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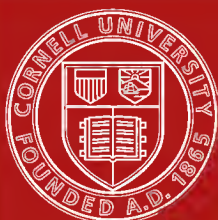
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ESSAYS OF POETS AND POETRY.

P R E F A C E

It is needless to say that no one of the nine Essays contained in this volume has been written within the last two years and a half.

The earliest, that on the "Art of Translation," was first published as long ago as 1895, in the *Quarterly Review*, the others in the same periodical, or in the *Monthly Review*, at intervals extending over some ten years. The latest, that on "In Memoriam after Fifty Years," appeared in the *Edinburgh Review* early in 1906, shortly after the first, and separate publication by Lord Tennyson of this poem with his father's annotations. I had hoped to have reprinted these Essays, as I am now doing, in book form, before the present date, but delayed to do so, promising myself more opportunity of rehandling than I have ever found time to accomplish. When in 1906 I became Vice-Chancellor, all hope of considerable retouching in any near future entirely disappeared. I was confronted with the alternative of allowing them to wait still longer, or of reprinting them as they were, with such limited amount of revision as had been, or was now, possible.

I have to thank my old friend and publisher, Mr John Murray, for much consideration and kindness added to that for which I was already largely in his debt, and I must express my

acknowledgments to Messrs Longmans for allowing me to reprint the Edinburgh article. I am indebted to not a few friends who, at the time when the articles first appeared, or since, have furnished me with valuable corrections or suggestions, notably to Dr Paget Toynbee, who read through for me the article on "Dante and the Art of Translation," both when it first appeared and again in the proofs a short time ago.

I am further under much obligation to Lord Fitzmaurice, who wrote spontaneously to tell me that Gray's copy of Milton was to be found in his brother's Library at Bowood, and to Lord Lansdowne himself, for being at special pains to enable me to inspect this most interesting relic, which deserves more thorough study than I have yet been able to give to it.

A word of sincere gratitude is also due from me to Professor Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Möllendorf for letting me use the long and interesting extract from his letter on the article about Sophocles, an informal but, as I think scholars will agree, very valuable contribution toward our realisation of that ever-interesting figure.

Finally, I have to thank Mr George Stuart Gordon, one of the junior Fellows of my College, for most kindly reading through the whole of the proofs as they were passing through the Press.

T. H. W.

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ESSAYS

I.

SOPHOCLES AND THE GREEK GENIUS.

“Fortunate Sophocles! with wealth and wit
Together blest, he lived, and full of days
He died; his many tragedies were fair,
And fair his end, before the evil hour.”

So, at the death of the great Attic tragedian, sang the comic poet Phrynichus, one of his younger contemporaries; and after-ages have always dwelt on the same characteristics, which are indeed singular and significant.

The “lives” of “the poets” are only too often some of the saddest reading in the world. Truly they seem to have “learned in suffering” what they have “taught in song,” and to have poured out their bitter-sweet notes, like the legendary nightingale, with their bosom against the thorn. Want, exile, passion ill-assorted, unhappy marriage, feuds with friend and foe, melancholy and madness, *sæva indignatio*, the pangs of envy or of sensitiveness, an early or a tragic end—these have been not seldom their lot. Glory is theirs, but purchased at what a price!

Some exceptions there have been—Sophocles,

Virgil, Chaucer, Shakespeare probably, Ariosto, Goethe, Wordsworth, Tennyson. But conspicuous among the exceptions is Sophocles. Both the ancient and the modern world have agreed to account him among the very happiest of all poets, happy in his era, happy in the circumstances of his life, happiest above all in his own sweet and sage temper; "the happiest of all Greek poets on record," as Swinburne called him long since; the "gentle Sophocles," as, by a felicitous transference of Ben Jonson's well-known epithet for his immortal friend, he styled him the other day.

Other contemporaries who were able to look back on the career of Sophocles echo the same note as Phrynichus. Aristophanes, whose glorious, graceless comedy spared no one else, spared him. The motive of the "Frogs" is, as every one knows, the proposal to recover for Athens, now sadly shorn of poets, one of the great tragedians of the generation which had just passed away.

"Why do you not bring Sophocles back from the grave, if you want one of the dead poets on earth again?" says Heracles to Dionysus. "Because, my dear sir, he will not come. He's too happy where he is, his sweet temper, his *bonhomie*, make him welcome everywhere. When he arrived in the lower regions he found his old friend and rival Æschylus enthroned. He only kissed him and clasped his hand, bidding him keep the throne, and so preserves his character still, 'Serene in life and after life serene.'"

And Plato, no lover of the poetic temperament, in the ever memorable opening of the "Republic," says the same, and uses the very same untranslatable epithet. He introduces Sophocles as an

example of one who in his May of life had enjoyed gustful youth to the full, but who could grow old charmingly, with a resignation worldly at once and unworldly. Well balanced and "serene," when one asked him, "How is it with you and Love, Sophocles? Are you still the man you were?" "Hush! hush!" he said, "we must not use such talk. Rather I have gladly escaped from the tyranny of a wild and mad master."

Doubtless he had escaped from other tyrannies and torments. Even he must have had his struggles. Good fortune brings its own enemies, its own friction of envy and detraction. Life had not always been smooth. He had not always been successful. His greatest play only won the second prize: once the Archon would not grant him a chorus at all. Gossip and scandal had gabbled and hissed around him. Lesser men, minor poets and interviewers, had presented him in their belittling mirror. It may be his own kin had sought to push him from his throne and try on his royal crown before his death. One of the comic poets called his poems literally "dog rimes," and said he seemed in writing his plays "to have collaborated with a barking hound."

It is true that the details of his life must remain dubious, for the record is scanty and mainly traditional. But, on the whole, tradition, in such matters once discredited, has rather recovered than lost authority. Such evidence as that of Plato and Aristophanes gives fixed points of light; and the broad facts remain, especially that of his relation to the evolution of the Greek drama.

Æschylus, with his magniloquence, nobly

grandiose, like "the large utterance of the early gods," Æschylus, whose

"Bronze-throat eagle-bark at blood
Has somehow spoilt my taste for twitterings;"

Sophocles, with the perfection of his art; Euripides, with his romance and novelty—they are all Greek, and they are all great. It is, however, of the essence of Sophocles, it is the secret and the sum of his happiness, to hold in everything the middle position. He was born just at the right moment. The peculiar glory of Athens falls entirely within a single century—the fifth before Christ. The date 500 B.C. found her still undeveloped, 400 B.C. left her ruined. The first two decades were decades of gloom and struggle. Marathon staved off the onset of the East; but it was only after Salamis and Plataea that the Persian peril ceased to be an ever-present overwhelming terror. It was between the two naval battles, Salamis and Ægospotami, that the brief splendid day of Athens flamed and faded. The fifty years between the Persian and the Peloponnesian wars were its high noon. These years are the years of Sophocles. Salamis, the greatest land-mark in the political history of Athens—in some ways of the ancient world—is also the most notable in her literary history.

"From Marathon to Syracuse

Are seventy years and seven; for so long

Endured that city's prime which was the world's."

In the battle of Salamis, and in the van of the fray, Æschylus fought, as he had fought before at Marathon. Its glorious agony lives for ever in the surging, glittering rhythms of the Persæ, which

ring as though Marlowe had sung the story of the Armada in the "mighty line" in which he had, the year before that great fight, given to the stage "Tamburlaine the Great." On the day of the battle, Euripides, according to tradition, was born. And what of Sophocles? His part was neither purely active nor purely passive, but eminently notable and appropriate. Neither the woes nor the throes of the victory were his. He was chosen for his beauty and his promise, as the prize-boy of the class-room and the playing-field, to lead the choristers who sang and danced in celebration of the crowning mercy. The picture is one which appeals to the imagination. Sophocles, afterwards to be the ideal Greek man, is here the ideal Greek boy.

"There the ancient celebration to the maiden queen of fight
Led the long august procession upward to the pillared height :
There the hearts of men beat faster while the glad Hellenic
boy
Ran and wrestled with his fellows, knew the struggle and the
joy ;
From the deep eyes in his forehead shone a radiance brave
and fair,
Flashing down his shapely shoulders ran the splendour of his
hair."

It is thus he first comes upon the world-stage ; and the appearance is significant.

For one thing is certain, that he had received that first of gifts, a good education. It seems probable that his father Sophillus¹ was of a middle station in life. Some have put him too low and called him a blacksmith or ironmonger ; others, on the ground that his son in later life held office

¹ Or Sophilus ; possibly a variant of Theophilus, "God-loving."

in the State, have imagined that he must have been of good family. Probably he was neither, but was a well-to-do *bourgeois*, keeping a small manufacturing business, such as Demosthenes' father kept a century later. In Athens, as elsewhere, the sons of such men have had perhaps the best of all starts in life. What is clear is that Sophillus gave his son the completest training then available. In particular his master in music and dancing, Lamprus, was the first and most fashionable teacher of the time.

That the young poet was beautiful and clever, that he was graceful, agile, and athletic, is vouched for by the story we have recalled. It is vouched for again later on in his life. He sustained the title-rôle in his own piece "Nausicaa," embodying the story of that most delightful of Homeric heroines. In a charming scene, as every one remembers, she leads her maidens in a combination of dance and ball-play. Sophocles threw the ball, as the Greek expression was, in consummate style. In another of his own pieces, "Thamyris," he played the lyre; but he gave up acting because his voice was thin and weak. All this, however, came later in his career. Meanwhile his boyhood was like that of any other Athenian gentleman's son. His home was the most beautiful spot in the neighbourhood of Athens, a "garden" not "wholly in the busy world nor quite beyond it," the Horseman's Knoll, as it was called—the "White Knoll," as he himself styles it—a low mound of light-coloured earth, swelling from the Attic plain, and covered with a boskage of laurel, olive, and vine, through which

trickled the unfailing rills of the little Kephisus, nourishing the daffodil, "a garland for the gods," and the gold-gleaming crocus, and keeping fresh the green dells in which a crowd of nightingales sang sweetly and unceasingly.

Of the poet's earlier manhood, from 480 to 468, we know nothing. He is called the pupil of Æschylus, as a great Italian painter is often called the pupil of his chief predecessor. That Æschylus gave, or Sophocles received, lessons, is not to be believed; but that, as a happy reverent spirit, he fell at first much under the influence of Æschylus and learned from him, there can be no doubt. The "Ajax," one of his earliest plays, is full of Æschylean words, taken mainly, as Professor Jebb notices, from the *Persæ*; and it was perhaps with mingled feelings that he found himself preferred at the age of twenty-seven to his master. The story of the victory is well known, although of doubtful authenticity. What it emphasises is, that from this time Sophocles undoubtedly held the foremost place among Athenian poets. So much is clear from Aristophanes. The old men might prefer Æschylus, the young men Euripides, but Sophocles was *hors concours*. Such was doubtless the judgment of the generals, even if the story of their award is not true. It was, as Professor Phillimore well puts it, the judgment of "the man in the street of Athens."¹ It was also the

¹ Aristophanes ("Peace" 531) makes one of his Chorus include, as one of the blessings of peace, "the songs of Sophocles." The scholiast says that Aristophanes praised Sophocles only to damn Euripides, whom he hated. But Aristophanes no doubt also represents the popular taste.

judgment of Xenophon and, perhaps we may divine, of Plato. And it was to be the judgment of Cicero and Virgil, and of that still more popular critic, Ovid.

Sophocles acquired, too, a public position. He was made, as we know from inscriptions, Hellenotamias in 443 or 442. He was sent as a general to Samos about 441. It has been argued that this means little, especially as regards his poetry. It is not so clear that this is the case. Professions were not then so much differentiated as they are to-day. Every Greek gentleman was bred to arms and familiar with the simple conduct of war as at that time carried on. Sophocles might well have been, if Greek comedy is to be trusted, as good a general as Pericles. It is true that Ion of Chios, in his "Reminiscences," entitled perhaps "Celebrities I have met," gives a gossiping, and not unscandalous, account of his encountering Sophocles at a dinner-party in Samos, and how he displayed his generalship in manœuvring at the dinner-table. "I am practising tactics," he said, "because Pericles says I am a good poet but a bad general." But Ion, Plutarch tells us, also described Pericles as "stiff and proud," and indeed thought it right to show the seamy side of great men. It is said more specifically that Sophocles was defeated in a naval skirmish by the famous atomic philosopher Melissus. Fancy a campaign conducted by Gladstone and Tennyson, in which Tennyson should be defeated at sea by M. Pasteur! But M. Berthelot held a portfolio in a French ministry, and a suggestion was made in the Boer War

that Mr Rudyard Kipling should have a command. And is not Mr Haldane, the author of "The Pathway to Reality," Minister of War? Professor von Wilamowitz-Möllendorf, indeed, lays more stress than other scholars have done on Sophocles' public and official career. He maintains that his holding these offices was neither accidental nor ornamental, but shows him to have been definitely a leading politician, and even a party man and important supporter of Pericles.

A figure and a personage, then, in Greek society, the compeer of Pericles, the friend of Herodotus, to whom he addressed an Ode, he ranged among the foremost men and minds of his day, interchanging with them, doubtless as an equal, ideas on the events and movements of his time. Whatever he was in the field, it is certain that his poems contain much political wisdom. Such passages as the famous

"Stone walls do not a city make, but men ;"

or again,

"Whereas

Nor fort nor fleet, empty, is anything,
Desert of men to be its complement,"

have passed into proverbs for every age and time. They gave him the reputation for that aphoristic eloquence or mastery of phrase which Plutarch attributes to him. He held a position not unlike that of Tennyson, who could venture to advise Gladstone about the extension of the franchise, and whose phrases or "sayings" are the crystallisation of the political wisdom of his time. It was the same cause, doubtless, which led to his being made a "Lord of the Treasury," and being employed, like

a French or American man of letters, Chateaubriand, or Hawthorne, or Motley, or Lowell, on various embassies. In the last years of his life, when, after the awful calamity of Syracuse, the democracy was discredited, and an attempt was made to frame a new constitution with a more restricted franchise, an assembly was summoned, not in Athens, but at his own Colonus, by which he is said to have been appointed one of a Committee of Ten, to devise a new constitution and submit it to the people. The result was the appointment of the famous or notorious Four Hundred. The identification is not absolutely certain, but there is no real reason to question it, and the story preserved by Aristotle, that Sophocles defended the course adopted by saying that it was not indeed ideal, but the best under the circumstances, is quite in keeping with his character.

For he was probably a moderate in politics as in everything else, and meant the Four Hundred to be merely an executive committee and not the tyrannical *junta* which it proved. As R. A. Neil, of lettered memory, writes, in his most suggestive introduction to the "Knights," the spirit of Attic literature is in the main that of moderate, not extreme, democracy. Sophocles was in any case a patriot, and even when Athens had seen her best days remained faithful to her. Euripides, also a democrat, but disillusioned—"exacerbated" by the jingoism, as Dr Murray implies, though he cleverly avoids saying it, of the Athenian democracy—fled to the court of Archelaus of Macedonia, which was like a Radical taking refuge with the Czar of Russia, and there composed that swan-song, strangely,

wildly beautiful, which Dr Murray has reproduced with so much genius and sympathy, the "Bacchæ." Sophocles was also invited by the despot, but he would not go. Then came "the sombre close of that voluptuous day." Euripides died. When Sophocles heard it he put on mourning and bade his chorus appear without the usual wreaths. The scene is admirably given by one of Euripides' best lovers, Mr Browning:—

"Enters an old pale-swathed majesty
Makes slow mute passage through two ranks as mute.

.
Priest—the deep tone succeeded the fixed gaze—
Thou carest that thy god have spectacle
Decent and seemly; wherefore I announce
That, since Euripides is dead to-day,
My Choros, at the Greater Feast, next month,
Shall clothed in black appear ungarlanded.
Then the grey brow sank low, and Sophokles
Re-swathed him, sweeping doorward; mutely passed
'Twixt rows as mute, to mingle possibly
With certain gods who convoy age to port;
And night resumed him."

His own end followed just in time, "before the evil hour." The story of the manner of his death and of his burial are both significant. The better versions of the first are pretty, the legend of the last is lovely, but chronology pronounces it apocryphal.

It was indeed time for him to depart. His domestic relations were too probably not happy. Like Goethe after Schiller's death and the shock and sequel of the battle of Jena, marrying Christiana Vulpius, then flirting and quarrelling with Bettine, incurring the contempt and censure of his family, the aged and over-amorous Sophocles had perhaps

fallen into the hands of an old man's young wives. They preyed upon him, perching on his house, as the forcible Greek saying had it, "like owls on a tomb." Whether his sons ever really brought that famous action *de lunatico inquirendo* which was dismissed upon Sophocles reciting the song from the "Œdipus at Colonus," is doubtful, though Cicero, a lover of a good story, accepted it. It is very probably a scene from a comedy, based perhaps on an exaggeration of the real state of Sophocles' relations with his family.

Browning's verses strike the true note of his passing, a note first heard nowhere else but in the Œdipus itself. For Sophocles was a many-sided character. He was not only a soldier and a statesman; he was also a priest, or something very like it, in the technical sense. Like Dante, who was inscribed of the Guild of Apothecaries, he seems to have had some connexion with medicine; he reared an altar, and wrote a hymn, to Asclepius, the god of medicine, which long remained famous. But he also held a sort of private prebend or priesthood in connexion with Alcon, a brother hero with Asclepius. He was even supposed to have entertained Asclepius, and after death was himself canonised as "The Entertainer."¹

This, too, is appropriate to his character. For not merely was he religious, but he was definitely pious. A poet, and especially a dramatist, must not be judged by isolated passages or sentiments put into the mouths of his characters; but the whole temper of Sophocles shows this, and the

¹ See Professor Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Möllendorf's letter at the end of this volume.

tradition that he came into collision with the *esprits forts* of his day, and offended them by his avowed orthodoxy, is verisimilar enough. We know little about the so-called "Mysteries," or the place they held in actual Greek thought and life. But one of the most famous passages about them is a fragment of Sophocles, in which he attributes to them a saving grace.

"Thrice happy," he sang, "are they among mortals who have looked on these rites before they pass to the world below. They alone will have life in the next world, the rest will have there nought but misery."

It is said that Diogenes asked, "What do you mean? Will the thief Pataëcion, if he dies a mystic, have a better chance than Epaminondas, because he has been initiated?"—thus anticipating the famous dispute between Cardinal Newman and Canon Kingsley over the Church's lazy and ragged, but religious beggar-woman and the State's pattern man.

The eminent German scholar, Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Möllendorf, lays special stress on Sophocles' piety as emphasised by these stories, and thinks it the key to the understanding of the "Œdipus Tyrannus."

"We" (he says) "are smitten to the ground by the awfulness of the story. Sophocles was not so. He had a warm piety in the heart of a child. The weakness of man was to him only God's opportunity. He believed in the gods as he believed in the oracles. Such piety is not found in Æschylus. Can we doubt that Augustine would have found in Sophocles, and not in his two comrades, a kinsman of heaven?"

Such his own generation certainly held him. He was beyond all others, they said, the darling of the gods. He retained, in fact, not a little of the older-fashioned piety which belonged to the aristocratic leaders of his day, to Pericles and to Nicias.

Is such a character, so practical, so sensuous at once and saintly, intelligible or realisable by us to-day? The poetic temperament sometimes takes this cast. On this side, as in other points, there is not a little resemblance between the "gentle" Sophocles, and the tender, pious Virgil, a wizard in his own and immediately succeeding days, a saint in the Middle Ages. But Virgil, *studiis florens ignobilis otii*, though full of practical sense, was not a man of action. We have compared Sophocles, too, with a poet who has much in common with Virgil, Lord Tennyson.¹ He has more points of contact with another poet, very different from either of these. It is said that Sophocles has no modern parallel, and strictly speaking this is true. The nearest perhaps, on the whole, or at least the most suggestive, as we have already hinted more than once, is Goethe. The differences are very great. Germany is not Greece. Neither Frankfort nor Weimar, nor both combined, are Athens. Yet in the man Goethe, in his temper, in his physique, there is much that helps us to understand Sophocles.

Born in a middle station, yet a natural aristocrat, strikingly handsome alike in youth and in age, mingling passion and reason, familiar with

¹ Professors Campbell, Butcher, and Phillimore, have all pointed out the similarity of Sophocles' style to that of Virgil and Tennyson, especially in its trick of giving to a word a sort of *aura* of association, and thus many meanings at once.

affairs as well as with books, prosecuting art and culture and science, and all amid the storm and thunder of a national struggle and mighty battles, minded ever "Im Ganzen, Guten, Schönen, resolut zu leben," to him also may be applied Matthew Arnold's famous lines about one

"Whose even-balanced soul
From first youth tested up to extreme old age,
Business could not make dull, nor passion wild,
Who saw life steadily and saw it whole."

Nor is it unlikely that their author in writing them had, perhaps unconsciously, in his mind both his artistic and literary heroes. The picture of Goethe with his sunny playfulness of wit and temper, as portrayed for us by Eckermann, may help us to understand the picture of Sophocles, which has already been alluded to, preserved by a less flattering witness than Eckermann, Ion of Chios. The famed combination of *Heiterkeit*, "blithe serenity," with *Allgemeinheit*, or "breadth of view," makes in both, though in very different forms, a complete ideal; while the deeper side of Goethe, that piety which all his sensual worldliness could not entirely obliterate, may be found in the treatment of religion in "Wilhelm Meister," both in the story of the *Schöne Seele*, and still more in the symbolic and mystic interpretation of Christianity which concludes the miscellaneous phantasmagoria of that strange book.

The social status of the two poets presents a further parallel.

"Placed midway between the perilous extremes of affluence and want, Goethe's whole career received a modifying impulse from this position.

He never knew adversity. This alone must necessarily have deprived him of one powerful chord which vibrates through literature. He never knew the gaunt companionship of Want, whispering terrible suggestions. He never knew the necessity to conquer for himself breathing-room in the world; and thus all the feelings of bitterness, opposition, and defiance which accompany and perplex the struggle of life, were to him almost unknown; and he was taught nothing of the aggressive and practical energy which these feelings develop in impetuous natures. How much of his serenity, how much of his dislike to politics, may be traced to this origin?"

So writes, in the opening pages of his book, his English biographer, Mr G. H. Lewes.

Goethe, again, had his acquaintance with affairs, both civil and military.¹ He was a Privy Councillor at five-and-twenty; and, just before he wrote his "Iphigeneia," he was appointed President of the Military and Causeway Commission for the Duchy of Weimar, so that he composed that famous piece, as he said, with "one foot only in the stirrup of Pegasus." He was interrupted in its composition by the riots among the starving weavers of Apolda. When it was first acted, he played the part of Orestes himself, and in the handsome prime of his young manhood—he was then just thirty—was likened to Apollo descended from heaven to present in bodily form the beauty of Greece. Truly a Sophoclean apparition! It is of no little importance that both poets were practically and personally acquainted with the

¹ His latest and most complete biographer, Dr Bielschowsky, lays great stress on his official and "business" career, and his political instinct and insight.

details and difficulties of staging and presentation. In this respect Sophocles was pre-eminent. His famous introduction of the third actor, his breaking-down of the practice of writing "tetralogies," or cycles, rather than single plays, like his improvements in dress and decoration, owe, doubtless, something to this conversance with the actual possibilities. It is noticeable that Goethe, in criticising Sophocles, lays special stress upon this acquaintance with the stage, as shown in both the "Philoctetes" and the "Œdipus at Colonus." It is pretty clear too that, like Aristotle, nay, probably following both Aristotle and Lessing, he took Sophocles as the norm and canon of Greek tragedy. Thus in his critique of "Cymbeline," the reviewer of Shakespeare, he says, should consider "how Sophocles would have handled the same material."

Finally, Goethe reminds us of Sophocles in his blending of reason and passion. He was eminently susceptible of beauty, and he yielded often, too often, to its spell. He was aware of this himself. Is not his confession,

"Ich könnte viel glücklicher sein
 Gab's nur keinen Wein
 Und keine Weiberthänen,"

in the same key as Sophocles' famous answer already quoted? And might not Sophocles have replied to Ion in Goethe's line,

"Wird doch nicht immer geküsst, es wird vernünftig
 gesprochen?"

Goethe resembled Sophocles, too, in his magnanimity and sweetness to other artists and poets, first and foremost to Schiller, but also to

lesser lights, Herder and Wieland, Jacobi and others. "How could I write songs of hatred without hating," said Goethe. Yet he wrote the *Xenien*. "Such was Sophocles' charm," says his biographer, "that everywhere and by every one he was beloved." Yet he could be satiric on occasion; and did we possess all his works we might find perhaps that he too not only could have written, but actually wrote his occasional *Xenien*; or perhaps, like Tennyson, he only composed and did not publish his epigrams on his foes.¹

The luck of some men seems to follow them even after their death. Their happy star shines over their graves. This has been the case with Sophocles. It is true, of course, that the bulk of his plays has been lost, that only seven have survived. But they are all masterpieces. Time does not always scatter his poppy so blindly as is supposed. Macaulay raised the issue, whether Euripides would not have been rated more highly had only the seven best of his dramas come down to us; and much as we must deplore the loss of many a famous piece by Sophocles, yet when we read the list of the hundred and fifteen whose names survive, we cannot avoid the surmise that, were they all more than names, we might better have understood that "unevenness" and that "artificiality" at which great ancient critics stumbled. It is true also that Sophocles' fame has not perhaps stood always equally high. He was too essentially Hellenic, nay, too Attic, for the cosmopolitan Hellenistic days which followed the break-up of old Greece. Euripides,

¹ An epigram on Euripides attributed to him is still extant.

far easier to understand, had probably a much wider vogue throughout the semi-Greek world. It was the "Bacchæ," and not the "Œdipus" or the "Antigone" that was being acted at the Parthian court when the head of the unfortunate Crassus was brought in and snatched up by the strolling player to point the wild Bacchante's refrain. But while Æschylus and Euripides have had at times more passionate partisans, Sophocles has been persistently the favourite of the best critics, of Aristotle and Dionysius, of Halicarnassus and Dio Chrysostomus, of Cicero and Virgil, of Lessing and Goethe, of Matthew Arnold and of Edward Fitzgerald.

It is true that his luck has not been absolutely unbroken. It is a misfortune that Lessing never completed his work upon him. Lessing, in the prime of his powers, meditated a great study of Sophocles, whom he wished to hold up as a model to German dramatists. It was to consist of four books. The first was to contain a life of the poet, which was to be followed by a critical analysis of the plays and a translation. Lessing began with the life, and commenced printing it in 1760; but he had not enough material ready, and the printing was discontinued with the seventh sheet. Fourteen years later he took it up again, but once more failed to complete it. Even now, after the lapse of a century and a half, we must regret that Lessing did not achieve what he projected, for he combined, what are so rarely combined in adequate measure, passion and erudition. He was not a poet who had failed, but rather a critic who had succeeded, in creative literature; and the author of

“Minna von Barnhelm” and the “Hamburgische Dramaturgie” might have given us in a life of Sophocles a supplement to his own “Laokoon” and a complement to the “Poetics.”

Lessing was not a Sophoclean character; few have been less so; but he would have treated a great poet as only a great poet can. His *obiter dicta* upon Sophocles are excellent. His general attitude and feeling are best expressed in his own noble words:—

“Let us,” he says, “once fall in love with an ancient author and then the most trifling detail which concerns, or which can have any reference, to that author, ceases to be indifferent to us. Now that I have once begun to regret having studied the ‘Poetics’ of Aristotle without first studying the pattern from which he derived it, I shall pay more attention to the name of Sophocles, let me find it where I will, than to my own. How often have I sought him, how much useless stuff have I read for his sake! To-day my thought is, No trouble is in vain which can save trouble to another. I have not read the useless uselessly, if it prevents one and another from having to read it hereafter. I may not be admired, but I shall be thanked. And imagined gratitude is as pleasant as imagined admiration; or we should have had no grammarians, no scholars.”

But if Sophocles was unlucky in the eighteenth century, he has been lucky in the nineteenth and twentieth. Neither Æschylus or Euripides, strange to say, has yet found a great or even an adequate editor. Famous scholars have dealt with single plays. Porson meditated at different times, editing both an Æschylus and a Euripides, but admirable as is his work on both authors, he had in his short,

ill-starred life neither the time nor the resolution to achieve either task. Sophocles has been happier. He has found an editor, of whom it is not too much to say that he is not only ideal, but also ideally appropriate to his author; and he has found him at the right moment.

Of scholarship in the literary and linguistic sense, Sir Richard Jebb was a past-master, and he had been trained in the best school. Classical study may progress on various lines, in comparative philology, in palæography, in archæology. New materials may be unearthed. In these ways there may be an advance, but in another direction there may very well be a decline. It may be doubted whether the command of Greek verse composition, with all it implies, will ever be carried higher, or indeed maintain itself so high, as it stood among the Oxford and Cambridge scholars of Sir Richard Jebb's day. Sir Richard was himself one of those men with a gift for language such as comes perhaps twice in a century, and he had practised it carefully and long. He was a consummate composer of Greek verse. He could, as Tennyson said, "roll an Olympian," that seemed to come from some very "ghost of Pindar" within him. His iambic translations of Shakespeare show a wealth and command of Greek diction which are marvellous. But he was more than a mere composer, rhetorician, or versifier. He was much of an orator and a poet. He was also a practised literary critic. He had enjoyed the friendship of living poets, the intimate friendship of the foremost and most artistic of his day. He possessed what Dryden so well said was necessary to give a really correct under-

standing of style, and to "wear off the rust contracted by learning," a knowledge of men and manners. Nay more, he was conversant with affairs; nor is it extravagant to say that, as Gibbon found—the reader, says Gibbon, may smile—"the captain of the Hampshire grenadiers not useless to the historian of the Roman Empire," so the Royal Commissioner and the Cambridge Member of Parliament may have been useful to the Cambridge Professor of Greek, regarded as the editor of the Attic dramatist who was also a soldier and a statesman. Diligent, accurate, well-balanced, judicious, sane, sympathetic, Sir Richard Jebb well fulfilled Lessing's canon. He loved his author, and he spared neither time nor pains in elucidating him.

Sir Richard Jebb's most famous predecessor in the Greek chair at Cambridge was a lover of Euripides. It is the custom at Cambridge that the candidates for the Greek chair should deliver, like Scotch ministers on trial, a public lecture in the schools upon some Greek author. Porson, when a candidate in 1792, chose Euripides for his theme, or perhaps the theme was proposed to him. Whichever was the case, the choice was most fortunate. The lecture, brilliant both in matter and expression, is far less well known than it deserves to be. To the general reader it is, indeed, not known at all, for it is written in Latin, and general readers do not read literary criticism in Latin. The pity is that the author of the "Letters to Travis" did not write more in English; for Porson was, like most really great scholars, like Conington or Munro, a man of letters as well as a scholar, a master of literary as well as

of textual criticism. He was also like not a few men of genius, procrastinating. The lecture was scrambled together, it is said, in two days. With consummate oratorical art, Porson apologises for making it a popular discourse which may possibly please the undergraduates—after all, perhaps, not the worst of judges. It treats interestingly of all three tragedians, but culminates in a comparison of Sophocles and Euripides, which concludes by declaring the great scholar's own predilection.

“I,” he says, “derive greater pleasure from the natural beauty and unaffected simplicity of Euripides than from Sophocles' more elaborate and artificial diligence. Sophocles may have indited the more correct tragedies, but Euripides wrote the sweeter poems. Sophocles we approve, but Euripides we adore; we praise the former, but we peruse the latter. *Hunc magis probare solemus, illum magis amare; hunc laudamus; illum legimus.*”

To this opinion of Porson Sir Richard Jebb would not have subscribed. He has praise for Euripides. “All honour to Euripides,” he says, “for no one is capable of feeling that Sophocles is supreme, who does not feel that Euripides is admirable.” But his love is for Sophocles.

And to the *grande amore* he added the *lungo studio*. The history of this edition is of high interest. As a young don of Trinity, six and thirty years earlier, he first edited two plays, the “Electra” and the “Ajax.” Already he meditated a complete edition of Sophocles on a large scale. But he saw that he must first master Greek rhetorical prose. His work on the Attic orators was thus an interlude and a preparation for the edition of Sophocles. In

its pages will be found some of his best general critical writing upon Sophocles. Only in 1883 was he able to publish the first volume of the larger edition. Thirteen years later, he once more gave to the world the second of the two plays with which he had begun, the "Ajax." With this the series of the plays was complete. It still remained for the eighth volume to be produced, which would contain the "Fragments,"¹ "Essays on subjects of general interest in relation to Sophocles," and an Index. It was to be hoped that it might also include a discussion of the life of Sophocles, for the notices about him are not few, and, sympathetically and scientifically treated, as Professor Jebb could have treated them, might be made to yield more than they have yet done.

But meanwhile Professor Jebb had a right to regard his task as, in a sense, achieved, and to inscribe it with a "Dedication" which is singularly appropriate. Whatever may be thought of Sophocles' failings in a pre-Christian age, not notable for either chastity or chivalry in the modern sense, Sophocles' women, the tender and the strong alike, are eminently noble and chivalrous creations; and the fact that he created them, and that they were so much admired in his own day, should go far to redeem the Periclean age from the imputation of a low opinion of the sex. It was then happy and not insignificant that this monumental edition should receive as its finishing ornament a dedication to Lady Jebb, "to whose sympathy," writes

¹ The editing of these was entrusted to Dr W. Headlam of King's College. Alas! "How soon has brother followed brother!" *Unde parem invenias?*

her husband, “it has owed more than to any other aid.”

What, it may be asked, are the general character and aim of this edition? They could not be better described than they are in the quiet and modest profession made in the preface to the second play edited, the lovely “*Œdipus at Colonus*.”

“It will be a sufficient reward,” it was there written, “for much thought and labour if this edition is accepted by competent critics as throwing some new light on a play of great and varied beauty.” And again, “One distinctive aim of the edition is thoroughness of interpretation in regard alike to the form and to the matter. . . . Rash conjecture constantly arises from defective understanding.”

“Thoroughness of interpretation,” conservatism, and sobriety in textual criticism—these are certainly its distinguishing marks. “Rare as epic song,” says the *doyen* of our living creative writers, himself no mean scholar, Mr George Meredith, “is the man who is thorough in what he does. And happily so; for in life he subjugates us, and he makes us bondsmen to his ashes.” Professor Jebb spared no pains to be thorough. There is no Sophoclean question which he has left untouched, few which he has not adorned. But, if the most thorough, he is also the most patient and modest, of commentators. With the richest gift for rewriting, the amplest powers of composing in the Sophoclean vein that any scholar ever possessed, he has been the most self-restrained of editors. Where he has emended, his suggestions carry all the more force. He has been most generous to the suggestions of others. But, as Professor Kaibel said long ago,

his aim is to understand his author, not to gain repute by novelty. Occasionally he is content not to understand, to suspend his judgment; but this is only when all means of illumination have been tried. Palæography, metrical science, grammar, prosody, are pressed into service in the determination and elucidation of the text; history, archæology, geography, even botany, all contribute to the full interpretation and presentment of the author's meaning. The result is that we recover Sophocles, and understand him with a fulness unknown before.

Indeed, as the second of Professor Jebb's brilliant young successors in the Glasgow chair of Greek, Professor Phillimore, generously writes, his great edition is so complete and judicious that, for years to come, all Sophoclean criticism must be expressed in terms of differing or agreeing with him. And let those who are tempted to differ think many times, for it is only by degrees that the reader perceives how intimately penetrated with the Sophoclean spirit his editor is, how nice and just is his sympathy, how exhaustive his consideration.

What, then, is the Sophoclean spirit? What are the Sophoclean characteristics? Perfection of detail, yet subordination of the parts to the whole; calculation and rule, yet the freedom which rule alone can give; "triumphant art, but art in obedience to law." It is of the essence of Sophocles that he is an artist, and a critical and self-conscious artist. Here, again, he is like Goethe, who said he had never written a single page without knowing how it came there. "You do what is right in poetry," said Sophocles to Æschylus, "but without knowing why." This was not, as some ancient

pedants supposed, because Æschylus was addicted to drink. Æschylus was indeed intoxicated at times, but not with wine. In a famous passage in the "Poetics," Aristotle divides poets into two classes—the "finely gifted," who are sympathetic and touched to fine issues, and the "finely frenzied," who are swept on by overmastering inspiration.¹ Æschylus belongs to the latter class, Sophocles emphatically to the former. Not, indeed, that Æschylus is not a great artist, or that Sophocles is uninspired; but, like Shakespeare, and even more than Shakespeare, Sophocles is "a great poet, made as well as born." He has thought out his art. That this was so as regards both his style and his general management, we know. His style is described by the great critic Dionysius as the "middle style," a mean between the austere and the elegant. And it was a mean arrived at deliberately. In his youth he used to say he had amused himself by travestyng the pomp of Æschylus; then he had experimented in the other extreme with his own inclination to incisiveness and hard elaboration; finally, he had exchanged both for a third style, which was the most sympathetic and the best.² So Shakespeare, as Mr Swinburne has admirably shown, halted between the following of Marlowe and that of Greene.

