to roll, or who, or what?

The only place where the latter-day Broome or Fenton can flatter himself that he rivals Pope at his own game is—

"What pearly drop the ashen cheek bedews!"

This is, if possible, *more* classical than Pope's own—

"With tears your wan distorted cheeks are drowned."

But Pope nobly revindicates his unparalleled power of translating funnily, when, in place of “the walls drip with blood,” he writes—

“With sanguine drops the walls are rubied round.”

Homer does not appear to have been acquainted with rubies; but what of that? And how noble, how eminently worthy of Pope it is to add that the ghosts “howl”! I tried to make them gibber, but ghosts *do* gibber in Homer (though not in this passage), so Pope, Fenton, Broome, and Co., make them howl.

No, Pope is not lightly to be rivalled by a modern translator. The following example, a far-off following of a noted contemporary poet, may be left unsigned—

“Wretches, the bane hath befallen, the night and the blight of your sin
Sweeps like a shroud o’er the faces and limbs that were gladsome therein;
And the dirge of the dead breaketh forth, and the faces of all men are wet,
And the walls are besprinkled with blood, and the ghosts in the gateway are met,
Ghosts in the court and the gateway are gathered, Hell opens her lips,
And the sun in his splendour is shrouded, and sickens in spasm of eclipse.”

The next is longer and slower: the poet has a difficulty in telling his story:

“Wretches,” he cried, “what doom is this? what night
Clings like a face-cloth to the face of each,—
Sweeps like a shroud o’er knees and head? for lo!
The windy wail of death is up, and tears
On every cheek are wet; each shining wall
And beauteous interspace of beam and beam
Weeps tears of blood, and shadows in the door
Flicker, and fill the portals and the court—
Shadows of men that hellwards yearn—and now
The sun himself hath perished out of heaven,
And all the land is darkened with a mist.”

That could never be mistaken for a version by the Laureate, as perhaps any contemporary hack’s works might have been taken for Pope’s. The difficulty, perhaps, lies here: any one knows where to have Pope, any one knows that he will evade the *mot propre*, though the precise evasion he may select is hard to guess. But the Laureate would keep close to his text, and yet would write like himself, very beautifully, but not with an Homeric swiftness and strength. Who is to imitate him? As to Mr. William Morris, he might be fabled to render Α δειλοί “niddering wights,” but beyond that, conjecture is baffled. ^[91] Or is *this* the kind of thing?—

“Niddering wights, what a bane do ye bear, for your knees in the night,
And your heads and your faces, are shrouded, and clamour that knows not delight
Rings, and your cheeks are begrutten, and blood is besprent on the walls,
Blood on the tapestry fair woven, and barrow-wights walk in the halls.
Fetches and wraiths of the chosen of the Norns, and the sun from the lift
Shudders, and over the midgarth and swan’s bath the cloud-shadows drift.”

It may be argued that, though this is perhaps a translation, it is not English, never was, and never will be. But it is quite as like Homer as the performance of Pope.

Such as these, or not so very much better than these as might be wished, are our efforts to translate Homer. From Chapman to Avia, or Mr. William Morris, they are all eminently conscientious, and erroneous, and futile. Chapman makes Homer a fanciful, euphuistic, obscure, and garrulous Elizabethan, but Chapman has fire. Pope makes him a wit, spirited, occasionally noble, full of points, and epigrams, and queer rococo conventionalisms. Cowper makes him slow, lumbering, a Milton without the music. Maginn makes him pipe an Irish jig:—

“Scarcely had she begun to wash
When she was aware of the grisly gash!”

Lord Derby makes him respectable and ponderous. Lord Tennyson makes him not less, but certainly not more, than Tennysonian. Homer, in the Laureate’s few fragments of experiment, is still a poet, but he is not Homer. Mr. Morris, and Avia, make him Icelandic, and archaistic, and hard to scan, though vigorous in his fetters for all that. Bohn makes him a crib; and of other translators in prose it has been said, with a humour which one of them appreciates, that they render Homer into a likeness of the Book of Mormon.

Homer is untranslatable. None of us can bend the bow of Eurytus, and make the bow-string “ring sweetly at the touch, like the swallow’s song.” The adventure is never to be achieved; and, if Greek is to be dismissed from education, not the least of the sorrows that will ensue is English ignorance of Homer.

The editor of a great American newspaper once offered the author of these lines a commission to explore a lost country, the seat of a fallen and forgotten civilisation. It was not in Yucatan, or Central Africa, or Thibet, or Kafiristan, this desolate region, once so popular, so gaudy, so much frequented and desired. It was only the fashionable novels of the Forties, say from 1835 to 1850, that I was requested to examine and report upon. But I shrank from the colossal task. I am no Mr. Stanley; and the length, the difficulties, the arduousness of the labour appalled me. Besides, I do not know where that land lies, the land of the old Fashionable Novel, the Kô of which Thackeray's *Lady Fanny Flummery* is the Ayesha. What were the names of the old novels, and who were the authors, and in the circulating library of what undiscoverable watering-place are they to be found? We have heard of Mrs. Gore, we have heard of *Tremayne, and Emilia Wyndham*, and the *Bachelor of the Albany*; and many of us have read *Pelham*, or know him out of Carlyle's art, and those great curses which he spoke. But who was the original, or who were the originals, that sat for the portrait of the "Fashionable Authoress," Lady Fanny Flummery? and of what work is *Lords and Liveries* a parody? The author is also credited with *Dukes and Dejeûners, Marchionesses and Milliners*, etc. Could, any candidate in a literary examination name the prototypes? "Let mantua-makers puff her, but not men," says Thackeray, speaking of Lady Fanny Flummery, "and the Fashionable Authoress is no more. Blessed, blessed thought! No more fiddle-faddle novels! When will you arrive, O happy Golden Age!"

Well, it has arrived, though we are none the happier for all that. The Fashionable Novel has ceased to exist, and the place of the fashionable authoress knows her no more. Thackeray plainly detested Lady Fanny. He writes about her, her books, her critics, her successes, with a certain bitterness. Can it be possible that a world which rather neglected *Barry Lyndon* was devoted to *Marchionesses and Milliners*? Lady Fanny is represented as having editors and reviewers at her feet; she sits among the flowers, like the Sirens, and around her are the bones of critics corrupt in death. She is puffed for the sake of her bouquets, her dinners, her affabilities and condescensions. She gives a reviewer a great garnet pin, adorned wherewith he paces the town. Her adorers compare her to "him who sleeps by Avon." In one of Mr. Black's novels there is a lady of this kind, who captivates the tribe of "Log Rollers," as Mr. Black calls them. This lady appears to myself to be a quite impossible She. One has never met her with her wiles, nor come across her track, even, and seen the bodies and the bones of those who perished in puffing her. Some persons of rank and fashion have a taste for the society of some men of letters, but nothing in the way of literary puffery seems to come of it. Of course many critics like to give their friends and acquaintances an applaudive hand, and among their acquaintances may be ladies of fashion who write novels; but we read nowhere such extraordinary adulations as Augustus Timson bestowed on Lady Fanny. The fashionable authoress is nearly extinct, though some persons write well albeit they are fashionable. The fashionable novel is as dead as a door nail: *Lothair* was nearly the last of the species. There are novelists who write about "Society," to be sure, like Mr. Norris; but their tone is quite different. They do not speak as if Dukes and Earls were some strange superior kind of beings; their manner is that of men accustomed to and undazzled by Earls, writing for readers who do not care whether the hero is a lord or a commoner. They are "at ease," though not terribly "in Zion." Thackeray himself introduces plenty of the peerage, but it cannot be said that he is always at ease in their society. He remembers that they are lords, and is on his guard, very often, and suspicious and sarcastic, except, perhaps when he deals with a gentleman like Lord Kew. He examines them like curious wild animals in the Jardin des Plantes. He is an accomplished naturalist, and not afraid of the lion; but he remembers that the animal is royal, and has a title. Mr. Norris, for instance, shows nothing of this mood. Mr. Trollope was not afraid of his Dukes: he thought none the worse of a man because he was the high and puissant prince of Omnium. As for most novelists, they no longer paint fashionable society with enthusiasm. Mr. Henry James has remarked that young British peers favour the word "beastly,"—a point which does not always impress itself into other people so keenly as into Mr. Henry James. In reading him you do not forget that his Tufts are Tufts. But then Tufts are really strange animals to the denizens of the Great Republic. Perhaps the modern realism has made novelists desert the world where Dukes and Dowagers abound. Novelists do not know very much about it; they are not wont to haunt the gilded saloons, and they prefer to write about the manners which they know. A very good novel, in these strange ruinous times, might be written with a Duke for hero; but nobody writes it, and, if anybody did write it in the modern manner, it would not in the least resemble the old fashionable novel.

Here a curious point arises. We have all studied the ingenious lady who calls herself Ouida. Now, is Ouida, or rather was Ouida in her early state sublime, the last of the old fashionable novelists, or did Thackeray unconsciously prophesy of her when he wrote his burlesque *Lords and Liveries*? Think of the young earl of Bagnigge, "who was never heard to admire anything except a *coulis de dindonneau à la St. Menéhould*, . . . or the bouquet of a flask of Médoc, of Carbonnell's best quality, or a *goutte* of Marasquin, from the cellars of Briggs and Hobson." We have met such young patricians in *Under Two Flags* and *Idalia*. But then there is a difference: Ouida never tells us that her hero was "blest with a mother of excellent principles, who had imbued his young mind with that morality which is so superior to all the vain pomps of the world." But a hero of Ouida's might easily have had a father who "was struck down by the side of the gallant Collingwood in the Bay of Fundy." The heroes themselves may have "looked at the Pyramids without awe, at the Alps without reverence." They do say "*Corpo di Bacco*," and the Duca de Montepulciano does reply, "*E' bellissima certamente*." And their creator might conceivably remark "Non cuivis contigit." But Lady Fanny Flummery's ladies could not dress as Ouida's ladies do: they could not quote Petronius Arbiter; they had never heard of Suetonius. No age reproduces itself. There is much of our old fashionable authoress in Ouida's earlier tales;

there is plenty of the Peerage, plenty of queer French in old novels and Latin yet more queer; but where is the *élan* which takes archæology with a rush, which sticks at no adventure, however nobly incredible? where is the pathos, the simplicity, the purple splendour of Ouida's manner, or manners? No, the spirit of the world, mirroring itself in the minds of individuals, simpered, and that simper was Lady Fanny Flummery. But it did many things more portentous than simpering, when it reflected itself in Ouida.

Is it that we do no longer gape on the aristocracy admiringly, and write of them curiously, as if they were creatures in a Paradise? Is it that Thackeray has converted us? In part, surely, we are just as snobbish as ever, though the gods of our adoration totter to their fall, and "a hideous hum" from the mob outside thrills through the temples. In fiction, on the other hand, the world of fashion is "played out." Nobody cares to read or write about the dear duchess. If a peer comes into a novel he comes in, not as a coroneted curiosity, but as a man, just as if he were a dentist, or a stockbroker. His rank is an accident; it used to be the essence of his luminous apparition. I scarce remember a lord in all the many works of Mr. Besant, nor do they people the romances of Mr. Black. Mr. Kipling does not deal in them, nor Mr. George Meredith much; Mr. Haggard hardly gets beyond a baronet, and *he* wears chain mail in Central Africa, and tools with an axe. Mrs. Oliphant has a Scotch peer, but he is less interesting and prominent than his family ghost. No, we have only Ouida left, and Mr. Norris—who writes about people of fashion, indeed, but who has nothing in him of the old fashionable novelist.

Is it to a Republic, to France, that we must look for our fashionable novels—to France and to America. Every third person in M. Guy de Maupassant's tales has a "de," and is a Marquis or a Vicomte. As for M. Paul Bourget, one really can be happy with him in the fearless old fashion. With him we meet Lord Henry Bohun, and M. De Casal (a Vicomte), and all the Marquises and *Marquises*; and all the pale blue boudoirs, and sentimental Duchesses, whose hearts are only too good, and who get into the most complicated amorous scrapes. That young Republican, M. Bourget, sincerely loves a *blason*, a pedigree, diamonds, lace, silver dressing cases, silver baths, essences, pomatums, *le grand luxe*. So does Gyp: apart from her wit, Gyp is delightful to read, introducing us to the very best of bad company. Even M. Fortune du Boisgobey likes a Vicomte, and is partial to the *noblesse*, while M. Georges Ohnet is accused of entering the golden world of rank, like a man without a wedding garment, and of being lost and at sea among his aristocrats. They order these things better in France: they still appeal to the fine old natural taste for rank and luxury, splendour and refinement. What is Gyp but a Lady Fanny Flummery *réussie*,—Lady Fanny with the trifling additional qualities of wit and daring? Observe her noble scorn of M. George Ohnet: it is a fashionable arrogance.

To my mind, I confess, the decay of the British fashionable novel seems one of the most threatening signs of the times. Even in France institutions are much more permanent than here. In France they have fashionable novels, and very good novels too: no man of sense will deny that they are far better than our dilettantism of the slums, or our religious and social tracts in the disguise of romance. If there is no new tale of treasure and bandits and fights and lions handy, may I have a fashionable novel in French to fall back upon! Even Count Tolstoï does not disdain the *genre*. There is some uncommonly high life in *Anna Karénine*. He adds a great deal of psychology, to be sure; so does M. Paul Bourget. But he takes you among smart people, who have everything handsome about them—titles, and lands, and rents. Is it not a hard thing that an honest British snob, if he wants to move in the highest circles of fiction, must turn to French novelists, or Russian, or American? As to the American novels of the *élite* and the *beau monde*, their elegance is obscured to English eyes, because that which makes one New Yorker better than another, that which creates the Upper Ten Thousand (dear phrase!) of New York, is so inconspicuous. For example, the scientific inquirer may venture himself among the novels of two young American authors. Few English students make this voyage of exploration. But the romances of these ingenious writers are really, or really try to be, a kind of fashionable novels. It is a queer domain of fashion, to be sure, peopled by the strangest aborigines, who talk and are talked about in a language most interesting to the philologist. Here poor Lady Fanny Flummery would have been sadly to seek, for her characters, though noble, were moral, and her pen was wielded on the side of Church and State. But these western fashionables have morals and a lingo of their own, made in equal parts of the American idioms and of expressions transferred from the jargon of Decadence and the *Parnassiculet Contemporain*. As one peruses these novels one thinks of a new tale to be told—*The Last of the Fashionables*, who died away, like the buffalo and the grisly bear, in some cañon or forest of the Wild West. I think this distinguished being, *Ultimus hominum venustiorum*, will find the last remnants of the Gentlemanly Party in some Indian tribe, Apaches or Sioux. I see him raised to the rank of chief, and leading the red-skinned and painted cavaliers on the war-path against the Vulgarians of the ultimate Democracy. To depict this dandy chief would require the art at once of a Cooper and a Ouida. Let me attempt—

THE LAST FIGHT OF FOUR HAIR-BRUSHES

By this time the Sioux were flying in all directions, mowed down by the fire of Gatling and Maxim guns. The scrub of Little Big Horn Creek was strewn with the bodies of writhing braves. On the livid and volcanic heights of Mount Buncombe, the painted tents were blazing merrily. But on a mound above the creek, an ancient fortress of some long-forgotten people, a small group of Indian horsemen, might be observed, steady as rocks in the reflux tide of war. The fire from their Winchester repeaters blazed out like the streamers of the Northern Lights. Again and again the flower of the United States army had charged up the mound, only to recoil in flight, or to line

the cliff with their corpses. The First Irish Cuirassiers had been annihilated: Parnell's own, alas! in the heat of the combat had turned their fratricidal black-thorns on M'Carthy's brigade, and these two gallant squadrons were mixed and broken, falling beneath the blows of brothers estranged.

But at last the fire from the Redmen on the bluff slackened and grew silent. The ammunition was exhausted. There was a movement in the group of braves. Crazy Horse and Bald Coyote turned to Four Hair-Brushes, who sat his steed Atalanta, last winner of the last Grand National, with all the old careless elegance of the Row.

"Four Hair-Brushes," said Crazy Horse (and a tear rolled down his painted cheek), "nought is left but flight."

"Then fly," said Four Hair-Brushes, languidly, lighting a cigarette, which he took from a diamond-studded gold *étui*, the gift of the Kaiser in old days.

"Nay, not without the White Chief," said Bald Coyote; and he seized the reins of Four Hair-Brushes, to lead him from that stricken field.

"Vous êtes trop vieux jeu, mon ami," murmured Four Hair-Brushes, "je ne suis ni Edouard II., ni Charles Edouard à Culloden. Quatre-brosses meurt, mais il ne se rend pas."

The Indian released his hold, baffled by the erudition and the calm courage of his captain.

"I make tracks," he said; and, swinging round so that his horse concealed his body, he galloped down the bluff, and through the American cavalry, scattering death from the arrows which he loosed under his horse's neck.

Four Hair-Brushes was alone.

Unarmed, as ever, he sat, save for the hunting-whip in his right hand.

"Scalp him!" yelled the Friendly Crows.

"Nay, take him alive: a seemlier knight never backed steed!" cried the gallant Americans.

From their midst rode a courteous cavalier, Captain John Barry, the scholar, the hero of sword and pen.

"Yield thee, Sir Knight!" he said, doffing his *képi* in martial courtesy.

Four Hair-Brushes replied to his salute, and was opening his curved and delicate lips to speak, when a chance bullet struck him full in the breast. He threw up his arms, reeled, and fell. The gallant American, leaping from saddle to ground, rushed to raise his head.

Through the war-paint he recognised him.

"Great Heaven!" he cried, "it is—"

"Hush!" whispered Four Hair-Brushes, with a weary smile: "let Annesley de Vere of the Blues die unnamed. Tell them that I fell in harness."

He did, indeed. Under his feathered and painted cloak Barry found that Annesley, ever careful of his figure, ever loyal in love, the last of the Dandies, yet wore the corset of Madame de Tellière. It was wet with his life-blood.

"So dies," said Barry, "the last English gentleman."

THACKERAY

"I thought how some people's towering intellects and splendid cultivated geniuses rise upon simple, beautiful foundations hidden out of sight." Thus, in his Letters to Mrs. Brookfield, Mr. Thackeray wrote, after visiting the crypt of Canterbury Cathedral, with its "charming, harmonious, powerful combination of arches and shafts, beautiful whichever way you see them developed, like a fine music." The simile applies to his own character and genius, to his own and perhaps to that of most great authors, whose works are our pleasure and comfort in this troublesome world. There are critics who profess a desire to hear nothing, or as little as may be, of the lives of great artists, whether their instrument of art was the pen, or the brush, or the chisel, or the strings and reeds of music. With those critics perhaps most of us agree, when we read books that gossip about Shelley, or Coleridge, or Byron. "Give us their poetry," we say, "and leave their characters alone: we do not want tattle about Claire and chatter about Harriet; we want to be happy with 'The Skylark' or 'The Cloud.'" Possibly this instinct is correct, where such a poet as Shelley is concerned, whose life, like his poetry, was as "the life of winds and tides," whose genius, unlike the skylark's, was more true to the point of heaven than the point of home. But reflection shows us that on the whole, as Mr. Thackeray says, a man's genius must be builded on the foundations of his character. Where that genius deals with the mingled stuff of human life—sorrow, desire, love, hatred, kindness, meanness—then the foundation of character is especially important. People are sometimes glad that we know so little of Shakespeare the man;

yet who can doubt that a true revelation of his character would be not less worthy, noble and charming than the general effect of his poems? In him, it is certain, we should always find an example of nobility, of generosity, of charity and kindness and self-forgetfulness. Indeed, we find these qualities, as a rule, in the biographies of the great sympathetic poets and men of genius of the pen—I do not say in the lives of rebels of genius, “meteoric poets” like Byron. The same basis, the same foundations of rectitude, of honour, of goodness, of melancholy, and of mirth, underlie the art of Molière, of Scott, of Fielding, and as his correspondence shows, of Thackeray.

It seems probable that a complete biography of Thackeray will never be written. It was his wish to live in his works alone: that wish his descendants respect; and we must probably regard the Letters to Mr. and Mrs. Brookfield as the last private and authentic record of the man which will be given, at least to this generation. In these Letters all sympathetic readers will find the man they have long known from his writings—the man with a heart so tender that the world often drove him back into a bitterness of opposition, into an assumed hardness and defensive cynicism. There are readers so unluckily constituted that they can see nothing in Thackeray but this bitterness, this cruel sense of meanness and power of analysing shabby emotions, sneaking vanities, contemptible ambitions. All of us must often feel with regret that he allowed himself to be made too unhappy by the spectacle of failings so common in the world he knew best, that he dwelt on them too long and lashed them too complacently. One hopes never to read “Lovel the Widower” again, and one gladly skips some of the speeches of the Old Campaigner in “The Newcomes.” They are terrible, but not more terrible than life. Yet it is hard to understand how Mr. Ruskin, for example, can let such scenes and characters hide from his view the kindness, gentleness, and pity of Thackeray’s nature. The Letters must open all eyes that are not wilfully closed, and should at last overcome every prejudice.

In the Letters we see a man literally hungering and thirsting after affection, after love—a man cut off by a cruel stroke of fate from his natural solace, from the centre of a home.

“God took from me a lady dear,”

he says, in the most touching medley of doggerel and poetry, made “instead of writing my *Punch* this morning.” Losing “a lady dear,” he takes refuge as he may, he finds comfort as he can, in all the affections within his reach, in the society of an old college friend and of his wife, in the love of all children, beginning with his own; in a generous liking for all good work and for all good fellows.

Did any man of letters except Scott ever write of his rivals as Thackeray wrote of Dickens? Artists are a jealous race. “Potter hates potter, and poet hates poet,” as Hesiod said so long ago. This jealousy is not mere envy, it is really a strong sense of how things ought to be done, in any art, touched with a natural preference for a man’s own way of doing them. Now, what could be more unlike than the “ways” of Dickens and Thackeray? The subjects chosen by these great authors are not more diverse than their styles. Thackeray writes like a scholar, not in the narrow sense, but rather as a student and a master of all the refinements and resources of language. Dickens copies the chaff of the street, or he roams into melodramatics, “drops into poetry”—blank verse at least—and touches all with peculiarities, we might say mannerisms, of his own. I have often thought, and even tried to act on the thought, that some amusing imaginary letters might be written, from characters of Dickens about characters of Thackeray, from characters of Thackeray about characters of Dickens. They might be supposed to meet each other in society, and describe each other. Can you not fancy Captain Costigan on Dick Swiveller, Blanche Amory on Agnes, Pen on David Copperfield, and that “tiger” Steerforth? What would the family solicitor of “The Newcomes” have to say of Mr. Tulkinghorn? How would George Warrington appreciate Mr. Pickwick? Yes, the two great novelists were as opposed as two men could be—in manner, in style, in knowledge of books, and of the world. And yet how admirably Thackeray writes about Dickens, in his letters as in his books! How he delights in him! How manly is that emulation which enables an author to see all the points in his rival, and not to carp at them, but to praise, and be stimulated to keener effort!

Consider this passage. “Have you read Dickens? O! it is charming! Brave Dickens! It has some of his very prettiest touches—those inimitable Dickens touches which make such a great man of him, and the reading of the book has done another author a great deal of good.”

Thackeray is just as generous, and perhaps more critical, in writing of Kingsley. “A fine, honest, go-a-head fellow, who charges a subject heartily, impetuously, with the greatest courage and simplicity; but with narrow eyes (his are extraordinarily brave, blue and honest), and with little knowledge of the world, I think. But he is superior to us worldlings in many ways, and I wish I had some of his honest pluck.”

I have often wished that great authors, when their days of creation were over, when “their minds grow grey and bald,” would condescend to tell us the history of their books. Sir Walter Scott did something of this kind in the prefaces to the last edition of the Waverley Novels published during his life. What can be more interesting than his account, in the introduction to the “Fortunes of Nigel,” of how he worked, how he planned, and found all his plots and plans overridden by the demon at the end of his pen! But Sir Walter was failing when he began those literary confessions; good as they are, he came to them too late. Yet these are not confessions which an author can make early. The pagan Aztecs only confessed once in a lifetime—in old age, when they had fewer temptations to fall to their old loves: then they made a clean breast of it once for all. So it might be with an author. While he is in his creative vigour, we want to hear about his

fancied persons, about Pendennis, Beatrix, Becky, not about himself, and how he invented them. But when he has passed his best, then it is he who becomes of interest; it is about himself that we wish him to speak, as far as he modestly may. Who would not give "Lovel the Widower" and "Philip" for some autobiographical and literary prefaces to the older novels? They need not have been more egotistic than the "Roundabout Papers." They would have had far more charm. Some things cannot be confessed. We do not ask who was the original Sir Pitt Crawley, or the original Blanche Amory. But we might learn in what mood, in what circumstances the author wrote this passage or that.

The Letters contain a few notes of this kind, a few literary confessions. We hear that Emmy Sedley was partly suggested by Mrs. Brookfield, partly by Thackeray's mother, much by his own wife. There scarce seems room for so many elements in Emmy's personality. For some reason ladies love her not, nor do men adore her. I have been her faithful knight ever since I was ten years old and read "Vanity Fair" somewhat stealthily. Why does one like her except because she is such a thorough woman? She is not clever, she is not very beautiful, she is unhappy, and she can be jealous. One pities her, and that is akin to a more tender sentiment; one pities her while she sits in the corner, and Becky's green eyes flatter her oaf of a husband; one pities her in the poverty of her father's house, in the famous battle over Daffy's Elixir, in the separation from the younger George. You begin to wish some great joy to come to her: it does not come unalloyed; you know that Dobbin had bad quarters of an hour with this lady, and had to disguise a little of his tenderness for his own daughter. Yes, Emmy is more complex than she seems, and perhaps it needed three ladies to contribute the various elements of her person and her character. One of them, the jealous one, lent a touch to Helen Pendennis, to Laura, to Lady Castlewood. Probably this may be the reason why some persons dislike Thackeray so. His very best women are not angels. [109] Are the very best women angels? It is a pious opinion—that borders on heresy.

When the Letters began to be written, in 1847, Thackeray had his worst years, in a worldly sense, behind him. They were past: the times when he wrote in *Galignani* for ten francs a day. Has any literary ghoul disinterred his old ten-franc articles in *Galignani*? The time of "Barry Lyndon," too, was over. He says nothing of that masterpiece, and only a word about "The Great Hoggarty Diamond." "I have been re-reading it. Upon my word and honour, if it doesn't make you cry, I shall have a mean opinion of you. It was written at a time of great affliction, when my heart was very soft and humble. Amen. Ich habe auch viel geliebt." Of "Pendennis," as it goes on, he writes that it is "awfully stupid," which has not been the verdict of the ages. He picks up materials as he passes. He dines with some officers, and perhaps he stations them at Chatteris. He meets Miss G---, and her converse suggests a love passage between Pen and Blanche. Why did he dislike fair women so? It runs all through his novels. Becky is fair. Blanche is fair. Outside the old yellow covers of "Pendennis," you see the blonde mermaid, "amusing, and clever, and depraved," dragging the lover to the sea, and the nut-brown maid holding him back. Angelina, of the "Rose and the Ring," is the Becky of childhood; she is fair, and the good Rosalba is *brune*. In writing "Pendennis" he had a singular experience. He looked over his own "back numbers," and found "a passage which I had utterly forgotten as if I had never read or written it." In Lockhart's "Life of Scott," James Ballantyne says that "when the 'Bride of Lammermoor' was first put into his hands in a complete shape, he did not recollect one single incident, character, or conversation it contained." That is to say, he remembered nothing of his own invention, though his memory of the traditional parts was as clear as ever. Ballantyne remarks, "The history of the human mind contains nothing more wonderful." The experience of Thackeray is a parallel to that of Scott. "Pendennis," it must be noted, was interrupted by a severe illness, and "The Bride of Lammermoor" was dictated by Sir Walter when in great physical pain. On one occasion Thackeray "lit upon a very stupid part of 'Pendennis,' I am sorry to say; and yet how well written it is! What a shame the author don't write a complete good story! Will he die before doing so? or come back from America and do it?"

Did he ever write "a complete, good story"? Did any one ever do such a thing as write a three-volume, novel, or a novel of equal length, which was "a complete, good story"? Probably not; or if any mortal ever succeeded in the task, it was the great Alexander Dumas. "The Three Musketeers," I take leave to think, and "Twenty Years After," are complete good stories, good from beginning to end, stories from beginning to end without a break, without needless episode. Perhaps one may say as much for "Old Mortality," and for "Quentin Durward." But Scott and Dumas were born story-tellers; narrative was the essence of their genius at its best; the current of romance rolls fleetly on, bearing with it persons and events, mirroring scenes, but never ceasing to be the main thing—the central interest. Perhaps narrative like this is the chief success of the novelist. He is triumphant when he carries us on, as Wolf, the famous critic, was carried on by the tide of the Iliad, "in that pure and rapid current of action." Nobody would claim this especial merit for Thackeray. He is one of the greatest of novelists; he displays human nature and human conduct so that we forget ourselves in his persons, but he does not make us forget ourselves in their fortunes. Whether Clive does or does not marry Ethel, or Esmond, Beatrix, does not very greatly excite our curiosity. We cannot ring the bells for Clive's second wedding as the villagers celebrated the bridal of Pamela. It is the development of character, it is the author's comments, it is his own personality and his unmatched and inimitable style, that win our admiration and affection. We can take up "Vanity Fair," or "Pendennis," or "The Newcomes," just where the book opens by chance, and read them with delight, as we may read Montaigne. When one says one can take up a book anywhere, it generally means that one can also lay it down anywhere. But it is not so with Thackeray. Whenever we meet him he holds us with his charm, his humour, his eloquence, his tenderness. If he has not, in the highest degree, the narrative

power, he does possess, in a degree perhaps beyond any other writer of English, that kind of poetic quality which is not incompatible with prose writing.

A great deal has been said about prose poetry. As a rule, it is very poor stuff. As prose it has a tendency to run into blank verse; as poetry it is highly rhetorical and self-conscious. It would be invidious and might be irritating to select examples from modern masters of prose-poetry. They have never been poets. But the prose of a poet like Milton may be, and is, poetical in the true sense; and so, upon occasions, was the prose of Thackeray. Some examples linger always in the memory, and dwell with their music in the hearing. One I have quoted elsewhere; the passage in "The Newcomes" where Clive, at the lecture on the Poetry of the Domestic Affections, given by Sir Barnes Newcome, sees Ethel, whom he has lost.

"And the past, and its dear histories, and youth and its hopes and passions, and tones and looks, for ever echoing in the heart and present in the memory—those, no doubt, poor Clive saw and heard as he looked across the great gulf of time and parting and grief, and beheld the woman he had loved for many years." "The great gulf of time, and parting, and grief,"—some of us are on the farther side of it, and our old selves, and our old happiness, and our old affections beyond, grow near, grow clear, now and then, at the sight of a face met by chance in the world, at the chance sound of a voice. Such are human fortunes, and human sorrows; not the worst, not the greatest, for these old loves do not die—they live in exile, and are the better parts of our souls. Not the greatest, nor the worst of sorrows, for shame is worse, and hopeless hunger, and a life all of barren toil without distractions, without joy, must be far worse. But of those myriad tragedies of the life of the poor, Thackeray does not write. How far he was aware of them, how deeply he felt them, we are not informed. His highest tragedy is that of the hunger of the heart; his most noble prose sounds in that meeting of Harry Esmond with Lady Castlewood, in the immortal speech which has the burden, "bringing your sheaves with you!" All that scene appears to me no less unique, no less unsurpassable, no less perfect, than the "Ode to the Nightingale" of Keats, or the *Lycidas* of Milton. It were superfluous to linger over the humour of Thackeray. Only Shakespeare and Dickens have graced the language with so many happy memories of queer, pleasant people, with so many quaint phrases, each of which has a kind of freemasonry, and when uttered, or recalled, makes all friends of Thackeray into family friends of each other. The sayings of Mr. Harry Foker, of Captain Costigan, of Gumbo, are all like old dear family phrases, they live imperishable and always new, like the words of Sir John, the fat knight, or of Sancho Panza, or of Dick Swiveller, or that other Sancho, Sam Weller. They have that Shakespearian gift of being ever appropriate, and undyingly fresh.

These are among the graces of Thackeray, these and that inimitable style, which always tempts and always baffles the admiring and despairing copyist. Where did he find the trick of it, of the words which are invariably the best words, and invariably fall exactly in the best places? "The best words in the best places," is part of Coleridge's definition of poetry; it is also the essence of Thackeray's prose. In these Letters to Mrs. Brookfield the style is precisely the style of the novels and essays. The style, with Thackeray, was the man. He could not write otherwise. But probably, to the last, this perfection was not mechanical, was not attained without labour and care. In Dr. John Brown's works, in his essay on Thackeray, there is an example of a proof-sheet on which the master has made corrections, and those corrections bring the passage up to his accustomed level, to the originality of his rhythm. Here is the piece:—

"Another Finis, another slice of life which *Tempus edax* has devoured! And I may have to write the word once or twice, perhaps, and then an end of Ends. [Finite is ever and Infinite beginning.] Oh, the troubles, the cares, the *ennui*, [the complications,] the repetitions, the old conversations over and over again, and here and there all the delightful passages, the dear, the brief, the forever-remembered!

"[And then] A few chapters more, and then the last, and behold Finis itself coming to an end, and the Infinite beginning."

"How like music this," writes Dr. John Brown—"like one trying the same air in different ways, as it were, searching out and sounding all its depths!" The words were almost the last that Thackeray wrote, perhaps the very last. They reply, as it were, to other words which he had written long before to Mrs. Brookfield.

"I don't pity anybody who leaves the world; not even a fair young girl in her prime; I pity those remaining. On her journey, if it pleases God to send her, depend on it there's no cause for grief, that's but an earthly condition. Out of our stormy life, and brought nearer the Divine light and warmth, there must be a serene climate. Can't you fancy sailing into the calm?"

Ah! nowhere else shall we find the Golden Bride, "passionless bride, divine Tranquillity."

As human nature persistently demands a moral, and, as, to say truth, Thackeray was constantly meeting the demand, what is the lesson of his life and his writings? So people may ask, and yet how futile is the answer! Life has a different meaning, a different riddle, a different reply for each of us. There is not one sphinx, but many sphinxes—as many as there are women and men. We must all answer for ourselves. Pascal has one answer, "Believe!" Molière has another, "Observe!" Thackeray's answer is, "Be good and enjoy!" but a melancholy enjoyment was his. Dr. John Brown says:

"His persistent state, especially for the later half of his life, was profoundly *morne*, there is no

other word for it. This arose in part from temperament, from a quick sense of the littleness and wretchedness of mankind . . . This feeling, acting on a harsh and savage nature, ended in the *sæva indignatio* of Swift; acting on the kindly and sensitive nature of Mr. Thackeray, it led only to compassionate sadness."

A great part of his life, and most of his happiness, lay in love. "Ich habe auch viel geliebt," he says, and it is a hazardous kind of happiness that attends great affection. Your capital is always at the mercy of failures, of death, of jealousy, of estrangement. But he had so much love to give that he could not but trust those perilous investments.

Other troubles he had that may have been diversions from those. He did not always keep that manly common sense in regard to criticism, which he shows in a letter to Mrs. Brookfield. "Did you read the *Spectator's* sarcastic notice of 'Vanity Fair'? I don't think it is just, but think Kintoul (Rintoul?) is a very honest man, and rather inclined to deal severely with his private friends lest he should fall into the other extreme: to be sure he keeps out of it, I mean the other extreme, very well."

That is the way to take unfavourable criticisms—not to go declaring that a man is your enemy because he does not like your book, your ballads, your idyls, your sermons, what you please. Why cannot people keep literature and liking apart? Am I bound to think Jones a bad citizen, a bad man, a bad householder, because his poetry leaves me cold? Need he regard me as a malevolent green-eyed monster, because I don't want to read him? Thackeray was not always true in his later years to these excellent principles. He was troubled about trifles of criticisms and gossip, *bagatelles* not worth noticing, still less worth remembering and recording. Do not let us record them, then.

We cannot expect for Thackeray, we cannot even desire for him, a popularity like that of Dickens. If ever any man wrote for the people, it was Dickens. Where can we find such a benefactor, and who has lightened so many lives with such merriment as he? But Thackeray wrote, like the mass of authors, for the literary class—for all who have the sense of style, the delight in the best language. He will endure while English literature endures, while English civilisation lasts. We cannot expect all the world to share our affection for this humourist whose mirth springs from his melancholy. His religion, his education, his life in this unsatisfying world, are not the life, the education, the religion of the great majority of human kind. He cannot reach so many ears and hearts as Shakespeare or Dickens, and some of those whom he reaches will always and inevitably misjudge him. *Mais c'est mon homme*, one may say, as La Fontaine said of Molière. Of modern writers, putting Scott aside, he is to me the most friendly and sympathetic. Great genius as he was, he was also a penman, a journalist; and journalists and penmen will always look to him as their big brother, the man in their own line of whom they are proudest. As devout Catholics did not always worship the greatest saints, but the friendliest saints, their own, so we scribes burn our cheap incense to St. William Makepeace. He could do all that any of us could do, and he did it infinitely better. A piece of verse for *Punch*, a paragraph, a caricature, were not beneath the dignity of the author of "Esmond." He had the kindness and helpfulness which I, for one, have never met a journalist who lacked. He was a good Englishman; the boy within him never died; he loved children, and boys, and a little slang, and a boxing match. If he had failings, who knew them better than he? How often he is at once the boy at the swishing block and Dr. Birch who does not spare the rod! Let us believe with that beloved physician, our old friend Dr. John Brown, that "Mr. Thackeray was much greater, much nobler than his works, great and noble as they are." Let us part with him, remembering his own words:

"Come wealth or want, come good or ill,
Let young and old accept their part,
And bow before the awful Will,
And bear it with an honest heart."