Still more significant is his use of the chorus.

¹ It is satisfactory to think that, as Professor Butcher shows in the preface to his new edition, the text in this important passage has now, thanks to Professor Margoliouth and the Arabic version, been placed beyond a doubt.

² Virgil's style was described, by his enemies, in almost exactly the same terms, as being "neither swelling or meagre, but a subtle and mannered manipulation of ordinary language."

Originally the Greek play was all chorus. At first only one actor, then two, then three, but never more than three, except as mute personages, appeared at one time upon the stage. What the early Greek plays were like, may still be seen in that archaic drama the "Suppliants" of Æschylus, or, though less markedly, in the "Persæ." Æschylus made the drama, Sophocles perfected it. His chorus was another person in the drama, a "collective actor," but something more than an actor. In the chorus the spectator sees himself brought into the scope of the piece, and his sympathy is strongly drawn out. Aristotle takes Sophocles' use as the model of perfection. But Sophocles did not attain to it without careful study. His evolution of the chorus was probably one of his earliest efforts, very possibly his first great artistic struggle. Perhaps the most interesting point in the very scanty record we possess of Sophocles is that he wrote a prose treatise about the chorus referring to and combating the views and practice of the older writers, Thespis and Chœrilus. The statement has, it is true, been doubted, but it seems credible enough,¹ for Sophocles' use of the chorus, as contrasted with that of Euripides, is one of the points on which Aristotle lays special stress in the "Poetics"; and there can be little doubt that the well-known passage in Horace does little more than reflect the view of Aristotle.

We know so little about Sophocles, or about

¹ Lessing thinks, with probability, that it was in this same prose treatise that he recorded the evolution of his own style. Aristotle may well have had it before his mind when writing the passage alluded to.

the modes of literary work in his day, that it is difficult to check many statements as to his studies or writings. It is probable, however, that the ways of poets and artists then were not very different from what they have been since his time. Sophocles was said to cull the beauties of all his predecessors, and to exhibit at once, daring variety, appropriateness, and sweetness.¹ He was called "the Attic bee," some say for the last-named quality. That he was sweet is very true. He knew how necessary sweetness is to the best poetry. *Nec satis est pulchra esse poemata, dulcia sunt.* But he was not too sweet. Here, as ever, he hit the mean. A story, perhaps apocryphal, used to be current about Mr Swinburne, generous sometimes of his blame, but ever still more generous of his praise, and consequently as potent in criticism as in creation, that he said of Tennyson, Browning, and himself, "Browning has body, and I have bouquet, but Tennyson has both." An ancient poet-critic said by a similar metaphor of Sophocles, "He is a wine neither luscious nor watery, but at once dry and cordial."

But the name was probably given to Sophocles as Horace gave it to himself, not so much for his sweetness, as for his industry; for he was accused, as all careful and learned poets have been, of plagiarism; and indeed Philostratus of Alexandria wrote a book on his thefts. The charge, it is true, has not clung to Sophocles as it has to Virgil, perhaps because we have not the authors from

¹ Aristophanes alludes to his honeyed sweetness ("Frag.," 231). Σοφοκλέους τοῦ μέλιτι κεχρισμένου.

whom he could be said to have drawn. For him the prayer of the Roman wit has been realised, "*Perierunt qui ante Sophoclem Sophoclea dixerunt.*" But it is additional proof that he was a careful and a learned poet, and Sir Richard Jebb¹ is all the more to be thanked for the assiduity with which he has sifted the dust-heap of *scholia* and *didascaliai* to discover the previous treatment of Sophoclean themes, and thereby demonstrated Sophocles' knowledge and originality.

The main characteristics of Sophocles' dramatic genius may, of course, best be seen by taking one of the plays as edited in this series. It might seem natural, perhaps, to select the "Œdipus Tyrannus," for this, as readers of the "Poetics" are aware, is the model and typical Greek play. Its strength consists in its wonderful arrangement, to use Leonardo da Vinci's phrase in its *symmetria prisca*. The movement passes through a perfect and absolute curve, in which no point, not the smallest, is out of place, so that it is little exaggeration to say, that not a line could be lost without disturbing the balance of the whole. That "dramatic economy" of which Porson spoke, is here displayed at its highest.² But the "Œdipus Tyrannus," eminently typical though it is, is perhaps not so well suited for displaying Sophocles' merits as is the "Antigone," the play

¹ Professor Jebb's many parallels from previous writers, e.g., from Theognis, are, in this connexion, very suggestive.

² In fact it exactly fulfils that precept of Voltaire in which Mr A. B. Walkley finds the "ideal of modern drama." "Tout doit être action dans la Tragédie; chaque scène doit servir à nouer et à dénouer l'intrigue, chaque discours doit être préparation ou obstacle."

after all which has most impressed the modern world.¹

The "Antigone" is one of the earliest of Sophocles' plays preserved. It is not perfect in style. It exhibits a certain amount of harshness. But it belongs to the maturity of the poet's powers, to the centre of his active life. What then are its characteristics? The story is of the simplest. A great situation, few motives, few actors; the conflict of a lesser duty, local, expedient, human, with one which is paramount, universal, divine; consistency, simplicity, fine psychology, these are its notes. The famous Dramatic Unities, reduced to rule by the French classical theatre, were not, as every one is now aware, known to the Greek theatre as rules. They are not contained in Aristotle. They are merely the result of that simplification which is of the essence of the best Greek tragedy, and which is nowhere better seen than in the "Antigone."

Sophocles, in what, as Goethe pointed out, was his usual manner, did not invent, he found the story. But his treatment of it is, as Sir Richard Jebb emphasises, his own. And notably his own is the happy use which he makes of a motive specially interesting to Athens, the burial of foemen slain in war. A sister, Antigone, insists on burying her brother who has come sword in hand against his native city, has been defeated and slain, and lies under the ban of what the Greeks would have considered a harsh and high-handed, but not illegal or unpatriotic decree. It is her uncle, the father of

¹ "If I lived for a hundred years, the study of the Greeks alone would be enough for me. I am reading the 'Antigone.' What an admirable man was Sophocles!"—BENJAMIN CONSTANT.

her lover, who has issued the edict, and he forbids her under pain of death to bury the corpse. The City's law is against her, but a higher law bids her go forward. She persists, openly performs burial rites, is brought to justice and is doomed to die. Her lover sides with her, and pleads with the father, but in vain. She is condemned and haled away to be immured in a living tomb. Too late the father relents, and going to release her, finds that she has hanged herself, and that her lover, his own son, has killed himself upon her dead body, while, as a crowning woe, his wife, the queen-mother, on hearing the news, herself commits suicide.

These are the factors, simple, elemental. To the Greeks the mere situation in itself was even more powerful than it is to-day. The great natural "moments" of man's earthly career, birth, marriage, death, had for them a predominance which we do not in all moods realise, although burial, even now, is a question which not seldom stirs feelings deep and universal. But even for us, and for all time, the situation remains profoundly touching. It possesses the universality of the greatest masterpieces.

Antigone is one of the very greatest characters in literature because she is so natural and so complete. She is a queen in tragedy, but she is no tragedy queen; she is a heroine, but a human heroine; for, as Professor Jebb says, "no other woman in Greek tragedy is either so human or so true a woman as the Antigone of Sophocles." She is the strongest of strong characters where character needs strength, but she is not in the smallest degree "strong-minded." She is only, as Goethe wrote, "*Die schwesterlichste der Seelen.*"

It is because she is so very woman, so true a sister, that she is also so true a sweetheart. Duty is paramount, but light and life and love are sweet, sweet with all the physical sweetness which they had for a healthy and honourable Greek girl, and she does not conceal her natural feelings. She says in effect—

“I could not love thee, dear, so much,
Loved I not honour more.”

But she is under no illusion. When the chorus launches the keenest dart of all, the taunt of her ill-starred heritage, she admits its sting. It is the sin of her house which has brought her into this terrible dilemma and forces her to this choice of evils; for she sees with awful clearness that it is truly a choice of evils, and that there is much to be said for the sentence which dooms her. She will hold fast to the one thing that is certain, duty to a brother. That gives her, like Jephtha's daughter, “strength that equals her desire”; but, like Jephtha's daughter, mourning because “no fair Hebrew boy shall smile away her maiden blame among the Hebrew mothers,” she is not ashamed to weep, and bewail, that death, not Hæmon, will be her groom. So, with surpassing power, with the reticent concentration of passion which marks a master's work, Sophocles focuses the clash of forces, brings into sharp contrast the bride-bed and the grave, throwing, in an unrivalled lyric, the flush and rosy light of love across the pallor and dark of death—

“Love, that no man conquer may,
Making goods and gear his prey;
Love, whose bivouac is laid
In the blush of dreaming maid!”

Then follows the tragic *dénouement* already described.

Such is the "Antigone." It contains many memorable beauties, great *tirades*, lovely lyrics, grand lines, the immortal speech about the "unwritten laws which are not of to-day or yesterday," the apostrophe to the living tomb, the famous chorus on the ingenuity of man, the noble phrase, sweet, eminently characteristic of Sophocles, an admirable example of what the ancients dwelt upon, his power of indicating a whole individuality in a word or two,

"But I was born

A sister to men's love and not their hate."

Yet, it is not in these details in themselves, but in the great simple situations and movement, and the living force of character which bursts forth at every shifting touch of circumstance and situation, that the grandeur of the play consists.

The details of this display and disengagement of character, the pressure of the environment and the interaction of the persons, the subtle manipulation of the plot by an original master, the *rôle* of Ismene, an amiable and conventional foil to her sister, like Chrysothemis to Electra, such touches as the heightened isolation given to the maiden Antigone by the chorus being composed entirely of men—the contrast between the handling of the story by Sophocles and that by Euripides, in which the motive of love for Hæmon is allowed to dominate—these and other points Professor Jebb brings out with a delicate but convincing thoroughness all his own. It is the same with the other plays, so different and various in their mood, the

chivalry of the "Philoctetes," the unearthly majesty of the transfigured Œdipus, walking literally by faith and not by sight, vanishing and passing, none knows how or when—"he was not, for God took him"—with each of these in turn Sir Richard shows himself equally skilful.

But marvellous as may be a great dramatist's mastery of detail, the interest of the drama lies mainly in character. And this is the case with Sophocles. Passion and nobility, the intensity of passion, the elevation of generosity, these are his prevailing notes. These are what have attracted other poets at all times.

"The world may like, for all I care,
The gentler voice, the cooler head,
That bows a rival to despair,
And cheaply compliments the dead.

Thanked, and self-pleased: ay, let him wear
What to that noble breast was due;
And I, dear passionate Teucer, dare
Go through the homeless world with you."

(Ionica: "After reading *Ajax*.")

"Antigone, the most sisterly of souls"; "Dear passionate Teucer":—Sophocles indeed moves the heart. His characters are men and women, not realistic, but idealistic, not indeed, as he himself said, men as they ordinarily are, but as they ought to be, as sometimes, in moments of exaltation, they would wish, nay, even do attain to be, yet men and women still. "There is nothing in Euripides," wrote William Cory, the author of the lines just quoted, "comparable with the Neoptolemus of Sophocles." Sophocles is rhetorical, of course. Rhetoric and drama are near akin. The secret

of oratory is "acting"; and one of the most striking characteristics of Shakespeare is his almost intolerable and blinding eloquence. The Greek drama was specially prone to rhetoric. "It is in this," said Goethe, "that the very life of the dramatic in general consists; and it is the very thing in which Sophocles is so great a master." But Rhetoric in Sophocles is kept under control. "Sophocles never *jaws* philosophy in the midst of passion: all his speeches advance, instead of retarding it," said Edward Fitzgerald. Goethe noticed exceptions, and thought that the famous and disputed sophistical passage in the "Antigone," which he hoped would be proved spurious,¹ was one. And there are not wanting instances in which, just as Tennyson was apparently, at one period of his career, influenced by the realism of Browning, Sophocles has caught the rhetorical note of Euripides. But the verdict of Fitzgerald was the verdict of Athens, and is in the main true.

In yet another aspect in which Sophocles appeals to universal feeling and moves the heart, he holds again this middle place, namely, in his religion. He stands just at the point where superstition and

¹ Professor Jebb's treatment of this is an admirable instance of his fair and exhaustive method. May not the solution be that which is very probable in the case of the analogous passage in Sophocles' Roman parallel Virgil—the passage about Helen in the Second *Æneid*—that it represents a rough draft of a speech by Sophocles, which he did not himself insert, but which was found in his remains, and introduced, perhaps also retouched, by a later and lesser hand? The lately discovered lines of Juvenal are very likely, as Professor Robinson Ellis suggests, yet another instance of this same phenomenon.

free-thought meet. His is a rational religion. The happiest of men and poets, he has yet written some of the saddest of strains. "Even when life has been at its best," he sings, "'twere something better not to be." Not that this was necessarily his own feeling, but he understood the burden of this unintelligible world—unintelligible, almost unbearable, without some kind of accepting faith. This it was that made him dear to Matthew Arnold, whose airy persiflage concealed so many pious sighs, so much spiritual yearning. It might well have been expected that "Euripides the human" would have approved himself more to the "liberalism" of the author of "Literature and Dogma." But this was not so. The "Note-books" recently published confirm the evidence of the language and the allusions and imitations scattered up and down his works, his prose and his poetry alike, that it was Sophocles who "propped in these bad times his soul." Matthew Arnold, indeed, underestimated Sophocles on the religious side.

"Perhaps," he writes, "in Sophocles the thinking power a little overbalances the religious sense, just as in Dante the religious sense overbalances the thinking power."

This would hardly seem to be the truth.¹ But whichever way the balance inclines, Matthew Arnold is in the main right. Sophocles is a strongly religious poet, and a notable and a reasonable teacher of the soul.

The greatest Greek art at all epochs in Greek

¹ Dr von Wilamowitz-Möllendorf takes quite the opposite view. See letter already alluded to.

history was popular. It was national; it was human; it appealed to national predilections, to the root-instincts of mankind, to their passions, to their "admiration, hope, and fear." It took common ground. To be simple, vigorous, even popular, is to be most truly Greek, not to be academic, ingenious, precious, bizarre. Alexandrine this may be, it is not Homeric or Attic. And such pre-eminently is Sophocles, one of those "moderate" spirits, walking the middle way;

"A loather of the lawless crown
As of the lawless crowd";

a lover in all things of the Greek doctrine of "the limit," the "neither too much nor too little"; asking in all things,

"Why should a man desire in any way
To vary from the kindly race of men,
Or pass beyond the goal of ordinance
Where all should pause, as is most meet for all?"

in religion, accepting, doubting too, it may be, yet "cleaving to the sunnier side of doubt," in everything shunning "the falsehood of extremes." Such characters are by extreme men, in religion, in politics, in art, disliked; they are condemned as timid compromisers, dealers in common-place, time-serving. But the wise at the top in other walks of life, taking broad views of men and things, the multitude at the bottom, with its elemental emotions, its innate piety and good sense, the "subliminal conscience" of mankind in both, approves them. Chaucer, Raphael, Molière, Mozart, are all Greek in this sense.

For the Greek genius at its best shows, alike in literary and in plastic creation, one predominant

characteristic, the happy blending of art and nature. For it, virtue, truth, beauty, all equally consist in the *juste milieu*, the golden mean between extremes. Proportion, rhythm, geometrical structure, are its distinguishing marks, sculpturesque self-repression, architectural balance, chiselled precision.

“Come leave your Gothic worn-out story
 San Giorgio and the Redentore,
 I from no building gay or solemn
 Can spare the shapely Grecian column.

Maturer optics don't delight
 In childish, dim, religious light,
 In evanescent vague effects
 That shirk, not face, one's intellects;
 They love not fancies just betrayed
 And artful tricks of light and shade,
 But pure form nakedly displayed,
 And all things absolutely made.”

So, long ago now, in a characteristic little piece which deserves to be read in its entirety, wrote Clough. It is true, and yet it is not all the truth, either in architecture or literature. Greek architecture was not, any more than Greek sculpture, so bare and cold as is often supposed. It was, in its living heyday, like that of our old Gothic cathedrals, rich and warm with colour. Greek sculpture had “pure form”; it had “all things absolutely made”; but it was instinct with natural play and freedom too. In one of the many illuminating passages in his book upon “Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art,” which we have quoted already—a truly classic presentation of a classic—Dr Butcher dwells on this double characteristic of the Greek writers from the other side. “Few nations,” he says, “have taken more delight in weaving airy and

poetic fiction apart from all reality, made out of nothing and ending nowhere." But if few have been more full of fancy, few have been less fantastic. Lamb's "Sanity of True Genius," he goes on to say, is as conspicuous in the Greek drama as in Shakespeare. M. Maurice Croiset's verdict is just the same. "*Sophocle, dans la poésie lyrique, comme ailleurs, est toujours l'Hellène par excellence, chez qui la raison apparaît dans tout ce que créent l'imagination et le sentiment.*"

The effect of Sir Richard Jebb's edition is to give us Sophocles as the type of this genuine Greek genius, in restoring him to us once more as he really was, no impossible ideal, but a genuine poet among poets, a living man among men, the child yet the master of his age. It is the fashion to think of Sophocles as impersonal, statuesque, chaste, cold,

"Faultily faultless, icily regular, splendidly null,
Dead perfection, no more."

He is nothing of the kind. "Beneath the marble exterior of Greek literature," to use Professor Jowett's words, "is concealed a soul thrilling with spiritual emotion." Sophocles has been called "classical in the vulgar sense." Classical in no vulgar sense indeed he is; classical with the classicism that is romantic too. He is romantic, as romantic at times as Spenser, if not as Shakespeare. Professor Phillimore, in his masculine and forcible introduction, brings into prominence his freshness, but speaks of him as impersonal, and ascribes this to the fact that his individual character is merged in that of his age and people. But in truth he somewhat exaggerates the impersonality which he

explains so ingeniously. Sophocles is in reality a very personal and living character.

“Euripides is human, but Sophocles is more human. He is so in the only way in which a Greek could be so, by being more Greek. . . . True simplicity is not the avoidance, but the control of detail. In Sophocles, as in great sculpture, a thousand fine touches go to the delineation of the great primary emotions. Sophocles is the purest type of the Greek intellect at its best. Euripides is a very different thing—a highly gifted son of his day.”

That is the final word. So Sir Richard Jebb wrote more than a quarter of a century ago. What he then wrote he demonstrated point by point in this great edition which he had completed.

And another past-master of English scholarship, whose study has been hardly less intimate and profound, says, and says well, the same thing, when he combats the view of those who pass Sophocles by with a disappointed feeling that what is so smooth and finished cannot be otherwise than cold. To study Sophocles, writes Professor Campbell, is like studying his statue in the Lateran Museum. “The first glance may show us only a statesman or general of handsome presence but moderate calibre, but as we continue gazing on the harmonious figure, a grave and sympathetic humanity is seen to breathe from every line.”

High, then, as Sophocles stood before, this edition lifts him higher still, not so much as against Æschylus or Euripides—for in raising Sophocles Professor Jebb raises the whole Greek drama with him—but absolutely, as one of the most consummate artists of all time, as a joy and a standard of

joy for ever. What, after all, does Greek tragedy teach us? That to attain the highest success in poetry a man must be himself, and his best self; for, as a Greek critic says, he who would be a good poet must first be a good man; he must have simplicity and naturalness, faith, optimism, idealism. *Chez les Grecs l'idéal passait dans la vie, parce qu'ils savaient tout simplifier, même le bonheur.* And idealism has at least this advantage, that it gets more out of human nature, and rouses it to greater effort, than realism. Modern taste is sometimes drawn to Euripides because it finds in him its own pleasant vices, and finds them in a glorious form. But the real Greek type is Sophocles. And it is in his drama that the real secret and the real success of Greek tragedy are to be found. It is this that has made him the touchstone of the critics, of Aristophanes and Aristotle, of Lessing and Goethe, of Fitzgerald and Arnold and Mackail.

If, then, the world were ever to give up Greek as a part of the general culture of its most cultivated minds, the greatest treasure it would lose is Sophocles, and for this reason. He is the least translatable, the least imitable, the most Greek of the Greeks. The romance of Homer, the histories of Herodotus and Thucydides, the great thoughts of Plato and Aristotle, would survive and affect mankind, as indeed they have ere now done, even at second-hand. Some equivalent to the effect of Æschylus might be found in the book of Job or the Hebrew prophets; something of the fun of Aristophanes, of the sweetness of Theocritus, might still be reproduced and preserved. The realism, the neurotic sentimentalism, the emphasis,

the rhetoric, which mingle with the dazzling allurements of Euripides—these are elements less necessary to the modern world, which possesses enough of them already. But the sage sanity, the sculpturesque serenity of Sophocles, the just blending of philosophy and passion, thought and expression, wedded like soul and body in a form of breathing, sentient, mobile beauty—this only Sophocles can give, and only Sophocles in his own incomparable tongue.

II

MATTHEW ARNOLD

“ Ah! two desires toss about
The poet's restless blood ;
One drives him to the world without,
And one to solitude.”

FOR a celebrity to say nowadays that he will not permit his life to be written after his death is about as wise, and about as effective, as for him to say that he will not permit his portrait to be taken during his life. If the celebrity will not be taken sitting, he will be “stalked” or “snap-shotted.” Some portrait of him for general use will be secured. It is the same with his biography. If he does not write his own story, or allow it to be written from authentic materials by friends, some “Life” will be written, *tant bien que mal*, from such materials as can be reached by fair means or by other means. Tennyson, “a shy beast,” as he called himself, who disliked the idea as strongly as any one could, recognised the necessity and bowed to it, happily for himself and the world.

That Matthew Arnold should have objected to the process seems a little strange, for he was not at all shy, but, on the contrary, liked recognition, and was even, innocently enough, rather vain. However, he did so object, and tried to prevent

it. His dislike was part of his paradoxical attitude. But written, of course, his life has been, and will be again. Besides the admirable articles in the "Dictionary of National Biography," by Dr Garnett, and in the "Encyclopædia Britannica," by Mr Watts-Dunton, three biographical sketches have been produced, by Professor Saintsbury, by Mr Herbert Paul, and, more recently, by Mr G. W. E. Russell. All three are, as they were sure to be, done with much skill. Professor Saintsbury is himself an excellent scholar both in ancient and modern tongues, and has an unique acquaintance with the history of criticism. Mr Paul is a man alike of letters and affairs, a politician, a journalist, and an historian, a master of wit and epigram, and full of keen appreciation for the Greek and Roman writers. Mr George Russell was an Under-Secretary of State, and is a practised writer, besides being a staunch churchman and a lay-preacher. Politically, Professor Saintsbury is a Conservative, Mr Paul and Mr Russell are Liberals. All three are Oxford men. Between the three, with all these qualifications, it might be thought that ample justice would have been done to their common subject. But it is not so. Neither individually or combined, do they give an adequate presentment. Professor Saintsbury treats Arnold too much as a man of letters who strayed into the pulpit; Mr Paul too much as a poet who was betrayed on to the platform. Mr George Russell comes nearest to what is wanted; and his book, so far as it goes, merits warm praise and gratitude. He has the best conception of the variety, range, and relation of Matthew Arnold's interests, and the fullest

sympathy with them. But something more is still required. We still want the man as a whole. He does not stand out as what he was, well-defined and complete. And the reason is not far to seek; it is want of material. No one of these biographers has been at the pains to collect materials for a real "Life."

Yet in truth this ought to be done, and done soon, before it is too late. There are not a few still living who knew Matthew Arnold well, though every year some one disappears who could tell us much at first-hand about him. There must be in existence many letters besides those included in Mr George Russell's well-known collection. Indeed, in his latest book, Mr Russell quotes at least one such letter of great value. Even the existing materials have hardly been properly used. The "Lives" of Arnold's contemporaries contain many letters and many notices which are interesting and elucidative. What is to be desired is that the bulk of these letters should now be collected and given to the world; and that, while the tradition of the living man is still itself alive, a biography should be written, with due reticence and reserve, but sufficiently full and definitive.

"What is there to write?" it may be said. "Surely Matthew Arnold's life was, even more than that of most poets, uneventful." But the evolution of a poet's genius is always instructive; and in Matthew Arnold's case the peculiar conflict of attractions and repulsions, and the somewhat erratic orbit which he ultimately traced, are intensely interesting. Why did he produce so little? yet why did he produce so much? for his total out-

put, though small, is a good deal larger than is often thought. Why did he publish, and why, having published, did he immediately withdraw, his first volume of poems? Why, stranger still, did he, three years later, repeat this odd process with "Empedocles on Etna"? What was the meaning of his sudden excursion into Italian politics in 1859, seven or eight years after he had apparently given up all idea of a wider public, and settled down to school-inspecting? Some hints in answer to these questions, and to others of the kind, Mr Russell gives; but much remains a mystery.

The main outlines of Matthew Arnold's life are pretty well known. He was the eldest son of the famous Dr Arnold, a man whose genius and variety, like those of his son, transcended the bounds of his profession and expressed itself alike in history, in politics, and in religion. To be the child of such a man meant much to Matthew Arnold. It meant that he was brought up in the love of letters, especially of the Greek and Latin masterpieces, in the love of history, in the love of nature, though not of Natural Science; in the love, therefore, of travel and of scenery alike for its natural beauty and its historic associations. It meant again that he was nursed in the keen air of a strong if limited Liberalism, not seldom refreshed by the breezes and, at times, the storms, of political and religious controversy. At the same time, Dr Arnold, though theoretically a Latitudinarian, retained in practice not a little of the old-fashioned churchman, and, like the Lutherans, clung to a certain order and ceremony. Matthew, "papa's continuator," as he quaintly called himself, did the same. Further, he

was not only the son of his father, but the godson of his father's friend, the author of "The Christian Year." As a boy at Winchester, he used to visit Mr Keble at Hurstley. As an undergraduate at Oxford, he was at home, not only with the then Broad Church party, but also with the Tractarians, and found in Newman not merely "the voice which from St Mary's thrilled the hour," but his godfather's near friend and ally. Thus he was emphatically a disciple, even if at times he appeared a truant disciple, of the English Church.

To be the son of Dr Arnold meant, again, that he was the child, not only of Rugby, but also of "Fox How," reared amid the scenery and the spirit of the Lakes and the Lake poets. Of Southey, indeed, he could only say "*Vidi tantum*"; but Southey's greater compeer, Wordsworth, was a familiar figure from his childhood. "It is not for nothing," as he wrote himself, "that one has been brought up in the veneration of a man so truly worthy of homage; that one has seen and heard him, lived in his neighbourhood, and been familiar with his country." The Lake poets, again, were eminently critical poets; and to the formative influences of Arnold's youth must be added the philosophic tradition of Coleridge, the literature of De Quincey, and the boisterous badinage of "Christopher North." Poetry, then, and criticism, education, and religion, separately and in combination, with their influences keen and high, were around him from the first.

Dr Arnold was a generous and wide-minded spirit. He had no bigoted belief in his own methods. He was a good Wykehamist, and loved

his old school. He thought "a period at Winchester would do his boys no harm"; and he sent "Mat" and "Tom" to be under Dr Moberly. Tom, in that *naïf* and sincere narrative, "Passages in a Wandering Life," gives us some glimpses of both the successes and the *faux pas* of his brother's boyhood. "Mat," he says—and we can well believe it—"always talked freely," and once, when at breakfast with the headmaster, spoke, in the presence of another bigger and stronger boy, of his form-work as being too easy. The result was that Dr Moberly naturally increased the tale of bricks, and the other boy and his friends, equally naturally, "took it out" of "Mat" after school. On the other hand, he distinguished himself by gaining the school prize—it was in the year of Queen Victoria's accession—for a recitation, choosing Byron, his favourite poet, the favourite of most youthful poets of that time. From Winchester he went back to Rugby; and from Rugby, the most strenuous and stimulating school of that day, he passed to the most strenuous and stimulating of Oxford colleges, having won "the Balliol," as the open classical scholarships of Balliol College were already called.

The set at Trinity, Cambridge, in which Tennyson moved, the coterie of "In Memoriam," is ever memorable; but even with that the Balliol coterie, in which Arnold found a place, need not fear comparison. The list of scholars who were his contemporaries is nothing short of extraordinary. Edward Meyrick Goulburn, Stafford Northcote, Arthur Hugh Clough, Frederick Temple, John Duke Coleridge, James Riddell, Edwin Palmer,

Theodore Walrond, Francis Palgrave, William Sellar, Henry Smith, Alexander Grant—could a dozen names be found more honourable to any seminary whose function was, in the language of the “bidding-prayer,” to supply “persons qualified to serve God in Church and State”?

No wonder that Principal Shairp was inspired to catch and fix the portraiture of this academic company in his charming “Remembrances.” Some of its members worked hard for the schools, most of them, indeed, very hard, and took the highest honours. The two Rugby poets, Clough and Arnold—not, perhaps, for quite the same reasons—both found their way into the second class, affording thereby consolation to many a subsequent similarly unlucky competitor. For both later, an Oriel fellowship redressed the balance of the University examinations. Arnold was undoubtedly a good undergraduate scholar. He was “*proxime accessit*” for the Hertford scholarship, being only vanquished by a rival to whom any one might well have run second, Goldwin Smith. He won the “Newdigate” too, with a strong but rather dull poem on a subject perhaps not very congenial, Oliver Cromwell. Probably he did not read hard, or not, at any rate, upon the lines recognised in the schools. Shairp’s vignette portrait is well known.

“So full of power, yet blithe and debonair,
 Rallying his friends with pleasant banter gay,
 Or, half adream, chaunting with jaunty air
 Great words of Goethe, catch of Béranger :
 We see the banter sparkle in his prose,
 But knew not then the undertone that flows,
 So calmly sad, thro’ all his stately lay.”

His brother Tom gives almost the same account. Their father died, it will be remembered, in the early summer of 1842, just at the end of Matthew's freshman's year. Tom went up to Oxford that autumn, and for the next three years the brothers were together.

"During these years" (writes Tom) "my brother was cultivating his poetic gift carefully, but his exuberant versatile nature claimed other satisfactions. His keen bantering talk made him something of a social lion among Oxford men; he even began to dress fashionably. Goethe displaced Byron in his political allegiance; the transcendental spells of Emerson wove themselves around him; the charm of an exquisite style made him, and long kept him, a votary of George Sand."

A contemporary at Oxford, afterwards a country clergyman, and fond, in a not unbecoming clerical way, of sport, would often recall with pleasure how he and Mat Arnold used to go rook-shooting together as undergraduates. The poet, indeed, always liked shooting, though a poor shot. "Need I say that I am passionately fond of the Colchian bird," he writes in one of his letters. His own account of his Oxford time bears out this and similar reminiscences. "I and my friends," he used to say, "lived in Oxford as in a great country-house." It was not altogether a bad way; it was a way, moreover, more natural and possible in the little old unreformed Oxford of those times than in the residential, many-villa'd city of to-day.

It is not difficult to imagine what Arnold's life at this period was. The sons of the aristocracy, of the country gentry and the clergy, with a sprinkling

of the sons of the well-to-do professional men, bankers and men of business, who were within the Anglican pale, "Lord Lumpington" and "the Rev. Esau Hittall," as Arnold afterwards called them, and their set, but without "Mr Bottles," who was still confined by the "Tests" to "Lycurgus House," and "Dr Silverpump"—these made the society of the Oxford of that era. And the place! The pleasant country still ran up to the walls and gates of the colleges. No fringe of mean or commonplace suburbs interposed between the coronal of spires and towers and its green setting. It was the Oxford of William Turner's paintings and Ingram's Memorials; the Oxford still unspoiled, which Mr Mackail so charmingly describes in his "Life of William Morris," where children gathered violets within bow-shot of Magdalen Tower. There were "our young barbarians all at play"; and Arnold played a good deal with them. "Bullington and hunting" were well known to him.

"See, 'tis no foot of unfamiliar men
To-night from Oxford up your pathway strays :
Here came I often, often, in old days,
Thyrsis and I : we still had Thyrsis then."

The "Hurst in spring," the "lone alehouse in the Berkshire moors," the "causeway chill," the "line of festal light in Christ Church Hall," seen from the Cumner slope, the "wide fields of breezy grass" above Godstow, "where many a scythe in sunshine flames" :

"What white, what purple fritillaries
The grassy harvest of the river-fields
Above by Ensham, down by Sandford, yields,
And what sedged brooks are Thames's tributaries" :

the “wood which hides the daffodil,” “the frail-leaf’d white anemone,” the “red loosestrife and blond meadow-sweet,” the “Fyfield elm” and the “distant Wyehwood bowers” — these last not known as a rule, even to poetical undergraduates—Arnold knew them all; and it was now that he learned to know them, roaming on foot with “Thyrsis” or some other congenial studious friend, but also at times “rejoicing in life and the sunshine,” as Thyrsis himself sings, and joining the jovial and merry bands of Oxford riders and oarsmen.

In later days his visits to these haunts grew, perforce, more rare, though his letters tell us that he always loved them, especially what he has called so delightfully “the green-muffled Cunner Hills.” It was now that he became Oxford’s poet *par excellence*. For Oxford, most poetical of universities and cities, has produced, strangely enough, few poets. She had few, indeed, worthy of the name until the last century. In the earlier half of the last century she “turned out,” as Mr Swinburne says, “in more senses than one”—two at least, of real note. In the last half of that century, and at the present time, it is true, she was and is comparatively rich. But if she had to wait long, she was at length rewarded when she found in Arnold a poet who made her territory literally “classic ground,” teaching her sons to love her, and giving a language to their love.

Arnold, however, did not linger in Oxford, though, had he chosen to do so, the opportunity offered. From Balliol and its distinguished undergraduate company he passed to the distinguished

graduate company of Oriel, the other college at that time most alert and alive, becoming a member of the same common-room with Newman, Church, Clough, and Poste. Now, indeed, the fortunate youth seemed to have the ball at his feet. He had not determined on a career, but what he inclined to was public life. For a few months he taught a low Form at Rugby; but this was a transient episode. "Attach yourself to some great man, sir! Many have risen to eminence in that way," said old President Routh, speaking with the voice of the eighteenth century, a year or two later, to Conington when he was leaving Magdalen. It was still a recognised precept, and Arnold followed it. He became private secretary to Lord Lansdowne, then President of the Council, and was launched into the great world. He had the run of Lansdowne House; he was asked down to Bowood, the rallying-ground of Whig wisdom, wit, fashion, and society. The path of intellectual and discriminating and very enjoyable and prosperous Whiggery, smooth, but not too smooth for mental health, lay before him. He had only to go forward on it with fair diligence and caution to be sure of success.

What, then, were the first steps of the young and brilliant *débutant*? They were characteristic enough. He set out with head erect and jaunty confident pace. "The mountain tops," as he has sung, shone "bright and bare," and "short the way appeared to the less practised eye of sanguine youth." Soon, however, he wearied of the beaten track. Furtively he stepped aside into the flowery meadows and sequestered by-paths, then hastily darted back into the high road. In other words,

he put out his first volume of poems; but they were published anonymously, and he called them in almost as soon as they appeared. In many a young man such a course would have been natural enough. Had Arnold not been a true and high poet, had the poems been less good, there would have been little remarkable about the matter. But, in truth, both the volume and the action were prophetic of his whole singular career. Taken alone, this first suppressed collection of poems is, indeed, extraordinarily interesting. It shows what Arnold was before he made the plunge, which he shrank so much from making, into practical life. The germ of much of his subsequent work and writing is here. His loves and his dislikes—hatreds in one so amiable and urbane they should hardly be called—his attractions and repulsions — Sophocles, Shakespeare, the blatant Nonconformist minister, the Republican friend, youth's bitter-sweet melancholy, his "sad lucidity of soul," his feeling of the irony of fate, above all, his hesitancy, his sense of the "something that infects the world"—all appear in it and appear impressively. For this slender first volume, so short-lived, so little noticed, contains some of his very best work, some of those pieces by which he will always be remembered—"Mycerinus" and the "Forsaken Merman," the sonnet on "Quiet Work," the "Sophocles" and "Shakespeare" sonnets, the "Sick King in Bokhara," *In utrumque paratus*, the "Strayed Reveller," and the "New Sirens."

Yet it shows only half his character; the other half was perhaps to be seen in its suppression.

He was indeed a singular mixture, a paradox, or rather a bundle of paradoxes, ever hesitating, vacillating, oscillating, between the worldly and the unworldly. Handsome, athletic, elegant, fashionable, loving (as he said himself) the ways and sports of the "barbarians," full of a superficial levity and even flippancy, calculated to shine in society, to adorn and enjoy it—this was what he appeared on the surface. "A very brilliant person was Arnold in those days," wrote, somewhat later, Mr Ellis Yarnall, that pious and kindly pilgrim from Pennsylvania—one of the very few recently surviving who could recollect Wordsworth and Keble¹—"but of sweet and winning manner; as an especial mark of eminence he was singularly urbane and gracious. Exquisite was he in dress; and his black hair and fine eyes, his easy bearing and pleasant talk, made him altogether fascinating." But, as Mr Russell well remarks, he was, like his own description of poetry,

"Radiant, adorn'd outside : a hidden ground
Of thought and of austerity within."