DICKENS

"I cannot read Dickens!" How many people make this confession, with a front of brass, and do not seem to know how poor a figure they cut! George Eliot says that a difference of taste in jokes is a great cause of domestic discomfort. A difference of taste in books, when it is decided and vigorous, breaks many a possible friendship, and nips many a young liking in the bud. I would not willingly seem intolerant. A man may not like Sophocles, may speak disrespectfully of Virgil, and even sneer at Herodotus, and yet may be endured. But he or she (it is usually she) who contemns Scott, and "cannot read Dickens," is a person with whom I would fain have no further converse. If she be a lady, and if one meets her at dinner, she must of course be borne with, and "suffered gladly." But she has dug a gulf that nothing can bridge; she may be fair, clever and popular, but she is Anathema. I feel towards her (or him if he wears a beard) as Bucklaw did towards the person who should make inquiries about that bridal night of Lammermoor.

But this admission does not mean that one is sealed of the tribe of Charles—that one is a Dickensite pure and simple, convinced and devout—any more than Mr. Matthew Arnold was a Wordsworthian. Dickens has many such worshippers, especially (and this is an argument in favour of the faith) among those who knew him in his life. He must have had a wonderful charm;

for his friends in life are his literary partisans, his uncompromising partisans, even to this day. They will have no half-hearted admiration, and scout him who tries to speak of Dickens as of an artist not flawless, no less than they scorn him who cannot read Dickens at all. At one time this honourable enthusiasm (as among the Wordsworthians) took the shape of "endless imitation." That is over; only here and there is an imitator of the master left in the land. All his own genius was needed to carry his mannerisms; the mannerisms without the genius were an armour that no devoted David had proved, that none could wear with success.

Of all great writers since Scott, Dickens is probably the man to whom the world owes most gratitude. No other has caused so many sad hearts to be lifted up in laughter; no other has added so much mirth to the toilsome and perplexed life of men, of poor and rich, of learned and unlearned. "A vast hope has passed across the world," says Alfred de Musset; we may say that with Dickens a happy smile, a joyous laugh, went round this earth. To have made us laugh so frequently, so inextinguishably, so kindly—that is his great good deed. It will be said, and with a great deal of truth, that he has purged us with pity and terror as well as with laughter. But it is becoming plain that his command of tears is less assured than of old, and I cannot honestly regret that some of his pathos—not all, by any means—is losing its charm and its certainty of appeal. Dickens's humour was rarely too obvious; it was essentially personal, original, quaint, unexpected, and his own. His pathos was not infrequently derived from sources open to all the world, and capable of being drawn from by very commonplace writers. Little Nells and *Dombey*s, children unhappy, overthrown early in the *mêlée* of the world, and dying among weeping readers, no longer affect us as they affected another generation. Mrs. Beecher Stowe and the author of "Misunderstood," once made some people weep like anything by these simple means. Ouida can do it; plenty of people can do it. Dickens lives by virtue of what none but he can do: by virtue of Sairey Gamp, and Sam Weller, and Dick Swiveller, and Mr. Squeers, with a thousand other old friends, of whom we can never weary. No more than Cleopatra's can custom stale *their* infinite variety.

I do not say that Dickens' pathos is always of the too facile sort, which plays round children's death-beds. Other pathos he has, more fine and not less genuine. It may be morbid and contemptible to feel "a great inclination to cry" over David Copperfield's boyish infatuation for Steerforth; but I feel it. Steerforth was a "tiger,"—as Major Pendennis would have said, a tiger with his curly hair and his ambrosial whiskers. But when a little boy loses his heart to a big boy he does not think of this. Traddles thought of it. "Shame, J. Steerforth!" cried Traddles, when Steerforth bullied the usher. Traddles had not lost his heart, nor set up the big boy as a god in the shrine thereof. But boys do these things; most of us have had our Steerforths—tall, strong, handsome, brave, good-humoured. Far off across the years I see the face of such an one, and remember that emotion which is described in "David Copperfield," chap. xix., towards the end of the chapter. I don't know any other novelist who has touched this young and absolutely disinterested belief of a little boy in a big one—touched it so kindly and seriously, that is there is a hint of it in "Dr. Birch's School Days."

But Dickens is always excellent in his boys, of whom he has drawn dozens of types—all capital. There is Tommy Traddles, for example. And how can people say that Dickens could not draw a gentleman? The boy who shouted, "Shame, J. Steerforth!" was a gentleman, if one may pretend to have an opinion about a theme so difficult. The Dodger and Charley Bates are delightful boys—especially Bates. Pip, in the good old days, when he was the prowling boy, and fought Herbert Pocket, was not less attractive, and Herbert himself, with his theory and practice of the art of self-defence—could Nelson have been more brave, or Shelley (as in Mr. Matthew Arnold's opinion) more "ineffectual"? Even the boys at Dotheboys Hall are each of them quite distinct. Dickens's boys are almost as dear to me as Thackeray's—as little Rawdon himself. There is one exception. I cannot interest myself in Little Dombey. Little David Copperfield is a jewel of a boy with a turn for books. Doubtless he is created out of Dickens's memories of himself as a child. That is true pathos again, and not overwrought, when David is sent to Creakle's, and his poor troubled mother dare hardly say farewell to him.

And this brings us back to that debatable thing—the pathos of Dickens—from which one has been withdrawn by the attractions of his boys. Little Dombey is a prize example of his pathos. Little Nell is another. Jeffrey, of the *Edinburgh Review*, who criticised "Marmion" and the "Lady of the Lake" so vindictively, shed tears over Little Nell. It is a matter of taste, or, as Science might say, of the lachrymal glands as developed in each individual. But the lachrymal glands of this amateur are not developed in that direction. Little Dombey and Little Nell leave me with a pair of dry eyes. I do not "melt visibly" over Little Dombey, like the weak-eyed young man who took out his books and trunk to the coach. The poor little chap was feeble and feverish, and had dreams of trying to stop a river with his childish hands, or to choke it with sand. It may be very good pathology, but I cannot see that it is at all right pathos. One does not like copy to be made out of the sufferings of children or of animals. One's heart hardens: the object is too manifest, the trick is too easy. Conceive a child of Dombey's age remarking, with his latest breath, "Tell them that the picture on the stairs at school is not Divine enough!" That is not the delirium of infancy, that is art-criticism: it is the *Athenæum* on Mr. Holman Hunt. It is not true to nature; it is not good in art: it is the kind of thing that appears in Sunday-school books about the virtuous little boy who died. There is more true pathos in many a page of "Huckleberry Finn." Yet this is what Jeffrey gushed over. "There has been nothing like the actual dying of that sweet Paul." So much can age enfeeble the intellect, that he who had known Scott, and yet nibbled at his fame, descended to admiring the feeblest of false sentiment. As for Little Nell, who also has caused floods of tears to be shed, her case is sufficiently illustrated by the picture in the first edition

("Master Humphrey's Clock," 1840, p. 210):

"When I die
Put near me something that has loved the light,
And had the sky above it always.' Those
Were her words."

"Dear, gentle, patient, noble Nell was dead!"

The pathos is about as good as the prose, and *that* is blank verse. Are the words in the former quotation in the least like anything that a little girl would say? A German sentimentalist might have said them; Obermann might have murmured them in his weaker moments. Let us try a piece of domestic pathos by another hand. It is the dawn of Waterloo.

"Heart-stained and shame-stricken, he stood at the bed's foot, and looked at the sleeping girl. How dared he—who was he—to pray for one so spotless! God bless her! God bless her! He came to the bedside, and looked at the hand, the little soft hand, lying asleep, and he bent over the pillow noiselessly towards the gentle pale face. Two fair arms closed tenderly round his neck as he stooped down. 'I am awake, George,' the poor child said, with a sob."

I know I am making enemies of a large proportion of the readers of this page. "Odious, sneering beast!" is the quotation which they will apply, perhaps unconscious of its origin, to a critic who is humble but would fain be honest, to a critic who thinks that Dickens has his weak places, and that his pathos is one of these. It cannot be helped. Each of us has his author who is a favourite, a friend, an idol, whose immaculate perfection he maintains against all comers. For example, things are urged against Scott; I receive them in the attitude of the deaf adder of St. Augustine, who stops one ear with his tail and presses the other against the dust. The same with Molière: M. Scherer utters complaints against Molière! He would not convince me, even if I were convinced. So, with regard to Dickens, the true believer will not listen, he will not be persuaded. But if any one feels a little shaken, let him try it another way. There is a character in M. Alphonse Daudet's "Froment Jeune et Rissler Aîné"—a character who, people say, is taken bodily from Dickens. This is Désirée Delobelle, the deformed girl, the daughter of *un raté*, a pretentious imbecile actor. She is poor, stunted, laborious, toiling at a small industry; she is in love, is rejected, she tries to drown herself, she dies. The sequence of ideas is in Dickens's vein; but read the tale, and I think you will see how little the thing is overdone, how simple and unforced it is, compared with analogous persons and scenes in the work of the English master. The idiotic yell of "plagiarism" has been raised, of course, by critical *crétins*. M. Daudet, as I understand what he says in "Trente Ans de Paris," had not read Dickens at all, when he wrote "Froment Jeune"—certainly had not read "Our Mutual Friend." But there is something of Dickens's genius in M. Daudet's, and that something is kept much better in hand by the Frenchman, is more subordinated to the principles of taste and of truth.

On the other hand, to be done with this point, look at Delobelle, the father of Désirée, and compare him with Dickens's splendid strollers, with Mr. Vincent Crummles, and Mr. Lenville, and the rest. As in Désirée so in Delobelle, M. Daudet's picture is much the more truthful. But it is truthful with a bitter kind of truth. Now, there is nothing not genial and delightful in Crummles and Mrs. Crummles and the Infant Phenomenon. Here Dickens has got into a region unlike the region of the pathetic, into a world that welcomes *charge* or caricature, the world of humour. We do not know, we never meet Crummles quite so unsophisticated as Vincent, who is "not a Prussian," who "can't think who puts these things into the papers." But we do meet stage people who come very near to this *naïveté* of self-advertisement, and some of whom are just as dismal as Crummles is delightful.

Here, no doubt, is Dickens's *forte*. Here his genius is all pure gold, in his successful studies or inventions of the humorous, of character parts. One literally does not know where to begin or end in one's admiration for this creative power that peopled our fancies with such troops of dear and impossible friends. "Pickwick" comes practically first, and he never surpassed "Pickwick." He was a poor story-teller, and in "Pickwick" he had no story to tell; he merely wandered at adventure in that merrier England which was before railways were. "Pickwick" is the last of the stories of the road that begin in the wandering, aimless, adventurous romances of Greece, or in Petronius Arbiter, and that live with the life of "Gil Blas" and "Don Quixote," of "Le Roman Comique," of "Tom Jones" and "Joseph Andrews." These tales are progresses along highways bristling with adventure, and among inns full of confusion, Mr. Pickwick's affair with the lady with yellow curl-papers being a mild example. Though "Tom Jones" has a plot so excellent, no plot is needed here, and no consecutive story is required. Detached experiences, vagrants of every rank that come and go, as in real life, are all the material of the artist. With such materials Dickens was exactly suited; he was at home on high-road and lane, street and field-path, in inns and yeomen's warm hospitable houses. Never a humour escaped him, and he had such a wealth of fun and high spirits in these glad days as never any other possessed before. He was not in the least a bookish man, not in any degree a scholar; but Nature taught him, and while he wrote with Nature for his teacher, with men and women for his matter, with diversion for his aim, he was unsurpassable—nay, he was unapproachable.

He could not rest here; he was, after all, a child of an age that grew sad, and earnest, and thoughtful. He saw abuses round him—injustice, and oppression, and cruelty. He had a heart to which those things were not only abhorrent, but, as it were, maddening. He knew how great an influence he wielded, and who can blame him for using it in any cause he thought good? Very

possibly he might have been a greater artist if he had been less of a man, if he had been quite disinterested, and had never written "with a purpose." That is common, and even rather obsolete critical talk. But when we remember that Fielding, too, very often wrote "with a purpose," and that purpose the protection of the poor and unfriended; and when we remember what an artist Fielding was, I do not see how we can blame Dickens. Occasionally he made his art and his purpose blend so happily that his work was all the better for his benevolent intentions. We owe Mr. Squeers, Mrs. Squeers, Fanny Squeers, Wackford and all, to Dickens's indignation against the nefarious school pirates of his time. If he is less successful in attacking the Court of Chancery, and very much less successful still with the Red Tape and Circumlocution Office affairs, that may be merely because he was less in the humour, and not because he had a purpose in his mind. Every one of a man's books cannot be his masterpiece. There is nothing in literary talk so annoying as the spiteful joy with which many people declare that an author is "worked out," because his last book is less happy than some that went before. There came a time in Dickens' career when his works, to my own taste and that of many people, seemed laboured, artificial—in fact, more or less failures. These books range from "Dombey and Son," through "Little Dorrit," I dare not say to "Our Mutual Friend." One is afraid that "Edwin Drood," too, suggests the malady which Sir Walter already detected in his own "Peveril of the Peak." The intense strain on the faculties of Dickens—as author, editor, reader, and man of the world—could not but tell on him; and years must tell. "Philip" is not worthy of the author of "Esmond," nor "Daniel Deronda" of the author of "Silas Marner." At that time—the time of the *Dorrits* and *Dombey*s—*Blackwood's Magazine* published a "Remonstrance with Boz"; nor was it quite superfluous. But Dickens had abundance of talent still to display—above all in "Great Expectations" and "A Tale of Two Cities." The former is, after "Pickwick," "Copperfield," "Martin Chuzzlewit," and "Nicholas Nickleby"—after the classics, in fact—the most delightful of Dickens's books. The story is embroiled, no doubt. What are we to think of Estelle? Has the minx any purpose? Is she a kind of Ethel Newcome of odd life? It is not easy to say; still, for a story of Dickens's the plot is comparatively clear and intelligible. For a study of a child's life, of the nature Dickens drew best—the river and the marshes—and for plenty of honest explosive fun, there is no later book of Dickens's like "Great Expectations." Miss Havisham, too, in her mouldy bridal splendour, is really impressive; not like Ralph Nickleby and Monk in "Oliver Twist"—a book of which the plot remains to me a mystery. ^[128] Pip and Pumblechook and Mr. Wopsle and Jo are all immortal, and cause laughter inextinguishable. The rarity of this book, by the way, in its first edition—the usual library three volumes—is rather difficult to explain. One very seldom sees it come into the market, and then it is highly priced.

I have mentioned more than once the obscurity of Dickens's plots. This difficulty may be accounted for in a very flattering manner. Where do we lose ourselves? Not in the bare high-road, but among lanes, between hedges hung with roses, blackberries, morning glories, where all about us is so full of pleasure that our attention is distracted and we miss our way. Now, in Dickens—in "Oliver Twist," in "Martin Chuzzlewit," in "Nicholas Nickleby"—there is, as in the lanes, so much to divert and beguile, that we cease to care very much where the road leads—a road so full of happy marvels. The dark, plotting villains—like the tramp who frightened Sir Walter Scott so terribly, as he came from Miss Baillie's at Hampstead—peer out from behind the hedges now and then. But we are too much amused by the light hearts that go all the way, by the Dodger and Crummies and Mrs. Gamp, to care much for what Ralph, and Monk, and Jonas Chuzzlewit are plotting. It may not be that the plot is so confused, but that we are too much diverted to care for the plot, for the incredible machinations of Uriah Heap, to choose another example. Mr. Micawber cleared these up; but it is Mr. Micawber that hinders us from heeding them.

This, at least, is a not unfriendly explanation. Yet I cannot but believe that, though Dickens took great pains with his plots, he was not a great plotter. He was not, any more than Thackeray, a story-teller first and foremost. We can hold in our minds every thread of Mr. Wilkie Collins' web, or of M. Fortuné du Boisgobey's, or of M. Gaboriau's—all great weavers of intrigues. But Dickens goes about darkening his intrigue, giving it an extra knot, an extra twist, hinting here, ominously laughing there, till we get mystified and bored, and give ourselves up to the fun of the humours, indifferent to the destinies of villains and victims. Look at "Edwin Drood." A constant war about the plot rages in the magazines. I believe, for one, that Edwin Drood was resuscitated; but it gives me no pleasure. He was too uninteresting. Dickens's hints, nods, mutterings, forebodings, do not at all impress one like that deepening and darkening of the awful omens in "The Bride of Lammermoor." Here Scott—unconsciously, no doubt—used the very manner of Homer in the *Odyssey*, and nowhere was his genius more Homeric. That was romance.

The "Tale of Two Cities" is a great test of the faith—that is in Dickensites. Of all his works it is the favourite with the wrong sort! Ladies prefer it. Many people can read it who cannot otherwise read Dickens at all. This in itself proves that it is not a good example of Dickens, that it is not central, that it is an outlying province which he conquered. It is not a favourite of mine. The humour of the humorous characters rings false—for example, the fun of the resurrection-man with the wife who "flops." But Sidney Carton has drawn many tears down cheeks not accustomed to what Mr. B. in "Pamela" calls "pearly fugitives."

It sometimes strikes one that certain weaknesses in our great novelists, in Thackeray as well as Dickens, were caused by their method of publication. The green and yellow leaves flourished on the trees for two whole years. Who (except Alexandre the Great) could write so much, and yet all good? Do we not all feel that "David Copperfield" should have been compressed? As to "Pendennis," Mr. Thackeray's bad health when he wrote it might well cause a certain languor in

the later pages. Moreover, he frankly did not care for the story, and bluffly says, in the preface, that he respited Colonel Altamont almost at the foot of the gallows. Dickens took himself more in earnest, and, having so many pages to fill, conscientiously made Uriah Heap wind and wriggle through them all.

To try to see blots in the sun, and to pick holes in Dickens, seems ungrateful, and is indeed an ungrateful task; to no mortal man have more people owed mirth, pleasure, forgetfulness of care, knowledge of life in strange places. There never was such another as Charles Dickens, nor shall we see his like sooner than the like of Shakespeare. And he owed all to native genius and hard work; he owed almost nothing to literature, and that little we regret. He was influenced by Carlyle, he adopted his method of nicknames, and of hammering with wearisome iteration on some peculiarity—for example, on Carker's teeth, and the patriarch's white hair. By the way, how incredible is all the Carker episode in "Dombey"! Surely Dickens can never have intended Edith, from the first, to behave as she did! People may have influenced him, as they influenced Scott about "St. Ronan's Well." It has been said that, save for Carlyle, Dickens was in letters a self-taught artist, that he was no man's pupil, and borrowed from none. No doubt this makes him less acceptable to the literary class than a man of letters, like Thackeray—than a man in whose treasure chamber of memory all the wealth of the Middle Ages was stored, like Scott. But the native naked genius of Dickens,—his heart, his mirth, his observation, his delightful high spirits, his intrepid loathing of wrong, his chivalrous desire to right it,—these things will make him for ever, we hope and believe, the darling of the English people.

ADVENTURES OF BUCCANEERS

Most of us, as boys, have envied the buccaneers. The greatest of all boys, Canon Kingsley, once wrote a pleasing and regretful poem in which the Last Buccaneer represents himself as a kind of picturesque philanthropist:—

"There were forty craft in Aves that were both swift and stout,
All furnished well with small arms, and cannons round about;
And a thousand men in Aves made laws so fair and free,
To choose their valiant captains and obey them loyally.
Thence we sailed against the Spaniard with his hoards of plate and gold,
Which he wrung with cruel tortures from Indian folk of old;
Likewise the merchant captains, with hearts as hard as stone,
Who flog men and keel-haul them, and starve them to the bone."

The buccaneer is "a gallant sailor," according to Kingsley's poem—a Robin Hood of the waters, who preys only on the wicked rich, or the cruel and Popish Spaniard, and the extortionate shipowner. For his own part, when he is not rescuing poor Indians, the buccaneer lives mainly "for climate and the affections":—

"Oh, sweet it was in Aves to hear the landward breeze,
A swing with good tobacco in a net between the trees,
With a negro lass to fan you, while you listened to the roar
Of the breakers on the reef outside that never touched the shore."

This is delightfully idyllic, like the lives of the Tahitian shepherds in the Anti-Jacobin—the shepherds whose occupation was a sinecure, as there were no sheep in Tahiti.

Yet the vocation was not really so touchingly chivalrous as the poet would have us deem. One Joseph Esquemeling, himself a buccaneer, has written the history and described the exploits of his companions in plain prose, warning eager youths that "pieces-of-eight do not grow on every tree," as many raw recruits have believed. Mr. Esquemeling's account of these matters may be purchased, with a great deal else that is instructive and entertaining, in "The History of the Buccaneers in America." My edition (of 1810) is a dumpy little book, in very small type, and quite a crowd of publishers took part in the venture. The older editions are difficult to procure if your pockets are not stuffed with pieces-of-eight. You do not often find even this volume, but "when found make a note of," and you have a reply to Canon Kingsley.

A charitable old Scotch lady, who heard our ghostly foe evil spoken of, remarked that, "If we were all as diligent and conscientious as the Devil, it would be better for us." Now, the buccaneers were certainly models of diligence and conscientiousness in their own industry, which was to torture people till they gave up their goods, and then to run them through the body, and spend the spoils over drink and dice. Except Dampier, who was a clever man, but a poor buccaneer (Mr. Clark Russell has written his life), they were the most hideously ruthless miscreants that ever disgraced the earth and the sea. But their courage and endurance were no less notable than their greed and cruelty, so that a moral can be squeezed even out of these abandoned miscreants. The soldiers and sailors who made their way within gunshot of Khartoum, overcoming thirst, hunger, heat, the desert, and the gallant children of the desert, did not fight, march, and suffer more bravely than the scoundrels who sacked Mairaiibo and burned Panama. Their good qualities were no less astounding and exemplary than their almost incredible wickedness. They did not lie about in hammocks much, listening to the landward wind

among the woods—the true buccaneers. To tell the truth, most of them had no particular cause to love the human species. They were often Europeans who had been sold into slavery on the West Indian plantations, where they learned lessons of cruelty by suffering it. Thus Mr. Joseph Esquemeling, our historian, was beaten, tortured, and nearly starved to death in Tortuga, “so I determined, not knowing how to get any living, to enter into the order of the pirates or robbers of the sea.” The poor Indians of the isles, much pitied by Kingsley’s buccaneer, had a habit of sticking their prisoners all over with thorns, wrapped in oily cotton, whereto they then set fire. “These cruelties many Christians have seen while they lived among these barbarians.” Mr. Esquemeling was to see, and inflict, plenty of this kind of torment, which was not out of the way nor unusual. One planter alone had killed over a hundred of his servants—“the English did the same with theirs.”

A buccaneer voyage began in stealing a ship, collecting desperadoes, and torturing the local herdsmen till they gave up their masters’ flocks, which were salted as provisions. Articles of service were then drawn up, on the principle “no prey, no pay.” The spoils, when taken, were loyally divided as a rule, though Captain Morgan, of Wales, made no more scruple about robbing his crew than about barbecuing a Spanish priest. “They are very civil and charitable to each other, so that if any one wants what another has, with great willingness they give it to one another.” In other matters they did not in the least resemble the early Christians. A fellow nicknamed The Portuguese may be taken as our first example of their commendable qualities.

With a small ship of four guns he had taken a great one of twenty guns, with 70,000 pieces-of-eight . . . He himself, however, was presently captured by a larger vessel, and imprisoned on board. Being carelessly watched, he escaped on two earthen jars (for he could not swim), reached the woods in Campechy, and walked for a hundred and twenty miles through the bush. His only food was a few shell-fish, and by way of a knife he had a large nail, which he whetted to an edge on a stone. Having made a kind of raft, he struck a river, and paddled to Golpho Triste, where he found congenial pirates. With twenty of these, and a boat, he returned to Campechy, where he had been a prisoner, and actually captured the large ship in which he had lain captive! Bad luck pursued him, however: his prize was lost in a storm; he reached Jamaica in a canoe, and never afterwards was concerned as leader in any affair of distinction. Not even Odysseus had more resource, nor was more long-enduring; but Fortune was The Portuguese’s foe.

Braziliano, another buccaneer, served as a pirate before the mast, and “was beloved and respected by all.” Being raised to command, he took a plate ship; but this success was of indifferent service to his otherwise amiable character. “He would often appear foolish and brutish when in drink,” and has been known to roast Spaniards alive on wooden spits “for not showing him hog yards where he might steal swine.” One can hardly suppose that Kingsley would have regretted *this* buccaneer, even if he had been the last, which unluckily he was not. His habit of sitting in the street beside a barrel of beer, and shooting all passers-by who would not drink with him, provoked remark, and was an act detestable to all friends of temperance principles.

François L’Olonnois, from southern France, had been kidnapped, and sold as a slave in the Caribbee Islands. Recovering his freedom, he plundered the Spanish, says my buccaneer author, “till his unfortunate death.” With two canoes he captured a ship which had been sent after him, carrying ten guns and a hangman for his express benefit. This hangman, much to the fellow’s chagrin, L’Olonnois put to death like the rest of his prisoners. His great achievements were in the Gulf of Venezuela or Bay of Maracaibo. The gulf is a strong place; the mouth, no wider than a gun-shot, is guarded by two islands. Far up the inlet is Maracaibo, a town of three thousand people, fortified and surrounded by woods. Yet farther up is the town of Gibraltar. To attack these was a desperate enterprise; but L’Olonnois stole past the forts, and frightened the townsfolk into the woods. As a rule the Spaniards made the poorest resistance; there were examples of courage, but none of conduct. With strong forts, heavy guns, many men, provisions, and ammunition, they quailed before the desperate valour of the pirates. The towns were sacked, the fugitives hunted out in the woods, and the most abominable tortures were applied to make them betray their friends and reveal their treasures. When they were silent, or had no treasures to declare, they were hacked, twisted, burned, and starved to death.

Such were the manners of L’Olonnois; and Captain Morgan, of Wales, was even more ruthless.

Gibraltar was well fortified and strengthened after Maracaibo fell; new batteries were raised, the way through the woods was barricaded, and no fewer than eight hundred men were under arms to resist a small pirate force, exhausted by debauch, and having its retreat cut off by the forts at the mouth of the great salt-water loch. But L’Olonnois did not blench: he told the men that audacity was their one hope, also that he would pistol the first who gave ground. The men cheered enthusiastically, and a party of three hundred and fifty landed. The barricaded way they could not force, and in a newly cut path they met a strong battery which fired grape. But L’Olonnois was invincible. He tried that old trick which rarely fails, a sham retreat, and this lured the Spaniards from their earthwork on the path. The pirates then turned, sword in hand, slew two hundred of the enemy, and captured eight guns. The town yielded, the people fled to the woods, and then began the wonted sport of torturing the prisoners. Maracaibo they ransomed afresh, obtained a pilot, passed the forts with ease, and returned after sacking a small province. On a dividend being declared, they parted 260,000 pieces-of-eight among the band, and spent the pillage in a revel of three weeks.

L’Olonnois “got great repute” by this conduct, but I rejoice to add that in a raid on Nicaragua he

“miserably perished,” and met what Mr. Esquemeling calls “his unfortunate death.” For L’Olonnois was really an ungentlemanly character. He would hack a Spaniard to pieces, tear out his heart, and “gnaw it with his teeth like a ravenous wolf, saying to the rest, ‘I will serve you all alike if you show me not another way’” (to a town which he designed attacking). In Nicaragua he was taken by the Indians, who, being entirely on the Spanish side, tore him to pieces and burned him. Thus we really must not be deluded by the professions of Mr. Kingsley’s sentimental buccaneer, with his pity for “the Indian folk of old.”

Except Denis Scott, a worthy bandit in his day, Captain Henry Morgan is the first renowned British buccaneer. He was a young Welshman, who, after having been sold as a slave in Barbadoes, became a sailor of fortune. With about four hundred men he assailed Puerto Bello. “If our number is small,” he said, “our hearts are great,” and so he assailed the third city and place of arms which Spain then possessed in the West Indies. The entrance of the harbour was protected by two strong castles, judged as “almost impregnable,” while Morgan had no artillery of any avail against fortresses. Morgan had the luck to capture a Spanish soldier, whom he compelled to parley with the garrison of the castle. This he stormed and blew up, massacring all its defenders, while with its guns he disarmed the sister fortress. When all but defeated in a new assault, the sight of the English colours animated him afresh. He made the captive monks and nuns carry the scaling ladders; in this unwonted exploit the poor religious folk lost many of their numbers. The wall was mounted, the soldiers were defeated, though the Governor fought like a Spaniard of the old school, slew many pirates with his own hand, and pistolled some of his own men for cowardice. He died at his post, refusing quarter, and falling like a gentleman of Spain. Morgan, too, was not wanting in fortitude: he extorted 100,000 pieces-of-eight from the Governor of Panama, and sent him a pistol as a sample of the gun wherewith he took so great a city. He added that he would return and take this pistol out of Panama; nor was he less good than his word. In Cuba he divided 250,000 pieces-of-eight, and a great booty in other treasure. A few weeks saw it all in the hands of the tavern-keepers and women of the place.

Morgan’s next performance was a new sack of Maracaibo, now much stronger than L’Olonnois had found it. After the most appalling cruelties, not fit to be told, he returned, passing the castles at the mouth of the port by an ingenious stratagem. Running boatload after boatload of men to the land side, he brought them back by stealth, leading the garrison to expect an attack from that quarter. The guns were massed to landward, and no sooner was this done than Morgan sailed up through the channel with but little loss. Why the Spaniards did not close the passage with a boom does not appear. Probably they were glad to be quit of Morgan on any terms.

A great Spanish fleet he routed by the ingenious employment of a fire-ship. In a later expedition a strong place was taken by a curious accident. One of the buccaneers was shot through the body with an arrow. He drew it out, wrapped it in cotton, fired it from his musket, and so set light to a roof and burned the town.

His raid on Panama was extraordinary for the endurance of his men. For days they lived on the leather of bottles and belts. “Some, who were never out of their mothers’ kitchens, may ask how these pirates could eat and digest these pieces of leather, so hard and dry? Whom I answer—that could they once experience what hunger, or rather famine is, they would find the way, as the pirates did.” It was at the close of this march that the Indians drove wild bulls among them; but they cared very little for these new allies of the Spaniards: beef, in any form, was only too welcome.

Morgan burned the fair cedar houses of Panama, but lost the plate ship with all the gold and silver out of the churches. How he tortured a poor wretch who chanced to wear a pair of taffety trousers belonging to his master, with a small silver key hanging out, it is better not to repeat. The men only got two hundred pieces-of-eight each, after all their toil, for their Welshman was indeed a thief, and bilked his crews, no less than he plundered the Spaniards, without remorse. Finally, he sneaked away from the fleet with a ship or two; and it is to be feared that Captain Morgan made rather a good thing by dint of his incredible cruelty and villainy.

And so we leave Mr. Esquemeling, whom Captain Morgan also deserted; for who would linger long when there is not even honour among thieves? Alluring as the pirate’s profession is, we must not forget that it had a seamy side, and was by no means all rum and pieces-of-eight. And there is something repulsive to a generous nature in roasting men because they will not show you where to steal hogs.

THE SAGAS

“The general reader,” says a frank critic, “hates the very name of a Saga.” The general reader, in that case, is to be pitied, and, if possible, converted. But, just as Pascal admits that the sceptic can only become religious by living as if he *were* religious—by stupefying himself, as Pascal plainly puts it, with holy water—so it is to be feared that there is but a single way of winning over the general reader to the Sagas. Preaching and example, as in this brief essay, will not avail with him. He must take Pascal’s advice, and live for an hour or two as if he were a lover of Sagas. He must, in brief, give that old literature a fair chance. He has now his opportunity: Mr. William

Morris and Mr. Eiríkr Magnússon are publishing a series of cheap translations—cheap only in coin of the realm—a *Saga Library*. If a general reader tries the first tale in the first volume, story of “Howard the Halt,”—if he tries it honestly, and still can make no way with it, then let him take comfort in the doctrine of Invincible Ignorance. Let him go back to his favourite literature of gossiping reminiscence, or of realistic novels. We have all, probably, a drop of the Northmen’s blood in us, but in that general reader the blood is dormant.

What is a Saga? It is neither quite a piece of history nor wholly a romance. It is a very old story of things and adventures that really happened, but happened so long ago, and in times so superstitious, that marvels and miracles found their way into the legend. The best Sagas are those of Iceland, and those, in translations, are the finest reading that the natural man can desire. If you want true pictures of life and character, which are always the same at bottom, or true pictures of manners, which are always changing, and of strange customs and lost beliefs, in the Sagas they are to be found. Or if you like tales of enterprise, of fighting by land and sea, fighting with men and beasts, with storms and ghosts and fiends, the Sagas are full of this entertainment.

The stories of which we are speaking were first told in Iceland, perhaps from 950 to 1100 B.C. When Norway and Sweden were still heathen, a thousand years ago, they were possessed by families of noble birth, owning no master, and often at war with each other, when the men were not sailing the seas, to rob and kill in Scotland, England, France, Italy, and away east as far as Constantinople, or farther. Though they were wild sea robbers and warriors, they were sturdy farmers, great shipbuilders; every man of them, however wealthy, could be his own carpenter, smith, shipwright, and ploughman. They forged their own good short swords, hammered their own armour, ploughed their own fields. In short, they lived like Odysseus, the hero of Homer, and were equally skilled in the arts of war and peace. They were mighty lawyers, too, and had a most curious and minute system of laws on all subjects—land, marriage, murder, trade, and so forth. These laws were not written, though the people had a kind of letters called runes. But they did not use them much for documents, but merely for carving a name on a sword-blade, or a tombstone, or on great gold rings such as they wore on their arms. Thus the laws existed in the memory and judgment of the oldest and wisest and most righteous men of the country. The most important was the law of murder. If one man slew another, he was not tried by a jury, but any relation of the dead killed him “at sight,” wherever he found him. Even in an Earl’s hall, Kari struck the head off one of his friend Njal’s Burners, and the head bounded on the board, among the trenchers of meat and the cups of mead or ale. But it was possible, if the relations of a slain man consented, for the slayer to pay his price—every man was valued at so much—and then revenge was not taken. But, as a rule, one revenge called for another. Say Hrut slew Hrap, then Atli slew Hrut, and Gisli slew Atli, and Kari slew Gisli, and so on till perhaps two whole families were extinct and there was peace. The gods were not offended by manslaughter openly done, but were angry with treachery, cowardice, meanness, theft, perjury, and every kind of shabbiness.

This was the state of affairs in Norway when a king arose, Harold Fair-Hair, who tried to bring all these proud people under him, and to make them pay taxes and live more regularly and quietly. They revolted at this, and when they were too weak to defy the king they set sail and fled to Iceland. There in the lonely north, between the snow and fire, the hot-water springs, the volcano of Hecla, the great rivers full of salmon that rush down such falls as Golden Foot, there they lived their old-fashioned life, cruising as pirates and merchants, taking foreign service at Mickle Garth, or in England or Egypt, filling the world with the sound of their swords and the sky with the smoke of their burnings. For they feared neither God nor man nor ghost, and were no less cruel than brave; the best of soldiers, laughing at death and torture, like the Zulus, who are a kind of black Vikings of Africa. On some of them “Bersark’s gang” would fall—that is, they would become in a way mad, slaying all and sundry, biting their shields, and possessed with a furious strength beyond that of men, which left them as weak as children when it passed away. These Bersarks were outlaws, all men’s enemies, and to kill them was reckoned a great adventure, and a good deed. The women were worthy of the men—bold, quarrelsome, revengeful. Some were loyal, like Bergthora, who foresaw how all her sons and her husband were to be burned; but who would not leave them, and perished in the burning without a cry. Some were as brave as Howard’s wife, who enabled her husband, old and childless, to overthrow the wealthy bully, the slayer of his only son. Some were treacherous, as Halgerda the Fair. Three husbands she had, and was the death of every man of them. Her last lord was Gunnar of Lithend, the bravest and most peaceful of men. Once she did a mean thing, and he slapped her face. She never forgave him. At last enemies besieged him in his house. The doors were locked—all was quiet within. One of the enemies climbed up to a window slit, and Gunnar thrust him through with his lance. “Is Gunnar at home?” said the besiegers. “I know not—but his lance is,” said the wounded man, and died with that last jest on his lips. For long Gunnar kept them at bay with his arrows, but at last one of them cut the arrow string. “Twist me a string with thy hair,” he said to his wife, Halgerda, whose yellow hair was very long and beautiful. “Is it a matter of thy life or death?” she asked. “Ay,” he said. “Then I remember that blow thou gavest me, and I will see thy death.” So Gunnar died, overcome by numbers, and they killed Samr, his hound, but not before Samr had killed a man.

So they lived always with sword or axe in hand—so they lived, and fought, and died.

Then Christianity was brought to them from Norway by Thangbrand, and if any man said he did not believe a word of it, Thangbrand had the schoolboy argument, “Will you fight?” So they

fought a duel on a *holm* or island, that nobody might interfere—holm-gang they called it—and Thangbrand usually killed his man. In Norway, Saint Olaf did the like, killing and torturing those who held by the old gods—Thor, Odin, and Freya, and the rest. So, partly by force and partly because they were somewhat tired of bloodshed, horsefights, and the rest, they received the word of the white Christ and were baptised, and lived by written law, and did not avenge themselves by their own hands.