Underneath were the "sad lucidity of soul," tender passion, dissatisfaction with the pleasures of this world, a mastering sense of duty at war with his lighter nature.

Much of this contradiction was indeed physical. "The lofty Mat" he had been called at school; and what he was as an undergraduate, Principal Shairp has recorded. His erect carriage, his manners like those of Milton's "affable archangel,"

¹ Mr Ellis Yarnall, who was still living when this essay was first published, died in 1905 at the age of 86.

his Count d'Orsay poses, his waving handkerchief and airy gesticulation, were natural to him, as natural as were

"The comely face, the cluster'd brow,
The cordial hand, the bearing free,"

which he has described so tenderly in those exquisite lines on his brother, most happily transferred by Mr Arthur Galton to himself. Equally natural were his sallies of wit and raillery. He was aware of it himself. "You'll like her," he said of his wife; "she has all my graces and none of my airs." These last, indeed, were proverbial among his friends. "Please say whether you liked Matthew Arnold and his airs," writes Lord Acton to Mary Gladstone. Arnold "laughed till he cried" when he read Frederic Harrison's description of himself, "me, in the midst of the general tribulation, handing out my pouncet-box." "Dick will do," he said, when he was about to take his son up to matriculate at Balliol, "Dick will do. He has that invincible *insouciance* which has always carried *me* through the world." "Invincible *insouciance*;" indeed he had need of it. Many a man has need of more than a little to carry him through the daunting stress of life. Arnold certainly found, as will be seen, his double portion very convenient and helpful. Yet, strange to say, it hardly appears in any line of his poetry.

His own ideal was to unite the grave and the gay. This combination was what he admired alike in his ancient and his modern exemplars, Sophocles and Goethe, spirits whom "business could not make dull nor passion wild," minds that "saw life

steadily and saw it whole." Again and again the ideal appears in his verse, but he could not compass it himself.

"Years hence, perhaps, may dawn an age
More fortunate, alas! than we,
Which without hardness will be sage,
And gay without frivolity."

In his own poetry the gay found no outlet. Perhaps poetry was too sublime and serious an art. Certainly life itself, when he was in the poetic humour and looked beneath the surface, was too serious a matter. The world in these moods was a vain and passing show; pleasure and knowledge were alike hollow; the white-robed slave whispers at the Great King's elbow amid the flowers and over the cups; the philosopher scales the heights of science only to sink palsied on the summit.

"Ah, what a spasm shakes the dreamer's heart
I too but seem."

In real life also he felt this serious side. It was ever returning upon him. He had, as his letters and note-books abundantly proclaim, a deep inner existence, fed by communings with his self-chosen directors, Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius, the Bible, the "Imitatio," and Bishop Wilson.

"From his earliest years" (wrote Lord Coleridge to Mr Ellis Yarnall just after his death) "sorrow or trouble always calmed or sobered him; his persiflage disappeared, and you saw and, what is more, you felt, the warm generous heart, the just judgment, the tender sympathy which was as natural to him as to breathe."

But in real life he had this double nature, one-half of which alone appears in his poems. The gay and

lively were always bubbling up through the grave and severe. He could not resist the chronic tendency to banter. The world, in consequence, did not know, to use a vulgar phrase, "where to have him," whether to treat him as a mocker or as a mystic, a Socrates or a Scarron. He seemed an impossible and provoking combination of opposites, a living contradiction in terms, a Christian Voltairian, a voice poking fun in the wilderness, an "elegant" from the cloister, a "Jeremiah," as some one said, "in white kid gloves." By a natural reaction, when he was most in the world the desire to escape and cultivate his unworldly side was strongest. It was when he was cut off from the world that his thirst for it returned.

A born critic of others, he was a born critic also of himself. Few young men at the opening of life have judged themselves better. There is a striking passage in a letter written to his sister in 1851, just before he "ranged himself," which, as a human document for the poetic temperament at this critical period of transition, may be compared with Keat's preface to "Endymion."

"The aimless and unsettled, but also open and liberal state of our youth, we *must* perhaps all leave, and take refuge in our morality and character; but, with most of us, it is a melancholy passage, from which we emerge shorn of so many beams that we are almost tempted to quarrel with the law of nature which imposes it on us. I feel this in my own case, and in no respect more strongly than in my relations to all of you. I am by nature so very different from you, the worldly element enters so much more largely into my composition,

that, as I become *formed*, there seems to grow a gulf between us which tends to widen till we can hardly hold any intercourse across it. But, as Thomas à Kempis recommended, *frequenter tibi ipsi violentiam fac* . . . so I intend not to give myself the rein in following my natural tendency, but to make war against it till it ceases to isolate me from you, and leaves me with the power to discern and adopt the good which you have, and I have not."

So he writes to his sister. But an influence more potent than a sister's was at hand. It has not been revealed, and perhaps it would not be right to ask, whether there is any special reference in the well-known pieces, published, as he himself would say, "by divers portions and in divers manners," but the first of which is found in the first volume and obviously goes back very early. Who were the fair figures appearing and vanishing in so charming, so perplexing a manner in the "Memory Picture" (called also "To my Friends"), and the "Modern Sappho," the "Dream," and the two series entitled "Switzerland" and "Faded Leaves?" Marguerite and Olivia; Marguerite before all, had she any individual existence? Where and when did he meet her? "*Mitte quærere*;"

"The mists are on the mountain hung,
And Marguerite I shall see no more."

Dreams, indeed, in a sense, in any case, they are; dreams in which passion and coquetry mingle; dreams and day-dreams of a chivalrous young heart and a gay insouciant spirit, blended with the romance and illusion of first travel and care-less roving hours by the Rhine and in the Alps.

Enough that, as may be said of many young impressionable natures, before they find the hour

“When round one fairest face shall meet
 Those many dreams of many fair,
 And wandering homage seek the feet
 Of one sweet queen, and linger there,”

Nondum amabat : amare amabat. It is customary to speak of Arnold's poetry as wanting in passion. But passion enough is in these pieces; and in consequence they contain some of the best and strongest, as well as the lightest and happiest, of his lines.

Two years after the publication of his first poems he found, like so many young men, if not the solution, at least the determination, of his doubts. He married for love, and he became a School-Inspector. Being what he was, it is infinitely characteristic, and much to his credit, that he should have taken these steps. It was an unworldly match and an unworldly choice of a profession. He seems to have dreamed at first of keeping leisure for his own poetic life, possibly even of retiring to Italy on 200% a year, but he soon found that this was an empty vision.

The career of a school-inspector was perhaps not necessarily so laborious as might appear. Some years later another distinguished poet, critic, and thinker, F. W. H. Myers, deliberately chose it as giving the maximum of free time for private research and writing. Myers undoubtedly justified his choice by his contributions to literature and to psychological inquiry. Possibly things were more difficult in the earlier days. As Arnold lived it, it was a hard life, and he was assuredly Pegasus in harness. Was it a mistake, was it all a mistake,

was it more than a mistake, the ruin of great possibilities?

Good poetry is so lovely, so delightful, above all, so rare, a thing, that we are always tempted to wish that the poet might have given us more. In Matthew Arnold's case this is certainly true. In reading his "Life" it is impossible to avoid a certain sense of a *vie manquée*. At times he himself seemed to feel this too. When he compared himself with his old friends and contemporaries, risen to be judges, cabinet ministers, ambassadors, and archbishops, it was difficult for him not to do so. To any worldly ambitions that he might have cherished he had certainly given the death-blow. "He is a Balliol man who has succeeded in life," he said of Archbishop Tait. "I am a Balliol man who has failed." And again, "We are only humble men of letters; we admire the superb proportions of Sir Robert Morier; we cannot emulate them. But we subsist and perform our humble functions." Was he serious in this badinage? Half serious. It was, perhaps, one reason why he did not wish his life to be written. Did he feel the consolation of having made a noble sacrifice for the sake of a profession, or to secure freedom for his own inner life? The first he might well have had, but he did not love his profession; the last, it will be seen, he only half secured.

"Though I am a schoolmaster's son I confess that school-teaching or school-inspecting is not the line of life I should naturally have chosen; I adopted it in order to marry. . . . My wife and I had a wandering life of it at first. . . . We had no home; one of our children was born in a lodging at Derby,

with a workhouse, if I recollect aright, behind and a penitentiary in front. But the irksomeness of my new duties was what I felt most; and during the first year or so it was sometimes insupportable."

So he spoke of the life when leaving and looking back on it. "Well-nigh a positive purgatory," he called it at the time. "I've had a hard day," he writes on one occasion. "Thirty pupil-teachers to examine in an inconvenient room, and nothing to eat except a biscuit which a charitable lady gave me." Things, perhaps, need not have been quite so trying. Arnold probably managed badly; but at times it was what is called a "dog's life." Even had he been a better economist of time and strength, it would have been difficult to combine it with writing the highest poetry, for, *Carmina secessum scribentis et otia quæerunt*, "the Muses haunt the brooding mind."

But it certainly was a fortunate hour for English education when, in order to marry Miss Fanny Lucy Wightman, Matthew Arnold accepted the post of school-inspector. What a wealth of resources he brought to it has been seen—the tradition of his father, moral and intellectual standards of the highest, wide culture, poetic imagination, ready sympathy, eloquence, charm, genius. In the strict technical sense he was probably not a good inspector. He was tempted to delegate his work. The details were not congenial. As years went on he became impatient, as he wrote to his mother, of getting old amid a press of occupations and labours for which, as he says, borrowing the phrase of his own Goethe, "after all I was not born." But his high gifts were

not all lost in what might appear his humble calling. Read "A French Eton"; note his powers of description, the masterly placing on the canvas of the Lycée of Toulouse and the College at Sorèze, the lovely and sympathetic picture of Lacordaire, the digression about the old *cité* of Carcassonne. In such passages the son of Dr Arnold and of Oxford, the hearer of Keble and Newman, the poet and literary artist, all appear. He brought, again, to the service of English education an idea of what education was and what it might be, some notion of its history, some conspectus of the history of other countries and other times, above all, his own fresh critical spirit, his habit of taking wide views and questioning everything, his mixture of patriotism and discontent, his interest in foreign countries, his love of England even as she was, and his desire to see her yet better.

His detached and independent position gave him much advantage. He retained his instinct for, and interest in, affairs. His work lay, it should be remembered, in the region of elementary, not of the higher or secondary education, and within this region in a peculiarly selected and restricted area, that of the Nonconformist schools. He started with a prejudice against the Nonconformists. Like his father, he wished to "compel them to come in," and resented their unwillingness to be compelled. Among his poems almost the only acrimonious one is the early sonnet on the "Independent Preacher." Their positive principles he only half understood. He regarded them as schismatics for schism's sake. As he went on he came to know them better, and found many friends among them, and undoubtedly

learned much from them. But their ways were not naturally congenial to him. A lover of beauty, his temperament a curious blending of the sensuous and the gay with the austere, he could respect them, but he could not love them, and, as Goldwin Smith, in his trenchant criticism of "Falkland," pointed out, he ever did less than justice to the Puritans. By nature he was drawn to the colour and the comfort, the historic dignity and glamour, of the Roman Catholic system, with its warmth and variety, its pleasant recognition of the "cakes and ale" of this world, containing, in his own phrase, "all the world of Shakespeare." The want of beauty in the Congregationalist, Methodist, and Baptist conventicles and beliefs got upon his nerves; and he used one-sided language about their "hideousness and immense *ennui*."

He retained, however, his wonderful spirits. He was bright and brave. "We are not here to have facilities made for us for doing the work we like," he wrote, "but to make them for ourselves." Still he desired more scope, more "action," as he called it. It was when he was in this mood that Oxford, ever his best friend, came to his rescue and gave him just what he wanted—an outlet from his poorly paid drudgery, emolument, honour, opportunity, authority, above all a pulpit from which to address the world. It is difficult to estimate how much he owed to the Professorship of Poetry, to which he was elected in 1857. He was an ideal man for the post. His lectures were brilliantly successful both on their delivery and in their subsequent publication. It is enough to say that the "Lectures on translating Homer"

and "Essays in Criticism" were the first-fruits of his professorship. It is strange to read that even these lectures "were not quite the work he liked." What on earth would he have liked? He thought he would have liked to give himself more to poetry, to creation rather than to criticism. But he knew how hard it was to do so, living the life he had to live. He could not do it without being exhausted, nay, "torn to pieces," *viel zerrissen*, as he said, borrowing the phrase of his great master, Goethe.

Some effort, fortunately, he did make. To this period we owe "Merope" and the volume entitled "New Poems," published in 1867. "Merope" was the outcome of his professorship, and has been happily called his "diploma piece." It is perhaps best described, if a little cruelly, as just such a poem as might have been expected from any professor of poetry—except Matthew Arnold. In it he appears as an inverted Wordsworth. The preface is one of the best things he ever penned. His theory is admirable, his practice a cold failure. He was disappointed and inclined to grumble to Conington at the success of Swinburne's "Atalanta," though not really classical. But it is not only the glitter and glamour of "Atalanta" that make poor "Merope" show faint and pale. The poem is equally a failure if compared with the austere force and solemn music of "Samson Agonistes," or the dainty art and frolic charm of "Achilles in Scyros."

The "New Poems" succeeded much better. From the first they sold well, and went into a second edition almost directly. His name as a poet was now firmly established. He had the popular

encouragement he required. Yet, after the publication of this volume, Arnold wrote hardly any more verse. Why did he not go on? The "New Poems" themselves contain, perhaps, part of the answer. After 1869 it is noticeable that all his poems were occasional, and all but two prompted by the death of friends, either human or brute, these last ever among his dearest—Dean Stanley, "Geist," "Kaiser," and "Poor Matthias"; the two best, a "Summer Night" and "Thyrsis," were drawn from him by the death of his brother William, and of that brother of his soul, Arthur Hugh Clough. He projected other poems, and it is interesting to note what he projected, namely, a handling of the Middle Ages, especially, perhaps, of the Nibelungen story, poems on "St Alexius," on the "Voyage of Achilles to the Island of Leuce," and a tragedy on Lucretius. He thought Tennyson had not done justice to the Middle Ages, and that he could do much better. He was distressed to find that Tennyson also was engaged on Lucretius, with which he himself had been occupied for twenty years. He thought, however, he would persevere with it. Those who remember the happy allusions in "Wordsworth's Grave" and "Obermann" will much regret that he did not. Why did he not? The answer is only partly given in the pathetic if awkwardly phrased stanzas entitled "The Progress of Poesy."

"The man mature with labour chops
For the bright stream a channel grand,
And sees not that the sacred drops
Ran off and vanish'd out of hand."

Arnold was not, he never became, "the old

man tottering nigh," and "feebly raking among the stones"; but it would appear that the cause of his ceasing to pour forth was not so much that the sacred drops vanished, as that he never chopped the channel grand. The real reason was that if he had little time in all, he did not give that little to poetry. A striking passage in a letter to Sir M. E. Grant-Duff, a very sympathetic recipient, to whom, consequently, some of his best letters were written, gives the truest clue to his real attitude.

"One is from time to time seized and irresistibly carried along by a temptation to handle political or religious or social matters directly; but, after yielding to such a temptation, I always feel myself recoiling again and disposed to touch them only so far as they can be touched through poetry."

More and more, almost insensibly, he yielded to the temptation, and the recoil became less and less. The fact is, as Mr W. H. Dawson has discriminat-ingly brought out, his prevailing desire was to deal with these political, religious, and social matters. He thought he could do this through poetry. But through what kind of poetry? He had a strong instinct for true poetry. When he was young this predominated. In so far as his mission was to preach beauty, poetry was a suitable medium. And in a sense beauty, no doubt, is truth, and truth is beauty. But they are not the same, nor to be handled in the same way. Unless the form of satiric or didactic or gnostic poetry be adopted, these topics cannot be touched except indirectly. Matthew Arnold did not adopt any of these forms. He therefore touched them only indirectly. So touching them, he fancied that he

had achieved already some considerable measure of success. "My poems represent," he wrote in 1869, "on the whole, the main movement of mind of the last quarter of a century."

He thought Tennyson "deficient in intellectual power." He thought that he himself had perhaps "less poetical sentiment than Tennyson, less intellectual vigour and abundance than Browning, but more of a fusion of the two than either," and, above all, "that he had more regularly applied that fusion to the main line of modern development." Does not this show how difficult it is for even the best critic fairly to judge his own work? For what was the "main line of modern development" in the quarter of a century preceding 1869, both in England and on the Continent? What were the ideas with which men's heads everywhere were full? Were they not chiefly these—the potency and promise of material and mechanical development, the conception of what was called, sometimes by its English, sometimes by its Latin name, "freedom" or "liberty" in every field; the emancipation of women, of the lower classes, of the serf, of the slave; "free trade," a "free press," a "free church in a free state"; and, with a view to all these, the extension of the franchise and the universal application of parliamentary systems? Were they not the ideas which went with these, of "nationality" and of "unification," and, above all, coming to crown them in the intellectual sphere, of "evolution," which seemed to supply a philosophic basis for all these movements? But where are these ideas, or any of them, to be found in Matthew Arnold's poems? The "march of mind," the "steamship

and the railway and the thoughts that shake mankind," the "happy sails that bear the Press," the "parliament of man, the federation of the world," the progress of science "charming her secret from the latest moon"—it is to "Locksley Hall" and "The Princess" and "In Memoriam," to the lines on the opening of the Exhibition, and those to the Queen, that we must go to find them; for Tennyson seems to have felt them all and anticipated many of them. It does not seem to have occurred to Matthew Arnold that perhaps to this fact, as well as to his "poetical sentiment," Tennyson's popularity was due.

There was, indeed, another movement going on simultaneously, by some considered only a backwater, by others the main stream. This was the movement which Disraeli partly started, partly only led, which began with the "Young England" set, and, after prevailing in the Conservative reaction of 1874, has since, in the main, merged itself in the later Unionist and Imperialist movement, but has also contributed something to modern Liberalism. To this stream of tendency Matthew Arnold, who had many affinities, besides his power of phrasemaking, with Disraeli, also contributed. Its note was to offer opposition to the Manchester school and to many of those ideas of liberation enumerated above, and, before all, to disparage the merely material and mechanical advance of England. It finds strong, if somewhat obscure expression in the famous apostrophe to England as "the weary Titan" in the lines on "Heine's Grave." The whole of that poem, indeed, indicates Arnold's position very well. He called himself a Liberal, and so he was;

but he was a continental Liberal, desiring to unite freedom of opinion with strong government. Be that as it may, of this reaction against the older English Liberalism he had no monopoly. Tennyson expressed it even more strongly in "Maud"; and Dickens, whom Matthew Arnold strangely did not read till his last years, expressed it in "Hard Times." Ruskin, too, is full of it. Arnold's capital idea, however, was that the world, down to the French Revolution, had based itself on supernatural Christianity; that the French Revolution meant the breaking up of that foundation; and that the world was moving, or striving to move, towards a new basis, resting on non-supernatural Christianity. In his poetry this again finds its best utterance in the two "Obermann" poems; but once more the utterance is obscure.

It is probably to such utterances that Arnold alludes when he speaks of having touched in his poems the "main movement" of his time; for it is these ideas, and ideas cognate to them, that he proceeded to work out in his prose. Mr Humphry Ward, in his introduction to the selection from Arnold's poems included in his "British Poets"—an introduction full at once of eloquence and insight, and, for the personal side, one of the best things written upon Arnold—points out that it was the decade of storm and stress (1840-1850) that gave Arnold as a poet his real ply. Certainly out of the discouragement, the melancholy of that "yeasty time" he never grew. The later more optimistic note of "Imperialism," so potent in our own day, struck so early and so forcibly by Tennyson, he never strikes at all. If he mentions the Colonies in

his writings it is only to think of them as children of the Philistines and an offspring more hopeless than their parents. If we go deeper the result is still the same. Many will remember the striking criticism by the late Professor Henry Sidgwick on the position, in relation to the main movement of mind, of "In Memoriam," and of "its unparalleled combination of intensity of feeling with comprehension of view in dealing with the deepest needs and perplexities of humanity."

"In the sixties, I should say" (writes Professor Sidgwick) "that these deeper issues were somewhat obscured by the discussions on Christian dogma, and Inspiration of Scripture, etc. One may recall Browning's reference to this period—

"The 'Essays and Reviews' debate
Begins to tell on the public mind,
And Colenso's words have weight."

During these years we were absorbed in struggling for freedom of thought in the trammels of an historical religion; and perhaps what we sympathised with most in "In Memoriam" at this time, apart from the personal feeling, was the defence of "honest doubt," and, generally, the forward movement of the thought. Well, the years pass; the struggle with what Carlyle used to call "Hebrew Old Clothes" is over. Freedom is won, and to what does Freedom bring us? It brings us face to face with atheistic science; the faith in God and Immortality, which we had been struggling to clear from superstition, suddenly seems to be "in the air"; and, in seeking for a firm basis for this faith, we find ourselves in the midst of the "fight with death" which "In Memoriam" so powerfully presents.

Colenso's words had no weight with Matthew

Arnold. Indeed he annoyed and alienated his Broad Church friends by treating Colenso as a ridiculous figure, a calculating boy turned *enfant terrible*. But in the "obscuring" discussions on dogma and inspiration he was and remained absorbed. He did not perceive, then or afterwards, that the really epoch-making book of 1859-63 was not "Essays and Reviews," nor even the "Vie de Jésus," but the "Origin of Species." The fact is that the great defect of Matthew Arnold's culture was his almost total want of appreciation of the real importance of Natural Science. It was partly the fault of his bringing up. What the position of Natural Science was in the studies of Rugby under his father is sufficiently indicated by the immortal picture of "Martin" in "Tom Brown's School-days." Oxford was little better. Natural Science was, it is true, just beginning, when Matthew Arnold went there, to struggle *in luminis oras*. Sir Henry Acland was laying the foundations of its modern study. His own contemporary, Henry Smith, caught the spark and fanned it into flame. But Matthew Arnold remained almost as insensible to it as Gladstone. Officially and theoretically, no doubt, he recognised its value; but the diameter of the sun and moon, the chemistry of the candle, the "descent of man," were for Matthew Arnold, like the equator, only things to take liberties with; and he thought Lord Salisbury a dangerous young man because he advocated the larger introduction of Natural Science into Oxford.

The determination of Arnold's relation to the "main movement of ideas" belongs, however, to the consideration of his prose rather than of his

poetry. By a strange irony it is through the very quality in which he was willing to admit himself inferior, but in which he was really strong, that, as a poet, he, like all poets, will live. What are his best poems, his most memorable pieces? Are they not "The forsaken Merman," "Sohrab," "Mycerinus," "Tristram and Iseult," "Requiescat," "A Summer Night," "A Southern Night," "Rugby Chapel," the lovely descriptive passages in "Thyrsis" and the "Scholar Gipsy," or in the "Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse"? They are not those in which any "main movement of ideas" appears, but those which are pervaded by the quality of poetic sentiment. Much, indeed, he did contribute to the ideas of his countrymen, but this he did as a prose-writer rather than as a poet.

Meanwhile, Oxford had given him, as we said, a pulpit just when he wanted it. Having a pulpit, he at once began to preach. The instinct for, the interest in, the two spheres, politics and religion, so universal in Englishmen, the desire to have his say about them, he had always felt; and now his chance had come. It is significant that his first prose book, published two years after he became Professor of Poetry, had nothing whatever to do with poetry, but was a return to his early loves, which came back to him in his first mission abroad. "I really think," he wrote from Lausanne in 1859, "I shall finish and bring out my pamphlet." He did so. It was "England and the Italian Question." It is not insignificant that it bore a biblical motto, given in the language of the Vulgate, which he used, he said, when he was not earnestly serious, "*Sed nondum est finis*" (S. Matt. xxiv. 6).

His first magazine articles were also significant. They were "Maurice de Guérin" and the "Bishop and the Philosopher." Three years later he opened his guns more directly, no longer from across the Channel, but on English soil, in the article, "My Countrymen," which, later still, was to form part of "Friendship's Garland."

Thus, even during his tenure of the professorship his real bent was clear. The "Essays in Criticism" themselves are only half literary. The element of politics and the element of religion, the elements of social and moral and didactic criticism, are at least as strong as those of literature proper; and it is these that form the originality and charm of the volume quite as much as the æsthetic or artistic elements. Directly he was freed from the bias given by the professorship, he showed his own inclination even more decidedly. He ceased to be professor in 1867, winding up with the lectures on Celtic Literature. He began almost at once the series of articles which form "Culture and Anarchy." It was ten years before he published anything new on literature. How was the decade filled? In it he produced "Culture and Anarchy," "St Paul and Protestantism," "Friendship's Garland," "Literature and Dogma," "God and the Bible," and "Last Essays on Church and Religion." There was not room for much *belles-lettres*. Truly it is "character and not circumstance that is destiny." It was not mainly want of leisure that prevented Arnold from writing more poetry or more literary criticism; it was his own action, his own deliberate choice, his own overmastering interest in contemporary affairs.

Though his poems had now at last begun steadily to make their way, it was these prose contributions on subjects of general interest which first made him a force in the country. "Gentlemen, you see before you what you have often heard of, an unpopular author," he said to the Income-Tax Commissioners on one occasion. A really popular author he never became during his lifetime; but these writings undoubtedly reached a large and wide audience. Their precise effect is difficult to estimate, as it is not easy to dissociate the religious from the political, and the political from the educational portion, of his writings. To judge by the results which have actually come about, the truth would seem to be that he affected his country, as regards these three points, in an ascending scale—least, that is to say, in the religious field, more in the political, most of all in the educational. His methods were least adapted for success in the first. The English, and not the English Non-conformists alone, are a serious people, peculiarly serious as regards their religion. Matthew Arnold's bantering, even flippant, tone and superior airs, his "smiling academic irony," as Swinburne called it, estranged even those who might have been expected to sympathise with him. What Gladstone forcibly expressed for himself, was felt by many.

"It is very difficult" (he wrote) "to keep one's temper in dealing with M. Arnold when he touches on religious matters. His patronage of a Christianity fashioned by himself is to me more offensive and trying than rank unbelief."

Arnold remained, too, always somewhat of an amateur in biblical criticism; and the "higher

critics," both of his own and of later days, have not paid much attention to him, not so much, indeed, as might have been expected. Jowett, on the morrow of his funeral, wrote:—

"The world has been pleased to say many complimentary things of him since his death, but they have hardly done him justice, because they did not understand his serious side—hard work, independence, and most loving and careful fulfilment of all the duties of life."

But earlier, when "Literature and Dogma" appeared, Jowett himself had pronounced after reading it:—

"Arnold is too flippant to be a prophet. His argument of the meaning of words from their etymology is fallacious and a most Philistine sort of fallacy. But he is a master in the art of plausibility. A confident statement, a slight joke, an argument of this kind, may be brought against anything. Oh, 'tis much that a slight jest will do."

It is significant, however, that the most serious minds have taken him most seriously. R. H. Hutton (of whom Matthew Arnold wittily, if ungratefully, said that his fault was, "Always seeing so very far into a millstone") in his own day wrote of him as "a great Oxford leader" and a "guide of modern thought," ranking and comparing him with his master, Cardinal Newman. The present Bishop of Birmingham, Dr Gore, in his lectures on St Paul's Epistle to the Romans, says:—

"Life in Christ Jesus, Christ living in me—there can be no question that these beautiful phrases, which, if St John's witness be true, represent

the teaching of Christ himself, express also what was most central in St Paul's idea of Christianity. It was the great merit of Matthew Arnold's "St Paul and Protestantism" that it recalled the fact to notice in ordinary educated circles. Recent scientific study of St Paul has gone in the same direction."

Something, then, Arnold contributed to theological education. Did he achieve his great object of delivering England from the political Nonconformist, and the Nonconformist from his narrow religion? The first end has certainly not yet been achieved. To the second, in so far as it, along with some widening in other quarters, has come about, many causes contributed; and probably Arnold's contribution was not by any means the largest.

In the realm of politics and of social questions he achieved much more. Here his manner, "easy, sinuous, unpolemical," as he himself described it, was admirably suited for its purpose. His banter and raillery only aided him; and it may be questioned whether any man of letters, by the mere power of his pen, has effected so much in this region since the days of Swift. Matthew Arnold, fortunately, was no Swift or Juvenal. No *sæva indignatio* lacerated his heart or prompted his prose-poetry. Rather his method was that of the dapper, plump little Roman poet-critic who "touched, like the sly rogue he was, every foible of his friend so gaily that his friend laughed with him," who "insinuates his way into our bosom and plays about our heart." There is more than one "Horatian echo" in Arnold's verse; there are many in what may be called his "Satires and Epistles."

“There is to-day a cult of Matthew Arnold,” says Mr W. H. Dawson, the well-known writer on sociology, in the preface to his solid volume entitled “Matthew Arnold in Relation to the Thought of his Time ; “it is growing, it must grow.” How far either the statement or the prediction is to be accepted it is difficult to determine, without more evidence than we possess. But the fact of their being thus made so fully set forth by such a writer is, in itself, so far as it goes, evidence. What cannot be overlooked is that many of the greater changes and reforms of to-day are those which Arnold predicted and advocated ; that he certainly was, in regard to his views and ideas, in advance of his time ; that he was, in his own language, “going with the movement of the world.”

The chief political changes in the England of the last quarter of a century—and they are so great that already they amount to something like a silent revolution—may all be referred to or summed up under one capital change of policy and public feeling, in itself a revolution—the change from the policy of *laissez-faire* to that of state-action, the change from Individualism to Collectivism. Many causes have doubtless contributed to effect this revolution, and many men. How far Matthew Arnold aided to bring it about may be difficult to determine. What is certain is that he inculcated and reiterated it so importunately that, for at least some part of it, it seems ungenerous not to give him credit.

“A true poet, and not only a poet, but a man, as we now see with a far truer insight into the intellectual needs of his countrymen than any other

writer of the closing quarter of the century." It is thus that Mr John Morley writes of him in his new classic "Life of Gladstone." Only a few years back the Bishop of Hereford, addressing the British Association at Cambridge upon the subject of education, called attention again and yet again to the warning words of Matthew Arnold "in his illuminating reports on the schools and universities of the Continent as he saw them thirty-seven years ago," and to his advocacy of scientific system and method.

"Had some English statesman" (the Bishop said) "been enabled to take up and give effect to Mr Arnold's chief suggestion, as Humboldt and his colleagues gave effect to their ideas in Prussia in the years 1808 and onwards, the advantage to our country to-day would have been incalculable."

What Arnold cared for in education, as in affairs, was not administrative or practical detail, but wide and fresh views, and the introduction of a general philosophy and system by which the detail should be governed. In this region it is hardly possible to exaggerate the services which he rendered to his country. Of the ideas which slowly and gradually have come to the birth in English education Arnold had not, indeed, a monopoly—few inventors ever have a monopoly of their ideas—but at least they are all contained in Arnold. Hardly anywhere are any of them stated earlier, and nowhere are they stated earlier with such completeness as in his pages. "Organise your primary education," he said, even before the general establishment of primary education was recognised as a State duty. He laboured for its organisation.

He laboured not less for its regulation. From the first moment that it was proposed, he courageously contended with "Bob Lowe"—a humble school-inspector with a powerful minister—against the introduction of "payment by results." It has died hard and slowly, but the first death-blow was dealt by Arnold's hand.

"Organise your secondary education," he cried again, boldly overstepping his province in the cause of what he felt to be an obvious public need. Here, even more completely than in the sphere of primary education, we are living even yet on his ideas; his spirit still rules us from his urn. What was it he said at the outset?

"There must be a real Minister of Education, supported by an Advisory Committee of educational experts. All schools and their courses must be inspected either by the Government or, for the Government, by the Universities. New secondary schools must be provided by local authorities up and down the country."

The Bills of 1899 and 1902 were framed in close agreement with these lines. It may fairly be claimed that he suggested these ideas and also did much to create the public feeling necessary for their being carried into effect.

He was much laughed at for his supposed advocacy of a British Academy of Letters. He did not *advocate* any academy. The German academy which he predicted we should one day have, is an accomplished fact. The French academy which he said we should not have, we have not got. If a Roman Catholic University is hereafter created in Ireland, it will be created because the feeling and

the ideas which he toiled to infuse and inculcate have prevailed. If it is not created it will be because it will be wrecked on the very reef which he always dreaded, because the forces which he recognised and deplored will have proved too strong.¹ In all these things he was before his time. In all, his secret of keeping an open mind and letting a fresh stream of ideas, derived from quiet pondering on the best hitherto thought and written, play upon our everyday conceptions, may be said to be justified.

What then is the truth? Was he after all a prophet, despite his flippancy, despite his airs, his persiflage, despite his white gloves, his pouncet-box? Had he a message for his generation? He certainly thought he had. He toiled and laboured, he rose up early and late took rest, he probably shortened his life, he certainly retarded his own worldly advancement, he forswore the darling Muses, in order to deliver it. Much of the prophet he undoubtedly possessed, yet he was not quite a prophet. He had not the prophet's intensity or abstraction. He did not retire enough either into the wilderness or into himself. Like his own Goethe, sitting between Lavater and Basedow, he occupied a middle place.

"Prophete rechts, Prophete links,
Das Weltkind in der Mitte."

In his apt and discriminating stanzas, entitled "In Laleham Churchyard," Mr William Watson hints very happily the contrast between the disciple and his other master.

¹ The Bill creating a University has been passed, but perhaps these sentences may still stand.

“Lulled by the Thames he sleeps, and not
 By Rotha's wave.
 'Tis fittest thus, for though with skill
 He sang of beck and tarn and ghyll,
 The deep authentic mountain-thrill
 Ne'er shook his page ;
 Somewhat of worldling mingled still
 With bard and sage.”

Moreover, even as a critic, and even as a poet, he lacks something. He did not concentrate enough. He did not remember his own Goethe's dictum—

“Wer Grosses will muss sich zusammen raffen ;
 In der Beschränkung zeigt sich erst der Meister.”

He was divided between his two desires. He did not give up all for poetry, like Tennyson, or for philosophy, like Herbert Spencer. Even his criticism is in a sense superficial. He did not go deep; he was more artist than scholar. His account of Heine is not exhaustive; he did not mean it to be. When Sir M. E. Grant Duff offered him fuller information, he declined it. His account of Gray's infertility is brilliant, but, as Mr Tovey has shown, not supported by full consideration of Gray's life and character. His criticism was often a matter mainly, as Swinburne said, of “studious felicity of exquisite phrase.” Yet in these very phrases critical power of the highest was condensed. His *aperçus*, too, and his intuitions were those of genius. They set others thinking and working. Of this, his lectures on Celtic Literature, of which he said, with characteristic frankness, “I know nothing,” are a capital instance.

So too his poetry is unequal. He is often compared to Gray “going down the centuries with

his thin volume under his arm." The parallel is not a good one. A better, so far as it goes, though it does not go far enough, would be with Collins; for though he has not greater, if so much, perfection, in a few pieces Matthew Arnold shows greater scope and range than either Gray or Collins. A defective ear, an uncertain choice and mastery of metre, yet often a lovely, unsought, unaffected music, always a tender elegiac passion, a pure drawing and colouring of nature, a philosophic and scholarly aroma blended with exquisite delicacy of sentiment—these are characteristic of both. Poetry is, above all, an affair of genius and often largely of youth. Had Arnold given his life to it, to pure poetry, that is, not to any Wordsworthian inculcation of the "main movement of ideas," but to the poetry with which he began, he might have done some greater, stronger, more finished things. Who shall say? But he did enough and more than enough, it may be confidently asserted, for immortality. A spirit buoyant, blithe, and charming, a delightful private friend, a faithful public servant, a benefactor of the commonwealth in his own day, and to all after-days a critic of genius and a true poet—to have been, to have achieved all this, is enough, is much.

"But seldom comes the Poet here,
And the Critic's rarer still!"

If each is rare taken singly, how rare should the combination be! How rare it is!

III

THE ART OF TRANSLATION

“*Traduttore, traditore,*” says an Italian proverb. “He occupied himself with that most lazy of all modes of dealing with the classics, that of translating them.” So wrote somewhat splenetically one famous Oxford scholar of the last generation about another. “Never translate! Translation is the death of understanding.” Such was the dictum of a great German philologist of the same era, often repeated and enforced upon successive generations of his pupils.

In all these utterances there is a grain of truth, in the last more than a grain. Yet all are absolutely opposed to the apparent faith and certain practice of mankind. To this false, this indolent, this fatal pursuit, high talent, and unsparing industry have again and again in all ages been devoted.

“Never translate.” But the world has always been translating. Our own time is often described as an age of this, that, or the other. Whatever it is or is not, it is certainly an age of translation. Almost all our poets from the beginning of the century have experimented in the art. Byron translated on occasion. Shelley was notoriously a professed translator, both in prose and verse. His

Cyclops, his Hymn to Mercury, his Symposium, his Prologue to Faust, are, and will probably remain, among the most successful efforts ever made to transfer poetry and prose from one literature to another. And he not only practised, but theorised about the art. Keats, with his very moderate Latin and no Greek, cannot be added to the list of professed translators; but what is not sufficiently remembered, he translated for himself the entire *Æneid* of Virgil, and it may be noticed that his famous sonnet on Chapman's Homer is perhaps the most eloquent tribute to the value of translation ever penned. Scott translated. The Lake Poets, despite their appeal to Nature at first hand, were no less translators. Southey translated. Coleridge's renderings from Schiller are part of his very best work, and among the best translations of any time. Wordsworth himself, though he passed such trenchant strictures on Dryden's Virgil, produced a version of two books of the *Æneid* far flatter and more conventional than the flattest parts of Dryden.

With the poets nearer to our own day the same is the case. Rossetti and Browning translated much, Matthew Arnold occasionally; Tennyson in a few noble specimens showed what he might have done in this field had he chosen. Of his friend Fitzgerald we shall speak anon. Clough and George Eliot toiled at the task of translation. Mr William Morris, Mr Swinburne, Mr Robert Bridges, Mr William Watson, Sir Theodore Martin, Sir Stephen de Vere, Mr Frederick Myers, Mr Ernest Myers, Mr Andrew Lang, Mr Gosse, and a host of others, have given us translations of the highest order;

while, perhaps, if we consider the range and variety of his efforts, the most accomplished and skilful translator of his time was the late Mr J. A. Symonds. These are all poets as well as prose-writers, but the same is the case with those who are more purely writers of prose—with Carlyle and his brother, with Mr Froude and Mr Goldwin Smith, Professor Max Müller, Mr Pater, Mr Blackmore, Mrs Ward. In other countries the same phenomenon presents itself. Goethe and Schiller translated; Heine, most passionate and spontaneous of poets, the Catullus of Germany, like Catullus himself, surprises us with specimens of this laborious, unspontaneous art. France supplies many examples, and the best known, if not the best, of American poets is among the best known of translators.

Nor have the scholars of our time paid any more attention to the warning voices of Pattison and Haupt than the men of letters. On the contrary, they have been unusually diligent as translators. Some, like Jowett, have given to it the major part of their effort. Most of the best have practised it—Conington, Kennedy, Munro, Jebb, Ellis, Campbell, von Wilamowitz-Möllendorf, Garnett, Butcher, Leaf, Verrall, Dakyns, Godley, Mackail, Morshead, Whitelaw, J. B. Rogers, Murray, Phillimore, Headlam, and many more. To the scholars may be added the men of practical life, lawyers like Lord Brougham and Lord Bowen, divines like Dean Plumptre, statesmen like Lord Derby or Lord Carnarvon, and finally, and above all, Mr Gladstone. Mr Gladstone had always been a translator. As a young man, he published versions from and into Greek and Latin. His Latin and

Italian renderings of hymns are well known. His first freedom saw him returning to his first loves.

All this when massed together seems surprising, yet in all this our own Victorian Age stands only in the same relation as in other matters to the ages of the past. The fact is, that great ages of pure literature have always been ages of translation, in Italy, in France, in Spain, in Germany, in England. Such in England was the great age of Queen Anne. Such more strikingly still was the greater age of Elizabeth. What our poets are now that they have always been—Gower and Chaucer, Lydgate and Surrey, Marlowe and Spenser, Ben Jonson and Milton, Fairfax and Harington, Denham and Cowley, Dryden and Pope, Addison and Johnson, Gray and Cowper. The Elizabethan Age was also full of prose translations; the versions of North and Florio, Holland and Fenton, Sylvester and Shelton, and others, are still memorable; while it should never be forgotten that the Authorised Version of the Bible, as its quaint but fine Preface reminds us, belongs to the era of Elizabeth and James I.—to the era exactly, that is, of Shakespeare.

The scholars, of course, at this period and earlier, translated into Latin, which was still thought the most elegant and artistic medium. Of this practice More and Lyly are English examples, as Erasmus and Ficinus, or earlier, Petrarch and Boccaccio, are foreign. The public demanded translations, and so did the publishers. Salmasius, Milton's great opponent, was a victim to the demand. His edition of the Palatine Anthology was not given to the world, and the

book remained inedited for two hundred years, because he died before he could finish the Latin "crib" which was to introduce it to its modern readers.

There is a common view of translation which regards it as naturally and necessarily a task for inferior minds, capable of being performed adequately by them and unworthy of any great or good ability, a fit employment for those who are essaying or those who have failed in literature. Much translation doubtless is produced by hacks, and it is obviously poor enough. But such production is in reality only like the other hack or journeyman work which fringes true and living literature. Translation worthy of the name has its proper place, and that no mean one, in the hierarchy of letters. Nay, rather what is noteworthy is not that so much translation is done by inferior writers for gain and as a trade, but that so much is done by men of ability for love and for little hire.

What is the strange fascination which induces men again and again to undertake tasks arduous from their length or their intrinsic difficulty or from both? Why this constant succession of translations of authors already again and again translated? The whole of Homer, the whole of Virgil, of Dante, of Cervantes, of Camoens; Æschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, the Odes of Horace, Goethe's Faust, the songs of Heine, these are tasks men seem never weary of imposing upon themselves. Something there must be in the nature of translation itself, as a function and exercise of human faculty, which underlies this

strange phenomenon. What that nature is, and what is the true and natural place of Translation in literature, are the questions which these pages are an attempt to determine.

Now, considering the important part that translation has played in the intellectual and spiritual history of the human race, both in the widest sense and also more particularly in pure literature and in education, it is extraordinary that so little attention has been definitely or deliberately given to its nature and principles.

It is not too much to say that the translations of the Scriptures alone have had an incalculable effect, not only as regards their matter, but also as regards their style, upon the languages and literatures of mankind. It is only necessary to recall the broad fact of the influence of the Septuagint, the Vulgate, and the Authorised Version in its various stages, severally upon the subsequent history of Greek, of Latin and the derived tongues, and of English, or of the similar if more confined influence of the French and German versions. Through them not only the thoughts, the religion, the morality of the Hebrews, but their words and their turns of expression, have profoundly and for ever affected the style and expression of the Indo-Germanic races. There are no translations which can compare in importance with these, but Amyot's and North's Plutarch, the German translations of Shakespeare, Dryden's Virgil, and Chapman's and Pope's versions of Homer, have contributed appreciably to form and inspire the literatures to which they have been added.

Yet, for all this, little or nothing has been written systematically on the Art of Translation. There is no recognised Philosophy of Translation. Aristotle did not include it in his *Encyclopædia*, there is no lost work on Hermeneutics or Metaphrastics to be recovered from an Egyptian grave. The reason of this is not far to seek. The Greeks, in their great age at any rate, though they borrowed something, perhaps much, from Persia or Egypt, had for literary purposes no need or temptation to translate. There are some interesting Alexandrine versions, but no Attic translations.¹ The fortunate Greek boy found no foreign languages standing between him and literature. All his classics, including specimens of excellence in every kind, were in his own tongue. In this respect Greek literature holds an unique position among the literatures of the world. It appears, like Melchizedek of old, without father or mother. It is what the Athenians themselves claimed to be, "autochthonous," without models, a law to itself.

With the next great literature of antiquity the case is absolutely different. Latin literature proper begins in translation and imitation, and as it begins so it continues. From Livius Andronicus to Seneca, from Seneca to Boethius, the Latin writers are translators, or, if not translators, imitators; and it is noteworthy that the great authors of the Golden Age are more rather than less imitative than those of the Silver and subsequent periods. Catullus, the most spontaneous of Roman writers, is a translator. Cicero is a professed and whole-

¹ Hanno's "Periplus," whatever it is, is hardly an exception.

sale translator. Virgil and Horace are full of adaptation and imitation which may be said to imply translation, and sometimes to include it. On much of Ovid's extant work the same criticism may be passed, while of his lost "Medea" it would doubtless be still more true. But, more than this, there was a mass of definite Roman translation which has perished. A poem, for instance like that of Aratus on the Signs of the Heavens and the Weather, which, though it does not appear to us of very commanding or conspicuous merit, had a singularly extended vogue in antiquity, was at four different epochs of Roman literature translated by four writers—all names of note, and two very memorable—Varro Atacinus, Cicero, Germanicus, and Avienus. The Romans translated, too, at a fairly early period from the Carthaginian. But the Romans, while they were great translators and good grammarians, were not, in the true sense, philosophers. Such philosophy as they were capable of borrowing they borrowed from Greece. Critical they were, of course, but their professed literary criticism is also derived mainly from Greek sources, and though they translated much, they did not attempt to write the philosophy of translation.

In one point the Romans broke ground. They set the example of the Translator's preface. It is significant that almost all translators have thought it necessary to write a preface. The practice was perhaps begun by Cicero. His remarks in his "De Optimo Genere Oratorum," which was written as a preface to his translation of the two most famous speeches of Æschines and Demosthenes, are at any

rate among the earliest and among the best of the kind. In English literature the first important example is probably that of Chapman. Following Chapman, we have a long series from the famous prefaces of Dryden and Pope to those of our own day, the last and best of which is Jowett's Preface to the third edition of his noble version of Plato. It is from these translators' prefaces that the "critic" of translation, the analysis of its principles, the classification of its rules so far as it has any, must mainly be collected. To them, of course, must be added Matthew Arnold's well-known Lectures, translating Homer. On the art of translation, on certain rules and precepts which may be laid down about it, these authorities have a good deal to say, and a good deal in which they are agreed, and which has therefore the weight of their agreement. But no one of them, it may fairly be said, enters at all systematically into first principles. Indeed, from the nature and occasion of their writing, there is no need for them to do so. Some beginnings of a philosophy of translation may be found in Mr Symonds's "Essays, Speculative and Suggestive." There is Bishop Huet's curious and erudite treatise, "de Interpretatione"; there are also various French and German *brochures* and articles, such as those of Tycho Mommsen or Professor von Wilamowitz-Möllendorf.¹ But these, again, are rather tentative and occasional.

On the other hand, on the question of the relation of language to thought, much has, of course,

¹ The best recent utterance is Mr F. Storr's brilliant and witty address given to the Modern Language Association last year, 1908.

been written by both philosophers¹ and philologists, and it will be seen that in considering the limits or the possibility of translation this famous and difficult question is at once raised. For the first step towards a philosophy of translation is to define translation. What is translation? It is the expression of one man's thought as conveyed in one language generally, but not necessarily, by another man, in another language. If there were so many precise and different thoughts present, or capable of being present, to the mind of an average civilised man, and if in each great language of civilisation there were one word for each of these thoughts, the problem would be simple enough. It would be a mere question of substitution; $a = x$, $b = y$; substitute x for a and y for b wherever found, and the result is attained. Such a process would be indeed an indolent mechanical task, unworthy of the powers of an able man. Such a process there is. But its value is confined within very narrow limits. It extends as far as the very lowest function of the courier or interpreter. It is obviously limited by the number of ideas or concepts which are absolutely common to mankind. Now in one sense these are fairly numerous, in another they are very few. There is even a sense in which there are none at all. Whatever sway "Collectivism" may achieve in the social or political realm, in the philosophical domain Individualism must always retain the first importance. The individual man is the feeling and the

¹ Schopenhauer, Jowett and Max Müller have all handled this theme.

thinking unit. And no two units feel or think exactly alike.

“Minds on this round earth of ours
Vary like the leaves and flowers.”

We fancy we are thinking the same thoughts, we use the same words to express them. But if we looked closely enough into the matter, we should find that there is an intransferable, untranslatable individuality about our thoughts themselves. In the same way, though we may have a common national or provincial accent, or a common family intonation, still there is a peculiar individual *timbre* and tone about every individual voice and mode of pronunciation, and an individual manner too, born of circumstance or education. And naturally, the higher we get in the scale of originality and of education combined, the greater is this multiplicity of these *nuances* of difference. We do in effect translate the language of our friend into our own, when we endeavour to explain his ideas or his communication in our own words, and we experience occasionally the underlying difficulty, nay impossibility, of translation in so doing.

Roughly speaking, however, and for purposes of translation, we may say that there is a certain number of ideas common to mankind, and a somewhat larger number common to that part of mankind which falls under the sway and definition of Western Civilisation. But the number is much smaller than is generally supposed. The simple facts and factors of nature, father, mother, child, young, old, earth, air, water, fire (which, as Aristotle says in the *Ethics*, burns alike in Persia

and in Greece)—these are common, though even here the individuality of mankind and of groups of mankind has introduced associations, colours, haloes, which cling to the idea and are conveyed by the national word for one nation and cannot be translated into the language of another. The only words which are really translatable are those which hardly require translation, the names of things essentially international and cosmopolitan: an international railway ticket, telegraph, sleeping-car, postage stamp, these can be absolutely translated, for the same things pass from land to land. So again the terms of natural science, where they do not happen to be identical, have generally an exact scientific equivalent as between civilised countries. But wherever any thing or idea has a national character it cannot really be translated. To take a very simple example: the English dictionary equivalent for the French *maison* is "house," and for practical purposes no one would hesitate to translate *maison* by "house" and "house" by *maison*. But anyone who has once seen a French house knows that *maison* suggests and calls up something as distinct and different from an English house as France is from England. Here the "Never translate" of Professor Haupt has its value. Professor Freeman cried out and objurgated when Jowett translated the Greek *πόλις* by the English "State": he was right that the word "state" conveys something very different from, something larger than, the Greek *πόλις*, but the words "city" and "town," which he might have used, convey something as different and smaller. Nor does it help to say that "city" or

“town” once meant something more like what was meant by πόλις. Approximate words in different languages do not cover exactly the same area. They are, as Schopenhauer said, not concentric circles, but intersecting circles with different centres. And if this is the case as regards the translation of mere simple words expressive of definite things or relations, what are we to say of the combinations of these words in increasing degrees of complexity, with a larger and ever larger admixture of national and individual idiosyncrasy? What are we to say not only of the simple expression of ideas in words, but of the highly artistic expression in prose or still more in poetry, when the choice of words, and their arrangement with its resulting alliteration and assonance, its mutually affected sound and colour, value and suggestion, go to make up the complex and subtle presentment of a whole bundle of the perceptions, selections, reasonings, affections, loves and hates, it may be, of a most unusually developed mind? It is obvious that the difficulty is increased a millionfold, and that what was in a sense impossible in principle becomes impossible too in detail. A line like Virgil’s *Sunt lacrimæ rerum et mentem mortalia tangunt* is, and must remain, untranslatable.

Dante indeed, in an interesting passage in the “Convito,” pronounces that all translation of good poetry is impossible. The wonder is then that translation appears so possible, and that in a sense it is so possible.

We have been laying stress on the dissimilarity of human beings; but though they differ so much, they are compounded of common elements, and

there is almost no limit to that human sympathy to which nothing human is alien.

“The world but feels the present’s spell;
The poet feels the past as well,
Whatever men have done might do,
Whatever thought might think it too.”

There is a phenomenon to the marvel and the significance of which sufficient attention has never been paid: it is the schoolboy’s Latin and Greek verses. That a sharp small boy should be able to arrange the comparatively few Greek or Latin words he knows in a tolerably simple pattern, the Chinese puzzle verse, is not so astonishing. But a clever sixth-form boy, or an undergraduate at college, will do something very different from this. With little or no experience of life or of the world, with no profound original poetic talent or insight, with a limited stock of Latin or Greek at his command, he will yet enter apparently into the heart and secret of the style of the unapproachable masters of the ancient world. He will give you Virgilian Hexameters or Sophoclean Iambics to order. He will be more Thucydidean than Thucydides, more Tacitean than Tacitus. If the style is the man, he will throw himself with the skill of a consummate actor into the character he wishes to reproduce. But more than this, he will translate the masterpieces, the most characteristic passages, of a great modern, of Shakespeare or Milton or Tennyson, into something which the best judges of ancient letters have to confess, though they may detect a flaw here or there, bears the very impress of the ancient nation and author into whose style he is translating.

There are, of course, yet higher flights, where a special master like Jebb, or Ellis, or (alas! the late) Mr Walter Headlam "from out the ghost" of Pindar or Catullus or Theocritus in his bosom "rolls an Olympian," or indites hendecasyllabics or bucolics that read like a beautiful original. But these higher flights, being as they are exceptional, are not perhaps such striking evidence of that strong human *solidarité*, that strange intellectual telepathy which thus enables men, across the gulf of the ages and of widely differing civilisations, to imitate and reproduce the manner, the accent, the style, the very informing spirit of a vanished personality. Perfect translation, then, is impossible, yet translation has infinite possibilities. Perfect sympathy with the original is impossible; perfect reproduction in a new medium is impossible. But in both there are infinite degrees of approximation.

And herein lies the explanation of that phenomenon noticed above—the multiplication of translations. Every age feels the original in its own particular way, every age has its own manner of expression, and the same is true of every individual. Therefore it is that they want translations of their own, and are satisfied with no other. Therefore they are willing, nay eager, for small recompense or none, to try again and yet again, that experiment in which they see so clearly that others have failed.

"The song is to the singer and comes back most to him." The song is the singer's imitation, his version, of nature and passion. Even more truly is the translation to the translator, and gives him a satisfaction which it can give to no one else,

for no one else can look through his eyes or speak with his voice.

Especially is this the case in dealing with the ancients. Speaking in the large way, the great classical masterpieces of antiquity remain the same from age to age : scholarship may do something to furbish them up a little, their text may be purified, fragments may be recovered and restored, excrescences may be removed, but on the whole they present the same general semblance and character as when they were dug from their resting-places in monastic lumber-rooms by Poggio or Boccaccio. It is with them as with the great artistic remains—

“ Gray time-worn marbles
 Hold the pure Muses :
 In their cool gallery
 By yellow Tiber
 They still look fair.”

But successive generations of scholars and *virtuosi* look at both with different feelings. The eye sees what it brings with it, the power of seeing. Different ages have different sympathies. The Romanticist finds Romanticism in the classics ; the Impressionist, Impressionism ; the Realist, Realism. An age like our own, which sympathizes by turns and in varying degrees with all these, will find something of them all. Sympathy is partly a matter of culture, of the education of the taste and feeling, partly a matter of knowledge. The old translations are not accurate grammatically. Still more are they not accurate as regards understanding of the relation in which the originals stand to their own time, the reason, the significance of their colour or *genre*, the meaning of their

allusions. As to all these points, philology makes, as Jowett said, a slow but subtle advance, and new and more accurate renderings are called for. But the old versions, like the originals, are regarded with different feelings from age to age.

Our time is in sympathy with the Elizabethan ; the merits of the great Elizabethan versions have been rediscovered, and we are grateful to the editors and publishers who put them once more within our reach. On the other hand, the present disregard of the poetry of Dryden and Pope is undue, nor can it be doubted that the pendulum will swing again in their direction, and that the real merit which underlies the mannerism of their versions, as of their original pieces, will be again appreciated.

It is clear then that that age, that nation, and that individual will produce the best versions whose sympathies are most comprehensive, whose appreciation is most just, and whose language is most various.

So far from translation being a lazy task for second-rate minds, it is a task which tries the best powers of the best. It is only the best ages of literature, and the best writers, that can produce really excellent translations. The reason why they do not oftener give themselves to the task is partly that they are naturally pre-occupied with their own creative effort, partly the difficulty, the insuperable difficulty, of the task ; and therefore its inherently unsatisfactory character. Occasionally, of course, there is to be found a mind first-rate or almost first-rate, which is fastidious and critical, to which creation comes with difficulty. Such a temperament,

the temperament of the great executant or scholar or copyist, is, as is well known, nearly if not quite as fine, but also nearly if not quite as rare, as the temperament of the composer, the poet, or the painter. Such a temperament may express itself in translation. The poet Gray—whether owing to his age or to his own nature, who shall say?—was very largely such a temperament. Fortunately he was something more, and he gave us a handful of poems, *βαιὰ μὲν, ἀλλὰ ῥόδα*. But had he been no more, Gray the critic, Gray the scholar, might have expressed his poetic self in translation. The specimens he has given us of Statius are, probably, as near perfection as it is possible for translation to come.

It being admitted then that a perfect translation is impossible, and perhaps that a final good translation is impossible, a good translation according to our times—good, not absolutely, but as Aristotle would say, for us—may be, nay, obviously is, quite possible, often most useful and sometimes, too, most delectable. What are the canons of excellence of such a translation? What are the rules which the translator should follow?

Translation has been already defined as the expression, in another set of words generally by another man, of the thoughts of one man already expressed in one set of words. It is possible, of course, for a man to express his thoughts first in one set of words and then in another in one language, as for instance when he explains himself in simpler language to a child or a foreigner, or an uneducated person.¹ This is a kind of translation. It is possible also for a man to trans-

¹ So Madame Lafayette wittily compared a bad translator

late from one state of a language into another. Thus Dryden calls his modernisations of Chaucer translations, and certainly the difference between the modes of thought and expression of Chaucer and those of Dryden amounts to the difference between two languages. Again, a person who commands perfectly two languages or three, if that be possible, may translate his own thoughts from one into the other. But all these are rather subtleties and refinements. The translation which requires discussion is something more than these processes. It may perhaps be called literary translation, and by translation what is ordinarily meant is literary translation. Now, in literary translation, there is something more than the bare meaning to be conveyed. There is the whole impression. Perhaps, strictly speaking, the bare meaning cannot really be separated from the whole impression; that is to say, the whole living meaning is an inseparable whole, and what is called the bare meaning, if it could be separated, would be a lower organism altogether, not a part of the higher. But be this so or not, the whole impression is what the translator has to transfer from one literature to another. What then are the canons of good translation, and what are the reasons of those canons? There is one proposition on which all translators seem practically and naturally agreed. *The aim of a translation should be to produce an impression similar, or as nearly as may be similar, to that produced by the original.*

to a blundering footman delivering a pretty message for his mistress, adding, "*Plus le compliment est délicat plus on est sûr que le laquais s'en tire mal.*"

This is the first and fundamental proposition. To it is sometimes added a further appendage, more especially in the case of the ancient classics; namely, *an impression similar to that produced by the original on its original hearers or readers.* But, said Matthew Arnold, we cannot possibly know what impression Sophocles or Horace produced on their contemporary hearers or readers. Matthew Arnold, to tell the truth, somewhat exaggerated the difficulty. We do know how the ancient writers affected their hearers, in so far as their hearers have told us this. Some general idea or conception of this original impression may be gathered from sundry sources, even if it does not help us very far. Further, the ancient criticisms of the classics agree, on the whole, very remarkably with the most considered and final of those criticisms which express modern feeling. They may, therefore, give us confidence that our impressions, making allowance for all that separates us, are not different or alien in kind from those received by the ancients, and they emphasize for us the importance of what will be seen to be the most important matter of all in translation, the reproduction of the *essential and differentiating character* of the original author. A translation which did not represent Æschylus as grandiose, at times almost to tumidity, or Euripides as rhetorical, would not have commended itself, could he conceivably have known and understood it, to Aristophanes: a translation of Horace which does not reproduce as a main characteristic "studied felicity," or "harmonious rhythm" would not have commended itself to Petronius or Ovid.

It is not easy, it is difficult—some acute critics, like Mr Hamerton, say it is impossible—exactly to know or feel how a foreigner is affected by the masterpieces of his own literature. But here the intervening gulf, if it cannot be abolished, may be narrowed and bridged. The opportunities of mutual interchange and explanation are many, the possibilities of knowledge are great. From this first proposition follow most of the others on which translators are agreed.

A good translation should read like an original.¹ Why? Because the original reads like an original. It might be amusing to ask, what about a translation of a translation? Of this of course there are some very notable examples, such as North's version of Amyot's version of Plutarch, to which Shakespeare owed so much. Shelley first read Plato in an English version of a French version. But it is obvious that such versions are not to be judged by the ordinary standard. They may serve a useful, even a great purpose, but they can hardly satisfy the requirements of the best translation.

And to read like an original, a translation must be *idiomatic* in the language in which it is written. Thus, as Jowett says, "The first requisite of an English translation is that it be English." This is the canon which is most frequently transgressed by translators. It is the non-observance of it which at once separates off and condemns the mass of inferior translations. All who have any large acquaintance with translations are familiar with

¹ "Ut opus *αὐτοφύε*s, non alieni Interpretatio credi possit" (Huetius, "de Optimo Genere Interpretandi," p. 79).

what may be called "translation English," a language which is neither English nor Greek nor Latin, French nor German, but something between the two. The grosser forms of it do not need to be pointed out. "Pigeon English," "English as she is spoke," these we all know; as again all teachers know the "translation English" of the fourth-form boy. The subtler, less obvious forms of it are just those which distinguish inferior translations. How often, when we read a translation, do we not feel that no one could write thus unless he had been translating?—a feeling which at once *pro tanto*, if our canon be good, condemns the work.

Now, if a translation is to be idiomatic, since the idioms of different languages differ, it is obvious that a literal translation is at once condemned. Here, as elsewhere, the letter killeth, the spirit giveth life. A really good translation should be not so much exact as faithful. It should not be free, but it should be, what is the same thing with a difference, liberal. It should be, in the language of Painting, not perhaps exactly Impressionist, but rather Impressionist than Pre-Raphaelite.

That the best translation should be not literal but liberal, all the best translators are agreed. This canon is laid down by Cicero in the passage already alluded to, and by Chapman, who laughs as he says at translators with

"Their word-for-word traductions, where they lose
The free grace of their natural dialect."

It is to Dryden, however, that the credit must be given of having first drawn this out with careful

analysis and examples. Dryden is sometimes called the first great writer, the "father" of modern English prose. He is more certainly the father of English criticism. An excellent prose writer he certainly is, nervous, clear, free yet firm, and a shrewd critic, and his critical pieces are excellent reading. But unfortunately Dryden in his prose as in his verse was hasty and somewhat reckless. The torrent of his genius hurried him on and extricated him only too easily from every difficulty. We may not take seriously the gibe of Swift :

"Read all the prefaces of Dryden,
For those our critics much confide in,
Though writ at first only for filling
To raise the volume's price a shilling."

But Dryden confesses himself that he wrote them, as he confesses that he wrote many things, "in haste." Yet, hasty in composition as they are, they are full of sound sense and discriminating judgment.

The fullest analysis of the art of translation will be found in the Preface to his rendering of the Epistles of Ovid.

"All translations," he there says, "I suppose may be reduced to three heads. First, that of *Metaphrase*, or turning an author word by word and line by line from one language into another.

"The second way is that of *Paraphrase*, or translation with latitude, where the author is kept in view by the translator so as never to be lost, but his words are not so strictly followed as his sense, and that too is admitted to be amplified but not altered. An example of this style is Waller's Fourth *Æneid*.

“The third way is that of *Imitation*, where the translator (if now we have not lost that name) assumes the liberty not only to vary from the words and sense, but to forsake them both as he sees occasion, and taking only some general hints from the original to run division on the groundwork as he pleases.”

The examples given of this method are Cowley's Odes of Pindar and the same author's rendering of Horace.

Having distinguished these three modes, Dryden proceeds to discuss their relative advantages and disadvantages. The whole discussion is too long to quote, but the main points may well be given.

“Concerning the first of these methods, our master Horace has given us this caution :

“Nec verbum verbo curabis reddere fidus
Interpres.”

Too faithfully is indeed pedantically. It is almost impossible to translate verbally and well at the same time. Such translation (in the case of poetry) is like dancing on ropes with fettered legs : a man may shun a fall by using caution, but the gracefulness of motion is not to be expected.

“Imitation is the other extreme. It is the endeavour of a later poet to write like one who has written before him on the same subject, not to translate his words or be confined to his sense, but only to set him as a pattern and to write as he supposes that author would have done had he lived in our age and in our country.”

It may be justified, says Dryden, in the case of Cowley's Pindar—for Dryden, be it noted, seems like Horace to have had the idea that

Pindar was a most irregular poet, above or without law, one who

“Per audaces nova dithyrambos
Verba devolvit numerisque fertur
Lege solutis” ;—

but not in the case of a regular and intelligible poet like Virgil or Ovid.

To state it fairly, he concludes: “Imitation is the most advantageous way for a translator to show himself, but the greatest wrong which can be done to the memory and reputation of the dead.” He then proceeds to advocate the middle course of “Paraphrase” or “translation with latitude.”

Like Dryden, we may perhaps dismiss “Imitation” as not really translation at all. At the same time he seems to admit that it is a process which may produce very fair poetry, and it should be noted that Dryden all along is really thinking and writing of poetical translation. Certainly a process tending very much towards “Imitation,” in which the “latitude,” at any rate which the translator has allowed himself, is very large, has given us one of the most remarkable and individual poems of our time, the “Omar Khayyam” of Edward Fitzgerald :—

“Your golden Eastern lay,
Than which I know no version done
In English more divinely well ;
A planet equal to the sun
That cast it, that large infidel
Your Omar.”

Fitzgerald’s method avowedly contained a good deal of “Imitation.”

Chapman’s Homer again is really, as Mr

Swinburne's discriminating eulogy on it shows, rather an Imitation than a Translation. "By the standard," says Mr Swinburne, "of original work they may be more fairly and more worthily judged than by the standard of translation." We may compare, too, Coleridge and Lamb, who say the same thing. And some of the best reputed and happiest modern versions of the classics into English undoubtedly err on the side of "Imitation," such as Frere's Aristophanes or Morshead's Agamemnon. Indeed, a moderate use of "Imitation" is hardly distinguishable from Dryden's own "Paraphrase"; and it may be noted that this very word "Paraphrase," which Dryden uses to denote the middle course, is ordinarily used to imply something certainly much nearer to imitation than to literal translation, and, indeed, that Dryden himself, as will be seen both by practice and precept, supports such an application.

There can be little doubt that this middle course is the true "golden mean," the true course for the translator to pursue, whether we call it "Paraphrase," which, as we have indicated, may be to modern ears misleading, or "translation with latitude," or, as we have suggested, "liberal" as opposed to literal translation. The question will be as to the amount of latitude permissible. One main consideration which should determine this will, if what was said at the outset be correct, at once appear. The latitude must be sufficient, but not more than sufficient; it must be the minimum which will suffice to make the translation idiomatic and natural in the language into which it is made. The skill of the translator will be

found in reducing the quantity as nearly as may be to this minimum.

But another consideration affects this latitude—a consideration the enforcement of which is perhaps Dryden's chief merit—a consideration which many even of the very best translators have overlooked.¹ *It is the preservation of the individual differentiating character of the original.*

The language of Dryden should here be quoted *in extenso* :

“No man,” he says, “is capable of translating poetry who, besides a genius to that art, is not a master both of the author's language and of his own; nor must we understand the language only of the poet, *but his peculiar turn of thought and expression, which are the characters that distinguish, and as it were individuate, him from all other writers.*”

“When we are come thus far, it is time to look into ourselves, to conform our genius to his, to give his thoughts either the same turn if our tongue will bear it, or if not, to vary but the dress, not to alter or destroy the substance. The like care must be taken of the mere outward ornaments, the words. Every language is so full of its own proprieties that what is beautiful in one is often barbarous, nay, sometimes nonsense, in another. There is therefore a liberty to be allowed for the expression, neither is it necessary that words and lines should be confined to the measure of the original. The sense of an author, generally speaking, is to be sacred and inviolable.

¹ It is this that makes Jowett's Plato so great a success, his Thucydides, in point of style, comparatively a failure. The Plato is like Plato, the Thucydides is often not like Thucydides. No one reading it would understand why the original is considered so crabbed and condensed.

If the fancy of Ovid be luxuriant, it is his character to be so; and if I retrench it, he is no longer Ovid. It will be replied that he receives advantage by this lopping of his superfluous branches, but I rejoin that a translator has no such right. When a painter copies from the life, I suppose he has no privilege to alter his features and lineaments under pretence that his picture will look better, perhaps the face which he has drawn would be more exact if the eye or the nose were altered, but it is his business to make it resemble the original."

What Dryden says well but briefly here, he has enforced and somewhat amplified in another piece, the Preface to what is called the Second Miscellany, including translations from Theocritus, Lucretius, and Horace. This Preface is exceedingly characteristic of Dryden, and contains some criticisms thrown out by the way which are of interest and instruction, beyond the province of translation.

"There are many," he says, "then, who understand Greek and Latin, and yet are ignorant of their mother tongue. The proprieties and delicacies of the English tongue are known to few. To know them," he adds, "requires not only learning, *but experience of life and good society.* Most of our ingenious young men take some cried-up English poet for their model and imitate him.

"It appears necessary that a man should be a nice critic in his mother tongue before he attempts to translate a foreign language. Neither is it sufficient that he be able to judge of words and style, but he must be a master of them too: *he must perfectly understand his author's tongue and absolutely command his own.*

"So that to be a thorough translator he must be a thorough poet."¹

"Neither is it enough to give his author's sense in good English in poetical expressions and in musical numbers; there remains a yet harder task, and it is a secret of which few translators have sufficiently thought. *It is the maintaining the character of an author which distinguishes him from all others, and makes him appear that individual poet whom you would interpret.*"

He then complains that the translators have not preserved the difference between Virgil and Ovid, but have confounded their several talents, and compares them to Sir Peter Lely, who "drew many graceful pictures, but few that were like, because he always studied himself more than those who sat to him." "In such translations," he says, "I can easily distinguish the hand which performed the work, but I cannot distinguish one poet from another."

The sum and substance of Dryden's remarks then is, that the best translation is translation with reasonable latitude, not mechanically or servilely reproductive, but loyal and faithful both to sense and style, not literal but liberal. And this is the view of all the best translators. It is true that an eminent poet and translator of our time, Robert Browning, in the Preface to his version of the "Agamemnon," holds a brief for *literal* as against *liberal* rendering. He maintains that a word-for-word translation gives the best notion of the original, and that if the reader

¹ Compare Chapman's Preface to his translation of the Iliad.

wants embellishment he can put it in for himself. Browning was a genius, a poet of originality, and a masculine thinker, and anything he advances seriously should be seriously considered. But in this case he put himself out of court. His love, his passion for the great writers of Greece, does credit to his heart rather than his head. His biographer tells us that he refused to admit the pretensions of even the best of them to be masters of style, and wrote his "Agamemnon" partly to expose the folly of those pretensions.¹ In other words, he does not appreciate in them that of which as a poet he was most in need, and which they could have given him; namely, artistic form. The result is an "Agamemnon" reflected in the distorting mirror of Browning's manner. That there is vigour and fire in his version is of course true, as there must be in everything he touched. But if he says that Æschylus is obscure, he has given us *obscurum per obscuriorem*, and the scholar who said that he could just make it out with the aid of the original had reason as well as wit on his side. It is true that a perfectly literal translation may be best for two persons—for him who knows the original, and for him who, without knowing the original, is himself a man of great creative imagination, and can reclothe the dry bones with flesh and blood and beauty. But a translation is not meant only or mainly for such readers, and Browning is not consistent. He does not give us a really literal version. He throws it into a certain form, but

¹ "Life and Letters of Robert Browning," by Mrs Sutherland Orr, p. 308.

it is the form not of Æschylus or anything resembling Æschylus, but of Browning.

Further, against the great authority of Browning may be quoted the authority, far greater in this matter, of the master to whom he owed so much, D. G. Rossetti. Rossetti was one of the most practised and unfailing translators of his own or any time. No one probably was ever more highly sensitive to the impression he wished to convey, more passionate in the desire to convey it. Arbitrary, wilful, he, if any ever did, formed his opinions for himself, and they may be trusted to be sincere. What does he say then on this point? In the Preface to the first edition of "Dante and his Circle," he writes:—

"The life-blood of rhythmical translation is this commandment, that a good poem shall not be turned into a bad one. The only true motive for putting poetry into a fresh language must be to endow a fresh nation as far as possible with one more possession of beauty. Poetry not being an exact science, literalness of rendering is altogether secondary to this chief law. I say literalness, not fidelity, which is by no means the same thing. When literalness can be combined with what is this primary condition of success, the translator is fortunate, and must strive his utmost to unite them. When such an object can only be attained by paraphrase, that is the only path."

Such is the canon of the translator of the "Ballad of Dead Ladies," as it was that of the translator of "Omar Khayyam."¹ And what Rossetti says of rhythmical translation is, of

¹ See Edward Fitzgerald's Preface to his version of the "Agamemnon."

course, equally good in principle of all translation of artistic style, whether in poetry or prose.

It is indispensable then in translating, whether from poetry or prose, that the translator should preserve the essentials of the style and character of the original. And to do this it is obvious that he must be careful first of all to consider what in each case these are. The critic, as Dryden saw, must precede and underlie the translator. This is what Matthew Arnold, a consummate critic, saw so clearly, and brought out so forcibly in those delightful Lectures on translating Homer, alluded to already, lectures which everyone who aspires to translate should, to use Horace's phrase, "thumb night and day." He begins by laying down four main characteristics of Homer, all four of which are so essential that the translator can neglect no single one; and he then points out how, by neglecting one or more, the various translators of Homer have failed so far in various ways.