They were Christians now, but they did not forget the old times, the old feuds and fightings and Bersarks, and dealings with ghosts, and with dead bodies that arose and wrought horrible things, haunting houses and strangling men. The Icelandic ghosts were able-bodied, well “materialised,” and Grettir and Olaf Howard’s son fought them with strength of arm and edge of steel. True stories of the ancient days were told at the fireside in the endless winter nights by story tellers or Scalds. It was thought a sin for any one to alter these old stories, but as generations passed more and more wonderful matters came into the legend. It was believed that the dead Gunnar, the famed archer, sang within his cairn or “Howe,” the mound wherein he was buried, and his famous bill or cutting spear was said to have been made by magic, and to sing in the night before the wounding of men and the waking of war. People were thought to be “second-sighted”—that is, to have prophetic vision. The night when Njal’s house was burned his wife saw all the meat on the table “one gore of blood,” just as in Homer the prophet Theoclymenus beheld blood falling in gouts from the walls, before the slaying of the Wooers. The Valkyries, the Choosers of the slain, and the Norns who wove the fates of men at a ghastly loom were seen by living eyes. In the graves where treasures were hoarded the Barrowwights dwelt, ghosts that were sentinels over the gold: witchwives changed themselves into wolves and other monstrous animals, and for many weeks the heroes Signy and Sinfjotli ran wild in the guise of wolves.

These and many other marvels crept into the Sagas, and made the listeners feel a shudder of cold beside the great fire that burned in the centre of the skali or hall where the chief sat, giving meat and drink to all who came, where the women span and the Saga man told the tales of long ago. Finally, at the end of the middle ages, these Sagas were written down in Icelandic, and in Latin occasionally, and many of them have been translated into English.

Unluckily, these translations have hitherto been expensive to buy, and were not always to be had easily. For the wise world, which reads newspapers all day and half the night, does not care much for books, still less for good books, least of all for old books. You can make no money out of reading Sagas: they have nothing to say about stocks and shares, nor about Prime Ministers and politics. Nor will they amuse a man, if nothing amuses him but accounts of races and murders, or gossip about Mrs. Nokes’s new novel, Mrs. Stokes’s new dresses, or Lady Jones’s diamonds. The Sagas only tell how brave men—of our own blood very likely—lived, and loved, and fought, and voyaged, and died, before there was much reading or writing, when they sailed without steam, travelled without railways, and warred hand-to-hand, not with hidden dynamite and sunk torpedoes. But, for stories of gallant life and honest purpose, the Sagas are among the best in the world.

Of Sagas in English one of the best is the “Volsunga,” the story of the Niflungs and Volsungs. This book, thanks to Mr. William Morris, can be bought for a shilling. It is a strange tale in which gods have their parts, the tale of that oldest Treasure Hunt, the Hunt for the gold of the dwarf Andvari. This was guarded by the serpent, Fafnir, who had once been a man, and who was killed by the hero Sigurd. But Andvari had cursed the gold, because his enemies robbed him of it to the very last ring, and had no pity. Then the brave Sigurd was involved in the evil luck. He it was who rode through the fire, and woke the fair enchanted Brynhild, the Shield-maiden. And she loved him, and he her, with all their hearts, always to the death. But by ill fate she was married to another man, Sigurd’s chief friend, and Sigurd to another woman. And the women fell to jealousy and quarrelling as women will, and they dragged the friends into the feud, and one manslaying after another befell, till that great murder of men in the Hall of Atli, the King. The curse came on one and all of them—a curse of blood, and of evil loves, and of witchwork destroying good and bad, all fearless, and all fallen in one red ruin.

The “Volsunga Saga” has this unique and unparalleled interest, that it gives the spectacle of the highest epic genius, struggling out of savagery into complete and free and conscious humanity. It is a mark of the savage intellect not to discriminate abruptly between man and the lower animals. In the tales of the lower peoples, the characters are just as often beasts as men and women. Now, in the earlier and wilder parts of the “Volsunga Saga,” otters and dragons play human parts. Signy and his son, and the mother of their enemy, put on the skins of wolves, become wolves, and pass through hideous adventures. The story reeks with blood, and ravins with lust of blood. But when Sigurd arrives at full years of manhood, the barbarism yields place, the Saga becomes human and conscious.

These legends deal little with love. But in the “Volsunga Saga” the permanent interest is the true and deathless love of Sigurd and Brynhild: their separation by magic arts, the revival of their passion too late, the man’s resigned and heroic acquiescence, the fiercer passion of the woman, who will neither bear her fate nor accept her bliss at the price of honour and her plighted word.

The situation, the *nodus*, is neither ancient merely nor modern merely, but of all time. Sigurd, having at last discovered the net in which he was trapped, was content to make the best of marriage and of friendship. Brynhild was not. “The hearts of women are the hearts of wolves,” says the ancient Sanskrit commentary on the Rig Veda. But the she-wolf’s heart broke, like a woman’s, when she had caused Sigurd’s slaying. Both man and woman face life, as they conceive

it, with eyes perfectly clear.

The magic and the supernatural wiles are accidental, the human heart is essential and eternal. There is no scene like this in the epics of Greece. This is a passion that Homer did not dwell upon. In the Iliad and Odyssey the repentance of Helen is facile; she takes life easily. Clytemnestra is not brought on the stage to speak for herself. In this respect the epic of the North, without the charm and the delightfulness of the Southern epic, excels it; in this and in a certain bare veracity, but in nothing else. We cannot put the Germanic legend on the level of the Greek, for variety, for many-sided wisdom, for changing beauty of a thousand colours. But in this one passion of love the "Volsunga Saga" excels the Iliad.

The Greek and the Northern stories are alike in one thing. Fate is all-powerful over gods and men. Odin cannot save Balder; nor Thetis, Achilles; nor Zeus, Sarpedon. But in the Sagas fate is more constantly present to the mind. Much is thought of being "lucky," or "unlucky." Howard's "good luck" is to be read in his face by the wise, even when, to the common gaze, he seems a half-paralytic dotard, dying of grief and age.

Fate and evil luck dog the heroes of the Sagas. They seldom "end well," as people say,—unless, when a brave man lies down to die on the bed he has strewn of the bodies of his foes, you call *that* ending well. So died Grettir the Strong. Even from a boy he was strong and passionate, short of temper, quick of stroke, but loyal, brave, and always unlucky. His worst luck began after he slew Glam. This Glam was a wicked heathen herdsman, who would not fast on Christmas Eve. So on the hills his dead body was found, swollen as great as an ox, and as blue as death.

What killed him they did not know. But he haunted the farmhouse, riding the roof, kicking the sides with his heels, killing cattle and destroying all things. Then Grettir came that way, and he slept in the hall. At night the dead Glam came in, and Grettir arose, and to it they went, struggling and dashing the furniture to bits. Glam even dragged Grettir to the door, that he might slay him under the sky, and for all his force Grettir yielded ground. Then on the very threshold he suddenly gave way when Glam was pulling hardest, and they fell, Glam undermost. Then Grettir drew the short sword, "Kari's loom," that he had taken from a haunted grave, and stabbed the dead thing that had lived again. But, as Glam lay a-dying in the second death, the moon fell on his awful eyes, and Grettir saw the horror of them, and from that hour he could not endure to be in the dark, and he never dared to go alone. This was his death, for he had an evil companion who betrayed him to his enemies; but when they set on Grettir, though he was tired and sick of a wound, many died with him. No man died like Grettir the Strong, nor slew so many in his death.

Besides those Sagas, there is the best of all, but the longest, "Njala" (pronounced "Nyoola"), the story of Burnt Njal. That is too long to sketch here, but it tells how, through the hard hearts and jealousy of women, ruin came at last on the gentle Gunnar, and the reckless Skarphedin of the axe, "The Ogress of War," and how Njal, the wisest, the most peaceful, the most righteous of men, was burned with all his house, and how that evil deed was avenged on the Burners of Kari.

The site of Njal's house is yet to be seen, after these nine hundred years, and the little glen where Kari hid when he leaped through the smoke and the flame that made his sword-blade blue. Yes, the very black sand that Bergthora and her maids threw on the fire lies there yet, and remnants of the whey they cast on the flames, when water failed them. They were still there beneath the earth when an English traveller dug up some of the ground last year, and it is said that an American gentleman found a gold ring in the house of Njal. The story of him and of his brave sons, and of his slaves, and of his kindred, and of Queens and Kings of Norway, and of the coming of the white Christ, are all in the "Njala." That and the other Sagas would bear being shortened for general readers; once they were all that the people had by way of books, and they liked them long. But, shortened or not, they are brave books for men, for the world is a place of battle still, and life is war. These old heroes knew it, and did not shirk it, but fought it out, and left honourable names and a glory that widens year by year. For the story of Njal and Gunnar and Skarphedin was told by Captain Speedy to the guards of Theodore, King of Abyssinia. They liked it well; and with queer altered names and changes of the tale, that Saga will be told in Abyssinia, and thence carried all through Africa where white men have never wandered. So wide, so long-enduring a renown could be given by a nameless Sagaman.

CHARLES KINGSLEY

When I was very young, a distinguished *Review* was still younger. I remember reading one of the earliest numbers, being then myself a boy of ten, and coming on a review of a novel. Never, as it seemed to me, or seems to my memory, was a poor novel more heavily handled: and yet I felt that the book must be a book to read on the very earliest opportunity. It was "Westward Ho!" the most famous, and perhaps the best novel, of Charles Kingsley. Often one has read it since, and it is an example of those large, rich, well-fed romances, at which you can cut and come again, as it were, laying it down, and taking it up on occasion, with the certainty of being excited, amused—and preached at.

Lately I have re-read "Westward Ho!" and some of Kingsley's other books, "Hypatia," "Hereward the Wake," and the poems, over again. The old pleasure in them is not gone indeed, but it is

modified. One must be a boy to think Kingsley a humourist. At the age of twelve or ten you take the comic passages which he conscientiously provides, without being vexed or offended; you take them merely in the way of business. Better things are coming: struggles with the Inquisition, storms at sea, duels, the Armada, wanderings in the Lotus land of the tropical west; and for the sake of all this a boy puts up good-naturedly with Kingsley's humour. Perhaps he even grins over Amyas "burying alternately his face in the pasty and the pasty in his face," or he tries to feel diverted by the Elizabethan waggeries of Frank. But there is no fun in them—they are mechanical; they are worse than the humours of Scott's Sir Percy Shafto, which are not fine.

The same sense of everything not being quite so excellent as one remembered it haunts one in "Hereward the Wake, the Last of the English." Kingsley calls him "the Last of the English," but he is really the first of the literary Vikings. In the essay on the Sagas here I have tried to show, very imperfectly, what the Norsemen were actually like. They caught Kingsley's fancy, and his "Hereward," though born on English soil, is really Norse—not English. But Kingsley did not write about the Vikings, nor about his Elizabethan heroes in "Westward Ho!" in a perfectly simple, straightforward way. He was always thinking of our own times and referring to them. That is why even the rather ruffianly Hereward is so great an enemy of saints and monks. That is why, in "Hypatia" (which opens so well), we have those prodigiously dull, stupid, pedantic, and conceited reflections of Raphael Ben Ezra. That is why, in all Kingsley's novels, he is perpetually exciting himself in defence of marriage and the family life, as if any monkish ideas about the blessedness of bachelorhood were ever likely to drive the great Anglo-Saxon race into convents and monasteries. That is the very last thing we have to be afraid of; but Kingsley was afraid of it, and was eternally attacking everything Popish and monkish.

Boys and young people, then, can read "Westward Ho!" and "Hypatia," and "Hereward the Wake," with far more pleasure than their elders. They hurry on with the adventures, and do not stop to ask what the moralisings mean. They forgive the humour of Kingsley because it is well meant. They get, in short, the real good of this really great and noble and manly and blundering genius. They take pleasure in his love of strong men, gallant fights, desperate encounters with human foes, with raging seas, with pestilence, or in haunted forests. For in all that is good of his talent—in his courage, his frank speech, his love of sport, his clear eyes, his devotion to field and wood, river, moor, sea, and storms—Kingsley is a boy. He has the brave, rather hasty, and not over well-informed enthusiasm of sixteen, for persons and for causes. He saw an opponent (it might be Father Newman): his heart lusted for a fight; he called his opponent names, he threw his cap into the ring, he took his coat off, he fought, he got a terrible scientific drubbing. It was like a sixth-form boy matching himself against the champion. And then he bore no malice. He took his defeat bravely. Nay, are we not left with a confused feeling that he was not far in the wrong, though he had so much the worse of the fight?

Such was Kingsley: a man with a boy's heart; a hater of cruelty and injustice, and also with a brave, indomitable belief that his own country and his own cause were generally in the right, whatever the quarrel. He loved England like a mistress, and hated her enemies, Spain and the Pope, though even in them he saw the good. He is for ever scolding the Spanish for their cruelties to the Indians, but he defends our doings to the Irish, which (at that time) were neither more nor less oppressive than the Spanish performances in America. "Go it, our side!" you always hear this good Kingsley crying; and one's heart goes out to him for it, in an age when everybody often proves his own country to be in the wrong.

Simple, brave, resolute, manly, a little given to "robustiousness," Kingsley transfigured all these qualities by possessing the soul and the heart of a poet. He was not a very great poet, indeed, but a true poet—one of the very small band who are cut off, by a gulf that can never be passed, from mere writers of verse, however clever, educated, melodious, ingenious, amiable, and refined. He had the real spark of fire, the true note; though the spark might seldom break into flame, and the note was not always clear. Never let us confuse true poets with writers of verse, still less with writers of "poetic prose." Kingsley wrote a great deal of that—perhaps too much: his descriptions of scenes are not always as good as in Hereward's ride round the Fens, or when the tall, Spanish galleon staggers from the revenge of man to the vengeance of God, to her doom through the mist, to her rest in the sea. Perhaps only a poet could have written that prose; it is certain no writer of "poetic prose" could have written Kingsley's poems.

His songs are his best things; they really are songs, not merely lyric poems. They have the merit of being truly popular, whether they are romantic, like "The Sands o' Dee," which actually reproduces the best qualities of the old ballad; or whether they are pathetic, like the "Doll's Song," in "Water Babies"; or whether they attack an abuse, as in the song of "The Merry Brown Hares"; or whether they soar higher, as in "Deep, deep Love, within thine own abyss abiding"; or whether they are mere noble nonsense, as in "Lorraine Loree":—

"She mastered young Vindictive; oh, the gallant lass was she,
And kept him straight and won the race, as near as near could be;
But he killed her at the brook against a pollard willow tree;
Oh, he killed her at the brook, the brute, for all the world to see,
And no one but the baby cried for poor Lorraine Loree."

The truth about Charles Kingsley seems to be that he rather made a brave and cheery noise in this night-battle of modern life, than that he directed any movement of forces. He kept cheering, as it were, and waving his sword with a contagious enthusiasm. Being a poet, and a man both of heart and of sentiment, he was equally attached to the best things of the old world and to the

best of the new world, as far as one can forecast what it is to be. He loved the stately homes of England, the ancient graduated order of society, the sports of the past, the military triumphs, the patriotic glories. But he was also on the side of the poor: as "Parson Lot" he attempted to be a Christian Socialist.

Now, the Socialists are the people who want to take everything; the Christians are the persons who do not want to give more than they find convenient. Kingsley himself was ready to give, and did give, his time, his labour, his health, and probably his money, to the poor. But he was by no means minded that they should swallow up the old England with church and castle, manor-house and tower, wealth, beauty, learning, refinement. The man who wrote "Alton Locke," the story of the starved tailor-poet, was the man who nearly wept when he heard a fox bark, and reflected that the days of fox-hunting were numbered. He had a poet's politics, Colonel Newcome's past, for the cottage, for the hall; and was dead against the ideas of Manchester, and of Mr. John Bright. "My father," he says in a letter, "would have put his hand to a spade or an axe with any man, and so could I pretty well, too, when I was in my prime; and my eldest son is now working with his own hands at farming, previous to emigrating to South America, where he will do the drudgery of his own cattle-pens and sheepfolds; and if I were twenty-four and unmarried I would go out there too, and work like an Englishman, and live by the sweat of my brow."

This was the right side of his love of the Vikings; it was thus *they* lived, when not at war—thus that every gentleman who has youth and health should work, winning new worlds for his class, in place of this miserable, over-crowded, brawling England. This, I think, was, or should have been, the real lesson and message of Kingsley for the generations to come. Like Scott the scion of an old knightly line, he had that drop of wild blood which drives men from town into the air and the desert, wherever there are savage lands to conquer, beasts to hunt, and a hardy life to be lived. But he was the son of a clergyman, and a clergyman himself. The spirit that should have gone into action went into talking, preaching, writing—all sources of great pleasure to thousands of people, and so not wasted. Yet these were not the natural outlets of Kingsley's life: he should have been a soldier, or an explorer; at least, we may believe that he would have preferred such fortune. He did his best, the best he knew, and it is all on the side of manliness, courage, kindness. Perhaps he tried too many things—science, history, fairy tales, religious and political discussions, romance, poetry. Poetry was what he did best, romance next; his science and his history are entertaining, but without authority.

This, when one reads it again, seems a cold, unfriendly estimate of a man so ardent and so genuine, a writer so vivacious and courageous as Kingsley. Even the elderly reviewer bears to him, and to his brother Henry, a debt he owes to few of their generation. The truth is we should *read* Kingsley; we must not criticise him. We must accept him and be glad of him, as we accept a windy, sunny autumn day—beautiful and blustering—to be enjoyed and struggled with. If once we stop and reflect, and hesitate, he seems to preach too much, and with a confidence which his knowledge of the world and of history does not justify. To be at one with Kingsley we must be boys again, and that momentary change cannot but be good for us. Soon enough—too soon—we shall drop back on manhood, and on all the difficulties and dragons that Kingsley drove away by a blast on his chivalrous and cheery horn.

CHARLES LEVER: HIS BOOKS, ADVENTURES AND MISFORTUNES

Surely it is a pleasant thing that there are books, like other enjoyments, for all ages. You would not have a boy prefer whist to fives, nor tobacco to toffee, nor Tolstoï to Charles Lever. The ancients reckoned Tyrtæus a fine poet, not that he was particularly melodious or reflective, but that he gave men heart to fight for their country. Charles Lever has done as much. In his biography, by Mr. Fitzpatrick, it is told that a widow lady had but one son, and for him she obtained an appointment at Woolwich. The boy was timid and nervous, and she fancied that she must find for him some other profession—perhaps that of literature. But he one day chanced on Lever's novels, and they put so much heart into him that his character quite altered, and he became the bravest of the brave.

Lever may not do as much for every one, but he does teach contempt of danger, or rather, delight in it: a gay, spontaneous, boyish kind of courage—Irish courage at its best. We may get more good from that than harm from all his tales of much punch and many drinking bouts. These are no longer in fashion and are not very gay reading, perhaps, but his stories and songs, his duels and battles and hunting scenes are as merry and as good as ever. Wild as they seem in the reading, they are not far from the truth, as may be gathered out of "Barrington's Memoirs," and their tales of the reckless Irish life some eighty years ago.

There were two men in Charles Lever—a glad man and a sad man. The gaiety was for his youth, when he poured out his "Lorrequers" and "O'Malleys," all the mirth and memories of his boyhood, all the tales of fighting and feasting he gleaned from battered, seasoned old warriors, like Major Monsoon. Even then, Mr. Thackeray, who knew him, and liked and laughed at him, recognised through his merriment "the fund of sadness beneath." "The author's character is *not*

humour, but sentiment . . . extreme delicacy, sweetness and kindness of heart. The spirits are mostly artificial, the *fond* is sadness, as appears to me to be that of most Irish writing and people." Even in "Charles O'Malley," what a true, dark picture that is of the duel beside the broad, angry river on the level waste under the wide grey sky! Charles has shot his opponent, Bodkin, and with Considine, his second, is making his escape. "Considine cried out suddenly, "Too infamous, by Jove: we are murdered men!"

"What do you mean?" said I.

"Don't you see that?" said he, pointing to something black which floated from a pole at the opposite side of the river.

"Yes; what is it?"

"It's his coat they've put upon an oar, to show the people he's killed—that's all. Every man here's his tenant; and look there! they're not giving us much doubt as to their intentions."

"Here a tremendous yell burst forth from the mass of people along the shore, which, rising to a terrific cry, sank gradually down to a low wailing, then rose and fell several times, as the Irish death-cry filled the air, and rose to heaven, as if imploring vengeance on a murderer."

Passages like this, and that which follows—the dangerous voyage through the storm on the flooded Shannon, and through the reefs—are what Mr. Thackeray may have had in his mind when he spoke of Lever's underlying melancholy. Like other men with very high spirits, he had hours of gloom, and the sadness and the thoughtfulness that were in him came forth then and informed his later books. These are far more carefully written, far more cunningly constructed, than the old chapters written from month to month as the fit took him, with no more plan or premeditation than "Pickwick." But it is the early stories that we remember, and that he lives by—the pages thrown off at a heat, when he was a lively doctor with few patients, and was not over-attentive to them. These were the days of Harry Lorrequer and Tom Burke; characters that ran away with him, and took their own path through a merry world of diversion. Like the knights in Sir Thomas Malory, these heroes "ride at adventure," ride amazing horses that dread no leap, be it an Irish stone wall on a mountain crest, or be it the bayonets of a French square.

Mr. Lever's biographer has not been wholly successful in pleasing the critics, and he does not seem to affect very critical airs himself, but he tells a straightforward tale. The life of Charles Lever is the natural commentary on his novels. He was born at Dublin in 1806, the son of a builder or architect. At school he was very much flogged, and the odds are that he deserved these attentions, for he had high spirits beyond the patience of dominies. Handsome, merry and clever, he read novels in school hours, wore a ring, and set up as a dandy. Even then he was in love with the young lady whom he married in the end. At a fight with boys of another school, he and a friend placed a mine under the ground occupied by the enemy, and blew them, more or less, into the air. Many an eyebrow was singed off on that fatal day, when, for the only time, this romancer of the wars "smelled powder." He afterwards pleaded for his party before the worthy police magistrate, and showed great promise as a barrister. At Trinity College, Dublin, he was full of his fun, made ballads, sang them through the streets in disguise (like Fergusson, the Scottish poet), and one night collected thirty shillings in coppers.

The original of Frank Webber, in "Charles O'Malley," was a chum of his, and he took part in the wonderful practical jokes which he has made immortal in that novel.

From Trinity College, Dublin, Lever went to Göttingen, where he found fun and fighting enough among the German students. From that hour he became a citizen of the world, or, at least, of Europe, and perhaps, like the prophets, was most honoured when out of his own country. He returned to Dublin and took his degree in medicine, after playing a famous practical joke. A certain medical professor was wont to lecture in bed. One night he left town unexpectedly. Lever, by chance, came early to lecture, found the Professor absent, slipped into his bed, put on his nightcap, and took the class himself. On another day he was standing outside the Foundling Hospital with a friend, a small man. Now, a kind of stone cradle for foundlings was built outside the door, and, when a baby was placed therein, a bell rang. Lever lifted up his friend, popped him into the cradle, and had the joy of seeing the promising infant picked out by the porter.

It seems a queer education for a man of letters; but, like Sir Walter Scott when revelling in Liddesdale, he "was making himself all the time." He was collecting myriads of odd experiences and treasures of anecdotes; he was learning to know men of all sorts; and later, as a country doctor, he had experiences of mess tables, of hunting, and of all the ways of his remarkable countrymen. When cholera visited his district he stuck to his work like a man of heart and courage. But the usual tasks of a country doctor wearied him; he neglected them, he became unpopular with the authorities, he married his first love and returned to Brussels, where he practised as a physician. He had already begun his first notable book, "Harry Lorrequer," in the *University Magazine*. It is merely a string of Irish and other stories, good, bad, and indifferent—a picture gallery full of portraits of priests, soldiers, peasants and odd characters. The plot is of no importance; we are not interested in Harry's love affairs, but in his scrapes, adventures, duels at home and abroad. He fights people by mistake whom he does not know by sight, he appears on parade with his face blackened, he wins large piles at *trente et quarante*, he disposes of coopers of claret and bowls of punch, and the sheep on a thousand hills provide him with devilled kidneys. The critics and the authors thought little of the merry medley, but the public enjoyed it, and defied the reviewers. One paper preferred the book to a wilderness of "Pickwicks"; and as

this opinion was advertised everywhere by M'Glashan, the publisher, Mr. Dickens was very much annoyed indeed. Authors are easily annoyed. But Lever writes *ut placeat pueris*, and there was a tremendous fight at Rugby between two boys, the "Slogger Williams" and "Tom Brown" of the period, for the possession of "Harry Lorrequer." When an author has the boys of England on his side, he can laugh at the critics. Not that Lever laughed: he, too, was easily vexed, and much depressed, when the reviews assailed him. Next he began "Charles O'Malley"; and if any man reads this essay who has not read the "Irish Dragoon," let him begin at once. "O'Malley" is what you can recommend to a friend. Here is every species of diversion: duels and steeplechases, practical jokes at college (good practical jokes, not booby traps and apple-pie beds); here is fighting in the Peninsula. If any student is in doubt, let him try chapter xiv.—the battle on the Douro. This is, indeed, excellent military writing, and need not fear comparison as art with Napier's famous history. Lever has warmed to his work; his heart is in it; he had the best information from an eye-witness; and the brief beginning, on the peace of nature before the strife of men, is admirably poetical.

To reach the French, under Soult, Wellesley had to cross the deep and rapid Douro, in face of their fire, and without regular transport. "He dared the deed. What must have been his confidence in the men he commanded! what must have been his reliance on his own genius!"

You hold your breath as you read, while English and Germans charge, till at last the field is won, and the dust of the French columns retreating in the distance blows down the road to Spain.

The Great Duke read this passage, and marvelled how Lever knew certain things that he tells. He learned this, and much more, the humours of war, from the original of Major Monsoon. Falstaff is alone in the literature of the world, but if ever there came a later Falstaff, Monsoon was the man. And where have you such an Irish Sancho Panza as Micky Free, that independent minstrel, or such an Irish Di Vernon as Baby Blake? The critics may praise Lever's thoughtful and careful later novels as they will, but "Charles O'Malley" will always be the pattern of a military romance. The anecdote of "a virtuous weakness" in O'Shaughnessy's father's character would alone make the fortune of many a story. The truth is, it is not easy to lay down "Charles O'Malley," to leave off reading it, and get on with the account of Lever.

His excellent and delightful novel scarcely received one favourable notice from the press. This may have been because it was so popular; but Lever became so nervous that he did not like to look at the papers. When he went back to Dublin and edited a magazine there, he was more fiercely assailed than ever. It is difficult for an Irishman to write about the Irish, or for a Scot to write about the Scottish, without hurting the feelings of his countrymen. While their literary brethren are alive they are not very dear to the newspaper scribes of these gallant nations; and thus Jeffrey was more severe to Scott than he need have been, while the Irish press, it appears, made an onslaught on Lever. Mr. Thackeray met Lever in Dublin, and he mentions this unkind behaviour. "Lorrequer's military propensities have been objected to strongly by his squeamish Hibernian brethren . . . But is Lorrequer the only man in Ireland who is fond of military spectacles? Why does the *Nation* publish these edifying and Christian war songs? . . . And who is it that prates about the Irish at Waterloo, and the Irish at Fontenoy, and the Irish at Seringapatam, and the Irish at Timbuctoo? If Mr. O'Connell, like a wise rhetorician, chooses, and very properly, to flatter the national military passion, why not Harry Lorrequer?"

Why not, indeed? But Mr. Lever was a successful Irishman of letters, and a good many other Irish gentlemen of letters, honest Doolan and his friends, were not successful. That is the humour of it.

Though you, my youthful reader, if I have one, do not detest Jones because he is in the Eleven, nor Brown because he has "got his cap," nor Smith because he does Greek Iambics like Sophocles; though you rather admire and applaud these champions, you may feel very differently when you come to thirty years or more, and see other men doing what you cannot do, and gaining prizes beyond your grasp. And then, if you are a reviewer, you "will find fault with a book for what it does not give," as thus, to take Mr. Thackeray's example:—

"Lady Smigsmag's novel is amusing, but lamentably deficient in geological information." "Mr. Lever's novels are trashy and worthless, for his facts are not borne out by any authority, and he gives us no information about the political state of Ireland. 'Oh! our country, our green and beloved, our beautiful and oppressed?'" and so forth.

It was not altogether a happy time that Lever passed at home. Not only did his native critics belabour him most ungrudgingly for "Tom Burke," that vivid and chivalrous romance, but he made enemies of authors. He edited a magazine! Is not that enough? He wearied of wading through waggon-loads of that pure unmitigated rubbish which people are permitted to "shoot" at editorial doors. How much dust there is in it to how few pearls! He did not return MSS. punctually and politely. The office cat could edit the volunteered contributions of many a magazine, but Lever was even more casual and careless than an experienced office cat. He grew crabbed, and tried to quarrel with Mr. Thackeray for that delightful parody "Phil Fogarty," nearly as good as a genuine story by Lever.

Beset by critics, burlesqued by his friend, he changed his style (Mr. Fitzpatrick tells us) and became more sober—and not so entertaining. He actually published a criticism of Beyle, of Stendhal, that psychological prig, the darling of culture and of M. Paul Bourget. Harry Lorrequer on Stendhal!—it beggars belief. He nearly fought a duel with the gentleman who is said to have suggested Mr. Pecksniff to Dickens! Yet they call his early novels improbable. Nothing could be

less plausible than a combat between Harry Lorrequer and a gentleman who, even remotely, resembled the father of Cherry and Merry.

Lever went abroad again, and in Florence or the Baths of Lucca, in Trieste or Spezia, he passed the rest of his life. He saw the Italian revolution of 1848, and it added to his melancholy. This is plain from one of his novels with a curious history—"Con Cregan." He wrote it at the same time as "The Daltons," and he did not sign it. The reviewers praised "Con Cregan" at the expense of the signed work, rejoicing that Lever, as "The Daltons" proved, was exhausted, and that a new Irish author, the author of "Con Cregan," was coming to eclipse him. In short, he eclipsed himself, and he did not like it. His right hand was jealous of what his left hand did. It seems odd that any human being, however dull and envious, failed to detect Lever in the rapid and vivacious adventures of his Irish "Gil Blas," hero of one of the very best among his books, a piece not unworthy of Dumas. "Con" was written after midnight, "The Daltons" in the morning; and there can be no doubt which set of hours was more favourable to Lever's genius. Of course he liked "The Daltons" best; of all people, authors appear to be their own worst critics.

It is not possible even to catalogue Lever's later books here. Again he drove a pair of novels abreast—"The Dodds" and "Sir Jasper Carew"—which contain some of his most powerful situations. When almost an old man, sad, outworn in body, straitened in circumstances, he still produced excellent tales in this later manner—"Lord Kilgobbin," "That Boy of Norcott's," "A Day's Ride," and many more. These are the thoughts of a tired man of the world, who has done and seen everything that such men see and do. He says that he grew fat, and bald, and grave; he wrote for the grave and the bald, not for the happier world which is young, and curly, and merry. He died at last, it is said, in his sleep; and it is added that he did what Harry Lorrequer would not have done—he left his affairs in perfect order.

Lever lived in an age so full of great novelists that, perhaps, he is not prized as he should be. Dickens, Bulwer, Thackeray, Trollope, George Eliot, were his contemporaries. But when we turn back and read him once more, we see that Lever, too, was a worthy member of that famous company—a romancer for boys and men.

THE POEMS OF SIR WALTER SCOTT

Yesterday, as the sun was very bright, and there was no wind, I took a fishing-rod on chance and Scott's poems, and rowed into the middle of St. Mary's Loch. Every hill, every tuft of heather was reflected in the lake, as in a silver mirror. There was no sound but the lapping of the water against the boat, the cry of the blackcock from the hill, and the pleasant splash of a trout rising here and there. So I read "The Lay of the Last Minstrel" over again, here, in the middle of the scenes where the story is laid and where the fights were fought. For when the Baron went on pilgrimage,

"And took with him this elvish page
To Mary's Chapel of the Lowes,"

it was to the ruined chapel *here* that he came,

"For there, beside our Lady's lake,
An offering he had sworn to make,
And he would pay his vows."

But his enemy, the Lady of Branksome, gathered a band,

"Of the best that would ride at her command,"

and they all came from the country round. Branksome, where the lady lived, is twenty miles off, towards the south, across the ranges of lonely green hills. Harden, where her ally, Wat of Harden, abode, is within twelve miles; and Deloraine, where William dwelt, is nearer still; and John of Thirlestane had his square tower in the heather, "where victual never grew," on Ettrick Water, within ten miles. These gentlemen, and their kinsfolk and retainers, being at feud with the Kers, tried to slay the Baron, in the Chapel of "Lone St. Mary of the Waves."

"They were three hundred spears and three.
Through Douglas burn, up Yarrow stream,
Their horses prance, their lances gleam.
They came to St. Mary's Lake ere day;
But the chapel was void, and the Baron away.
They burned the chapel for very rage,
And cursed Lord Cranstoun's goblin-page."

The Scotts were a rough clan enough to burn a holy chapel because they failed to kill their enemy within the sacred walls. But, as I read again, for the twentieth time, Sir Walter's poem, floating on the lonely breast of the lake, in the heart of the hills where Yarrow flows, among the little green mounds that cover the ruins of chapel and castle and lady's bower, I asked myself whether

Sir Walter was indeed a great and delightful poet, or whether he pleases me so much because I was born in his own country, and have one drop of the blood of his Border robbers in my own veins?

It is not always pleasant to go back to places, or to meet people, whom we have loved well, long ago. If they have changed little, we have changed much. The little boy, whose first book of poetry was "The Lady of the Lake," and who naturally believed that there was no poet like Sir Walter, is sadly changed into the man who has read most of the world's poets, and who hears, on many sides, that Scott is outworn and doomed to deserved oblivion. Are they right or wrong, the critics who tell us, occasionally, that Scott's good novels make up for his bad verse, or that verse and prose, all must go? *Pro captu lectoris*, by the reader's taste, they stand or fall; yet even pessimism can scarcely believe that the Waverley Novels are mortal. They were once the joy of every class of minds; they cannot cease to be the joy of those who cling to the permanently good, and can understand and forgive lapses, carelessnesses, and the leisurely literary fashion of a former age. But, as to the poems, many give them up who cling to the novels. It does not follow that the poems are bad. In the first place, they are of two kinds—lyric and narrative. Now, the fashion of narrative in poetry has passed away for the present. The true Greek epics are read by a few in Greek; by perhaps fewer still in translations. But so determined are we not to read tales in verse, that prose renderings, even of the epics, nay, even of the Attic dramas, have come more or less into vogue. This accounts for the comparative neglect of Sir Walter's lays. They are spoken of as Waverley Novels spoiled. This must always be the opinion of readers who will not submit to stories in verse; it by no means follows that the verse is bad. If we make an exception, which we must, in favour of Chaucer, where is there better verse in story telling in the whole of English literature? The readers who despise "Marmion," or "The Lady of the Lake," do so because they dislike stories told in poetry. From poetry they expect other things, especially a lingering charm and magic of style, a reflective turn, "criticism of life." These things, except so far as life can be criticised in action, are alien to the Muse of narrative. Stories and pictures are all she offers: Scott's pictures, certainly, are fresh enough, his tales are excellent enough, his manner is sufficiently direct. To take examples: every one who wants to read Scott's poetry should begin with the "Lay." From opening to close it never falters:—

"Nine and twenty knights of fame
Hung their shields in Branksome Hall;
Nine and twenty squires of name
Brought their steeds to bower from stall,
Nine and twenty yeomen tall
Waited, duteous, on them all . . .
Ten of them were sheathed in steel,
With belted sword, and spur on heel;
They quitted not their harness bright
Neither by day nor yet by night:
 They lay down to rest
 With corslet laced,
Pillowed on buckler cold and hard;
 They carved at the meal
 With gloves of steel,
And they drank the red wine through the helmet barred."

Now, is not that a brave beginning? Does not the verse clank and chime like sword sheath on spur, like the bits of champing horses? Then, when William of Deloraine is sent on his lonely midnight ride across the haunted moors and wolds, does the verse not gallop like the heavy armoured horse?

"Unchallenged, thence passed Deloraine,
To ancient Riddell's fair domain,
Where Aill, from mountains freed,
Down from the lakes did raving come;
Each wave was crested with tawny foam,
Like the mane of a chestnut steed,
In vain! no torrent, deep or broad,
Might bar the bold moss-trooper's road;
At the first plunge the horse sunk low,
And the water broke o'er the saddle-bow."

These last two lines have the very movement and note, the deep heavy plunge, the still swirl of the water. Well I know the lochs whence Aill comes red in flood; many a trout have I taken in Aill, long ago. This, of course, causes a favourable prejudice, a personal bias towards admiration. But I think the poetry itself is good, and stirs the spirit, even of those who know not Ailmoor, the mother of Aill, that lies dark among the melancholy hills.

The spirit is stirred throughout by the chivalry and the courage of Scott's men and of his women. Thus the Lady of Branksome addresses the English invaders who have taken her boy prisoner:—

"For the young heir of Branksome's line,
God be his aid, and God be mine;
Through me no friend shall meet his doom;

Here, while I live, no foe finds room.
Then if thy Lords their purpose urge,
Take our defiance loud and high;
Our slogan is their lyke-wake dirge,
Our moat, the grave where they shall lie."

Ay, and though the minstrel says he is no love poet, and though, indeed, he shines more in war than in lady's bower, is not this a noble stanza on true love, and worthy of what old Malory writes in his "Mort d'Arthur"? Because here Scott speaks for himself, and of his own unhappy and immortal affection:—

"True love's the gift which God has given
To man alone beneath the Heaven.
It is not Fantasy's hot fire,
Whose wishes, soon as granted, fly;
*It liveth not in fierce desire,
With dead desire it doth not die:*
It is the secret sympathy,
The silver link, the silken tie,
Which heart to heart and mind to mind,
In body and in soul can bind."