But, as appears in the course of Matthew Arnold's disquisition, in translating poetry it is not enough to preserve the style; there is yet another consideration of the highest importance, the consideration of the *form*. This is the point in which, as we saw, Dryden is weakest, partly because his time was weak in form, partly because it was limited. From the large freedom in spirit and expression of the Elizabethans, from their spacious time and its melodious burst, English poetry gradually declined, nor did it expand again until the dawn of the Romantic movement in the early years of our own century. Gray felt and struggled against the restriction with the feeling he has so well

expressed in the "Stanzas to Mr Bentley." Dryden perhaps did not feel it, for Dryden was Titanic, not Olympian, a giant, not a god; but he was limited by it. For those who feel it, and in proportion as they feel it, form must always be one of the great problems and difficulties of the translator. It is the superadded difficulty which makes any translation of poetry often so hopeless. It is a barrier set between language and language, between literature and literature. All forms are not congenial or even possible to all languages. Even when the same forms are common to two or more languages, they are common, but with differences. The Latin Hexameter, the Latin Pentameter, the Latin Alcaic and Lyric, even when a great Latin artist attempts to minimise the difference, are felt by us to be quite different from the Greek.

Now form is of the essence of much, nay of most, poetry. *Die Kunst ist nur Gestaltung*, says Goethe, "Art is only the giving of Form." Although for certain reasons it is a common and in some ways commendable practice to translate poetry into prose, no one doubts that an enormous loss is at once involved by that process. What, then, is to be done with form by the translator? The perfect translation undoubtedly requires that the form, as well as the style and sense, should be transferred. This is the first and best method. And there are some languages as between which and cases in which this transference can be effected fairly adequately. Form can often be transferred from German into English, and English into German, though the absence of terminations in English and the consequently more monosyllabic

character and deficiency in double rhymes of English constitutes a difficulty with which every translator is familiar. Again the heroic couplet, with a difference, is common to French and English. Boileau can be translated into the style of Dryden or Pope, and *vice versâ*. So again the Sonnet borrowed from Italian has been naturalised in England, and Italian sonnets can, allowing for differences of ending and rhyme, be sufficiently rendered into English.

But the cases in which the same form and mould are naturally common to two countries and languages are very limited. The next question is, can exotic forms be naturalised? To some extent this can perhaps be done. In the first place many, perhaps most, of the forms which seem native and indigenous have originally been imported. It is an experiment always worth trying. The result will often be beautiful, even if it is not absolutely what is aimed at. Tennyson's Alcaics and Hendecasyllabics and Galliambics—be they, what is disputed, syllabically and prosodically exact or not—do not produce just the same effect and impression as the similar metres used by Catullus, Alcæus, and Horace, but have a charm of their own. The exquisite metrification, too little appreciated, of the Jubilee Ode does not even suggest to many ears the rhythm of *Collis o Heliconii*, on which it is based, but it is a beautiful addition to English metres. The same may be said of many of Mr Swinburne's marvellous and brilliant experiments. There is then always much to be said for attempts to translate into the "metre of the original." Such a careful and conscientious

volume as Professor Robinson Ellis's renderings of Catullus, done in this manner, not only aids the English reader to form an idea of Catullus, but discovers new possibilities in the English language. But for perfect translation, it is necessary not only that a form be possible, but that it be natural, and, if not familiar, at least so congenial that it may hereafter become familiar. Here again the first canon of translation has its force: "A translation must read like an original." That being so, then it is almost imperative for the translator to adopt a form which is already familiar, and perhaps this rule might be laid down, that no form or metre can be happily used in translation in which a master in the language of the translation could or would not naturally write an original poem. Translation metres are no more permissible than translation English.

A crucial instance of the question of transference of metres is the Hexameter. Is the Hexameter an English metre, and can it be used to translate the Greek and the Latin Hexameter? The history of the attempts to acclimatise the Hexameter in England is very interesting, but too long to be recited here. A pleasing though not great poem has been written by Longfellow in English Hexameter, and some beautiful, though not quite commandingly or convincingly beautiful, effects have been there attained. Clough used the metre with more strength and better result. But neither Longfellow's nor Clough's¹ Hexameters, nor again Kingsley's, recall or suggest the general ring, or any single rhythm or combination of rhythms, of either

¹ Cp. Clough's "Letters of Parepidemus," No. II.

Homer or Virgil. They do not echo either the "surge and thunder" of the Iliad or Odyssey, or the "stateliest measure ever moulded by the lips of man." Unless, then, something very different, something much more, can be made of the Hexameter in English than has yet been made, the Hexameter cannot be used to translate the Greek or Latin Hexameter. It is possible that a great artist may yet arise and enormously develop the capacities of the Hexameter, and it may then be used. Matthew Arnold thought it might be made a possible metre. The beautiful but too brief fragment of translation he quoted from Dr Hawtrey seemed at first sight to justify this faith. But Matthew Arnold's own attempts are, it must be confessed, failures. Mr Robert Bridges' most interesting and masterly prosodic Hexameters have shown what can be done in English with the metre as a vehicle of the Epistolary style of Horace, but Mr Bridges has not attempted its heroic use.

The Germans claim to have succeeded better with the Hexameter. Perhaps it may be allowed that they have succeeded slightly better. The Hexameter has now at any rate this advantage in Germany, that a thoroughly popular poem by a poet and artist of the first order has been written in it. German, moreover, would appear to be a language which lends itself to translation. It is plastic: like the sculptor's clay, it takes the mould of any form, and in setting and becoming itself, does not necessarily break. The structure of French, on the other hand, is essentially crystalline. It must arrange itself in a few mathematically determined patterns. It has an admirable lucidity and

brilliance, but little plasticity. And this plasticity of German applies to metre as well as to sense. It would perhaps be unfair to say that the literary standard in Germany is not so high as in England or France, considering the excellence reached by Goethe or Heine, but this may perhaps be said that, according to the capacity of the German language, the Hexameter has been more successfully adopted in German than in English. But the German Hexameter would certainly seem to be nearer to the English than it is to the Greek, and the English Hexameter should, of course, be used for translating a German Hexameter poem such as "Hermann und Dorothea."

The case of the Pentameter in English is much the same as that of the Hexameter, excepting that perhaps even less attempt has been made, and with less success, to naturalise the Pentameter, and the whole matter may be summed up in the well-known lines of the late Laureate—

"Hexameters no worse than daring Germany gave us,
Barbarous experiments, barbarous Hexameters."

If then a metre, a form cannot be transplanted or transferred without losing more than is gained, what is the translator to do? He must do what he had to do with the words and style. He must try to find what is on the whole an equivalent. He must consider what are the main and essential characteristics of the metre and style of the original, and what metre in his own language will on the whole best contain and give back those characteristics. And he will be helped here, as elsewhere, by considering analogies, by considering what

authors and what pieces, in his own language, generally resemble his original, and what have been the forms adopted by them.

He may further, in an analogous though different metre, preserve much of the essence of the form of the original, its movement, its alliteration and assonance. On this point it would be difficult to find better precept or example than those of that well-known master of translation and composition in English, Latin, and Greek, C. S. Calverley. As his biographer points out, in his renderings both into and from the ancient languages, where it was possible, he preserved, with extraordinary skill and fidelity, form for form, cadence for cadence. When it was not, he showed wonderful tact in selecting a form which was analogous and sympathetic.

A consideration of this point would have saved translators from many deplorable errors at the outset of their work. It would have saved us from what Matthew Arnold so well calls the "detestable dance" of Dr Maginn's Homeric Ballads:

"And scarcely had she begun to wash
Ere she was aware of a grisly gash;"

and from the not detestable but deplorable mistake which led so good a scholar and man of letters, and translator too in other fields, as Professor Conington, into thinking that the stately grace, the melancholy majesty of Virgil could possibly be preserved in a rattling imitation of Scott. Scott has a music, a music cheerful, breezy, martial, noble. It is capable of a sadness and of an elevation of its own, but it is no more like that of Virgil than a pibroch or the strains of a drum and

five band are like a funeral march of Chopin rendered with a full orchestra.

The metre of Homer and Virgil must remain a difficulty for the translator, but more may probably be done with blank verse, the recognised English vehicle of the Epic, than has yet been done. Tennyson's two experiments with Homer, more especially the second and less known piece, "Achilles over the Trench," show this. Not even this has all the qualities of Homer, but it has many. It is, as Mr H. W. Paul pointed out in a review not long after the poet's death, astonishingly faithful, even literal. But the secret of it lies in the inimitable choice of words and combination of words, and in the management and variation of the rhythm. Tennyson's view about Virgil was that, if translated into English, he ought to be translated into Miltonic blank verse, and he used to quote certain passages of "Paradise Lost" as being eminently Virgilian in their movement.¹ Of the characteristics of Virgil he has, of course, shown, in his exquisite poem "To Virgil," that he was a most sympathetic lover and judge, and it is to be profoundly regretted that he did not include among his experiments at least one or two translations from that author.

Meanwhile the many experiments made in translating both Homer and Virgil are singularly instructive to the translator. In the case of these consummate authors it is now recognised that a final translation can hardly be expected. Different

¹ Cf. *Mem.* the Wordsworth's letter to Lord Lonsdale, Feb. 5, 1829. ("Memoir of W. Wordsworth," by Chr. Wordsworth, vol. ii., p. 70.)

translations bring out different sides and portions of their excellence: Dryden the virility and rhetoric of Virgil, William Morris the romance and glamour, Lord Bowen the majesty and rolling harmony, and so on. This point was well put by the late F. W. A. Myers in his *Essay on Virgil*,—for its length one of the most suggestive and original criticisms of Virgil ever written. He has himself given some specimens of translation from Virgil in the Heroic couplet, if that can still be called the Heroic couplet to which he has given an entirely new and original colour and character. In some renderings printed now a long time ago, but never, we believe, published, he achieved perhaps an even greater success, and one very curious and instructive. Few would imagine or ever believe that it would be possible to translate Virgil successfully into the metre and stanza of Tennyson's "Dream of Fair Women." But those who know Mr Myer's renderings will admit that an astonishing degree of success has been attained. The lesson probably is, that while the general form of the metre is much, a great deal may be done by the employment of the secrets of poetic sound and diction within the general form of the metre. Of these secrets Mr Myers was a special master, and it is much to be desired that he should give us some larger and longer specimens of what he could accomplish by applying them to the rendering of Virgil. The success of Dryden—not always, and especially not now, sufficiently recognised—is due in the same way to what is done within the metre. The Heroic couplet, as we said, is trammelling and unsuited to the rendering of Virgil, but a careful

study of Dryden's Virgil reveals unsuspected degrees of labour, art, and resulting beauty in his individual phrases and combinations.

But there are places where the Heroic couplet is suitable, where it helps and does not hinder the translator. It is suited, as Dryden discovered, and Pope still further displayed, for epigram, for rhetoric, for argument, for balancing and pointing antithesis, and so for satire or criticism, or again for conveying a certain urbane, modish artificiality, as of brilliant but not quite heartfelt or natural conversation. Hence it translates, and translates well, two different styles and metres—the Elegiac of Ovid, and the Hexameter satire of Horace or Juvenal. The conclusion of the couplet within itself in the Ovidian Elegiac is admirably represented by the same conclusion within itself in the Heroic couplet, while there is the same opportunity when required of breaking through and carrying on. It would not be difficult to press this parallelism and correspondence further. There is, of course, considerable flexibility in the Heroic couplet, and it may be noted that Professor Conington, who failed so conspicuously with Virgil owing to his choice of a metre, more than balanced his failure by as great a success in his rendering of Horace's Satires and Epistles. The Preface in which he explains the peculiar character of Horace's satiric style is for any who care for these niceties most excellent and valuable reading. So it may be added in his Preface to his translation of the *Æneid*, a large part of which is devoted to showing why he ought not to have adopted the metre he has adopted.

That for the purposes of translation, where the

metre cannot be absolutely reproduced, much may be done with an approximate or correspondent metre, is shown again conspicuously in the case of the Iambic. The Iambic beat is, of course, common to Greek, Latin, and English, but the uses made of it and the effects produced in practice are somewhat different. The great Greek Iambic line, the line of the dialogue of Greek drama, is, of course, the Senarian, consisting of six Iambics or their equivalents. The corresponding line in English contains only five. The Greek line is therefore a little longer than the English, and, considering that translation tends to be longer than the original, it is difficult for the translator to reproduce line by line. Yet by manipulation this may often be done. But, what is far more important, the movement, what Dryden calls the "breakings," the stresses, and pauses may be so reproduced and followed that the difference in the length of the line is hardly felt. Some of Swinburne's lines in such "imitative" poems as "Atalanta" or "Erectheus" ring with an absolutely Greek echo. As a specimen of translation, where the form of the original is followed as closely almost as it is possible, Mr Symond's rendering of the famous *tirade* of Medea, given in his "Studies of the Greek Poets," may be cited.

To go through other metres would be wearisome and unnecessary. Suffice it to say, that now after the great continuous effort that has been spent from the beginning of our century upon technique and metrification, including the return to and revival of the Elizabethan modes, and the adoption of certain foreign styles, the English translator has

or may have at command a greater wealth of diction and music, of vocabulary and metres, than he ever had before. Every poet who, like Coleridge or Shelley, Keats or Tennyson, Swinburne or Bridges, really enlarges the music and colour of the English tongue, adds to the translator's possibilities not only by making him more susceptible to tones and *nuances* unnoticed before in the music and colour of the great models of other tongues, but by furnishing him with the appropriate medium in which to reproduce them. To adduce a single instance, there are few more entirely successful pieces of translation than Sir Richard Jebb's poetic rendering of Catullus' lovely little lyric, *Dianæ sumus in fide*. It is not, perhaps, to be called exactly Swinburnian, yet could it have been written before Swinburne's influence had been felt?

Before we leave the topic of poetic translation a word ought perhaps to be said about the much-vexed question of rhyme. Rhyme has, if anything ever had, the "defects of its qualities." It is an undoubted beauty, but it is an undoubted fetter. It is hardly found in Latin and Greek. Is it natural, is it necessary to introduce it in translating from these languages? The answer would appear to be that it belongs to what is called the genius of the English language. It comes in under the head of idiom and equivalent, and, subject to the consideration stated above, should be used as such. So far only a few rhythms in English have been proved to be really successful or really pleasing without rhyme. Among them, it is true, is the greatest, namely, blank verse. It is an advantage

for the original poet and the translator that it is free from this trammel. But blank verse can only be used, as we said above, for certain purposes. In the lyric, rhyme seems almost necessary to counterbalance the loss involved in forsaking the form of the original Latin or Greek. Certainly the few undoubtedly good specimens we have of verse translation from Latin and Greek lyrics or elegiacs—such as those by Ben Jonson, Dryden, Shelley, or Rossetti, or Cory's "They told me, Heraclitus—they told me you were dead"—go far to justify the use of rhyme.¹ This last piece does more: so far as it goes, it thoroughly justifies the liberal as against the literal method. It is not literal. It does not follow the form of the original exactly, it does not exactly follow the words; yet it is not mere imitation—it is successful translation. It gives the value and the spirit of the words, the value and the soul of the form. It is true and moving poetry, the work of one who was a poet. And the last word on translation of poetry is Dryden's, "To be a thorough translator of poetry a man must be a thorough poet."

It remains to say a few words about prose translation, and especially about the translation of poetry into prose. To-day, when the feeling for style and technique in language is widespread, it is perhaps not so necessary as it would have been a short time ago, but for the completeness of the argument it is necessary to state that writing prose is a fine art as well as writing poetry, and

¹ Since this essay was written, Dr Gilbert Murray, in his brilliantly successful translations of Euripides, has justified on a large scale, and in the most convincing manner, the use of rhyme.

that prose differs from poetry in degree rather than in kind. Yet even now this is not always properly appreciated. We speak, it is true, in the schools, of "Prose Composition," but we forget the full significance of the word "composition," and most persons fortunately, like M. Jourdain, speak and write prose all their lives without knowing it. The masters of language at all times have understood it. Dryden in a most happy phrase speaks of running his thoughts into verse or giving them "the other harmony of prose." The ancient masters, the Greeks and Romans, understood it, the Greeks pre-eminently. They laboured their prose composition as carefully as their verse. Isocrates spent ten years over a single Panegyric; Plato in his eightieth year was still touching up his Dialogues—readjusting their *coiffure*, as the Greek phrase has it. After his death tablets were found on which he had experimented in the order of words—exercises like the pencillings of the great Italian artists. Style is hardly less, perhaps more, a characteristic of prose than of verse, and no one who is sensitive to style, who feels the quality of the prose style of Plato or Cicero or Livy, Bossuet or Buffon, Addison, Sir Thomas Browne, Burke, Gibbon, Goethe, or again of those nearer our own time, De Quincey, Newman, Ruskin, Froude, Pater, will need to be told that the secrets are as subtle or as many as those of verse. But what is important is that they are for the most part the same as those of verse. Order, rhythm, alliteration, assonance, the choice of words, and the combination of words, the grouping of phrases and sentences, of paragraphs and periods, these are among them.

The skilful joining or introduction, or setting, the *callida junctura* which makes an old word new, or prevents a new one from jarring or startling, belongs as much to prose as to verse. It follows then that, where there are style and form in a prose original, that style and form must be preserved in a translation. It follows, too, that in translating poetry into prose much may and must be done in this direction.

The translation of poetry into prose is necessarily somewhat of a *pis aller*. It involves a large and certain loss; but it brings, too, some gain. The freedom of the "other harmony of prose" enables the translator to follow more closely and faithfully the detail and the inner and incidental movement of many originals than he could do if trammelled by a set form, and where the form of the original cannot be preserved this becomes so much pure gain. In proportion as sensitiveness to the minutiae and the differences of the originals has grown, and with this sensitiveness the despair of reproducing them, this practice has gained ground. Prose renderings, like those of Munro, Butcher, Lang, Leaf, Myers, Mackail, J. Jackson, and others, often rise to high literary beauty, and are felt to be not only the most useful, but the most satisfying translations available. Tennyson himself approved this practice, as we now know from the fine version of the Sixth Iliad printed by his son at the end of vol. vi. of the new annotated edition of the Poems.

When this modern style of prose translation of verse really began, it might be difficult to say. Goethe suggested to his own countrymen, as a new thing, that it would be well to translate

Homer into prose. But this had been successfully done and defended by Madame Dacier in French a century earlier. And there is one much older version of poetry, the most successful of all, with which we are all familiar; so familiar that we often forget to think of it as a specimen of translation at all. It is, of course, the Authorised Version of the Bible. Large portions of the Old Testament are definitely poetic in form, and perhaps the larger portion of the whole is essentially poetic in character and structure. The poetic character has certainly not been lost, but shines through in several of the more famous versions, in the Vulgate, in the Lutheran German, in the French, and not least in our own version. It is to be seen, of course, most sustainedly in the Psalms (the Prayer-book Version usually, though not always, shows it best) and in the Song of Songs, in Job and in the lyrical pieces contained in the other books—the Song to the Well, the song of Deborah, the lament of David, and so on; but it is not less striking in the Prophets, or even in much of the historical and philosophical books—Genesis, Ecclesiastes, and parts of the Apocrypha. A Scotch minister, it is related, once lost his pulpit by preaching on the lyrical beauty of the Psalms, but it will now be held not impermissible to use this example, and to say that of the possibility and possibilities, of translation of poetry into prose, of the lines on which it should go and the canons it should observe, there is no greater proof or monument, and none fortunately which has had greater influence, than that afforded by these versions of ancient Hebrew poetry, and especially by our own.

Such are some of the main features, conditions, and principles of the Art of Translation. To draw them out into rules or suggestions for practice would not be difficult, but this would be better done in a separate article. That it is really an art, and a fine art, full of difficulties, yet full of possibilities, enough has perhaps been said to show. That it has had a considerable, nay a great, influence on all the great Aryan literatures but one, is clear.

Nor in this regard ought the Semitic literatures to be forgotten, with their immensely important versions of the Scriptures and the Arabic renderings of Jewish and also of Greek authors, especially Aristotle and Plato, the range and influence of which extended from Spain to India. But translation has had another very important influence, one never perhaps more important than at the present, one still likely to increase—namely, in education. That translation is one of the best, perhaps the best, of literary exercises, whether it come as the self-imposed discipline of the young writer or the set task of the schoolboy, is beyond a doubt. In the teaching of the classics, as they are called in this country, nothing has been more striking than the growth in importance of written translation. Whereas original composition, in Latin especially, the original copy of verse or the Latin essay—"Latin writing," as it was significantly called—was at the beginning of the century the prevailing exercise and translation the exception, now the latter is the rule, the former a mere survival. "Translation is the death of understanding." That may be true for the last stage and for the finished scholar; but that translation

is the beginning, the quickening of understanding, is the universal belief on which the modern system of education is based. In Germany the revised Prussian code gave it a larger place than before. Both in Germany and among ourselves it has been recognised that real translation, literary translation, not mere literal word-for-word construing, is what is truly educational. At the present moment, as applied to Latin and Greek, it seems to have reached the highest possible pitch, and there can be little doubt that it is the secret of the efficiency as an educational method of the so-called classical training. One of the reasons why the same mental training is not attained through the modern languages is that the difficulty of translation from them is necessarily less; the other, that the experiment has never been tried in the same way. If the same effect or anything like what has been attained through Latin and Greek is to be attained through French and German, the present system of translation must be greatly expanded. It is not enough to make the student translate ordinary colourless exercises or letters commercial or otherwise in English into the same in French or German. He must be made to distinguish, to appreciate, and to copy the various styles, generic and individual—the style of the orator, the historian, the philosopher, the poet, of Bossuet or Vergniaud, of Buffon or Béranger, of Goethe or Heine, of Kant or Von Ranke, of Machiavelli or Leopardi.

Then, and only then, will the student trained in modern languages learn the gamut of these tongues and of his own.

IV

DANTE AND THE ART OF POETRY

It may seem superfluous, if not impertinent, at this time of day to remind the world that Dante is a poet—not less than a poet, but also not more than a poet; a poet greater than most if not quite all others, more comprehensive, of more universal appeal, yet after all and before all a poet, with the merits, but also—for better and for worse—with the limitations, of a poet. Yet it is precisely at this time of day that the reminder is needed. Dante was certainly never more widely praised, probably never more highly appreciated; but he is in some danger of being most praised and most appreciated, not for that which he most truly desired to be, and that which he most truly is, but for the accessories and accidents rather than the essence of his work. Dante is a whole so vast that his reader is oftentimes tempted to forget the whole in the parts. Dante as a philosopher, a politician, an historian, a geographer, an astronomer, a geometrician—Dante as an Aristotelian, a Platonist, even by anticipation an Hegelian—Dante as a Guelph, a Ghibelline, an Imperialist, a Catholic, enlists successively the several interests of those who come to

him with special interests of their own. Dante is all these or something of all these, but all these would matter little, would not make Dante, if he were not above all a poet. And this is what he himself sought and strove to be. To be a poet, to succeed as a poet, to be even a poet laureate, recognised, decorated—this was the instinct of his childhood, the inspiration of his youth, the task of his manhood. And if it was not only in order to be a poet that he laboured at philosophy and science and rhetoric, still it was to this end that he bent all the powers of his intellect, on this that he concentrated all the mighty resources of his heart.

His own countrymen in simpler ages nearer his own time recognised this fact beyond a doubt. Boccaccio says plainly that it was ambition that made Dante a poet, ambition for fame and glory, and that he chose this calling because it led, like the life of heroic deeds, to a crown—because the poet is the rival of the hero; and there is much in Dante's own language, which indeed Boccaccio is but echoing, to confirm this view.

Of all purely human energies, Dante ranks that of the poet highest. The place occupied by the poets, and the parts assigned to them, in the "Divine Comedy," are very remarkable. The name of poet, we read, is that which honours most and most endures. The great Pagan poets are stationed within the gate of Hell, it is true, but in a region apart, a region of light amid the darkness; they have such (honour¹) that it separates them

¹ In the lines which describe their fate ("Inferno," iv. 71 *et seq.*), the words "onrevol, onori, onranza, onrata, onorate," are curiously repeated, till the whole passage may be said literally

from the manner of the rest, the honourable name which sounds of them on earth gaining them grace and advancement in heaven. As Pagans they must endure the doom of Pagans, but of honour, apart from divine justice, none have more. It is theirs to pass, dryshod as it were, over the rivulet of Eloquence, and to enter through the Seven Gates into the Noble Castle, where, in a serene air, neither sad nor glad, they rest for ever among the wise and the bold. Such is the spot where "Orpheus and where Homer are." But not Orpheus and Homer only. It is enough to wear the name of a true poet to gain admittance to their elysium, and Dante includes in it not only "Horace the satirist," Lucan and Ovid, Plautus and Terence, Juvenal and Persius, Euripides and Simonides, but others who are to us, and must have been in a still greater measure to Dante himself, little more than names—Agathon and Antiphon, Cæcilius and Varro. All have equal honour with the kings and conquerors of the world, and of the realms of the mind, with Cæsar and Cicero, with Plato and Aristotle, with Hippocrates and Galen, with Hector and with Saladin the generous. So again, in the great passage which opens the "Paradiso," we read that the triumph of the poet is as high and rare as that of the Cæsar. "Joy should there be in Delphi when any thirsts for the seldom plucked laurel."

But this is not all. To the poets the poets to re-echo with "honour, honour, honour to them, eternal honour evermore."

This sort of repetition, it may be noted, is a well-known figure in Provençal poetry, and is known as the "mot tornat." A play on these same or kindred words occurs in the "Ensenhamen" of Sordello, vv. 1050 ff.

have ever been kind, and the sweetest and aptest praises of poetry have in all ages been those penned by the brethren of the craft. But no great poet has ever, in all history, honoured another as Dante has honoured Virgil. The position of Virgil in the "Divine Comedy" is unique in literature. The language which Dante holds towards him at meeting and in parting—the language which he makes Sordello and Statius hold towards him, with its intensity of grateful love and admiration, implies before everything Dante's view of poetry, and of poets such as Virgil. Virgil is Dante's "Author," a word perhaps of special meaning on Dante's lips, and his Master. Dante can plead with him by virtue of long study and of mighty love. Again and again he quotes his words or his thoughts. A single epithet of Virgil avails with him to lift one who in the "Æneid" is a mere name, a Pagan princeling, with Trajan and Constantine to a place more advanced than that of Virgil himself, high and bright in bliss.¹ We have only to look under the name Virgilio in Dr Toynbee's Dictionary to see collected together the titles by which Dante apostrophises the Roman poet—his loved, his dear, his wise, his true guide, the sea of all wisdom, the dear pedagogue, the lofty doctor, the mightiest of the Muses. Sordello, that distant and disdainful spirit, motionless and unperturbed in his pride like a couchant lion, leaps to life and love as he greets his brother Mantuan. Statius, just released from Purgatory, would be willing to spend another year amid its dolours only to have lived on earth with Virgil.

¹ "Rhipheus justissimus unus," "Æn," ii. 426. Cp. "Par.," xx. 68.

He forgets his condition in the desire to "clasp him, every word of whom is a dear token of love." In the consummate moment when Dante himself at last sees Beatrice, his first impulse is to turn to Virgil with Virgil's own words, those words which doubtless had often risen to his lips in real life, "I feel the footprints of the olden flame." And when he finds that his confidant is gone, he forgets even his new bliss and gain in passionate weeping for his loss.

All this is much, but more than all, if we consider the profound and calculated significance and proportion of all Dante's important figures, is the mere fact of Virgil's position in the poem. Poetry, in the person of Virgil, is Dante's guide through two-thirds of his journey. Poetry is the highest embodiment of human wisdom, the purest glory of the human race, the best human pilot of humanity.

But Virgil, it may be said, and to a less degree Statius and the other great ancients, are seen by Dante through a haze of conventional reverence; they are heroic figures; they are traditional glories—mythic, symbolical, and as such accepted and partly taken on trust by Dante. Even if it were so, Dante's love of poetry, the importance he attaches to it as such, is not less conspicuous in his mention of the poets of his own time.

"Even like the two sons that Statius tells of, when they beheld again their mother, even such was I when I heard name himself the best father of me and mine who ever used sweet and grateful rhymes of love.

"And I to him: Your sweet ditties, so long as

modern use shall last, will make dear their very ink."

It is thus he introduces Guido Guinicelli. But Guido tells him he can point to a still better master.

There is a warmth of special personal interest in the passage which follows. It is of course Dante's practice to introduce everywhere his personal friends and foes, to embody his loves and hates in concrete examples. His dealing with poetry is no exception, and throws a light on the history of the poet and his art. It has sometimes been said that no good art is produced except in a circle or a school, a brotherhood or a clique. Like all rules, this has its exceptions, but Dante is not one. Despite his tremendous individuality and originality, he certainly comes before us at first as a member of a little coterie or clique of poets, a youthful brotherhood, striving, as so many youthful brotherhoods have striven, to strike out a new style. And nowhere does the *camaraderie* of such a brotherhood receive more touching or noble glorification than where Dante introduces his own early poetic friends and compeers into his immortal song. The idea of "Dante and his Circle" has been made familiar to us by the genius and learning of Mr D. G. Rossetti. In the words which Dante puts into the mouth of Guido Guinicelli, it is perhaps not fanciful to discover an echo or reminiscence of the opinions, possibly of the very language, held by this little coterie, when they lived and talked together, in the first infallibility of youth:—

"As for ditties of love and prose of romance,"

says Guido, "this one excelled all who wrote them. Let the fools prate who believe that the Limousin¹ is before him. So the elder generation cried up Guittone of Arezzo, until at last the truth prevailed."²

The better master whom Guido introduces is Arnaut Daniel, the Provençal poet, an imitation of whose language Dante proceeds to build, so to speak, into the walls of his own cathedral.

That Dante should thus honour these poets of his own and somewhat preceding times is to us remarkable. But what emphasises his action, and what is still more significant of his place among his poetic friends, is that we have it on record that Cino da Pistoia, a contemporary poet who knew Dante well, makes it a serious complaint that Dante omitted to mention yet another minor poet of the time, one Onesto di Boncima.

Cino finds two faults in the "Divina Commedia." Two faults—so many and yet no more in so great, so large a work—curiosity is roused to hear what they are.

"One is that holding with Sordello high
Discourse, and with the rest who sang and taught,
He of Onesto di Boncima nought
Has said, who was to Arnault Daniel nigh."³

¹ The Limousin is Girant de Borneil, of Essidueil, a castle near Limoges.

² "Purg.," xxvi. 120. See Butler and his note *ad loc.* See also "Academy," April 13th, 1889. Fra Guittone of Arezzo died in 1293, and thus belongs to the generation before Dante. He is coupled, in "Purg.," xxiv., with the Notary, Jacopo da Lentino, and Buonagiunta Urbiciani of Lucca.

³ Cino da Pistoia: Sonnet xii.; Rossetti's translation in "Dante and his Circle." Onesto di Boncima of Bologna was a doctor of laws. He is mentioned and quoted by Dante in the "V. E.," I., xv.: "Honestus, et alii poetantes Bononiae."

The passage about the two Guidos in the eleventh canto of the "Purgatory" is so well known as not to need quotation. The second Guido may be Cavalcanti, while it is often maintained that the third poet, who "perchance may chase both one and the other from the nest," is Dante himself. All worldly fame, even the poet's, is but a breath; but the phrase *La gloria della lingua* betrays Dante's feelings, and so does the curious expression, *Se non è giunta dall' etati grosse*.

Sordello, the good Sordello, has been already noticed. His prominence and importance in the "Commedia" can hardly be attributed to any cause but that he too was a poet, even if his attitude toward Virgil did not prove this.¹ The same would appear to be the reason of the place and part given to Folquet of Marseilles² in Paradise. A troubadour-bishop, he has the rare quality of uniting art and religion; he has passed from earthly to heavenly love; he is there where poetry finds its true end and explanation; there where one gazes into the art "which makes beautiful with so great affection"; there "where the good is discerned whereby the world on high turns that below."

¹ He is specially mentioned in the "De Vulg. Eloq.," I., xv. 8. "Sordellus de Mantua, qui tantus vir eloquentiae non solum in poetando sed quomodo loquendo patrium vulgare disseruit." Dante's view of him may have been further influenced by his having been in some sense his pioneer and precursor. It seems certain that Dante was indebted to Sordello's lament on the death of Blacatz for the idea of making him the "showman" of the princes in "Ante-Purgatory."

² "Par.," ix. 37. He, too, is mentioned in the "V. E.," II., vi., among the famous singers, the *dictatores illustres*, and a line of his is quoted.

Such passages are enough, and more than enough, to show what was Dante's chief earthly ambition, blended, it is true, with a higher aim which at first fosters and then overpowers it, but in which, though merged, it is not lost. It was to be a poet, a "regular" poet, a great poet like Virgil or Homer, one of the company of the sovereign bards, the sixth among such great intelligences. To write poetry was his overmastering instinct and interest from youth to age. Every mood, every phase, of his life lends itself to, passes into, this form of expression. He returns to it again and again, with wider views, with greater knowledge, with intenser passion. Foiled in his practical career, in exile and wandering he gives himself to this end. Poetry is to win all back for him. Worn, wasted, whitened with age, he is to conquer his obdurate country. He is to return in triumph to Florence, a poet recognised, admitted, accepted; and over the font where in infancy he was baptised he is to take the poet's crown of laurel:—¹

"Con altra voce omai, con altro vello
Ritornarò poeta, ed in sul fonte
Del mio battesimo prenderò 'l capello."

Such was Dante's personal and intellectual ambition. But why was it so? To be a true, a great poet—what did this mean for him, and how did he think it could be compassed? What, in other words, did Dante consider to be the art and function of the poet? What is this great poet's theory of poetry?

¹ Cp. "The Life," by Boccaccio, § 8, and del Virgilio's First Eclogue, vv. 42-44.

Have we the material for answering this question? Not perhaps altogether, but to a large extent we have. We have it partly in Dante's poems, partly in his prose works, which are largely analytical and critical. Poets, says Aristotle,¹ are of two kinds. Poetry is ἡ εὐφροῦς ἡ μαικῶν, the product of either a fine talent or a fine frenzy; or, to put it a little differently, poets are either conscious and self-critical or unconscious and instinctive. "Poetry," says one of the most gifted of our living poets—

"may be something more than an art or a science, but not because it is not, strictly speaking, a science or an art. There is a science of verse as surely as there is a science of mathematics; there is an art of expression by metre as certainly as there is an art of representation by painting. To some poets the understanding of this science, the mastery of this art, would seem to come by a natural instinct which needs nothing but practice for its development, its application, and its perfection. Others, by patient and conscientious study of their own abilities, attain a no less unmistakable and a scarcely less admirable success."²

The words of Aristotle were probably not known to Dante,³ but they were doubtless known to one of his first critical biographers, Lionardi Bruni,

¹ Aristotle, "Poetics," xvii. 2 (1455a), ed. Butcher. See also Professor Butcher's excellent comment on the same, p. 368, with note, and compare Matthew Arnold's preface to his "Selections from Byron," p. xvi.

² Swinburne, "Studies in Prose and Poetry," pp. 132, 133.

³ Dante almost certainly was not acquainted with the "Poetics" of Aristotle. See Moore, "Studies in Dante," First Series (1896), pp. 8 and 93. On the other hand, he seems to have known the "Ars Poetica" of Horace fairly well, and probably at first hand. *Ibid.*, 197.

who distinguishes between the poets who write by virtue of a certain innate force, which may be called *furore*, and those *poeti litterati e scientifici*, who compose *per istudio, per disciplina ed arte e per prudenza*, and adds: *e di questa seconda spezie fu Dante*.

And he is certainly right, though so inspired, so great, so forcible is Dante, such the fire, such the sweep and scope alike of his imagination and his passion, that he seems to unite both qualities. *Μανικός, εὐφύης*: fine frenzy, fine talent—the words seem coined to describe, as indeed they were perhaps suggested by, the contrast between Æschylus and Sophocles. That contrast, be it remembered, is not in truth the contrast of the inspired with the uninspired, of the artistic with the inartistic. None could truly say that Æschylus is not a consummate artist or that Sophocles is not divinely inspired. It is rather the contrast hinted above, of the conscious and the trained with the unconscious and natural artist. We may remember how Sophocles himself said to Æschylus: “You do what is right, Æschylus, but without knowing it.” Dante reminds us at first sight more of the elemental and spontaneous grandeur of Æschylus, but if we look more closely we find in him the calculated poise and finish of Sophocles. Not Sophocles himself was more self-critical. Goethe tells us that he “had nothing sent him in his sleep”: there was no page of his, as Carlyle says, but he well knew how it came there. Dante doubtless could and would have made the same profession. Nay more, alone among the greatest of the great poets, unless indeed we are to admit

this very Goethe to that crowning category, he has given us with some fulness an account of his views of poetry and of the theory of his practice.