Truth and faith, courage and chivalry, a free life in the hills and by the streams, a shrewd brain, an open heart, a kind word for friend or foe, these are what you learn from the "Lay," if you want to learn lessons from poetry. It is a rude legend, perhaps, as the critics said at once, when critics were disdainful of wizard priests and ladies magical. But it is a deathless legend, I hope; it appeals to every young heart that is not early spoiled by low cunning, and cynicism, and love of gain. The minstrel's own prophecy is true, and still, and always,

"Yarrow, as he rolls along,
Bears burden to the minstrel's song."

After the "Lay" came "Marmion, a Tale of Flodden Field." It is far more ambitious and complicated than the "Lay," and is not much worse written. Sir Walter was ever a rapid and careless poet, and as he took more pains with his plot, he took less with his verse. His friends reproved him, but he answered to one of them—

"Since oft thy judgment could refine
My flattened thought and cumbrous line,
Still kind, as is thy wont, attend,
And in the minstrel spare the friend:
*Though wild as cloud, as stream, as gale,
Flow forth, flow unrestrained, my tale!*"

Any one who knows Scott's country knows how cloud and stream and gale all sweep at once down the valley of Ettrick or of Tweed. West wind, wild cloud, red river, they pour forth as by one impulse—forth from the far-off hills. He let his verse sweep out in the same stormy sort, and many a "cumbrous line," many a "flattened thought," you may note, if you will, in "Marmion." For example—

"And think what he must next have felt,
At buckling of the falchion belt."

The "Lay" is a tale that only verse could tell; much of "Marmion" might have been told in prose, and most of "Rokeby." But prose could never give the picture of Edinburgh, nor tell the tale of Flodden Fight in "Marmion," which I verily believe is the best battle-piece in all the poetry of all time, better even than the stand of Aias by the ships in the Iliad, better than the slaying of the Wooers in the Odyssey. Nor could prose give us the hunting of the deer and the long gallop over hillside and down valley, with which the "Lady of the Lake" begins, opening thereby the enchanted gates of the Highlands to the world. "The Lady of the Lake," except in the battle-piece, is told in a less rapid metre than that of the "Lay," less varied than that of "Marmion." "Rokeby" lives only by its songs; the "Lord of the Isles" by Bannockburn, the "Field of Waterloo" by the repulse of the Cuirassiers. But all the poems are interspersed with songs and ballads, as the beautiful ballad of "Alice Brand"; and Scott's fame rests on *these* far more than on his later versified romances. Coming immediately after the very tamest poets who ever lived, like Hayley, Scott wrote songs and ballads as wild and free, as melancholy or gay, as ever shepherd sang, or gipsy carolled, or witch-wife moaned, or old forgotten minstrel left to the world, music with no maker's name. For example, take the Outlaw's rhyme—

"With burnished brand and musketoon,
So gallantly you come,
I read you for a bold dragoon
That lists the tuck of drum.
I list no more the tuck of drum,
No more the trumpet hear;
But when the beetle sounds his hum,

My comrades take the spear.
And, oh, though Brignal banks be fair,
And Greta woods be gay,
Yet mickle must the maiden dare,
Would reign my Queen of May!"

How musical, again, is this!—

"This morn is merry June, I trow,
The rose is budding fain;
But she shall bloom in winter snow,
Ere we two meet again.
He turned his charger as he spake,
Upon the river shore,
He gave his bridle-reins a shake,
Said, 'Adieu for evermore,
My love!
Adieu for evermore!"

Turning from the legends in verse, let it not be forgotten that Scott was a great lyrical poet. Mr. Palgrave is not too lenient a judge, and his "Golden Treasury" is a touchstone, as well as a treasure, of poetic gold. In this volume Wordsworth contributes more lyrics than any other poet: Shelley and Shakespeare come next; then Sir Walter. For my part I would gladly sacrifice a few of Wordsworth's for a few more of Scott's. But this may be prejudice. Mr. Palgrave is not prejudiced, and we see how high is his value for Sir Walter.

There are scores of songs in his works, touching and sad, or gay as a hunter's waking, that tell of lovely things lost by tradition, and found by him on the moors: all these—not prized by Sir Walter himself—are in his gift, and in that of no other man. For example, his "Eve of St. John" is simply a masterpiece, a ballad among ballads. Nothing but an old song moves us like—

"Are these the links o' Forth, she said,
Are these the bends o' Dee!"

He might have done more of the best, had he very greatly cared. Alone among poets, he had neither vanity nor jealousy; he thought little of his own verse and his own fame: would that he had thought more! would that he had been more careful of what was so precious! But he turned to prose; bade poetry farewell.

"Yet, once again, farewell, thou Minstrel Harp,
Yet, once again, forgive my feeble sway.
*And little reck I of the censure sharp
May idly cavil at an idle lay."*

People still cavil idly, complaining that Scott did not finish, or did not polish his pieces; that he was not Keats, or was not Wordsworth. He was himself; he was the Last Minstrel, the latest, the greatest, the noblest of natural poets concerned with natural things. He sang of free, fierce, and warlike life, of streams yet rich in salmon, and moors not yet occupied by brewers; of lonely places haunted in the long grey twilights of the North; of crumbling towers where once dwelt the Lady of Branksome or the Flower of Yarrow. Nature summed up in him many a past age a world of ancient faiths; and before the great time of Britain wholly died, to Britain, as to Greece, she gave her Homer. When he was old, and tired, and near his death—so worn with trouble and labour that he actually signed his own name wrong—he wrote his latest verse, for a lady. It ends—

"My country, be thou glorious still!"

and so he died, within the sound of the whisper of Tweed, foreseeing the years when his country would no more be glorious, thinking of his country only, forgetting quite the private sorrow of his own later days.

People will tell you that Scott was not a great poet; that his bolt is shot, his fame perishing. Little he cared for his fame! But for my part I think and hope that Scott can never die, till men grow up into manhood without ever having been boys—till they forget that

"One glorious hour of crowded life
Is worth an age without a name!"

Thus, the charges against Sir Walter's poetry are, on the whole, little more than the old critical fallacy of blaming a thing for not being something else. "It takes all sorts to make a world," in poetry as in life. Sir Walter's sort is a very good sort, and in English literature its place was empty, and waiting for him. Think of what he did. English poetry had long been very tame and commonplace, written in couplets like Pope's, very artificial and smart, or sensible and slow. He came with poems of which the music seemed to gallop, like thundering hoofs and ringing bridles of a rushing border troop. Here were goblin, ghost, and fairy, fight and foray, fair ladies and true lovers, gallant knights and hard blows, blazing beacons on every hill crest and on the bartisan of every tower. Here was a world made alive again that had been dead for three hundred years—a

world of men and women.

They say that the archæology is not good. Archæology is a science; in its application to poetry, Scott was its discoverer. Others can name the plates of a coat of armour more learnedly than he, but he made men wear them. They call his Gothic art false, his armour pasteboard; but he put living men under his castled roofs, living men into his breastplates and taslets. Science advances, old knowledge becomes ignorance; it is poetry that does not die, and that will not die, while—

“The triple pride
Of Eildon looks over Strathclyde.”

JOHN BUNYAN

Dr. Johnson once took Bishop Percy’s little daughter on his knee, and asked her what she thought of the “Pilgrim’s Progress.” The child answered that she had not read it. “No?” replied the Doctor; “then I would not give one farthing for you,” and he set her down and took no further notice of her.

This story, if true, proves that the Doctor was rather intolerant. We must not excommunicate people because they have not our taste in books. The majority of people do not care for books at all.

There is a descendant of John Bunyan’s alive now, or there was lately, who never read the “Pilgrim’s Progress.” Books are not in his line. Nay, Bunyan himself, who wrote sixty works, was no great reader. An Oxford scholar who visited him in his study found no books at all, except some of Bunyan’s own and Foxe’s “Book of Martyrs.”

Yet, little as the world in general cares for reading, it has read Bunyan more than most. One hundred thousand copies of the “Pilgrim” are believed to have been sold in his own day, and the story has been done into the most savage languages, as well as into those of the civilised world.

Dr. Johnson, who did not like Dissenters, praises the “invention, imagination, and conduct of the story,” and knew no other book he wished longer except “Robinson Crusoe” and “Don Quixote.” Well, Dr. Johnson would not have given a farthing for *me*, as I am quite contented with the present length of these masterpieces. What books do *you* wish longer? I wish Homer had written a continuation of the Odyssey, and told us what Odysseus did among the far-off men who never tasted salt nor heard of the sea. A land epic after the sea epic, how good it would have been—from Homer! But it would have taxed the imagination of Dante to continue the adventures of Christian and his wife after they had once crossed the river and reached the city.

John Bunyan has been more fortunate than most authors in one of his biographies.

His life has been written by the Rev. Dr. Brown, who is now minister of his old congregation at Bedford; and an excellent life it is. Dr. Brown is neither Roundhead nor Cavalier; for though he is, of course, on Bunyan’s side, he does not throw stones at the beautiful Church of England.

Probably most of us are on Bunyan’s side now. It might be a good thing that we should all dwell together in religious unity, but history shows that people cannot be bribed into brotherhood. They tried to bully Bunyan; they arrested and imprisoned him—unfairly even in law, according to Dr. Brown, not unfairly, Mr. Froude thinks—and he would not be bullied.

What was much more extraordinary, he would not be embittered. In spite of all, he still called Charles II. “a gracious Prince.” When a subject is in conscience at variance with the law, Bunyan said, he has but one course—to accept peaceably the punishment which the law awards. He was never soured, never angered by twelve years of durance, not exactly in a loathsome dungeon, but in very uncomfortable quarters. When there came a brief interval of toleration, he did not occupy himself in brawling, but in preaching, and looking after the manners and morals of the little “church,” including one woman who brought disagreeable charges against “Brother Honeylove.” The church decided that there was nothing in the charges, but somehow the name of Brother Honeylove does not inspire confidence.

Almost everybody knows the main facts of Bunyan’s life. They may not know that he was of Norman descent (as Dr. Brown seems to succeed in proving), nor that the Bunyans came over with the Conqueror, nor that he was a gipsy, as others hold. On Dr. Brown’s showing, Bunyan’s ancestors lost their lands in process of time and change, and Bunyan’s father was a tinker. He preferred to call himself a brazier—his was the rather unexpected trade to which Mr. Dick proposed apprenticing David Copperfield.

Bunyan himself, “the wondrous babe,” as Dr. Brown enthusiastically styles him, was christened on November 30th, 1628. He was born in a cottage, long fallen, and hard by was a marshy place, “a veritable slough of despond.” Bunyan may have had it in mind when he wrote of the slough where Christian had so much trouble. He was not a travelled man: all his knowledge of people and places he found at his doors. He had some schooling, “according to the rate of other poor men’s children,” and assuredly it was enough.

The great civil war broke out, and Bunyan was a soldier; he tells us not on which side. Dr. Brown and Mr. Lewis Morris think he was on that of the Parliament, but his old father, the tinker, stood for the King. Mr. Froude is rather more inclined to hold that he was among the "gay gallants who struck for the crown." He does not seem to have been much under fire, but he got that knowledge of the appearance of war which he used in his siege of the City of Mansoul. One can hardly think that Bunyan liked war—certainly not from cowardice, but from goodness of heart.

In 1646 the army was disbanded, and Bunyan went back to Elstow village and his tinkering, his bell-ringing, his dancing with the girls, his playing at "cat" on a Sunday after service.

He married very young and poor. He married a pious wife, and read all her library—"The Plain Man's Pathway to Heaven," and "The Practice of Piety." He became very devout in the spirit of the Church of England, and he gave up his amusements. Then he fell into the Slough of Despond, then he went through the Valley of the Shadow, and battled with Apollyon.

People have wondered *why* he fancied himself such a sinner? He confesses to having been a liar and a blasphemer. If I may guess, I fancy that this was merely the literary genius of Bunyan seeking for expression. His lies, I would go bail, were tremendous romances, wild fictions told for fun, never lies of cowardice or for gain. As to his blasphemies, he had an extraordinary power of language, and that was how he gave it play. "Fancy swearing" was his only literary safety-valve, in those early days, when he played cat on Elstow Green.

Then he heard a voice dart from heaven into his soul, which said, "Wilt thou leave thy sins and go to heaven, or have thy sins and go to hell?" So he fell on repentance, and passed those awful years of mental torture, when all nature seemed to tempt him to the Unknown Sin.

What did all this mean? It meant that Bunyan was within an ace of madness.

It happens to a certain proportion of men, religiously brought up, to suffer like Bunyan. They hear voices, they are afraid of that awful unknown iniquity, and of eternal death, as Bunyan and Cowper were afraid.

Was it not De Quincey who was at school with a bully who believed he had been guilty of the unpardonable offence? Bullying is an offence much less pardonable than most men are guilty of. Their best plan (in Bunyan's misery) is to tell Apollyon that the Devil is an ass, to do their work and speak the truth.

Bunyan got quit of his terror at last, briefly by believing in the goodness of God. He did not say, like Mr. Carlyle, "Well, if all my fears are true, what then?" His was a Christian, not a stoical deliverance.

The "church" in which Bunyan found shelter had for minister a converted major in a Royalist regiment. It was a quaint little community, the members living like the early disciples, correcting each other's faults, and keeping a severe eye on each other's lives. Bunyan became a minister in it; but, Puritan as he was, he lets his Pilgrims dance on joyful occasions, and even Mr. Ready-to-Halt waltzes with a young lady of the Pilgrim company.

As a minister and teacher Bunyan began to write books of controversy with Quakers and clergymen. The points debated are no longer important to us; the main thing was that he got a pen into his hand, and found a proper outlet for his genius, a better way than fancy swearing.

If he had not been cast into Bedford jail for preaching in a cottage, he might never have dreamed his immortal dream, nor become all that he was. The leisures of gaol were long. In that "den" the Muse came to him, the fair kind Muse of the Home Beautiful. He saw all that company of his, so like and so unlike Chaucer's: Faithful, and Hopeful, and Christian, the fellowship of fiends, the truculent Cavaliers of Vanity Fair, and Giant Despair, with his grievous crabtree cudgel; and other people he saw who are with us always,—the handsome Madam Bubble, and the young woman whose name was Dull, and Mr. Worldly Wiseman, and Mr. Facing Bothways, and Byends, all the persons of the comedy of human life.

He hears the angelic songs of the City beyond the river; he hears them, but repeat them to us he cannot, "for I'm no poet," as he says himself. He beheld the country of Beulah, and the Delectable Mountains, that earthly Paradise of nature where we might be happy yet, and wander no farther, if the world would let us—fair mountains in whose streams Izaak Walton was then even casting angle.

It is pleasant to fancy how Walton and Bunyan might have met and talked, under a plane tree by the Ouse, while the May showers were falling. Surely Bunyan would not have likened the good old man to Formalist; and certainly Walton would have enjoyed travelling with Christian, though the book was by none of his dear bishops, but by a Non-conformist. They were made to like but not to convert each other; in matters ecclesiastical they saw the opposite sides of the shield. Each wrote a masterpiece. It is too late to praise "The Complete Angler" or the "Pilgrim's Progress." You may put ingenuity on the rack, but she can say nothing new that is true about the best romance that ever was wedded to allegory, nor about the best idyl of old English life.

The people are living now—all the people: the noisy bullying judges, as of the French Revolutionary Courts, or the Hanging Courts after Monmouth's war; the demure, grave Puritan girls; and Matthew, who had the gripes; and lazy, feckless Ignorance, who came to so ill an end, poor fellow; and sturdy Old Honest, and timid Mr. Fearing; not single persons, but dozens, arise on the memory.

They come, as fresh, as vivid, as if they were out of Scott or Molière; the Tinker is as great a master of character and fiction as the greatest, almost; his style is pure, and plain, and sound, full of old idioms, and even of something like old slang. But even his slang is classical.

Bunyan is everybody's author. The very Catholics have their own edition of the Pilgrim: they have cut out Giant Pope, but have been too good-natured to insert Giant Protestant in his place. Unheralded, unannounced, though not uncriticised (they accused the Tinker of being a plagiarist, of course), Bunyan outshone the Court wits, the learned, the poets of the Restoration, and even the great theologians.

His other books, except "Grace Abounding" (an autobiography), "The Holy War," and "Mr. Badman," are only known to students, nor much read by them. The fashion of his theology, as of all theology, passed away; it is by virtue of his imagination, of his romance, that he lives.

The allegory, of course, is full of flaws. It would not have been manly of Christian to run off and save his own soul, leaving his wife and family. But Bunyan shrank from showing us how difficult, if not impossible, it is for a married man to be a saint. Christiana was really with him all through that pilgrimage; and how he must have been hampered by that woman of the world! But had the allegory clung more closely to the skirts of truth, it would have changed from a romance to a satire, from "The Pilgrim's Progress" to "Vanity Fair." There was too much love in Bunyan for a satirist of that kind; he had just enough for a humourist.

Born in another class, he might have been, he would have been, a writer more refined in his strength, more uniformly excellent, but never so universal nor so popular in the best sense of the term.

In the change of times and belief it is not impossible that Bunyan will live among the class whom he least thought of addressing—scholars, lovers of worldly literature—for devotion and poverty are parting company, while art endures till civilisation perishes.

Are we better or worse for no longer believing as Bunyan believed, no longer seeing that Abyss of Pascal's open beside our armchairs? The question is only a form of that wide riddle, Does any theological or philosophical opinion make us better or worse? The vast majority of men and women are little affected by schemes and theories of this life and the next. They who even ask for a reply to the riddle are the few: most of us take the easy-going morality of our world for a guide, as we take Bradshaw for a railway journey. It is the few who must find out an answer: on that answer their lives depend, and the lives of others are insensibly raised towards their level. Bunyan would not have been a worse man if he had shared the faith of Izaak Walton. Izaak had his reply to all questions in the Church Catechism and the Articles. Bunyan found his in the theology of his sect, appealing more strongly than orthodoxy to a nature more bellicose than Izaak's. Men like him, with his indomitable courage, will never lack a solution of the puzzle of the earth. At worst they will live by law, whether they dare to speak of it as God's law, or dare not. They will always be our leaders, our Captain Greathearts, in the pilgrimage to the city where, led or unled, we must all at last arrive. They will not fail us, while loyalty and valour are human qualities. The day may conceivably come when we have no Christian to march before us, but we shall never lack the company of Greatheart.

TO A YOUNG JOURNALIST

Dear Smith,—

You inform me that you desire to be a journalist, and you are kind enough to ask my advice. Well, be a journalist, by all means, in any honest and honourable branch of the profession. But do not be an eavesdropper and a spy. You may fly into a passion when you receive this very plainly worded advice. I hope you will; but, for several reasons, which I now go on to state, I fear that you won't. I fear that, either by natural gift or by acquired habit, you already possess the imperturbable temper which will be so useful to you if you do join the army of spies and eavesdroppers. If I am right, you have made up your mind to refuse to take offence, as long as by not taking offence you can wriggle yourself forward in the band of journalistic reptiles. You will be revenged on me, in that case, some day; you will lie in wait for me with a dirty bludgeon, and steal on me out of a sewer. If you do, permit me to assure you that I don't care. But if you are already in a rage, if you are about tearing up this epistle, and are starting to assault me personally, or at least to answer me furiously, then there is every hope for you and for your future. I therefore venture to state my reasons for supposing that you are inclined to begin a course which your father, if he were alive, would deplore, as all honourable men in their hearts must deplore it. When you were at the University (let me congratulate you on your degree) you edited, or helped to edit, *The Bull-dog*. It was not a very brilliant nor a very witty, but it was an extremely "racy" periodical. It spoke of all men and dons by their nicknames. It was full of second-hand slang. It contained many personal anecdotes, to the detriment of many people. It printed garbled and spiteful versions of private conversations on private affairs. It did not even spare to make comments on ladies, and on the details of domestic life in the town and in the University. The copies which you sent me I glanced at with extreme disgust.

In my time, more than a score of years ago, a similar periodical, but a much more clever

periodical, was put forth by members of the University. It contained a novel which, even now, would be worth several ill-gotten guineas to the makers of the *chronique scandaleuse*. But nobody bought it, and it died an early death. Times have altered, I am a fogey; but the ideas of honour and decency which fogies hold now were held by young men in the sixties of our century. I know very well that these ideas are obsolete. I am not preaching to the world, nor hoping to convert society, but to *you*, and purely in your own private, spiritual interest. If you enter on this path of tattle, mendacity, and malice, and if, with your cleverness and light hand, you are successful, society will not turn its back on you. You will be feared in many quarters, and welcomed in others. Of your paragraphs people will say that "it is a shame, of course, but it is very amusing." There are so many shames in the world, shames not at all amusing, that you may see no harm in adding to the number. "If I don't do it," you may argue, "some one else will." Undoubtedly; but *why should you do it?*

You are not a starving scribbler; if you determine to write, you can write well, though not so easily, on many topics. You have not that last sad excuse of hunger, which drives poor women to the streets, and makes unhappy men act as public blabs and spies. If *you* take to this *métier*, it must be because you like it, which means that you enjoy being a listener to and reporter of talk that was never meant for any ears except those in which it was uttered. It means that the hospitable board is not sacred for *you*; it means that, with you, friendship, honour, all that makes human life better than a low smoking-room, are only valuable for what their betrayal will bring. It means that not even the welfare of your country will prevent you from running to the Press with any secret which you may have been entrusted with, or which you may have surprised. It means, this peculiar kind of profession, that all things open and excellent, and conspicuous to all men, are with you of no account. Art, literature, politics, are to cease to interest you. You are to scheme to surprise gossip about the private lives, dress, and talk of artists, men of letters, politicians. Your professional work will sink below the level of servants' gossip in a public-house parlour. If you happen to meet a man of known name, you will watch him, will listen to him, will try to sneak into his confidence, and you will blab, for money, about him, and your blab will inevitably be mendacious. In short, like the most pitiable outcasts of womankind, and, without their excuse, you will live by selling your honour. You will not suffer much, nor suffer long. Your conscience will very speedily be seared with a red-hot iron. You will be on the road which leads from mere dishonour to crime; and you may find yourself actually practising *chantage*, and extorting money as the price of your silence. This is the lowest deep: the vast majority, even of social *mouchards*, do not sink so low as this.

The profession of the critic, even in honourable and open criticism, is beset with dangers. It is often hard to avoid saying an unkind thing, a cruel thing, which is smart, and which may even be deserved. Who can say that he has escaped this temptation, and what man of heart can think of his own fall without a sense of shame? There are, I admit, authors so antipathetic to me, that I cannot trust myself to review them. Would that I had never reviewed them! They cannot be so bad as they seem to me: they must have qualities which escape my observation. Then there is the temptation to hit back. Some one writes, unjustly or unkindly as you think, of you or of your friends. You wait till your enemy has written a book, and then you have your innings. It is not in nature that your review should be fair: you must inevitably be more on the look-out for faults than merits. The *écreintage*, the "smashing" of a literary foe is very delightful at the moment, but it does not look well in the light of reflection. But these deeds are mere peccadilloes compared with the confirmed habit of regarding all men and women as fair game for personal tattle and the sating of private spite. Nobody, perhaps, begins with this intention. Most men and women can find ready sophistries. If a report about any one reaches their ears, they say that they are doing him a service by publishing it and enabling him to contradict it. As if any mortal ever listened to a contradiction! And there are charges—that of plagiarism, for example—which can never be disproved, even if contradictions were listened to by the public. The accusation goes everywhere, is copied into every printed rag; the contradiction dies with the daily death of a single newspaper. You may reply that a man of sense will be indifferent to false accusations. He may, or may not be,—that is not the question for you; the question for you is whether you will circulate news that is false, probably, and spiteful, certainly.

In short, the whole affair regards yourself more than it regards the world. Plenty of poison is sold: is it well for you to be one of the merchants? Is it the business of an educated gentleman to live by the trade of an eavesdropper and a blab? In the Memoirs of M. Blowitz he tells you how he began his illustrious career by procuring the publication of remarks which M. Thiers had made to him. He then "went to see M. Thiers, not without some apprehension." Is that the kind of emotion which you wish to be habitual in your experience? Do you think it agreeable to become shame-faced when you meet people who have conversed with you frankly? Do you enjoy being a sneak, and feeling like a sneak? Do you find blushing pleasant? Of course you will soon lose the power of blushing; but is that an agreeable prospect? Depend on it, there are discomforts in the progress to the brazen, in the journey to the shameless. You may, if your tattle is political, become serviceable to men engaged in great affairs. They may even ask you to their houses, if that is your ambition. You may urge that they condone your deeds, and are even art and part in them. But you must also be aware that they call you, and think you, a reptile. You are not one of those who will do the devil's work without the devil's wages; but do you seriously think that the wages are worth the degradation?

Many men think so, and are not in other respects bad men. They may even be kindly and genial. Gentlemen they cannot be, nor men of delicacy, nor men of honour. They have sold themselves and their self-respect, some with ease (they are the least blamable), some with a struggle. They

have seen better things, and perhaps vainly long to return to them. These are "St. Satan's Penitents," and their remorse is vain:

Virtutem videant, intabescantque relicta.

If you don't wish to be of this dismal company, there is only one course open to you. Never write for publication one line of personal tattle. Let all men's persons and private lives be as sacred to you as your father's,—though there are tattlers who would sell paragraphs about their own mothers if there were a market for the ware. There is no half-way house on this road. Once begin to print private conversation, and you are lost—lost, that is, to delicacy and gradually, to many other things excellent and of good report. The whole question for you is, Do you mind incurring this damnation? If there is nothing in it which appals and revolts you, if your conscience is satisfied with a few ready sophisms, or if you don't care a pin for your conscience, fall to!

Vous irez loin! You will prattle in print about men's private lives their hidden motives, their waistcoats, their wives, their boots, their businesses, their incomes. Most of your prattle will inevitably be lies. But go on! nobody will kick you, I deeply regret to say. You will earn money. You will be welcomed in society. You will live and die content, and without remorse. I do not suppose that any particular *inferno* will await you in the future life. Whoever watches this world "with larger other eyes than ours" will doubtless make allowance for you, as for us all. I am not pretending to be a whit better than you; probably I am worse in many ways, but not in your way. Putting it merely as a matter of taste, I don't like the way. It makes me sick—that is all. It is a sin which I can comfortably damn, as I am not inclined to it. You may put it in that light; and I have no way of converting you, nor, if I have not dissuaded you, of dissuading you, from continuing, on a larger scale, your practices in *The Bull-dog*.

MR. KIPLING'S STORIES

The wind bloweth where it listeth. But the wind of literary inspiration has rarely shaken the bungalows of India, as, in the tales of the old Jesuit missionaries, the magical air shook the frail "medicine tents," where Huron conjurors practised their mysteries. With a world of romance and of character at their doors, Englishmen in India have seen as if they saw it not. They have been busy in governing, in making war, making peace, building bridges, laying down roads, and writing official reports. Our literature from that continent of our conquest has been sparse indeed, except in the way of biographies, of histories, and of rather local and unintelligible *facetiae*. Except the novels by the author of "Tara," and Sir Henry Cunningham's brilliant sketches, such as "Dustypore," and Sir Alfred Lyall's poems, we might almost say that India has contributed nothing to our finer literature. That old haunt of history, the wealth of character brought out in that confusion of races, of religions, and the old and new, has been wealth untouched, a treasure-house sealed: those pagoda trees have never been shaken. At last there comes an Englishman with eyes, with a pen extraordinarily deft, an observation marvellously rapid and keen; and, by good luck, this Englishman has no official duties: he is neither a soldier, nor a judge; he is merely a man of letters. He has leisure to look around him, he has the power of making us see what he sees; and, when we have lost India, when some new power is ruling where we ruled, when our empire has followed that of the Moguls, future generations will learn from Mr. Kipling's works what India was under English sway.

It is one of the surprises of literature that these tiny masterpieces in prose and verse were poured, "as rich men give that care not for their gifts," into the columns of Anglo-Indian journals. There they were thought clever and ephemeral—part of the chatter of the week. The subjects, no doubt, seemed so familiar, that the strength of the handling, the brilliance of the colour, were scarcely recognised. But Mr. Kipling's volumes no sooner reached England than the people into whose hands they fell were certain that here were the beginnings of a new literary force. The books had the strangeness, the colour, the variety, the perfume of the East. Thus it is no wonder that Mr. Kipling's repute grew up as rapidly as the mysterious mango tree of the conjurors. There were critics, of course, ready to say that the thing was merely a trick, and had nothing of the supernatural. That opinion is not likely to hold its ground. Perhaps the most severe of the critics has been a young Scotch gentleman, writing French, and writing it wonderfully well, in a Parisian review. He chose to regard Mr. Kipling as little but an imitator of Bret Harte, deriving his popularity mainly from the novel and exotic character of his subjects. No doubt, if Mr. Kipling has a literary progenitor, it is Mr. Bret Harte. Among his earlier verses a few are what an imitator of the American might have written in India. But it is a wild judgment which traces Mr. Kipling's success to his use, for example, of Anglo-Indian phrases and scraps of native dialects. The presence of these elements is among the causes which have made Englishmen think Anglo-Indian literature tediously provincial, and India a bore. Mr. Kipling, on the other hand, makes us regard the continent which was a bore an enchanted land, full of marvels and magic which are real. There has, indeed, arisen a taste for exotic literature: people have become alive to the strangeness and fascination of the world beyond the bounds of Europe and the United States. But that is only because men of imagination and literary skill have been the new conquerors—the Corteses and Balboas of India, Africa, Australia, Japan, and the isles of the southern seas. All such conquerors, whether they write with the polish of M. Pierre Loti, or with the carelessness of

Mr. Boldrewood, have, at least, seen new worlds for themselves; have gone out of the streets of the over-populated lands into the open air; have sailed and ridden, walked and hunted; have escaped from the fog and smoke of towns. New strength has come from fresher air into their brains and blood; hence the novelty and buoyancy of the stories which they tell. Hence, too, they are rather to be counted among romanticists than realists, however real is the essential truth of their books. They have found so much to see and to record, that they are not tempted to use the microscope, and pore for ever on the minute in character. A great deal of realism, especially in France, attracts because it is novel, because M. Zola and others have also found new worlds to conquer. But certain provinces in those worlds were not unknown to, but were voluntarily neglected by, earlier explorers. They were the "Bad Lands" of life and character: surely it is wiser to seek quite new realms than to build mud huts and dunghills on the "Bad Lands."

Mr. Kipling's work, like all good work, is both real and romantic. It is real because he sees and feels very swiftly and keenly; it is romantic, again, because he has a sharp eye for the reality of romance, for the attraction and possibility of adventure, and because he is young. If a reader wants to see petty characters displayed in all their meannesses, if this be realism, surely certain of Mr. Kipling's painted and frisky matrons are realistic enough. The seamy side of Anglo-Indian life: the intrigues, amorous or semi-political—the slang of people who describe dining as "mangling garbage" the "games of tennis with the seventh commandment"—he has not neglected any of these. Probably the sketches are true enough, and pity 'tis true: for example, the sketches in "Under the Deodars" and in "The Gadsbys." That worthy pair, with their friends, are to myself as unsympathetic, almost, as the characters in "La Conquête de Plassans." But Mr. Kipling is too much a true realist to make their selfishness and pettiness unbroken, unceasing. We know that "Gaddy" is a brave, modest, and hard-working soldier; and, when his little silly bride (who prefers being kissed by a man with waxed moustaches) lies near to death, certainly I am nearer to tears than when I am obliged to attend the bed of Little Dombey or of Little Nell. Probably there is a great deal of slangy and unrefined Anglo-Indian society; and, no doubt, to sketch it in its true colours is not beyond the province of art. At worst it is redeemed, in part, by its constancy in the presence of various perils—from disease, and from "the bullet flying down the pass." Mr. Kipling may not be, and very probably is not, a reader of "Gyp"; but "The Gadsbys," especially, reads like the work of an Anglo-Indian disciple, trammelled by certain English conventions. The more Pharisaic realists—those of the strictest sect—would probably welcome Mr. Kipling as a younger brother, so far as "Under the Deodars" and "The Gadsbys" are concerned, if he were not occasionally witty and even flippant, as well as realistic. But, very fortunately, he has not confined his observation to the leisures and pleasures of Simla; he has looked out also on war and on sport, on the life of all native tribes and castes; and has even glanced across the borders of "The Undiscovered Country."

Among Mr. Kipling's discoveries of new kinds of characters, probably the most popular is his invention of the British soldier in India. He avers that he "loves that very strong man, Thomas Atkins"; but his affection has not blinded him to the faults of the beloved. Mr. Atkins drinks too much, is too careless a gallant in love, has been educated either too much or too little, and has other faults, partly due, apparently, to recent military organisation, partly to the feverish and unsettled state of the civilised world. But he is still brave, when he is well led; still loyal, above all, to his "trusty chum." Every Englishman must hope that, if Terence Mulvaney did not take the city of Lungtung Pen as described, yet he is ready, and willing so to take it. Mr. Mulvaney is as humorous as Micky Free, but more melancholy and more truculent. He has, perhaps, "won his way to the mythical" already, and is not so much a soldier, as an incarnation, not of Krishna, but of many soldierly qualities. On the other hand, Private Ortheris, especially in his frenzy, seems to shew all the truth, and much more than the life of, a photograph. Such, we presume, is the soldier, and such are his experiences and temptations and repentance. But nobody ever dreamed of telling us all this, till Mr. Kipling came. As for the soldier in action, the "Taking of Lungtung Pen," and the "Drums of the Fore and Aft," and that other tale of the battle with the Pathans in the gorge, are among the good fights of fiction. They stir the spirit, and they should be distributed (in addition, of course, to the "Soldier's Pocket Book") in the ranks of the British army. Mr. Kipling is as well informed about the soldier's women-kind as about the soldier: about Dinah Shadd as about Terence Mulvaney. Lever never instructed us on these matters: Micky Free, if he loves, rides away; but Terence Mulvaney is true to his old woman. Gallant, loyal, reckless, vain, swaggering, and tender-hearted, Terence Mulvaney, if there were enough of him, "would take St. Petersburg in his drawers." Can we be too grateful to an author who has extended, as Mr. Kipling in his military sketches has extended, the frontiers of our knowledge and sympathy?

It is a mere question of individual taste; but, for my own part, had I to make a small selection from Mr. Kipling's tales, I would include more of his studies in Black than in White, and many of his excursions beyond the probable and natural. It is difficult to have one special favourite in this kind; but perhaps the story of the two English adventurers among the freemasons of unknown Kafirstan (in the "Phantom Rickshaw") would take a very high place. The gas-heated air of the Indian newspaper office is so real, and into it comes a wanderer who has seen new faces of death, and who carries with him a head that has worn a royal crown. The contrasts are of brutal force; the legend is among the best of such strange fancies. Then there is, in the same volume, "The Strange Ride of Morrowbie Jukes," the most dreadful nightmare of the most awful Bunker in the realms of fancy. This is a very early work; if nothing else of Mr. Kipling's existed, his memory might live by it, as does the memory of the American Irishman by the "Diamond Lens." The sham magic of "In the House of Suddhu" is as terrible as true necromancy could be, and I have a *faiblesse* for the "Bisara of Pooree." "The Gate of the Hundred Sorrows" is a realistic version of

“The English Opium Eater,” and more powerful by dint of less rhetoric. As for the sketches of native life—for example, “On the City Wall”—to English readers they are no less than revelations. They testify, more even than the military stories, to the author’s swift and certain vision, his certainty in his effects. In brief, Mr. Kipling has conquered worlds, of which, as it were, we knew not the existence.

His faults are so conspicuous, so much on the surface, that they hardly need to be named. They are curiously visible to some readers who are blind to his merits. There is a false air of hardness (quite in contradiction to the sentiment in his tales of childish life); there is a knowing air; there are mannerisms, such as “But that is another story”; there is a display of slang; there is the too obtrusive knocking of the nail on the head. Everybody can mark these errors; a few cannot overcome their antipathy, and so lose a great deal of pleasure.

It is impossible to guess how Mr. Kipling will fare if he ventures on one of the usual novels, of the orthodox length. Few men have succeeded both in the *conte* and the novel. Mr. Bret Harte is limited to the *conte*; M. Guy de Maupassant is probably at his best in it. Scott wrote but three or four short tales, and only one of these is a masterpiece. Poe never attempted a novel. Hawthorne is almost alone in his command of both kinds. We can live only in the hope that Mr. Kipling, so skilled in so many species of the *conte*, so vigorous in so many kinds of verse, will also be triumphant in the novel: though it seems unlikely that its scene can be in England, and though it is certain that a writer who so cuts to the quick will not be happy with the novel’s almost inevitable “padding.” Mr. Kipling’s longest effort, “The Light which Failed,” can, perhaps, hardly be considered a test or touchstone of his powers as a novelist. The central interest is not powerful enough; the characters are not so sympathetic, as are the interest and the characters of his short pieces. Many of these persons we have met so often that they are not mere passing acquaintances, but already find in us the loyalty due to old friends.

FOOTNOTES:

[70] The subject has been much more gravely treated in Mr. Robert Bridges’s “Achilles in Scyros.”

[91] Conjecture may cease, as Mr. Morris has translated the *Odyssey*.

[109] For Helen Pendennis, see the “Letters,” p. 97.

[128] Mr. Henley has lately, as a loyal Dickensite, been defending the plots of Dickens, and his tragedy. *Pro captu lectoris*; if the reader likes them, then they are good for the reader: “good absolute, not for me though,” perhaps. The plot of “Martin Chuzzlewit” may be good, but the conduct of old Martin would strike me as improbable if I met it in the “Arabian Nights.” That the creator of Pecksniff should have taken his misdeeds seriously, as if Mr. Pecksniff had been a Tartuffe, not a delight, seems curious.

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