The art of Homer, be it the art of a man or of a nation, is consummate. But of Homer, the artist, one or many, the maker or makers of the "Iliad" and "Odyssey," we know nothing. A few allusions tell us of the guise and manner of the Homeric minstrel, of his conception of inspiration, his mode of exposition, but that is all. Had chance preserved to us Sophocles' prose work on the Chorus, in which he combated the practice of the elder poets and defended his own, we should have known something perhaps of the theory of the most artistic of first-rate Greek poets about his art. Of Virgil's method of composition nothing is recorded save two or three interesting and not improbable traits. Shakespeare, in a few well-known and striking passages, flashes the illumination of his myriad-faceted mind on poetry and the poets. Milton, a more disciplined artist, in noble prose, reminding us of Dante, whom indeed he avowedly had before him, tells us what in aim and training a true poet should be, and discloses the aspiration and the creed with which he himself set about his great work. But Dante gives us far more than any of these. In his "Vita Nuova" we have Dante's "Wahrheit und Dichtung," the "Wahrheit und Dichtung" of a diviner nature than that of Goethe, the story of the growth of his soul, the passion of his boyhood and youth, with its reflection in his early songs and sonnets, and finally his resolve on the threshold of middle life to close that book

and open a new one only when years and study should have enabled him to write concerning his lady what "hath not before been written of any woman." In the "Convivio," written later in life, he returns upon this theme and philosophises it, giving us an elaborate account of his second period of study and self-discipline, and much dissertation upon both the subject and the method of poetry. Finally, in the book "De Vulgari Eloquentia," certainly projected after he had begun the "Convivio," and probably written later, he sets out the theory and grammar of his art.

To attempt such a task at all, to view poetry in this way as a science and an art with definite principles and even rules, may seem to some a little strange, especially in a poet; but in reality it is not so, and perhaps only appears so to the English reader. England is the very home of poetry, but it is precisely in England that its genesis is for the most part least understood. England, in art as in science, has been the country of individual genius, not of traditional schools, of intuition rather than of system. To the Italian, as to the Greek and Latin mind, it seems a natural or at any rate a familiar view. It is significant that in the "Lives" of Dante, alike that by Boccaccio and that by Bruni, there are found disquisitions on the "Art of Poetry." To Dante himself it was doubtless familiar from the first. He was brought up on the great classical Latin authors, with their exact forms and metres, and on the traditional comment and criticism which had come down along with them from antiquity. Though ancient they were not removed from him as they are from our-

selves by the barrier of a dead medium. Latin was still a living language, a living voice of poesy. So Dante doubtless acquired at school that art of the schools which he retained through life—the art of writing Latin verse; the art to which in his old age Joannes de Virgilio challenged him, and with which he replied to the challenge; the art with which he actually began perhaps to write the “Divine Comedy,” that art to which, however, he himself more than any other was by his own example and success to deal the death-blow.

But side by side with the older lore and practice of the schools, and the precept, and, to a slight extent, the example of his “master” Brunetto, he came under another and even more potent influence, that of the still new art of those living friends, slightly older or contemporary, among whom he found himself.

When and how Dante began his practice of the art of spontaneous poetry in the vernacular we do not know; but it is clear that it was very early in his career. He tells us himself that when his first great vision came to him he had already discovered for himself the art of expressing himself in rhyme, and it would appear that he was familiar with the idea of exchanging poems with those who were known poets of that day. The sonnet which stands first in the “Vita Nuova,” and which is the outcome of that vision, was certainly not Dante’s first essay in poetry. It is too good for a first attempt, and indeed he tells us himself that he has passed by many things which may be imagined by the pattern of those which he is giving.

The “Vita Nuova,” then, displays to us the

figure of one who was from the first a lover and a student of poetry. When the boy of nine met with the girl younger by a few months, and conceived the inspiration of his life, he was already potentially, but perhaps also actually, a poet. Possibly already, though probably not till later, he could apply to his feeling words from Homer: "She seemed the daughter not of mortal man, but of a God." Certainly from that hour his poetic impulse began. Poetry and love with Dante went ever hand in hand.

"Io mi son un che, quando
Amor mi spira, noto, ed a quel modo
Che detta dentro, vo significando."

This is the plain meaning or implication of the "Vita Nuova" itself, which it seems best to follow, notwithstanding the difficulties, as old as the "Vita" and "Compendio" of Boccaccio, to which Dr Moore has called attention.

As the book proceeds we see the practice of Dante gradually growing in scope and subtlety. Love is the spring and source, but love is not enough. Form and art are from the first apparent. Dante has all the forms of the *trovatori* at his command—the Sonnet, the Ballata, the Canzone. He uses these various forms as the nature of the occasion prompts or requires. This he implies in the introduction to the first Canzone. But he further varies the form, in its divisions, to suit the sense. Thus, Sonnet vii., he tells us, he does not divide, because "a division is only made to open the meaning of the thing divided," whereas Sonnet ix. is divided into as many as four parts, four

things being therein narrated, while the last sonnet of the "Vita Nuova" comprises five parts, and might, he says, even be divided *più sottilmente* than he has divided it.

Dante, then, all along shows in his attitude towards poetry several marked characteristics which we must never forget if we wish properly to appreciate his poetry and his place among poets. From the first he regards poetry as being definitely an art, an art with a tradition and examples, an art which may, nay, which must, be learned from the examples, and from those who have the tradition. Certain it is that directly he appears in his own strength he appears as a professed and we may even say a professional poet. As such apparently he was recognised and won some fame quite early, and when he qualified for full citizenship by joining the College of Physicians and Apothecaries, he was entered as Dante d' Aldighieri, Poeta Fiorentino. It is a tradition not incredible, perhaps not improbable, at any rate significant, that he became a Professor of Poetry at Ravenna, and lectured on the art to many pupils.¹

As a poet he lived, as a poet he became famous, as a poet, and perhaps in the garb of a poet, he was buried; and this attitude of the self-conscious avowed poet pervades all his prose works. In the "Vita Nuova," as we have seen, he distinctly takes up the position of a man of letters, and a critic of himself and of others. In the "Convivio," his second prose work, he goes further. His attitude there is very curious. The piece, especially the

¹ See the Prolegomena to Wicksteed and Gardner's "Dante and Giovanni del Virgilio," pp. 85, 86.

fourth treatise, is full of disquisitions on the art of poetry. Dante quotes the poets Virgil, Statius, Lucan, Juvenal; he discourses of the styles suitable to different themes, of the art of embellishing a poem in concluding it; but, above all, like some professors of fine art, he admits us to his studio, or rather converts it into a class-room, writes a poem as it were on the black board, and then explains, if not how, at least why all is done as it is. The letter to Can Grande adds a few touches on the kinds and parts of poetry, and especially, of course, of comedy, and the "Divine Comedy" in particular.

It is, however, in the "De Vulgari Eloquentia" that he sets out his view most systematically, and it is from this treatise that his attitude towards poetry as a formal art is to be gathered. If Dante really lectured on poetry this treatise may be the substance of his lectures; at least we may say that had he lectured on poetry this is what his lectures would have been like. For the treatise on the Vulgar Tongue is in reality a treatise *de Arte Poetica*.¹ As Boccaccio says of it, in the "Vita," "Dante wrote a *brochure* in Latin prose which he entitled 'De Vulgari Eloquentia,' in which he intended to instruct those who wished to learn the art of modern poetry, '*del dire in rima.*'" As its title runs, it is a treatise on language; but it is really a treatise on language as relative to poetry, on the vulgar or vernacular language as appropriate to the vernacular poetry of Dante's immediate predecessors, of his contemporaries and himself. It is therefore at once an historic document of

¹ In 1705 the Professorship of Poetry at Wittenberg was styled a Chair of Eloquence.

great value for Dante's time, and an analytical and critical work of still greater value for Dante's own theory of poetry. As we have it, it is imperfect and consists of only two books. There were to have been at least four.

The first is more strictly philological, and is devoted to discussing the genesis of the various languages of the world, with a view to discovering which is the best, or at any rate the best for the Italian poet. It ends by pronouncing that the best language for this purpose is the *Latinum vulgare illustre*, or grammatical vernacular of Italy. The second book, which is more strictly *de Arte Poetica*, needs more detailed consideration.

Dante begins by asking whether, this being established as the best language, those who write poetry in Italian should use it. On the surface, he says, the answer would appear to be yes, because—and the saying is notable for Dante's attitude towards poetry—*every one who writes verses ought to adorn or beautify his verse as much as possible*. But it should be with an appropriate beauty. The best horseman should have the best horse, since it is appropriate to him, and the best conception the best language. But the best conceptions can only exist where knowledge and talent are. Those who write poetry without knowledge and talent ought not to use the best language. A *bos ephippiatus*, or "a pig in a baldric," is not beautified, but rendered hideous and ridiculous. Again, not only not all poets, but not all themes, deserve the best language. How then are themes to be classified? *Salus, Venus, virtus*—these are the highest things, which ought to be treated in

the best manner ; and the best themes of verse are correspondingly, "prowess in arms," the "kindling of love," the "ruling of the will." So the best poets of the vulgar tongue have sung—Bertran de Born of the sword, Arnaut Daniel of love, Giraut de Borneil of righteousness, Cino da Pistoia of love, and his friend (Dante himself) of righteousness.

So much for language in general. Now of *form*. How, Dante asks, are these themes to be tied together? There are many forms which poets of the vulgar tongue have used, some the canzone, some ballads, some sonnets, some illegitimate and irregular modes. Of these we hold, says Dante, the canzone to be the most excellent. But what is the best form of the canzone? For many, says Dante, take their form by chance rather than as art dictates. And here we must remember, he says, that we have called the versifiers in the vulgar tongue for the most part poets, and poets certainly they are if we shall rightly consider poetry, which is nothing else than *feigning by means of rhetoric thrown into a musical form*—"Quae nihil aliud est quam fictio rhetorica in musicaque posita."

But though poets, they are different from the great, that is, the regular, poets, who have written poetry in the grand style, and with regular art, *magno sermone et arte regulari*, whereas these, as we have said, write as chance dictates. The more closely we imitate these great poets the more correctly shall we write. But the first thing is for each to choose a weight suited to his shoulders, even as our master Horace prescribed:—

"Sumite materiam vestris qui scribitis æquam
Viribus."

Next, when our theme is decided on, we must decide on the style, whether it shall be tragic, comic, or elegiac. If a tragic theme is to be ours, then we must employ the more noble vernacular, and must tie our canzone accordingly. But if a comic theme, then we must take now a middle, now a low, vernacular; if an elegiac theme, then nothing but humble or sad language will suit. Let us pass by the other styles and treat of the tragic style.

“And because, if we remember rightly, we proved that the highest is worthy of the highest, and because the tragic is the highest of styles, therefore those themes which need the highest treatment must be sung in this style alone, namely, the themes of valour, love, and virtue, and the thoughts to which they gave birth, that no accident may make them base.

“Let poets all and sundry, therefore, be warned, and discern well what we say; and when they intend to sing these themes absolutely, or the thoughts which flow absolutely and directly from them, let them first drink of Helicon, then tune their lyre to pitch and so take the plectrum with confidence, and begin in due form. But to make the canzone and the distinction as is fitting, there's the rub, *hoc opus et labor est*, since never without energy of genius and assiduity of art and an intimate acquaintance with the sciences can it be done. They who achieve it, these are they whom the poet in the sixth of the *Æneids* calls beloved of God, by fiery virtue lifted to the skies, and the sons of heaven, though he be speaking in a figure.

“Let then their folly confess itself, who, without art or knowledge, trusting only in talent, rush into singing the highest themes in the highest

style. Let them desist from such presumption, and if by their natural sluggishness they are geese, let them not attempt to emulate the starward soaring eagle."

Dante proceeds to discuss in order, first the best metre, which he decides to be the hendecasyllabic; then the best construction; finally the best diction; carefully making good each point with illustrations. The detail into which he enters is most significant. "A sieve must be used to sift out noble words;" "polysyllables are ornamental;" and so on.

As Mr Howell well says, the minuteness of his divisions and subdivisions and the elaboration of his rules disclose in part the secret of the extremely artificial canzoni which seem to flow so easily from the poet's pen, and show us within what rigid restrictions his genius was content to work.

Such, so far as we have it, is Dante's theory of the art of poetry. It is unfortunate that we do not possess that portion of the "De Vulgari Eloquentia" which would have treated of the comic and elegiac styles, and more particularly of the comic, to which technically the "Divine Comedy" belongs—topics touched on in the letter to Can Grande. The main points of the theory, however, emerge clearly enough. Poetry, according to Dante's view, is an art, one of the fine arts, an art distinct and definite and difficult, in which success cannot be attained without knowledge, without long study, without laborious practice. There is poetry and poetry, there are poets and poets, but all must conform to the laws of their art. For what is poetry? Technically and in terms,

as we saw, poetry is "*fictio rhetorica in musicaque posita.*" Such is Dante's brief and pregnant definition. Unfortunately both the reading and the rendering of this central passage are somewhat in dispute,¹ but three elements, or two at any rate, are seen pretty clearly.

First, poetry is *fictio*, *finzione*, fiction, feigning, invention, imaginative description, the statement not of fact, but of fancy. It is at once creation and imitation, or something between the two. It does not appear that Dante was acquainted with Aristotle's formal treatise on poetry, but possibly Aristotle's teaching may have filtered down to him. Certainly if this be what he meant by *fictio*,

¹ The Grenoble MS. almost certainly, the Trivulzian certainly, gives the words as quoted above. And so Trissino read, rendering verbatim: "quale non è altro che una finzione rettorica e posta in musica." Professor Rajna, the most recent editor, in his large edition of 1896, introduced a conjectural addition, reading "*fictio rhetorica versificata in musicaque posita.*" In his smaller edition of 1897, however, he drops "*versificata*" and adopts a smaller alteration, reading "*fictio rhetorica musice composita.*" As to the meaning, he thinks it must remain in doubt, unless it be found that the definition is not Dante's own, but borrowed, and the source be discovered. If it be Dante's own, "*fictio*" probably means "*finzione.*" If the definition be borrowed, it may mean no more than "*compositio.*" As to "*musica*" and "*musice,*" Rajna adopts the larger view, relying mainly on "*Convivio,*" iv. 2, and iv. 6. For Professor Rajna's views the writer is indebted partly to his critical note, partly to a private letter to Dr Paget Toynbee. Mr Howell, on the contrary, renders merely: "Poetry is a rhetorical composition set to music." That "*fictio*" may mean merely a composition is possible; that "*musica*" means merely music seems hardly possible. The subject, however, is too long for a note, and calls for a separate disquisition. The older translators appear to favour the view adopted above. And the "D. C." itself is, of course, a "*fictio*" throughout, though much of it is based on fact and experience. Cp. Leynardi, p. 224.

he is in agreement with Aristotle's teaching as a whole.¹

Ben Jonson, it may be noted, says very much the same in his "Discoveries." "A poet is that which by the Greeks is call'd *κατ' ἐξοχήν ὁ ποιητής*, a maker or a fainer; his art, an art of imitation or faining, expressing the life of man in fit measure, numbers, and harmony, according to Aristotle: from the word *ποιεῖν*, which signifies to make or fayne."

Secondly, it is *rhetorica*. But rhetoric means for Dante all that it meant for his great master, the science and the art of ruling the passions of man by understanding them, of dealing therefore with his thoughts and emotions in their various relations, and, again, the science and the art of dealing with language. Rhetoric in this sense touches on the one side moral and mental philosophy, on the other grammar. In the "Convivio" it appears as the art of pleasing the passions by words, and corresponds as such to the Heaven of Venus.

Thirdly, it is *in musica posita*, or *musice composita*. But, again, music meant for Dante all, or almost all, that it meant for Plato, or perhaps we should rather say that it had not lost altogether its original two-fold Greek meaning. It still implies the music of words as well as of notes. Perhaps the best illustration of this is to be found in three passages in the "Convivio": one where he speaks of the poets who have tied together their words with *mosaic* art, "*coll' arte musaica le loro parole hanno legate*"; another, where

¹ See especially Professor Butcher on Aristotelian and Baconian views of poetry, "Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art," pp. 174, 373.

music, to which the Heaven of Mars is compared, is stated to have two beauties, one of them being the beauty of relation, such as is seen in harmonised words and songs;¹ and finally, a third, in which he says expressly that the beauty (*bellezza*) of the song he is discussing, as distinguished from its goodness (*bontà*), depends on three things—the construction, which belongs to the grammarian; the order of the discourse, which belongs to the rhetorician; and the rhythm of its parts, which belongs to the musician.

It is of the essence then of poetry to be harmonised, to be artistic, to be beautiful. It is not sufficient, Dante says over and over again, that it should be excellent, that it should be good in matter, that it should even be coldly beautiful. It should have beauty of form and sound, of order and diction. It should have sweetness and harmony, *dolcezza e armonia*. As Horace says, in words which Dante doubtless knew and approved, though he does not actually quote them:—

“Non satis est pulchra esse poemata; dulcia sunt
Et quocunque volent animum auditoris agunto.”

But this is not inconsistent with its being true and natural and simple. Rather it is beautiful because it is true. The beauty arises out of the truth. Poetry is the beautiful voice of truth to feeling and truth to fact; it is beautiful, therefore, with the beauty of propriety. No one ever

¹ In “V. E.” II., viii. 50, a *cantio* is defined as “actio completa dictantis verba modulationi armonizata.” It is “fabricatio verborum armonizatorum,” as opposed to “ipsa modulatio.”

recognised this more fully than Dante. Few have ever been capable of recognising it so fully. For it is just in his universality, his catholicity, and withal the adequacy of his power to his knowledge, of his art to his matter, that he is so transcendently great.

When not long ago Tennyson died, Mr Watts-Dunton well said that the most characteristic thing about him was "a great veracity." This was true of Tennyson; truer it could not be of any poet. It is true of many—shall we say of all the best poets? It is true on the grandest scale of Dante. The famous passage—

"E s' io al vero son timido amico
Temo di perder viver tra coloro
Che questo tempo chiameranno antico"—

has even a wider and fuller application than Dante intended. The secret of his immortality has been, before all, his truth.

Wordsworth, in his well-known essay, complains of poets whose eye never seems to have been "steadily fixed upon their object." Such a complaint could never be made of Dante. He says himself, in the remarkable canzone which heads the fourth treatise in the "Convivio,"

"Chi pinge figura,
Se non può esser lei, non la può porre,"

and he explains more fully in the comment, "No painter can portray any figure unless he makes himself first by a mental effort that which the figure ought to be." And in the passage quoted above he implies that the secret of his style, the new sweet style which the earlier poets could not

compass, was its sincerity and simplicity, its truth to feeling.

But the new style is not only simple and true : it is sweet, it is beautiful, it is poetic. To be sincere and honest, true to oneself, "not to manipulate one's feelings," is the secret of all art. But art, in that it is art, also expresses faithfully what the artist truly feels. And poetic art goes further : it expresses it beautifully and with a special kind of beauty. Prose may be true ; prose may be, to make use of Milton's phrase, simple, sensuous, and passionate ; prose may contain many of the elements of poetry. Dante's prose is often highly poetic, both in structure and in quality. Nothing is more striking than the way in which it resembles his poetry in the ideas and even in the turns of expression. Two instances taken from the "Vita Nuova" will suffice to show this. One is very simple : it is the mode of speaking of the anniversary of Beatrice's death. "On that day which fulfilled the year since my lady was made of the citizens of eternal life." Nothing is needed but metre to make this a beautiful line for the "Divine Comedy." With such passages Dante's prose abounds. The other instance is more striking ; it is one of substance ; it again resembles not a few passages, and might itself have made one, in the "Divine Comedy." It is the passage where Dante says of certain mournful ladies, "As I have seen rain falling mingled with fair snow, so did I seem to see their speech issue forth mingled with sighs." Such passages are essentially poetic ; they are the matter of poetry. But Dante would not call them poetry, but prose. They are not

harmonized; they are not "tied with the bond of music"; they are beautiful, but not with the beauty of poetry.

For unreal ornament Dante cared nothing. Poetry, he recognised, should be as reasonable as prose. Its ornament and arrangement should bear analysis :—

"Poetic licence is allowed," he says, "to poets, but licence with reason. The great poets of old did not speak without consideration, nor should they who rhyme to-day; for it were a shame that one should rhyme under the cloak of figure and rhetorical colouring, and afterwards, if questioned, should not be able to strip his words of their clothing and show their true meaning. Of such foolish rhymers," he adds, "I and my first friend know many."¹

Poetry, then, should be as reasonable as prose. It should bear being broken up and paraphrased in prose, not indeed without loss, but without absolute destruction.

But that there is no such thing as poetic diction, that "prose is verse and verse is merely prose"—such a theory could never for a moment even in satire be imputed to Dante. Dante is at times sublimely, perhaps we may say divinely, grotesque; he is at times sublimely simple and plain, almost common. But into the freakish discordances of a Browning, who refused, we are told by his biographer, to recognise even the first of Greek writers as models of literary style, and made his translation of *Æschylus'* "Agamemnon" partly "for the pleasure of exposing and rebuking these

¹ "V. N.," § 25.

claims," or again, into the deliberate commonplaces and puerilities of Wordsworth in his uninspired moments, Dante could not fall. Falls and faults are his, it is true: he tells us himself that he often failed to attain to his own ideal. Often both in prose and verse he cannot write as he would. His theme transcends his powers: "he has the habit of his art, but the hand trembles." But his faults are the faults of a true, not a false theory of poetry. Ugly words and sounds befit ugly themes, and childish language childish ideas. What is the true canon?

"To describe the bottom of the universe is not an enterprise to be taken up in sport, nor for a tongue that cries mammy and daddy; but let those ladies aid my verse who aided Amphion to wall in Thebes, so that my words may not be diverse from the fact"—

"Si che dal fatto il dir non sia diverso."¹

There is perhaps no passage more characteristic of Dante's method, of his serious painstaking, his invocation of art, his poetic aim, than the one that ends thus.

Truth to fact and feeling, as was said above, is the secret of Dante's matter; and fitness, appropriateness of language to thought, is the secret of his style. In fact and feeling nothing is too high or too low for Dante. Below the bottomless depth of Hell, above the ineffable highest Heaven, he ranges, but the highest rules the lowest; it is the

¹ "Inferno," xxxii. 12. He does, however, occasionally use low words in the "Divine Comedy," but this is because the poem is avowedly a comedy, and deliberately written in a mixed style.

beauty and the love which prevail. It follows that in his art Dante is at once the greatest of realists and the greatest of idealists. But realist or idealist, or both, Dante is always an artist. Poetry cannot be written, he says, by mere *afflatus*, *de solo ingenio*, without art or knowledge. His practice follows, and depends absolutely upon, his theory—the best proof that his theory, as said above, is good and adequate. Every rule and every principle which he has thought out and set forth in his prose works is put in force and use in the “Divine Comedy.” He is ever conscious of the limits of his art, of the *fren dell’ arte*. It is true that, like the best art, it often conceals itself; the restraint is not always obvious, but the restraint is always there. The geometric symmetry of the “Divine Comedy” has often been noticed. It could hardly be doubted, even if it were not demonstrable, or if he did not himself say as much, that Dante, so careful of the whole, was equally careful of every line and word.¹ He fails sometimes in his command of his resources, and sometimes his resources fail him. The writer of the “Ottimo Commento” tells us, in a passage now well known, that he had heard Dante himself state that he had never for the sake of a rhyme said anything that was not otherwise in his mind,² but that many

¹ Mariotti draws out with great elaboration the extraordinary underlying symmetry and numerical balance of the “D. C.” He has been at pains to count and classify the lines and words employed by Dante in the different parts of his poem. He concludes by saying that the “D. C.” reminds us of the Biblical words, “omnia in mensura et numero et pondere disposuisti.” Cp. also Leynardi, p. 114.

² Yet one is tempted to suspect such passages as “Inferno,” xxxii. 26, 30, as partly written for the rhyme. Compare also the

times and oft he had made words signify something different from that which they had been wont to express in other poets. If Dante, then, is obscure, it is doubtless partly because his thought was in advance of all language, partly because, like that of Thucydides, it was in advance of his own time ; for we must remember that, not unlike Thucydides, Dante was himself making his language as he went, and that the vulgar Italian which he employed was still in a rough and unformed state. It was not because he did not desire to be beautiful or finished, nor because he did not take pains, that he was ever otherwise, but because of the inherent difficulty of his subject and the imperfection of his medium, or because he did not think beauty appropriate. Thus, in describing the souls of the "stingy" and the "lavish," cuffing each other in the fourth circle of Hell, "their conflict," he cries, "shall have no beautifying of style from me." But, speaking more generally in the "De Vulgari Eloquentia," he says that every poet ought to beautify his style as much as possible. And again, in the "Convivio" :—

"Every good workman at the end of his work ought to ennoble and embellish it to the best of his power, that it may leave his hands more famous and more precious. This I intend to do, not as a good workman myself, but as a follower of such in the past."

"Famous, precious, beautiful, ennobled, embellished"—that is what Dante, the "austere Dante," thought a poem ought to be : ornament, deliberate ornament, appropriate no doubt, but still ornament, rhyme Malacoth, Sabaoth, "Par.," vii. 1, and Toynebee's Dictionary, *sub voc.*

should not be wanting. Later in life he became more confident of his own powers and skill, but his desire is the same. To achieve it he spent life and strength. "He grew pale beneath the shade of Parnassus." "The sacred poem, to which heaven and earth have set their hand, made him lean for many years." And no wonder. For every line of his poetry, as every page of his prose, bears witness to the intense and all-devouring industry of genius, to that "long study" which is only possible to "mighty love." It is ever so with the greater poets. Critics have written, and men sometimes speak, as though Shakespeare, an unlearned and unlettered miracle, wrote by mere afflatus, wrote, as the phrase is, by the light of nature and of his own genius, and took little or no trouble with his diction or versification :—

"But Otway failed to polish and refine,
And fluent Shakespeare scarce effaced a line."

But the fact is, that if Shakespeare was not exactly a scholar, still he was not an illiterate. He had been at a good grammar school, he had a fair knowledge of Latin, and a smattering of other languages, but above all he practised himself early and long in the art of writing, and of writing verse. His lines are, to employ Ben Jonson's words about him, "well-tuned." His rhythm is what is technically called learned. His "precious phrase" is, to use his own delightful and significant expression, "by all the Muses filed." Of Dante, as of Milton, we may say much more. Mr Robert Bridges, in his original and suggestive examination of Milton's prosody, has shown us something of the marvellous art of Milton's blank verse. A very interesting paper

by Mr Tozer¹ on Dante's versification demonstrates that Dante employs just the same artifices of inversion and variation which Mr Bridges finds in Milton. It is, he well says, in the temperate use of these and similar changes that the melody of Dante's verse consists.

To challenge the authority of Dean Church on any main characteristic of Dante seems audacious, almost sacrilegious. Yet Dean Church, toward the end of his famous essay, appears in one passage hardly to hold the balance quite as true as usual. It is where he says that Dante has "few of those indirect charms which flow from the subtle structure and refined graces of language, none of that exquisitely-fitted and self-sustained mechanism of choice words of the Greeks"; and again, "that his sweetness and melody appear unsought for and unlaboured." Unlaboured and unsought in a sense they indeed appear, but only because the skill to command them had been sought and laboured at during a lifetime. That Dante chose, "sifted," his words we know from his own statement. Lines like—

"La concubina di Titone antico
Già s' imbiancava al balzo d' oriente,"

can hardly be called spontaneous. They are beautiful, but beautiful with the artistic, nay, the artificial beauty of poetic diction. Dante's use of alliteration and assonance,² of balance and antithesis,

¹ "Textual Criticism of the Divine Comedy." E. Moore; Cambridge, 1889. Appendix V., p. 713.

² Mr James Russell Lowell remarks, indeed, that Homer, like Dante and Shakespeare, and like all who really command language, seems fond of playing with assonances. "My Study Windows" ("Library of Old Authors"), p. 240.

still more his employment of proper names, which give a pomp and blazonry to diction like that which is given by heraldry to architecture or stained glass or painting; all these point to a love of language and of its hues and colours for their own sake, to a love of literary and linguistic art as such.¹

“Dopo la dolorosa rotta, quando
Carlo Magno perdè la santa gesta,
Non sonò sì terribilmente Orlando.”

Are the echoes of such a passage, the collocation and the separation, the inversions and the sequences, unsought or unstudied?

No, rather must we agree with that eloquent and subtle critic of language, alas! too early silent, Mr Walter Pater, who, in his introduction to his friend Dr Shadwell's version of the “Purgatorio,” says that, despite the severity of his subject, Dante “*did not forget that his design was after all to treat it as a literary artist, to charm his readers; and that he has shown a command of every sort of minute literary beauty, an expressiveness, a care for style and rhythm at every point, the evidence of which increases upon the reader as his attention becomes microscopic.*”²

But indeed Dean Church himself was not insensible to this aspect of Dante. In his remarkable,

¹ His own phrase, used of Arnaut Daniel—“Miglior fabbro del parlar materno”—is very significant (“Purg.,” xxvi. 117). Cp. *fabricatio verborum armonizatorum*, “V. E.,” II., viii. 5.

² “The Purgatory of Dante Alighieri,” by Charles Lancelot Shadwell; Introduction by Walter Pater, pp. 15-16. Cp. Leynardi, “La Psicologia dell’Arte nella ‘D. C.,’” last chapter, especially pp. 491 *et seq.* Leynardi contrasts the repeated use of *a*, *o*, and *u* in “Inf.,” iv. 10, 12, with that of *i* and *e* in “Inf.,” ii. 127-29.

though less known, essay on Browning's "Sordello," he takes a juster, because more comprehensive, view :—

"Dante, the singer, the artist, seemed naturally to belong to that vast and often magnificent company, from Orpheus and Homer downward, whose business in life seemed art and the perfection of art. But Dante, with his artist's eye and artist's strength, was from the beginning and continued to the end in closest contact with the most absorbing interests of human life. We almost forget the poet, and such a poet, in the man."

The fact is that both aspects are true. Dante is more than an artist : but he is always an artist. His own feeling about the form of his work is best expressed in his own words. He leaves us in no doubt. In the song that opens the second book of the "Convivio," he says that he wishes it may please even if it is not understood. Few will understand thee, he says ; but say to them—

"Ponete mente almen com' io son bella."

In the twelfth chapter he explains that the beauty consists in *construction*, which is given by grammar, in *order*, which is given by rhetoric, and in *rhythm*, which is given by music. The beauty should, however, be appropriate. This he explains in the opening lines of the poem prefixed to the next book, in which he says that he must now put away the sweet rhymes he was wont to use in treating of love, and must speak of the valour which makes a man truly noble, with rhyme rough and subtle. "Rhyme rough and subtle"¹—"Rima aspra e

¹ In the second chapter he explains that *aspra* refers to the

sottile”—what truer description could there be of much of the “Divine Comedy”? But that it is so is due neither to accident nor to defect, but to design. Always and ever Dante cared for two things together, the matter and the manner, the thing to be said and the way of saying it: “*e a così parlare, e a così intendere le scritture.*” When he exalts his matter he sustains it with more art.

It was thus that his art rose with him and with his theme. For manner he must ever have cared, or he would not have cared so profoundly for Virgil—for Virgil, the stylist *par excellence*; Virgil, in whom Coleridge found nothing but diction and metre. Dante found much beside; but that he loved Virgil as he did, and that his early boast was to have won by long study the Virgilian style, is pre-eminently significant of his attitude and temperament. From Virgil and his Roman brothers he caught, moreover, the strength of the Roman, or rather of the Latin utterance, imperial, martial, legal, logical, clear-cut, clear-sounding. But Christianity, as Dean Church has so truly and delicately indicated in his “Gifts of Civilisation,” Christianity, with its breaking-up of the fallow ground of the heart, needed a more subtle music than the Roman, something more than even the melancholy majesty and grace of the “stateliest measure ever moulded by the lips of man.” That more subtle music was to be found in the fresh and tender poetry of love style, to the sound of the poetry; *sottile* refers to the meaning of the words. In “Inferno,” xxxii., he complains that he cannot command rhyme rough enough for the lowest circle of Hell. Mr C. B. Heberden, in an excellent paper, “Dante and his Lyrical Metres,” printed in the “Modern Language Review” for July 1908, brings this out with thoroughness and nobility.

and chivalry, in the "new sweet style" for which the way was paved by the troubadours and worked out by the pupils of Brunetto Latini, Guido Cavalcanti, and Dante himself, in concert with poets like Cino da Pistoia, painters like Giotto, musicians like Casella—that style which the Notary and Guittone of Arezzo and Bonagiunta could not reach, the style which followed exactly the dictation of love.

In these two schools, as was said at starting, Dante served his apprenticeship. But of their teaching, too, he came to the end. He saw that he must find and trust himself. Nothing is more instructive for the understanding of Dante's development than to compare the last words of Virgil, at the end of the "Purgatorio" proper, with the invocation at the beginning of the "Paradiso." At meeting Virgil, Dante did homage to him and hung on his every word. Now he is an apprentice and in pupillage no longer. "Await no more," says Virgil, "my word or my sign; free, right, and sound is thy judgment, and it were a fault not to follow it. Wherefore prince and pontiff over thyself I crown and mitre thee." Dante is to stand at last, as a great poet must stand, in his own strength: but no one knows better than he the difficulty of his art. "Well may poets," he says in the letter to Can Grande, "need much invocation, for they have to seek something from the powers above, beyond the common scope of mankind, a bounty, as it were, from Heaven itself." "O good Apollo," he cries—using words which recall the striking expression employed of St Paul, the *vas electionis*—"make me in my last toil a vessel of thy power, so fashioned as thou requirest for the gift of the beloved laurel.

Hitherto one peak of Parnassus hath sufficed me, but now with both it is meet that I enter the remaining lists."

The exact meaning of these last words is obscure, but the gist of the passage with its context is plain. There is a poetry of earth, there is a poetry of heaven. There is the art of the amorist and the troubadour; they too are poets, but not regular poets, not great poets—they sing of love, but of an earthly passion. Dante too sings of love. He too began as the amorist of earthly beauty, which yet contained for him the seed and promise of the heavenly; he was led up from the love of earthly beauty to the love of knowledge, to that divine Eros,¹ the love of Him in whom beauty and knowledge are united, the love that "moves the sun and all the stars."

Such is poetry for the true poet, no toy, no trifle, an art rather, a fine art, but the best of all the fine arts, to which all knowledge may be made tributary, and which may itself subserve the highest ends. Dante is an artist, but he is more than an artist. Art for art's sake has no meaning for him. Were he asked whether art ought to be moral, he would reply that man, whether artist or not, ought certainly to do right and live well. Poetry cannot save Brunetto or Arnaut Daniel. It cannot even save Virgil, best of Pagans.

Yet poetry may rise to heaven. It may have the highest mission. It may be in no pedantic sense a Teologia. It may be of power "to celebrate in

¹ Plato, "Symposium." Cp. "Convivio," ii. 13, where Dante describes how he came to love the gentle lady Philosophy; and again, "Convivio," ii. 16.

glorious and lofty hymns the throne and equipage of God's almightiness, and what he works and what he suffers to be wrought with high providence in his Church." Thus the poet's place may truly be with the heroes and the saints; and such is Dante's. Carlyle saw this when he wrote the "Hero as Poet"; Raphael saw it when he painted the "Disputa"; but Dante's own Virgil had seen it long before:—

"Hic manus ob patriam pugnando volnera passi,
Quique sacerdotes casti, dum vita manebat,
Quique pii vates et Phœbo digna locuti."

Dante perceived the place that he might win, and won it.

"The song that nerves a nation's heart
Is in itself a deed."

What shall be said of the song that has nerved the heart and lifted the soul of the race? Only that here the language of Dean Church in his unforgettable peroration is no hyperbole, but the simple and the sober truth. Only that while, as an artist and for technical reasons, Dante himself called his poem by the name which belonged to the range of the humble and the human, a "Comedy," the world soon added, and has for ever attached, first to the poet and then to the poem, the epithet "Divine."

V

VIRGIL AND TENNYSON: A LITERARY PARALLEL

“I salute thee, Mantovano,
I that loved thee since my day began.”

FEW books have had a longer or more living influence than the “Parallel Lives” of Plutarch. Its shining examples of character and genius have affected and inspired the emotion and emulation of all ages and portions of the Western world. If the trophies of Miltiades have caused sleepless nights to many besides Themistocles, it is Plutarch whom envy or ambition must blame or thank. Yet of the thousands who have sauntered through or even lingered in Plutarch’s gallery, how many have really noted its arrangement? Many have read the “Lives”: few have read the “Comparisons.” Most common is it to speak only of Plutarch’s “Lives,” and, ignoring the epithet he gave them, to forget that they are parallels.

Plutarch’s method, indeed, has gone out of fashion, as history has become more scientific and less picturesque — more pedantic, perhaps some would say, and less historic. History, it is seen, if it repeats itself, ever does so with a difference, and the historic or geographic parallel only provokes a smile of superiority. Yet the method of

Plutarch has its advantages. Truth to tell, it is, as Bacon remarked, quite as much a part of science to note resemblances as to note differences. Often the differences are natural or necessary, and it is the resemblances which are surprising. Similarities, in style and genius, between the late Lord Tennyson and the Roman Virgil have often been noticed. The comparison was, perhaps, first made in print by Lord Tennyson's old friend, the Rev. R. D. B. Rawnsley, a quarter of a century ago. It was perhaps rather of Mr Andrew Lang's pretty allusion that the poet himself was thinking when he remarked to a friend: "Someone once called me the English Virgil"; but in any case he was aware of the suggestion and was pleased by it. The parallel of their lives, however, has never been as fully worked out as it deserves to be. For, striking as is the analogy when once suggested, in general terms and on the surface, it will be found still more striking when the two biographies are, after the manner of Plutarch, placed side by side.

The life of Tennyson has been given us in a singularly full and happy form. Perhaps no poet's life has ever been written in a way to be more useful to the scholar and the critic. Virgil's life we no longer possess in a shape comparable to this. But such a picture of him did once exist, and of that picture considerable relics and traces remain. Besides the three great works of Virgil, the "Eclogues," "Georgics," and "Æneid," there have come down, as scholars know, various minor works—in particular two hexameter pieces, the "Culex," or "Gnat," and the "Ciris," a mythological poem;

a pretty idyll, entitled the "Moretum" or "Salad"; the "Copa," or "Mine Hostess," a short elegiac piece; and, further, a small collection, chiefly of lyrical poems, called the "Catalepta," or "Catalepton." Several "Lives" of the poet, longer or shorter, have also survived. These it has been not unusual to treat with neglect or discredit, as a tissue of forgery or a mass of accretions. But this is surely a mistake. Virgil, though, like Tennyson, he loved seclusion, did not live or die in a corner, but rather in the fullest blaze of light. He was a great figure in the great world of Rome when Rome was at her highest intellectual level. Of that Rome he may, like Horace, properly be called a laureate poet. He was the friend of the Emperor Augustus, and of the greatest statesmen and the leading literary men of the day. By two of these, Tucca and Varius, specially intimate friends of long standing, his papers were sifted, and his great epic edited, under the Emperor's own direction. Varius, himself an excellent and admired poet, also wrote his friend's "Life." He wrote with full knowledge of the persons and the facts, while most of the persons were still living and the facts were still fresh. His memoir contained, we have reason to believe, a full and sufficient account of the poet, of his life and work, his education and friendships, his habits of composition, personal traits, anecdotes, table-talk, good stories, perhaps scandals, *obiter dicta*, and the like, together with illustrative extracts from the poet's poems, whether published or unpublished, and from his correspondence, including both his own letters and those of friends. When it was written, many of the documents on

which it was based, such as the letters of the Emperor, like those of the Queen to Tennyson, were in evidence, and they remained so long after. It would have been impossible to make any serious mis-statement which many living friends could correct, or which could be contradicted by reference to documents undoubtedly authentic, or to interpolate any poem or portion of a poem as Virgil's without authority.

On this "Life" by Varius, and on the authorised edition or editions of Virgil's poems, it is pretty clear that the later authorities rested, as long as any serious and strong critical spirit remained. The best that we now have is a fairly long sketch, probably by Suetonius, much in the nature of a "Dictionary of Biography" article. This, no doubt, is an abridgment from the "Life" by Varius, but has been again added to and embroidered from other less excellent sources. In Virgil's case, as in most others, there were current, immediately after his death, and perhaps even during his lifetime, conflicting texts and semi-authenticated stories, and some of these doubtless established themselves in lieu of, or side by side with, the genuine; but without entering into the minutiae of discrimination, it may be said that we possess a considerable body of information about Virgil, and that when due allowance has been made for such accretions, a great deal remains, well attested or carrying its own claim to credence. We know more, probably, about the life of Virgil than we do about the life of Shakespeare. To state this may not indeed be to state very much. The late Master of Balliol, Professor Jowett, whose sturdy historical

scepticism knew hardly any limit, was fond of saying that all that we really know about Shakespeare's life could be written on a half-sheet of notepaper. The Master, it is true, did not live to see the brilliant essay of his distinguished pupil Mr Sidney Lee, but even had he done so he would probably have stuck to his epigram.

Taking then the life of Virgil as we have it, let us put it side by side with that of Tennyson. The regular method of Plutarch would no doubt be to recite first the one career and then the other, and finally to institute the comparison. For our purpose, however, it would seem better to take the two lives together. The life of Tennyson may be assumed to be generally known, that of Virgil will be best understood when thus brought into comparison point by point.

The large differences are obvious. Virgil was born and spent his days in Italy, the Italy of the last century before the coming of Christ; Tennyson in England, the England of the nineteenth century of the Christian era. Tennyson lived to eighty-six, Virgil died at fifty-one. Tennyson married and saw children and grandchildren of his blood; Virgil had neither wife nor child. Tennyson lived all his days under a constitutional monarchy; Virgil first under a Republic, then under a despotism. Virgil wrote three principal works in three styles—the pastoral, the didactic, the epic—but all in one metre, though with great variety within that metre. It is only in his minor poems that we find him using either elegiac or lyric measures. There is little here to match the infinite variety of Tennyson.

But all these contrasts, with the exception of

the personal differences of length of life and domestic surroundings, are not in reality nearly so great as would at first sight appear. Looking at history in the large way, what is seen is that Virgil flourished when the Roman Republic was changing into the imperial monarchy of the Cæsars ; what will be seen hereafter is that Tennyson flourished when the English realm and monarchy were expanding into the British Empire.

Between the old senatorial oligarchy of Rome and the government of England as it existed under the hereditary monarchy, the privileged House of Lords, and the unreformed House of Commons, there is no small similarity. It is one of the great services of Mommsen and his scholars to have shown that the movement towards the Empire—the Roman revolution, as it is sometimes styled—was, notwithstanding its monarchic and imperial result, a democratic movement, fought for, and issuing in, the admission of many to civic privileges previously confined to a few, and the extension to wide regions of as much of self-government as was possible without a representative system. Both poets, then, were born and grew up in times of “storm and stress.” Both witnessed in their own day an immense expansion—the one a city, the other a kingdom outgrowing its ancient bounds ; each saw the establishment, amid battle and throes, of a world-wide empire. Events moved more slowly in the later case ; and thus, if Tennyson lived longer, he saw less, rather than more, political change, for the thirty or thirty-five additional years of his life were needed to complete the revolution begun in his boyhood.

Virgil was born in 70 B.C. His birth-year, the year of the consulship of Pompey and Crassus, may be taken as the beginning of the Roman revolution, for it was this consulship that began, through the restoration of the Tribunate, to undo the work of Sulla, while the memorable impeachment of Verres by Cicero was, if not the first, at least a very signal recognition, of the provincial empire of Rome. Virgil's boyhood and youth, then, were full of disturbance at home and abroad. The great campaigns of Pompey and of Cæsar shook alike the Eastern and the Western world, from his fifth to his twentieth year. He was a child of seven at the time of Catiline's famous conspiracy; then followed the long ignoble brawls and street-fights, of which those of Clodius and Milo were only the most notorious. He came of age in the Roman sense in the year of the first invasion of Britain, on the day, tradition relates, of the death of his great forerunner Lucretius. He was twenty-one when Cæsar crossed the Rubicon, twenty-six when Cæsar fell by the dagger of Brutus, thirty-nine when the battle of Actium once more brought a settlement into view.

Tennyson in like manner was born in the last years of a narrow oligarchy, when gigantic wars abroad were reacting upon a state of unstable equilibrium at home. His birthday fell amid the opening conflicts of the Peninsula campaign, and in the year in which Sir Francis Burdett introduced his first motion for a reform of the House of Commons. The effect of the struggle with Napoleon was for a time to retard the disintegration of the English oligarchy. But, Waterloo over, and peace

restored, the movement soon began once more, and indeed was fomented by the distress consequent on the long and wasting war. Tennyson's childhood saw Peterloo and the Cato Street conspiracy; his youthful days were the "rick-fire days" of riot and rebellion in town and country. As an undergraduate he helped to quench a blazing farm near Cambridge. He would have been, but for his father, at the battle of Navarino, in 1827. He actually went, with Arthur Hallam, in 1831, to the Pyrenees, to help the insurgents under Torrijos. Then came the great battle for "Reform" at home, and the memorable upheavals in Europe. Tennyson through all this turmoil was, like Virgil, for liberty, but also for order and religion. Of finding both together he rather despaired.

"The empty thrones call out for kings,
But kings are cheap as summer dust;
The good old time hath taken wings,
And with it taken faith and trust,
And solid hope of better things."

To the Roman reformers it seemed that the combination could, by divine providence, be found in Cæsar:—

"O Melibœe, deus nobis hæc otia fecit." ("Ecl.," i. 6.)

In the welter of the civil war, Virgil's life was probably in danger, and for a time he lost his property; but the rule of Cæsar meant peace and enfranchisement. Julius had been the friend of the provinces, the friend in particular of Lombardy; he became patron of Gallia Transpadana in 68 B.C., when Virgil was a child of two. In the year 49 B.C., when Virgil was twenty-one, Cæsar conferred

the Roman citizenship on its inhabitants, thereby attaching the whole region to his cause. Tennyson at twenty-three was ringing the Somersby church bells with his brothers for the passing of the Reform Bill. Virgil had no bells to ring, but it is not unlikely that the feeling of himself and his family was, *mutatis mutandis*, much the same as that of the Tennysons. On all grounds—personal, political, and, as we shall see later, philosophic—Virgil was in thorough sympathy with the Empire and the Augustan *régime*. The bent, the bias, of both lives is the same. It is the political accord of Virgil, just as it is the political accord of Tennyson, the personal attachment of Virgil, like the personal attachment of Tennyson, the spiritual sympathy of Virgil, like the spiritual sympathy of Tennyson, which made them both such happily loyal, because such sincerely and spontaneously loyal, laureates, the one of Augustus, the other of Victoria. Both, while becoming pre-eminently national poets, Virgil the Roman, Tennyson the English, singer, had a divided provincial and racial strain. Tennyson was probably a Dane by descent; Virgil, it would seem, with his melancholy and magic, his romance and glamour, may be claimed by the Celts. Both his own name and that of the village where he was born are, it is said, Celtic.

Both were children of the country, and of the real unsophisticated country. Tennyson was born in the sequestered hamlet of Somersby, in Lincolnshire; Virgil's birthplace was also a hamlet, that of Andes—for such was its strange name—possibly the modern Pietola, a little way out of Mantua. Mantua itself was no large town, and Andes,

whether three or seventeen miles away—for this is disputed—must have been thoroughly rural. In birth Tennyson had the advantage. His father, though disinherited in favour of a younger brother, was the eldest son in a good family, and was a beneficed clergyman and a Doctor of Laws of Cambridge. His mother, too, came of a good county stock. Virgil's father, on the other hand, would appear to have been a hired servant to one Magius, a carrier or courier, perhaps himself in addition a working potter, who by industry amassed a little property for himself, which he increased by keeping bees and buying up tracts of woodland, and then, like the industrious apprentice, marrying his master's daughter, whose name, Magia, or Magia Polla, may perhaps have given rise to the later idea that Virgil was a wizard.

Both, then, were brought up face to face with nature, with the country, and with country folks and ways. Mr Watts Dunton once made the pertinent remark about Tennyson, that he was a poet of the country in a sense even beyond that of ordinary lovers and students of nature; that he was the only great poet who, if he saw a turnip-field, could tell with a farmer's eye how the turnips were doing. The "Georgics" were written, no doubt, from a personal knowledge similar or even greater. So probably was the famous picture of the "*Corycius senex*," the old gardener amid his roses and his cucumbers, with whom perhaps may be compared the two "Northern Farmers."

Both, however, while reared in the depths of the country, received as good an education as the time could give. Tennyson was sent first to Louth

Grammar School, then to Trinity College in Cambridge. Virgil went to school, first at Cremona, then at fifteen to Milan—some say also to Naples to learn Greek with Parthenius—and finally at seventeen was entrusted to the best teachers of the day at Rome. Each of them found incidentally through his education a good introduction to the great world of letters and affairs. All of us know the list of Tennyson's early friends, the "Cambridge Group," the "Apostles," as by a cant name for a recently founded club they were called—Milnes, Trench, Blakesley, Alford, Thompson, Spedding, Brookfield, Spring-Rice, Charles Buller, above all Arthur Hallam. It is not possible to say exactly when Virgil made the acquaintance of his chief friends, but among those who were school-fellows, fellow-students, or early comrades, are Alfenus Varus, Quintilius Varus,¹ Varius and Tucca, Gallus and Macer, and Horace himself; somewhat older were Pollio, the statesman-poet, and Cinna, the poet-friend of Catullus. It is worth noting that Antony and Augustus himself were also earlier and later pupils of the same teacher Epidius, from whom Virgil learnt rhetoric; and one of the ancient "Lives" actually makes Virgil a fellow-student with Augustus, though this is open to much doubt, for Augustus was seven years his junior.

Tennyson began to write verse as a boy, or even as a child, and naturally felt the influence of the leading writers just before his time, notably Byron, Moore, and Coleridge. Keats he came to love, and Wordsworth to admire, somewhat later, after he

¹ "Multis ille bonis flebilis occidit,
Nulli flebilior quam tibi, Vergili." (Horace, Odes, i. 24.)

had achieved his own style. Virgil, apparently, began not less early. His first poem, written in boyhood, is said to have been an epigram on a certain Ballista, a fencing-master or trainer of gladiators, who also, it would seem, took the road as a highwayman, and was stoned to death for his crimes. The incident was not improbably an experience or a good story of Virgil's father, the carrier's man. The epigram has been preserved :—

“Monte sub hoc lapidum tegitur Ballista sepultus ;
Nocte, die, tutum carpe viator iter !”

which perhaps may be rendered :

“Old Sling is dead,
And o'er his head
This hill of stones we rear :
Now take your way,
By night or day,
Traveller, the road is clear !”

Virgil's Byron and Coleridge were Catullus and Lucretius. Among his minor youthful pieces are several in the Catullian vein. One, which is an obvious parody of Catullus, seems again to contain a reminiscence of Virgil's home and early days. It is a poem on an old muleteer, turned schoolmaster and town-councillor, who, in lines which are a travesty of Catullus' well-known stanzas on his old yacht, boasts his own former prowess and dedicates himself to Castor and Pollux, the traveller's gods. Catullus belonged to the literary generation just before Virgil ; his brief and brilliant literary career was at its height in Virgil's early years. It was natural that he should exercise a strong influence over the poets of the next era ; and indeed it is clear that he

did set, or lead, a fashion, to which Virgil and perhaps Horace also—though, if so, he afterwards repudiated it—yielded in their youth. Catullus died when Virgil was twenty-three; whether they ever met we do not know; it may be remembered, however, that both came from Lombardy. Artistically, they had much in common—for Virgil, like Catullus, belonged to the Alexandrine school—and they enjoyed many common friends. Just as Tennyson was linked to Byron, whom he never saw, by Rogers and Leigh Hunt, so Virgil was linked to Catullus by men like Pollio and Cinna.

Some other minor pieces attributed to Virgil are extant, less creditable followings of the Catullian fashion; but it is not certain that Virgil wrote them, and they are hardly consonant with the character with which, as will be seen later, his youth was credited. Tennyson had also his period of youthful heat and trial, but he passed through it well. He uttered nothing base, and hardly anything bitter. In one or two pieces he just showed what he could have done in the mordant and satiric vein had he wished. Such a piece is the spirited and gay repartee—a “silly squib” he called it himself—to “Crusty Christopher,” the dogmatic and heavy-handed Professor Wilson; while the lines on Sir E. Lytton Bulwer, entitled the “New Timon and the Poets,” which were sent to “Punch,” though not sent by Tennyson himself, afford an even better example.

But Virgil soon fell under another influence, for him far more potent than that of Catullus. One of the most striking and interesting of his

minor poems is what may perhaps be called a sixth-form or undergraduate piece, written when he was passing from grammar and rhetoric to philosophy, when, as an Oxford undergraduate would say, he was turning from "Honour Mods" to "Honour Greats." Not a few young Oxford scholars from Eton, let us say, or Winchester or Charterhouse, a little wearied, for the nonce at any rate, with what seem the trite topics and stale rules of scholarship and composition, and looking forward to a new subject and what promised to be more real and vital studies, will understand Virgil's feelings in these lines. They are headed: *Virgil abandons other studies and embraces the Epicurean philosophy.* The text is uncertain in places; the whole may be somewhat freely rendered as follows:—

“Avaunt, ye vain bombastic crew,
Crickets that swill no Attic dew :
Good-bye grammarians, crass and narrow,
Selius, Tarquitiuſ, and Varro !
A pedant tribe of fat-brained fools,
The tinkling cymbals of the ſchools ;
Sextus, my friend of friends, good-bye
With all our pretty company !
I'm ſailing for the bliſſful ſhore,
Great Siron's high recondite lore,
That haven where my ſoul ſhall be
From every tyrant care ſet free.
You, too, ſweet Muſes mine, farewell,
Sweet Muſes mine, for truth to tell
Sweet were ye once, but now begone !
And yet, and yet, return anon,
And when I write at whiles be ſeen
In viſits ſhy and far between !”

In another ſhorter piece in the ſame collection,

which, moreover, is vouched for by Quintilian, Virgil attacks a rhetorician of the day, accusing him of murdering first the alphabet, and then—which he seems actually to have done—his own brother. It is curious to see these poems of schoolboy or undergraduate revolt. Such an attitude is, of course, common with young men of genius, and not least common among those who afterwards become champions of order and convention. Virgil in later days became, if ever there was one, a scholarly poet, so much so that he was even accused of subtle verbal affectation and of pedantry. Remembering these youthful explosions, we may say that probably here too his position was really not unlike that of the Tennyson of whom Jowett writes: "Tennyson was very much of a scholar, but was not at all a pedant. Once he said to me, 'I hate learning,' by which I understood him to mean that he hated the minutiae of criticism compiled by the Dryasdusts."¹ Both certainly loved simplicity, but the simplicity of knowledge, not of ignorance.

It need hardly be said that Virgil's "sweet Muses" did return, and that he found himself loving philosophy, but writing poetry. But this love of philosophy was in him no passing undergraduate phase. It sank deep into the very tissue of his being: it persisted to his latest day. In his last year, when he set out on the final fatal journey to Greece and Asia, his purpose was, we are told, to finish the "*Æneid*," and then to devote the rest of his life to philosophy. The

¹ In the same spirit the erudite Gray said to Walpole, that "learning should never be encouraged."

Epicurean philosophy was fashionable in the Rome of Virgil's youth, and his tutor Siron was its most fashionable professor. It had two main branches of interest and two aspects. It was largely a materialistic philosophy, attempting to give an account of the physical universe, dealing therefore with questions rather of natural science than of philosophy proper. In the realm of religion it preached a kind of mechanical fatalism, a "polytheistic deism," if such a phrase can be coined. This, like other agnostic systems, produced in shallower natures an easy hedonism—"let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die"; in deeper, a sort of strenuous positivism or religion of irreligion—"let us toil and strive, for the long night cometh, and in the grave there is neither wisdom nor knowledge." The first may be seen in Memmius Gemellus or in Horace, who calls himself a "hog of Epicurus' sty"; the second in Lucretius and in Virgil. The debt, the deep debt, of Virgil to Lucretius is obvious and avowed, but its character and limits are not always understood.

Here once more the parallel with Tennyson becomes singularly illuminating. Tennyson and his friends at Cambridge, like Virgil in the classrooms of Rome, complained of the narrow range, the cut-and-dried nature, of much academic study. His fine, but too denunciatory sonnet on the Cambridge of his day, ending—

" You that do profess to teach,
And teach us nothing, feeding not the heart"—

may be set side by side with Virgil's piece just quoted. It was not so much with grammar that

Tennyson and Hallam quarrelled as with mathematics, the predominating study of Cambridge; but, more than with any one subject, it was with the monotonous hide-bound character of Cambridge studies in those days. "None but dry-headed, calculating, angular little gentlemen can take much delight in $a + \sqrt{b}$, etc.," Tennyson wrote to his aunt, Mrs Russell. Macaulay had written almost the same thing from Cambridge to his mother just ten years before. Gray and his friends had said it in far earlier days, both at Cambridge and at Oxford; and Clough, in his "Lines in a Lecture-room," wrote in much the same strain even of Oxford philosophy lectures at Balliol. Tennyson, however, did not bid the Muses pack: on the contrary, he read Virgil under the table while Whewell was lecturing. The hope of himself and his friends lay in poetry, in philosophy, and in natural science, still more in the combination of the three; and oddly enough, at the very moment when Darwin at Christ's was also complaining of the unfruitfulness of Cambridge education and pursuing field-botany with Henslow, Tennyson at Trinity was propounding the view that the development of the human body might possibly be traced from the "radiated, vermicular, molluscous, and vertebrate organisms."

It is the peculiar characteristic of Lucretius that he combines exactly these three elements. One of the finest of Rome's poets, he is also in a sense her most genuine philosopher, and certainly her truest man of science. It is a commonplace that he, more than any other ancient writer, anticipates Darwin and the theory of evolution; he also

displays more powerfully than any other the atomic theory, as the ancients understood it. Virgil's lines on Lucretius are well known, and the allusion is obvious, whether it be specially to the poet or generally to the philosophy which he pre-eminently put forward. Even more significant are the splendid verses which precede them, beginning:—

“Me vero primum dulces ante omnia Musæ,
Quarum sacra fero ingenti percussus amore,
Accipiant,” etc. (“Georgics,” ii. 478 *et seq.*)

The Muses, his “sweet Muses” once more, are to teach the poet, and through the poet the world, the secrets of nature and science. If he cannot learn these, the poet would prefer the life of seclusion and ease, unknown to fortune and to fame.¹ This is worth toiling for, not the giddy and gaudy glories of the senate and the marketplace, of the throne and the sword: Yes,

“Felix qui potuit rerum cognoscere causas,”

but also—

“Fortunatus et ille, deos qui novit agrestes,
Panaque Silvanumque senem Nymphasque sorores.”

That this love of science was one of Virgil's earliest loves is shown by the fact that it had appeared already in the Sixth of the “Eclogues,” in the famous song of Silenus, the language of which is strikingly Lucretian; and indeed still earlier, in the “Culex.” The lines in that poem (vv. 57 *et seq.*), beginning

“O bona pastoris, si quis non pauperis usum,”

are a rough draft of the magnificent passage just

¹ There is a story that Virgil said that the only thing of which there comes not satiety is knowledge. (“Tib. Cl. Donati Vita,” xviii. 73.)

quoted. Its persistence is proved by its reappearance in the First "Æneid," in the song of the minstrel Iopas, who, like Silenus, sings of "the wandering moon and the sun's eclipse," and

"Whence mankind and cattle came,
The source of water and of flame,"

and again in that transcendent central passage of the Sixth Æneid, beginning—

"Principio cælum ac terram camposque liquentes,"

the most Virgilian passage in Virgil, as Mr F. W. H. Myers calls it, and which he has rendered so finely.

Tennyson's early poems in exactly the same way show this combination of interests, which was to reappear later in more splendid and mature expression. The chief mark of his pieces in the little Lincolnshire volume, put out by him and his brother when still at school, is the display made, with all the innocent exaggeration of boyhood, at once of literary learning and of scientific study. This is shown by the very titles of the poems, "Apollonius' Complaint," "The High Priest to Alexander," "Mithridates presenting Berenice with the Cup of Poison"; by lines like—

"The mighty sea-snake of the storm,
The vorticella's viewless form,"

and again, by the frequent notes and references to "Baker on Animalculæ," or to Ælius Lampridius; while the Cambridge prize poem "Timbuctoo," which may perhaps be called Tennyson's "Culex," displays, in a manner less crude, it is

true, but still immature, precisely the same features.

Both writers, then, to use the phrase of the last century, "commenced poet" early. We do not know when Virgil first published anything, but the "Culex" was evidently regarded as an early and promising publication; and many of his other minor poems were doubtless circulated in manuscript, as indeed were many of Tennyson's, among his friends. It is fair then to say that both early achieved a certain limited success and recognition. Then came for both that period which so often comes between youth and manhood, bringing with it causes at once internal and external for uncertainty and arrestation. Virgil apparently tried the bar, but without success. He appeared and spoke in court as an advocate, but only once. In speech he was, says Melissus, very slow, and like one untaught. Tennyson never attempted a profession. An admirable talker, he never made a speech, only once returning thanks, and that, as he said, not on his legs, at a dinner given by a society of authors at Hampstead. Before a crowd he was, he professed, infinitely shy. Speaking of the youthful club whose debates are immortalised in "In Memoriam," he said, "They made speeches, I never did." Yet both Tennyson and Virgil have shown great mastery of rhetoric in writing speeches for their characters.

Both, again, appear to have dabbled in medicine; both certainly studied the stars. Amongst other studies, says Virgil's biographer, he devoted himself to medicine, and especially

to astrology. Tennyson as a youth read medical books till he fancied, like a medical student, that he had all the diseases in the world. As for astronomy, he was at all times devoted to it. It is one of the most constant and conspicuous features of his earliest poems, as of his very last. The striking fragment, "The Moon," and the beautiful astronomical stanzas, afterwards removed, which appear in the early versions of the "Palace of Art," show the same taste, to which he returned in "God and the Universe." "His mind," said Sir Norman Lockyer, "was saturated with astronomy." But both made their studies subservient to poetry rather than to a profession.

The "Culex," we are told, was written when Virgil was sixteen. Before he published the "Eclogues" he had learned something of the trials of life as well as of the dreams of the poet and the aspirations of the student. In the year 41 B.C., when he was twenty-nine years of age, his father lost his estate by the confiscations of the civil war; and Virgil and his family were turned out of house and home, and had to take refuge in a cottage belonging to Siro, his whilom master in philosophy.¹ The story of his restoration is well known. The good offices of Pollio, the poet and statesman, and of Cornelius Gallus, the poet, made interest with Mæcenas and ultimately with the future Emperor, Octavianus himself; and Virgil's patrimony was restored. Tennyson's story is of course not so heroic, nor so well known, but it affected him very deeply. He

¹ The person who was put in possession in the poet's place bore, like Catullus' butt, the name of Arrius.

lost the little property inherited from his father by an unlucky philanthropic speculation. His mother and sister suffered too in the same way. Then followed a season of real hardship. "I have drunk," he said, "one of those most bitter draughts out of the cup of life which go near to make men hate the world they move in." He found, however, a Gallus and a Pollio in Carlyle and "Dicky" Milnes, and a Mæcenas in Sir Robert Peel, who recommended him for a pension of 200*l.* a year. Both, then, chose the poet's life, and remained faithful to it, through good report and evil report, in sickness and in health, for richer, for poorer, until death; both when once fairly established gave themselves up to it, and forswore everything else. Virgil's genius, says an ancient authority, forsook him when he attempted prose. The same cannot be said of Tennyson; but neither published any works in prose. A few scraps are all that remain of Virgil's correspondence, nor are Tennyson's letters numerous.

In person Virgil was tall, dark, of rustic mien, and of variable health, often suffering from weakness in the throat and stomach and from headache, and not seldom spitting blood. He was exceedingly temperate in eating and drinking. Gossip has not spared his character, but what is certain is that he was modest and refined in thought and word, so much so that, just as Milton was called at Cambridge the "Lady of Christ's," Virgil, by a Greek pun on his name, was known at Naples as "Parthenias"; the "Lady," or, to use the old-fashioned expression, the "Miss" of

Naples. There is, perhaps, an allusion also to the Greek name of Naples, Parthenope. Other plays upon his name have been made at other times. Leland, in his popular stories about Virgil, tells us how a Florentine claimed him for Florence, on the ground that he was a true lily of the city of lilies—*Ver' giglio*. He very seldom came to Rome, though he had a house there in a good situation, near Mæcenas' villa; when he did, he disliked very much being seen in public, and if anyone pointed him out he fled into the nearest house. For the most part he affected the seclusion of Campania and Naples or Sicily. Yet this retirement, says Tacitus, did not diminish either the favour of Augustus or his popularity with the people of Rome. When he did come to town he was a celebrity, and on one occasion when he was at the theatre and his own poems were recited, the whole house rose up and honoured him as if he had been the Emperor.

Substitute Hampshire for Campania, the Isle of Wight for Naples and Sicily, and London for Rome, and this account might, in most points, have been written for the late Laureate, who might also be described as tall and dark, and, if not exactly rustic, not town-bred in appearance, who, though certainly not girlish or ladylike in appearance, was twitted for his intellectual and artistic daintiness as "Schoolmiss Alfred," and who also fled from the interviewer and the admirer.

Throughout his life Virgil seems to have been shy and sensitive, but amiable and attractive. Horace, in the delightful glimpse given on the

road to Brundisium, tells us two things of him—that having a poor digestion he retired to sleep after dinner instead of playing tennis with Mæcenas, and that he was emphatically a “white soul,” the most sincere and lovable of spirits. Apocryphal or doubtful stories eke out the record of his modesty and affection, gentleness and generosity. “His library was open to all scholars; he went on the principle that friends have all in common; he praised the good, he censured none; if he saw anything well said by anyone else he was as pleased as if it was his own, so that everyone who was not absolutely cross-grained not only liked but loved him, and the contemporary poets, though burning with jealousy among themselves, Varius, Tucca, Horace, Gallus, Propertius, were one and all devoted to Virgil.”¹ So it might be written of Tennyson, in whom nothing is more admirable than his charity, whether as a man or a poet. Nothing in his life is more entirely delightful than the account of his relations with the other poets of his long reign, from the days of Rogers and Wordsworth, Leigh Hunt and Freiligrath, to those of Victor Hugo, Henry Taylor, the Brownings, Matthew Arnold, Rossetti, Longfellow, Lowell, Patmore, Whitman, Swinburne, Watts-Dunton, Watson, and Kipling.

Both Tennyson and Virgil, while young, conceived the idea of writing an epic, but, daunted by its difficulty, postponed it. “The earliest fragment of an epic,” says Lord Tennyson, “that I can find among my father’s MSS. in my possession, was

¹ “Tib. Cl. Donati Vita,” xvii. 67.

probably written about 1833, when he was twenty-four, and is a sketch in prose." The vision of Arthur, as Tennyson said of himself, had come upon him when, little more than a boy, he first lighted upon Malory. The magnificent fragment of the "Morte d'Arthur" was read by him in manuscript to his friends in 1835. Twelve was the number of books he had originally contemplated, as we learn from the preface afterwards added to this fragment; and this was the number of "Idylls" ultimately completed, though they were not written in the order in which they are now arranged.

Not otherwise Virgil, after he had written a few youthful pieces, began a poem on the History of Rome, but, repelled by the amount of matter, also, as some say, by the roughness of the proper names involved, turned to the "Bucolics." Not otherwise, when he came to write the "Æneid," he sketched it out in prose, arranging it for twelve books, and then composed it piecemeal and in no order, taking up a section here and a section there, as the humour seized him.

Neither life, after its earlier years, can be said to have been eventful. A poet's life naturally has but few events. Its landmarks are his poems. A few visits, a few travels, the trip to Brundisium, the voyage in the "Pembroke Castle," journeys to Italy or to Greece—these may diversify life, but are hardly events. Through the liberal gifts of friends Virgil became very wealthy, enjoying a fortune of some 100,000*l*. When Augustus offered him the property of a citizen who had been exiled, he declined to accept it. Is it a

coincidence, or something more, that Tennyson was the one poet of modern times who became rich by poetry? ¹

Virgil, being unmarried, could not found a family. His father died before him, and his mother married again. Of his two brothers he lost one in childhood, and the other as a young man. He left half his property to his half-brother, Valerius Proculus. The rest of his life is soon told. He spent on the "Æneid" some eleven years, groaning, it would seem, over the magnitude of the task, saying that he had been mad ever to undertake it, longing to be free and turn to other pursuits more to his taste. At last, in his fifty-second year, he determined to make a great effort to finish. He decided to travel to Greece and Asia, and there devote himself in seclusion to the sole task of revising his poem, so that he might have the rest of his life free to follow philosophy. He started on his journey and proceeded as far as Athens, when he met Augustus returning from the East. The Emperor, using perhaps a little gentle violence, persuaded the poet to return in his own company. But fate had other destinies for him. He went in a very hot sun to make an antiquary's visit to the neighbouring town of Megara. He contracted a low fever, made it worse by travelling by sea, without any break, to Brundisium, and, reaching that port in a critical state, died there on the 21st of September, 19 B.C. His ashes were conveyed to his home at Naples, and there entombed, a little way out of the town, on the road to Puteoli. Upon the tomb was

¹ Shakespeare and Pope under very different conditions were similarly prosperous in their day.

inscribed the distich which, it is said, he himself dictated on his death-bed :—

“Fields, flocks, and chiefs I sang; Mantua gave
Me birth, Calabria death, Naples a grave.”

By the multitude his resting-place was little heeded, but it became a sort of shrine of the faithful, who, like Silius Italicus, kept the poet's birthday there and honoured his shade. The fame of him lived long on the country-side. Whether he was more of a saint or a wizard was uncertain, but his name lingered on, and is apparently still known and associated with strange tales of magic and marvel.¹

Meanwhile his poems became more and more widely read. Like Tennyson, Virgil became at once an author for the young, a classic for colleges and schools. He suffered, but also gained, as the topic and theme of critics of every order, from the professor and professional critic to the itinerant lecturer or reciter. The first to lecture on Virgil was a private tutor and lecturer to young ladies and gentlemen, one Quintus Cæcilius Epirota, a freedman of Cicero's friend Atticus, and a friend of Virgil's friend Gallus, apparently a Greek by origin, for the rest a dilettante of somewhat doubtful morals, styled by the epigrammatist Domitius Marsus “the nurse of baby bards.” Another, a critic of heavier metal, was the compiler of the first Latin Dictionary, Verrius Flaccus. Still later, it is interesting to find

¹ See Comparetti, “Virgilio nel Medio Evo,” translated by Mr F. M. Benecke, London, 1895; and Mr C. G. Leland's more recent book, “The Unpublished Legends of Virgil,” Eliot Stock, London, 1899.

Cornutus, the tutor to whom his pupil Persius makes so touching an acknowledgment, commenting on Virgil. But what is still more noticeable is that the best of all the commentators on Virgil is not a Roman of Rome, but a colonial, a Latin scholar of the colony of Berytus in Syria, Marcus Valerius Probus, who flourished in the middle and latter part of the first century of our era. A man of real learning, Probus restored, in more than one place, an almost certain reading, notably when he gave back to Lavinia her "blosmy" locks.¹ A man too of independent mind, he ventured, we are told, to criticise Virgil at times, and that sharply. So Tennyson found some of his first and best commentators in Van Dyke of the United States and Dawson of Canada, while the earliest annotated editions of his poems were written by professors of English in India for their native students.

Virgil was everywhere. Lines of his were inscribed on spoons and tiles, and introduced like texts on gravestones. Fashionable blue-stockings began the conversation at dinner by comparing Virgil and Homer, or discussing the "Dido problem." Grammarians and lexicographers made him their norm and example. The schoolboy thumbed his "Æneid" by lamplight till the page grew black with the smuts; he learned it for repetition, and scribbled scraps of it on the nearest wall. At Pompeii, where all is silent, and has been so for eighteen hundred years, it is touching to read the first word and a half of the famous second book, "CONTICUERE OM . . .," while still

¹ "Floros crines." ("Æneid," xii. 605.) The old and common-place reading is "flavos crines."

more notable, scrawled in gigantic letters, as though by the hand of the genius of Rome itself, on the wall of the Baths of Titus, is the most appropriate of lines :—

“Tantæ molis erat Romam condere gentem.”

Like Tennyson, like all truly popular poets, Virgil was parodied. Like Tennyson, he was taken to task during his lifetime, and for much the same faults as Tennyson. What are these? First and foremost, unoriginality, plagiarism. “Virgil,” says his biographer, “never wanted disparagers (*obtrectatores*), and no wonder, for Homer has been disparaged too.” Herennius collected only Virgil’s faults, Perellius Faustus his thefts as well; Quintus Octavius Avitus had eight books of parallels or translations, enumerating what verses he borrowed, and from what sources. Other critics defended him from these charges of plagiarism, but Virgil’s own answer is the best: “Why don’t these gentry attempt the same thefts themselves? They will then find that it is easier to rob Hercules of his club than Homer of a single line.” Still he was not insensible to criticism. He intended, we are told, to go into retirement and polish his works till even the most hostile critic could say no more. Here again how like Tennyson! “No poet,” says Mr Lecky, “ever altered more in deference to his critics”; while the late Mr Churton Collins and Mr Stephen Gwynn have shown how many corrections he made in his early volume after the strictures of the Quarterly Review.

Of Virgil’s imitation much is obvious enough. It is obvious that he copies Theocritus, obvious

that he translates, and it must be confessed, even mistranslates him. He avowedly follows Hesiod and sings the song of Ascrea through the towns of Italy. It is patent that he copies Homer and borrows from Ennius. Tennyson's case is different. He, too, was a scholar deeply versed in letters, Greek, Roman, and modern, and he often makes avowedly scholarly allusions and appropriations, and occasionally, though not often, obviously imitates or translates. But the amount of his imitation has been, as he himself long ago pointed out, much over-estimated by the class of critics who are inclined—to use his own phrase—to “swamp the sacred poets with themselves.”

In addition to the charge of plagiarism thus brought against both of them, they were taken to task for yet other faults, faults of manner, faults of matter. Virgil was accused of a “new Euphuism” of a special and subtle kind, by which he gave an unusual and recondite meaning to simple words. The critics could not call him either bombastic or poverty-stricken, they therefore quarrelled with what he and Horace considered the secret, and what surely is one secret, of his grand style, his new and inspired combination of old and simple materials. The truth would seem to be that Virgil, like Tennyson, held the theory that poetry and poetic diction must often suggest rather than express, that you cannot tie down the poet to one meaning and one only. “Poetry is like shot silk,” Tennyson once said, “with many glancing colours, it combines many meanings” :—

“Words, like Nature, half reveal
And half conceal the soul within” ;

and this is exactly the theory applied by Conington to the elucidation of Virgil.¹

A more serious charge is that levelled against the characters, and especially the heroes, of their epics. "Tennyson's mediævalism, it is said, is unreal : he has sophisticated the masculine directness of Malory. The hero of the 'Idylls' is a prig, and a blameless prig : he is too good, he is even goody." This has often been said of Tennyson and King Arthur. It is exactly what is said of Virgil and *pius Æneas*. Virgil's hero is a prig or a "stick"—"always," as Charles James Fox remarked, "either insipid or odious": his blood does not flow, his battles are battles of the stage. Virgil's epic is a drawing-room epic. These are criticisms often made, and there is a superficial truth in them. *Æneas* is certainly not a simple Homeric hero. "He is conceived by Virgil," says Professor Nettleship, "as embodying in his character the qualities of a warrior, a ruler, and a civiliser of men, the legendary impersonation of all that was great in the achievements of Rome. His mission is to carry on a contest in Italy, to crush the resistance of its warlike tribes, to give them customs and build them cities."

"Bellum ingens geret Italia, populosque feroces
Contundet, moresque viris et mœnia ponet." ²

Mr Gladstone significantly misses this character. To him Turnus is more attractive than *Æneas* : he is the leader of a people "rightly struggling to be free." But, in truth, to Virgil, Turnus is a

¹ For instance, in his note on "Assurgens fluctu nimbosus Orion"—"*Æneid*," i. 535.

² "*Æneid*," i. 263.

barbarian. So Arthur is the champion of the faith, who—

“In twelve great battles ruining overthrew
The heathen hordes.”

He is not only the warrior-king of legend, but is an ideal—

“New-old and shadowing Sense at war with Soul,
Ideal manhood closed in real man.”

It is this element of allegory that here and there, as Mr Stopford Brooke has eloquently shown, makes Arthur seem “superhuman,” “out of the world,” “too good for human nature’s daily food.”

It has been a question with critics to what extent Æneas is the type of Augustus. There can be little doubt that Virgil sincerely saw in the Augustan *régime* the realisation of much of his wish for the Roman people. Tennyson also could write of Prince Albert—

“These to his memory—since he held them dear,
Perchance as finding there unconsciously
Some image of himself.”

“Æneas,” says Professor Sellar, in almost the same language as Professor Nettleship, “is intended to be an embodiment of the courage of an ancient hero, the justice of a paternal ruler, the mild humanity of a cultivated man living in an age of advanced civilisation, the saintliness of the founder of a new religion of peace and pure observance, the affection for parent and child which was one of the strongest instincts in the Italian race.”

So again, “Mr Tennyson,” wrote Mr Gladstone, “has encouraged us to conceive of Arthur as a

warrior no less irresistible than Lancelot, but as also perfect in purity, and as in all other respects more comprehensive, solid, and profound."

Yet, after all the worldling is tempted to cry—
"Victrix causa deis placuit, sed victa Catoni."
 Tennyson has come nearer to success with his hero than Virgil. Arthur finds more voices to praise him than Æneas. The greatness of Virgil does not depend upon Æneas, but upon the "Æneid" as a whole. Of its characters the greatest is Dido: indeed it may be doubted if any other is really great. Yet many are excellently delineated; and figures like Anchises, Evander, Mezentius, Camilla, and Drances have a picturesque and dramatic value, as the creations of one who is a master in grouping and figure-painting, if not exactly in character-drawing. As much or indeed more might be said of the minor characters of the "Idylls," Gawain, Sir Bors, Enid, Elaine, and others; but Tennyson's powers as a delineator of character are not to be judged only, perhaps not mainly, by the "Idylls." The characters of his dramas are, it is true, in the first place, not so much ideals as historical studies; but the study of the personality of Queen Mary is very fine,¹ and so are the conceptions of Harold and of Becket, as became increasingly clear when the last was seen on the stage; while, leaving these out of the question, the "Northern Farmer," and in a different way "Ulysses," and, yet again,

¹ "Vienne un grand acteur qui comprenne et incarne Harold, une grande actrice qui se passionne pour le caractère de Marie, et sans effort Tennyson prendra sa place parmi les dramaturges." (Filon, "Théâtre Anglais," p. 168.)

"Maud," show a power of indicating individuality by a few strokes, which is of a very high order.

But if the epics of both fall short in directness, in point of heroic strength and life, and in those qualities in which Homer is so forcible, both have on the other hand qualities which go far to compensate for these defects. Both make appeal to sentiments and interests strong at once in their own day and for all time. Both are national poets addressing themselves to the patriotism of their countrymen; both are at once religious and scientific; both are scholars and artists. What in this regard was Virgil's attitude is best seen by placing him once more side by side with Lucretius. Lucretius, as was said above, is a natural philosopher. Science for him retained its old double meaning: it was at once natural science, that is to say, physical investigation and induction, and philosophy, that is, metaphysical speculation. Lucretius is not indeed aggressively negative: rather he is an agnostic. He embraces a philosophy which retains the gods provisionally. He does not accept the ordinary views about them, but he does go so far, in his magnificent poem, as to give a kind of scientific justification to a national belief and a family cult. He does not however believe, he disbelieves, in the immortality of the soul. He certainly cannot, by any stretch, be called orthodox. Virgil on the other hand is constructive, is in a sense orthodox. The orthodoxy of his time consisted in maintaining the accepted historic religion of Rome, and in giving a new sanction to its traditions and legends. This line Virgil pre-eminently follows. Further,

he has a strong yearning for a personal immortality. He starts, it is true, with the same Epicurean creed as Lucretius: his desire is to know the causes of things. Horace began in precisely the same way. But Horace rested in, or lapsed into, an agnostic conformity: for him all after this life is dust and shadow. Virgil is not content with such a view. If still somewhat of a doubter, "majestic in his sadness at the doubtful doom of human kind," more and more he trusts to a "larger hope." He believes in a Providence, a Providence to whom the Roman people is specially near and dear; he believes in the persistence of the individual soul, though it may clothe itself in different forms, and therefore in a Heaven and a Hell, even in a Purgatory. The Sixth "*Æneid*" is a magnificent effort to reconcile traditional belief and philosophic science. The famous doctrine of metempsychosis is employed, no doubt, partly as a splendid artistic device, parallel to the "*Making of the Shield*," but it is also an attempt to justify the belief in immortality, to give to humanity "the wages of going on, and still to be."

Here again Tennyson's effect is less intense, or perhaps rather only less concentrated. Like Virgil, he too was possessed from youth to age by a passion for philosophy. Jowett said to him: "Your poetry has an element of philosophy more to be considered than any regular philosophy in England. It is almost too much impregnated with philosophy. Yet this to some minds will be its greatest charm." It is hardly necessary to recall his part in the early discussions of the Cambridge "*Conversazione*" Society, better known

by its popular style as the "Apostles," or how with Mr James Knowles and Professor Pritchard in later days he founded the Metaphysical Society, to which a brief but notable chapter in the "Life" is very properly devoted by his son. Like Virgil, and with better opportunities than Virgil, he had a passion for natural science—a passion that appears on almost every page of his poems. He was accepted by the scientific men of his age as their most intelligent and sympathetic critic and mouth-piece in the world of letters; while his accuracy as an observer of nature is a household word. Virgil's poetry is more artificial, and certainly cannot always be called scientific, but it is probable that less than justice is done to him on this score. Mr Warde Fowler, for instance, tells us that, excepting that of the half mythical "alcyon," all Virgil's descriptions of birds are true to nature. Tennyson was specially careful about his birds and beasts, and had much correspondence about them with friends, in particular with the late Duke of Argyll; and, as other experts have shown, he was not less exact in his botany.

But Tennyson, if a naturalist, was no materialist; and with this scientific attitude there went in him, as in Virgil, an intense personal conviction of the immortality of the soul. His effort was to bring all these factors — natural observation, personal intuition, reason, and passion—into relation with religion in general, and in particular with Christianity, still more especially, here and there, with that Anglican Christianity in whose warm and kindly bosom he had been brought up.¹ For like

¹ Cp. Sneath, p. 26. Tennyson's relation to religion and

Virgil, if, to use the old classical phrase, his head struck the stars and the sky, he had his feet firmly planted on the soil of his own country.

Both, then, wrote *sub specie eternitatis*, but both were passionately patriotic, even to the extent of appearing at times almost narrowly national. Of this it is hardly necessary to multiply examples from either poet. Virgil's many splendid allusions to the beauties and glories of Italy, her lakes and mountains, her "hill-towns piled on their sheer crags," her "rivers gliding under ancient walls," his great apostrophe to her as "Mother of increase, mighty mother of men," are known to all. His magnificent lines in the Sixth "Æneid" sum up Rome's character and mission as perhaps no other artist has ever summed up the mission and character of a race.

"To rule the world, O Roman, be thy bent,
 Empire thy fine art and accomplishment,
 The crushed to spare, but battle down the proud,
 Till all beneath the code of thy firm peace be bowed!"
 ("Æneid," vi. 851.)

The mission of England, the mandate of the British Empire, is not so fierce or selfish or all-embracing, and Tennyson's strain is naturally different. It is all the more interesting at once to compare and contrast Tennyson's patriotic songs and passages, such songs and passages as—

"Love thou thy land,"

OR—

There is no land like England,"

philosophy are well brought out in two books—Mr E. H. Sneath's "Mind of Tennyson," and Mr C. F. G. Masterman's "Tennyson as a Religious Teacher."

OR—

“Pray God our greatness may not fail
Thro’ craven fears of being great.”

The utterances of both poets, moreover, have in this matter a certain character of prophecy. What is specially noticeable, perhaps, is how Tennyson outran his own time in his language about the Colonies and the Empire as a whole, his words about which are even more true and vital now than they were when he wrote them. As a key to this, we may remark that so far back as May 1881 we find him writing in a private letter to Sir Henry Parkes, Premier of New South Wales: “I always feel with the Empire, and I read with great interest of these first steps in Federation.”

Both poets, again, were scholars, though, as we have seen, neither was a pedant. Both read widely and deeply. Both were “lords of language,” coiners of “many a golden phrase.” Tennyson invented and employed many metres. Virgil, so far as we know, used but few; indeed in his great acknowledged poems he used the hexameter alone. But within the large limits of the hexameter he made numberless experiments and inventions. There is reason, as was said above, to believe that the criticisms of Horace were worked out in conjunction with Virgil; Horace’s maxims about the choice of words and the combination of words, and about the arrangement of a theme, coincide exactly with Virgil’s practice; and indeed in more than one place he avows that he has Virgil in his mind. That Virgil was a conscious and critical artist, laborious and careful, there can be no doubt. He used to compose, we are told, a large number

of lines every morning, dictating them to his secretary, and then going over them all day, to reduce them finally to very few,¹ saying that "he brought forth his poems as a she-bear does her young, and gradually licked them into shape." Not to stop his flow, he would pass over certain parts without finishing them; other places again, he, so to speak, propped up with very slight lines, which he would say in jest were "shoring-poles" put in to support the work until the solid pillars should arrive. But sometimes lines would come to him in a flash, and his amanuensis Eros in his old age used to tell a story, which apparently became a little confused in the telling, how he had completed two lines of the "Æneid" on the spur of the moment as his work was being read over for entry in the finished book.

Tennyson's process was perhaps less methodical, but he too polished and rejected. He certainly composed hundreds, nay thousands, of lines which he never wrote down; as a rule he "rolled them about in his head." But to him, too, not seldom the lines "came." "Many of his shorter poems," says his son, "were made in a flash!" and again, "When alone with me he would often chaunt his poems and add fresh lines." "'Crossing the Bar' came," he told his son, "in a moment," as he was crossing the Solent, on his way from Aldworth to Farringford. Often his poems started from a single line. The line, "At Flores in the Azores Sir Richard Grenville lay" was on his desk for years,

¹ Tennyson has himself referred to this tradition in "Poets and their Bibliographies." Cp. "Corpora fingere lingua," "Æneid," viii. 634.

but he finished the ballad at last, all at once, in a day or two. "What people don't understand," he said, "is the slow germination, the long preliminary process which must precede the sudden rapid bursting into flower." The crowning instance is "Maud," the whole of which, as we now have it, was written *backward*, as the development and justification of the lovely little lyric beginning, "O that 'twere possible, After long grief and pain," which had been composed and even published in a magazine, very many years earlier.

Both were very fastidious. Tennyson would throw away a beautiful poem like that on "Reticence" because he could not please himself about one collocation. He would reject, says Aubrey de Vere, passages or stanzas, however beautiful in themselves, if they spoiled the general form of the poem. We know less about Virgil, but all we know points in the same direction, and the story about his wishing the "Æneid" to be burnt is probably no fable, though it is also probably true that he acquiesced in his impulse being over-ruled.

Tennyson restored or revived the use of many old and beautiful English words and forms: forms like *knolled*, words like *flittermouse* or *marish*, "Not a cricket *chirred*," "The wood that *grides* and clangs," "The *poached* filth that floods the middle street." It is characteristic that he regretted that he had never employed the word "*yarely*." Exactly analogous is Virgil's use of archaism, his genitives in *ai*, his infinitives in *ier*; his *olle* for *ille* and *hoc* for *huc*, or his *quianam* and *porgite* and *fictus*; or the beautiful old word *florus* as an epithet for a maiden's hair, alluded to already.

There is nothing unusual in the fact that both read their poems aloud: this has been done by many poets, ancient and modern. But in their manner of reading there is an interesting resemblance. Virgil used to read or recite from his poems, we are told, not, as became the fashion at Rome, publicly or semi-publicly at *séances* to large audiences, but only occasionally to a few chosen friends, and then for the most part passages about which he was in doubt, in order to get his friends' judgment. Of the charm of his reading abundant testimony has been preserved. He read with wonderful sweetness and fascination, and with enviable dramatic power, and often brought out the meaning of lines of his own which without him were empty and dumb. The story of Octavia fainting at the recital of the passage on the young Marcellus is well known.

Tennyson followed the same practice. He read to get his friends' judgment. "The constant reading of new poems aloud was the surest way of helping him to find out any defects there might be." He also read for the enjoyment of his friends. Reporters differ, as is to be expected, about the artistic value of his reading. One witness said he read with a voice like a rough sea; but in truth it was very fine, musical, and sympathetic, and brought out, like Virgil's reading, new and unsuspected meanings and beauties in the poems themselves. Fanny Kemble speaks of the striking and impressive reading of "Boadicea." Gladstone understood and was converted to "Maud" when he heard it read; so was Dr Van Dyke, the American critic, who has written on the whole the fullest and

truest account of Tennyson's reading. The reading of freshly finished poems to special friends was with both poets a great occasion. Thus Virgil read the "Georgics" to Augustus, at the rate of a "Georgic" a day, for four days. Propertius, again, was admitted to a hearing of the "Æneid," while it was still in process, and wrote :

"Way, bards of Greece, and Roman bards, make way!
More than the 'Iliad' soon shall see the day."

So Tennyson read to the Prince Consort, or to the Rossettis and the Brownings.

It would be easy to carry the parallel into yet further detail, but perhaps it has been almost over-elaborated already. Much of the same kind of similarity might be found between other poets, ancient and modern. Tennyson has much of affinity with Milton and Gray. As regards Virgil, Tennyson had Virgil himself, as well as Virgil's model before him, and was a conscious and constant student of Virgil. His poem on Virgil is well known. What is less well known, though recorded in the last lines, is the lifelong love out of which these glorious stanzas themselves flowed. "I had no idea that Virgil could sound so fine as it did by his reading," said Savile Morton in 1844. "Tears which during a pretty long and intimate intercourse I had never seen glisten in his eye but once, when reading Virgil—dear old Virgil, as he called him—together." So wrote Edward Fitzgerald, who shared this, as he shared so many of Tennyson's loves.

It seems a pity that he did not give any specimen of translation from a poet with whom he

had so much affinity. How he thought it ought to have been done he has told us. Like Wordsworth, he thought Virgil should be translated into blank verse. Perhaps the best suggestion of what Tennyson's rendering would have been like, had he attempted it, is to be found in the closing lines of "Demeter," lines which have a distinctly Virgilian ring :—

"The Stone, the Wheel, the dimly-glimmering lawns
Of that Elysium, all the hateful fires
Of torment, and the shadowy warrior glide
Along the silent field of Asphodel"—¹

or in what his son justly calls the "Virgilian" simile about the torrent and the cataract in "Enid."

Imitation, however, is one thing, the approximation of independent writers another; and in drawing out the parallel some deduction must perhaps be made on these and similar grounds. In their actual output, too, there is perhaps more difference than in their genius. Tennyson is more various: Virgil is more concentrated. Had Virgil followed up his early bent, or had he lived longer, he might have given us both lyrics and elegiacs of a memorable kind. The "Catalepta," as already hinted, seems to suggest analogues to several of Tennyson's occasional verses. It must be remembered also that our record of Virgil's personality is very imperfect. Thus his intense passion for philosophy, hinted at, as has been shown, more than once in his remains, can hardly be properly

¹ Other very Virgilian passages are the lines in the "Lotos Eaters," beginning, "They sat them down upon the yellow sand," or those in the "Princess," beginning, "Then rode we with the old king across the lawns."

estimated now, though it is unconsciously felt in his poetry. Again, we have very few of his sayings. There is one, which sounds genuine and is certainly fine, "That no virtue is more useful to a man than patience, and that there is no lot so hard that a brave man cannot conquer it by bearing it wisely." He has expressed this maxim in the "Æneid" :—

"Quidquid erit, superanda omnis fortuna ferendo est ;"

and Horace, in his beautiful dirge on Virgil's friend Quintilius Varus, is perhaps alluding to it, and for Virgil's sake :

"Durum : sed levius fit patientia,
Quidquid corrigere est nefas."

With both may be not inaptly compared Tennyson's fine and famous lines—

"O well for him whose will is strong!
He suffers, but he will not suffer long."

Had Tennyson been more bold and determined with his epic, reared a more sustained architecture, and finished all in a style and on a scale more fully corresponding to the promise of the first "Morte d'Arthur," the resemblance might have been more complete, if less interesting.

Yet when all deductions have been made, the parallel seems well worth working out. How close it is perhaps we can hardly yet tell. Hereafter, when these things shall have become history, when the Victorian age like the Augustan shall lie "fore-shortened in the tract of time," its separate stars gathered to one glittering constellation, it will be

more easy to pronounce. Yet assuredly it is strikingly close. Fitley indeed was a wreath of laurel from the tomb of Virgil laid upon Tennyson's bier. Were there ever two poets at once so profound and so popular, satisfying at the same time the highest and the widest tastes; poets the delight of the artist and the student; the favourites, and more, the friends, of monarchs; the heroes, so far as men of letters can be heroes, of an empire? Did we hold Virgil's creed, we might be tempted at times to think—though the dates do not exactly, but only nearly, correspond—of that ancient doctrine of reincarnation so wonderfully handled by Plato and by Virgil himself, and to fancy that the tender and pensive, yet withal masculine, spirit, which went to join Musæus on the Elysian lawn nineteen years before the birth of Christ, had, after twice rolling the fateful cycle, found a third avatar, and lived again, well-nigh two thousand years later, in the English Laureate of the nineteenth century. But Tennyson's faith, though the doctrine had much attraction for him, was not this. Rather it was one which looked ever forward and upward—
“On and always on.”

VI

GRAY AND DANTE

“The curfew tolls the knell of parting day.”

“Squilla di lontano
Che paia 'l giorno pianger che si muore.”

(“The distant bell
That seems to mourn the dying of the day.”)

THE parallel is fairly obvious, and suggests at once that Gray borrowed his thrice-famous opening from the commencement of the eighth canto of the “Purgatorio.” Such resemblances, it is true, by no means always prove borrowing, or at any rate conscious borrowing. Often they are due to “unconscious cerebration,” as often to mere coincidence. In the case quoted, however, there is evidence that Gray himself admitted the debt. He even avowed that it was originally fuller. “He had first written,” he said, “the knell of dying day,” but “changed ‘dying’ into ‘parting’ to avoid the *conchetto*.”

Gray is, of course, generally considered a highly imitative poet. It is certain that he was a very learned poet. He congratulated himself, indeed, on not possessing a good verbal memory, for even without this, he said, he had imitated too much, and had he possessed it, all he wrote would have been imitations, from his having read so much.

The poetic power and importance of Gray have

recently been impugned in much the same way, and on much the same grounds, that the poetic power and importance of Horace have also recently been impugned. He may well be content to be disparaged in such company.

“Ego apis Matinæ
 More modoque,
 Grata carpentis thyma per laborem
 Plurimum circa nemus uvidique
 Tiburis ripas operosa parvus
 Carmina fingo.”

So wrote Horace of himself. But what Horace called “the modest industry of the Matine bee,” the world called *curiosa felicitas*, “felicity reduced to a science.” And of this *curiosa felicitas* Gray has a large share. Nay, of this special combination of learning with poetic genius he is, perhaps, although there are other good examples, the most complete example in English letters, in which, moreover, he is surely a very singular and fascinating figure.

For what is Gray? A don, a “futile don,” as, in his brilliant insouciant youth, too soon, alas, to be glorified by a soldier’s death, the late Mr G. W. Steevens, himself at the time that infallible being, a non-resident junior fellow, might have called him; a “futile don” in days when the life of a resident don at Oxford or Cambridge was one of real academic seclusion and sequestration; a “futile don” and yet a first-rate poet; shy, fastidious, academic, yet fired with genuine if suppressed passion, and filled with world-wide sympathies; a cross between, shall we say, the author of the “Anatomy of Melancholy” and Lord Tennyson; a don who, from his college rooms, indited the most popular poem in the

language, which Wolfe, if the tale be true, repeated as he rowed down the St Lawrence, on the eve of his victory and his death, saying he would rather have written it than take Quebec; a poet, too, who achieved the first rank with so few lines, yet a poet again whose little represented so much, whose tiny posy, "a handful, but all roses," was the outcome of an acquisition and culture truly immense.

If Milton, after making his Italian journey, had returned to Cambridge, had never married or become Latin Secretary, but had immured himself, with his books and his mulberry-tree, in the delightful courts and gardens of Christ's College, we might have seen, a century and more earlier than Gray's time, the same phenomenon. As it is, Callimachus writing "They told me Heraclitus" in the Museum of Alexandria, is perhaps a parallel from Greek Literature, but in English letters Gray is unique. So many explanations have been given of the paradox which he presents, that it is worth while to consider once more how he came to be what he was, to do what he did, and, what is not less remarkable, to do, or at any rate to write, no more than he did. Matthew Arnold puts down Gray's infertility to the credit of his times, to the "moral east wind then blowing." But Fitzgerald is more probably correct when he writes: "I fancy Gray would have written and published more had his ideas been more copious and his expression more easy to him."

Gray's temperament no doubt made him a don. He did not like Cambridge, or rather, with many of her sons, he liked her best in vacation, when the University was down. He said hard things of her,

both as an undergraduate and in middle age. Yet he returned thither after seeing something of the world, he lingered there, and finally made his life or, at any rate, his home there, and it is doubtful if he would have been either happier or more productive elsewhere.

Had he married "Madam Speed" with her "thirty thousand pounds," her "house in town, plate, jewels, china, and old japan infinite," he might have been shaken out of himself, but it would have been a dangerous experiment. Addison was not perhaps very happy with his Countess. And being a don confirmed and set the bent of Gray's temperament. Yet it is character, not circumstance, that is destiny, and it was temperament that was really responsible for his manner of life. His genius, his instinct, were rather for acquisition than creation. He knew this himself. As to creation, his answer to Wharton, when asked by him to write an epitaph, is sufficient evidence :

"I by no means pretend to inspiration [he replied], but yet I affirm that the faculty in question is by no means voluntary. It is the result (I suppose) of a certain disposition of mind, which does not depend on oneself, and which I have not felt this long time. You, that are a witness how seldom this spirit has moved me in my life, may easily give credit to what I say."

As to acquisition, his own language is no less significant. "When I expressed my astonishment that he had read so much," says Norton Nicholls, he replied, "Why should you be surprised, for I do nothing else?" He had essentially the temperament of the scholar. Like Mark Pattison, he

could not, or would not, write on any topic, until he had read all that had been written upon it.

The fact that he was a good classical scholar, that he wrote Latin verses, some of which have even made an enduring mark, is well known. The true character and amount of his classical studies is not so fully recognised. Gray was not merely a scholar in the ordinary sense in which many well-educated men of letters, and not a few men of action, have been scholars; he was a genuine and deep student, an "original researcher." Temple and Potter, scholars of his own day, described him as "the most learned man in Europe or of the age, equally acquainted with the elegant and profound parts of science, and that not superficially but thoroughly," and the opinions of Temple and Potter in the eighteenth century have been endorsed in the last by Fynes-Clinton and—most fastidious and hard to satisfy—the late Master of Trinity, Dr W. H. Thompson.

"Gray projected," says the learned author of the "Fasti Hellenici," "a literary chronology. Had this work been completed by a writer of Gray's taste, learning and accuracy, it would have undoubtedly superseded the necessity of any other undertaking of the same kind." Gibbon, indeed, lamented that the poet was sometimes lost in the scholar and man of science. After quoting from the fragmentary piece on "Education and Government," he proceeds to ask, "Instead of compiling tables of chronology and natural history, why did not Mr Gray apply the powers of his genius to finish the philosophic poem of which he has left such an exquisite specimen?"

But the answer is that Gray was by nature as much of a student, nay, perhaps, though he never achieved a History, even as much of an historian, as Gibbon himself, and that it was part of his genius to compile. Like Gibbon, he would seem to have read, and even observed, pen in hand. Whether he was at home or abroad, he was always jotting, noting, extracting, recording. When he made the Grand Tour he kept elaborate notes of travel, often probably to the annoyance of his more volatile companion, Horace Walpole, who writes significantly to West, "Only think what a vile employment 'tis, making catalogues."

He studied the fine arts in the same methodical, diligent way in which he travelled, or in which he perused the classics. He was a great lover of music, and early acquired a taste for the Italian schools of that art, as well as of painting. His acquaintance with painting is shown in his letter of criticism to Walpole in reference to the latter's "Lives of the Painters." Pergolesi, Leo, and Scarlatti were among his favourite composers. Galuppi, whom many admirers of Browning suppose him to have discovered, was well known to Gray. Walpole even thought that Gray had first introduced Pergolesi into England. This cannot be established, but what is certain is, that when in Italy he collected—transcribing many pieces with his own hand—nine volumes of Italian music, which are still in existence, a monument alike to his predilections and his indefatigable industry. Dr H. E. Krehbiel, in whose possession they now are, gives a very full and precise account of them in his interesting

little book on "Music and Manners in the Classical Period." Gray was also at the pains to add the names of the chief singers by whom he had heard these pieces performed. The whole collection thus forms now a most valuable record of forgotten music and musicians. He kept a journal in France, a journal in Italy. He wrote an essay on Architecture. Above all, he was interested in Natural History of every kind. About the same time as White of Selborne, he kept a naturalist's calendar of the same sort as that kept by White. He drew up a list of the "Fishes that live in the Mediterranean, about whose names we know nothing from the Greeks or Romans." He wrote an exceedingly clever account, in Latin hexameters, of the "Generick Characters of the Orders of Insects," beginning thus with the Coleoptera—

"Alas lorica tectas Coleoptera jactant."

He annotated Gerald's "Herbal" and Ray's "Select Remains"; Linnæus' "Systema Naturæ" he not only annotated, but illustrated with careful pen-and-ink drawings of birds and insects, producing a volume which deservedly was one of the chief treasures of Mr Ruskin's library, and afterwards of that of the late Mr Charles Eliot Norton.¹ But, indeed, he annotated many, if not most, of his books. It is a thousand pities that his library was dispersed, after being kept together for some seventy years. The items, a few out of many, that have been recovered from dispersal, afford

¹ It has been beautifully reproduced in facsimile by that fine scholar to whom the tradition of letters owes so much on both sides of the Atlantic.

a most striking testimony to the width of his interests, the depth of his knowledge. The catalogue of it, printed in 1851, when it was sold, makes our mouths water. He annotated Euripides and "The Digest," Boccaccio and Milton, Clarendon and Bishop Burnet, Roger Lord Orrery, Dugdale's "Baronage," and various volumes of memoirs and travels. On Aristophanes, and on Plato, he left a body of systematic notes.

But what is not less remarkable than Gray's learning is his culture. He had, as has been said by his graceful and sympathetic biographer, Mr Edmund Gosse, all the modern tastes. He knew and loved the Elizabethan writers, and even the earlier English literature of Lydgate and Gower and Chaucer. He appreciated Gothic architecture. He loved mountainous scenery. He was fascinated by the Alps, though their terrors when he crossed them were very various and very real. He discovered the English Lakes before Wordsworth, and the Scotch Highlands before Scott. He played the spinet, he collected blue china, he had flower-boxes in his college windows at Cambridge, and when he was in London went every day to Covent Garden for a nosegay. He was a connoisseur in wall-papers, stained glass, and high-art furniture, and in these matters it may be noted that his taste was more fastidious than that of Strawberry Hill, where he accused Walpole of having "degenerated into finery."

He loved the classical, but he loved the romantic too. He translated Norse and Welsh poetry before York-Powell had collected the one, or Matthew Arnold written on the other. Among

Gray's modern tastes was the taste for Dante. Dante was, of course, well known to England and England's poets long before. Three hundred and seventy years earlier Chaucer visited Italy, and probably met Petrarch and very possibly heard Boccaccio lecture, while his various allusions to Dante, and his reproduction of the story of "Erl Hugelyn of Pise" are well known.

Milton in his day also made the Italian tour, and knew Italian well—better than some of his critics, such as the late Rector of Lincoln, who have had the temerity to find fault with his knowledge. Milton copies Dante, he translates him, he avows that he took him for his model. "Above all I preferred," he says, "the two famous renowners of Beatrice and Laura, who never write but honour of those to whom they devote their verse."

In what was till yesterday our own century, from first to last, our poets, with hardly an exception, have been students and lovers of Dante.

Keats in 1817, then a young man of twenty-two, wrote of him :

"He is less to be commended than loved, and they who truly feel his charm will need no argument for their passionate fondness. With them he has attained the highest favour of an author, exemption from those canons to which the little herd must bow ; Dante, whether he has been glorified by the Germans or derided by the French, it matters little."

Shelley writes more precisely but not less

fervently. Byron, who told Murray that he thought his "Prophecy of Dante" was the best thing he had ever done if not unintelligible, and who published a very careful translation of the Paolo and Francesca episode, felt, and acknowledged that he felt, the power and compulsion of the great Florentine. It was, it would seem, from the motto prefixed by him to "The Corsair" that Tennyson as a boy of twelve first learned that "A sorrow's crown of sorrow is remembering happier things."

Of Tennyson himself, or the other poets nearer our own time, Browning and Matthew Arnold, Longfellow and Lowell, Rossetti and Swinburne, there is no need to speak. They share, and indeed have done much alike to illustrate and to stimulate, that "great love and long study" of Dante which has been among the most characteristic symptoms of the process of thought and letters in England and, we may add, in America, in our own century and day.

But if such was the taste of Chaucer and of Milton, if such was the taste of the nineteenth century, such was not the taste of the eighteenth. And this is just one of the points which makes Gray so interesting. It is true that to study Italian was fashionable enough in England in the last century. The little Eton set at Cambridge, who, with West at Oxford, formed the "Quadruple Alliance," the set to which Gray belonged, the picture of which has been so delightfully recovered for us by Mr Tovey, began the study, of their own motion, as young men, with Signor Hieronimo Piazza, the University teacher.

“I learn Italian like any dragon [he writes to West, in one of the first letters preserved], and in two months am got through the 16th book of Tasso, whom I hold in great admiration; I want you to learn too, that I may know your opinion of him; nothing can be easier than that language to any one who knows Latin and French already, and there are few so copious and expressive.”

And again in one of his early letters he alludes to having translated (like all beginners) the “Pastor Fido.”

But to learn Italian is not always, certainly was not then, necessarily to love Dante. Walpole, for instance, began Italian with Gray, with Gray he travelled to Italy, and studied Italian art. In two places in his letters he makes allusion to the author of the “Divine Comedy”; in the first, he says that, “asking Mr Hayley’s pardon, he does not admire Dante”; in the second, he tells Mr William Mason that “Dante was extravagant, absurd, disgusting; in short, a methodist parson in Bedlam.” This may seem astonishing by itself, but it is worth noting that in the same vein Walpole poured equal contempt on Gray’s modern taste for Norse. “Who can care,” he said, “through what horrors a Runic savage arrived at all the joys and glories they conceive—the supreme felicity of boozing ale out of the skull of an enemy in Odin’s Hall?” In point of fact, Walpole’s language is strong, but the sentiment is only too characteristic of that “wonderful eighteenth century through which poor Gray wandered in life-long exile.” It is only fair to Walpole, however, to say that he also made a serious and

sensible observation about Dante, and one which bore fruit. "Dante," he said, "is a difficult author. I wish we had a complete translation in prose with the original on the opposite page." The remark had some influence in setting Cary on his admirable rendering.

With Walpole's may be set Lord Chesterfield's opinion, which is amusing, and also of value if only in showing what was the verdict on Dante of a cultivated man of fashion in 1750. It is thus he wrote in that year to his son—

"Whatever author is obscure and difficult in his own language certainly does not think clearly. This is, in my opinion, the case of a celebrated Italian author, to whom the Italians, from the admiration they have of him, have given the epithet of *il divino*; I mean *Dante*. Though I formerly knew Italian extremely well, I could never understand him; for which reason I had done with him, fully convinced that he was not worth the pain necessary to understand him."

But even Lord Chesterfield's scourge, Dr Johnson, the English oracle of the century, held probably much the same views. Few things of the kind are more interesting than to contrast the attitude of Dr Johnson towards Ossian and Macpherson with that of Gray.¹ Johnson's is the more amusing and even heroic, but Gray's is undoubtedly the more scholarly and sympathetic, and the more in accord with modern views.

¹ The pious diligence of the late Dr Neil, Librarian of Pembroke, recovered for his College Library, *inter alia*, Gray's copy of Macpherson's "Ossian."

Johnson hardly mentions Dante except, oddly enough, to compare the opening of the "Pilgrim's Progress" with that of the "Divine Comedy." Yet Johnson knew Italian, and speaks with appreciation of Petrarch and Ariosto. Still more strange, Boswell quotes two lines from the "Divine Comedy," but avows that he does not know the author of the quotation.

Gibbon in the same way, who knew Italy and Italian better, perhaps, than he professes, speaks, it is true, of Dante's "original wildness," but would appear to prefer Ariosto and Tasso, and seems to regard Petrarch as a more important if not better poet.

Gray knew and loved Petrarch too. His copy of Petrarch was marked, after his methodical academic manner, with signs indicating the comparative merit of the various pieces. Boccaccio, we have seen, he had studied minutely. He was also well acquainted with Tasso and Ariosto. Indeed, there is little doubt that Norton Nicholls was right in saying that Gray knew the whole range of Italian literature, both prose and verse. And it has been seen that to know, with Gray, was to know exactly and exhaustively.

What is pretty certain then is that his acquaintance with Dante was of the same minute and profound kind as his acquaintance with Aristophanes or Plato. The evidence for this, it is true, is somewhat scattered and scanty, but, taken in conjunction with Gray's own character, it seems sufficient.

The statement about the debt to Dante with which this paper begins is drawn from what is,

perhaps, the most graphic and best account of Gray preserved, namely, the "Reminiscences" of the Rev. Norton Nicholls. This gentleman, a Suffolk rector, wealthy and of artistic tastes, the owner of a "villa" at Blundeston, near Lowestoft, who died in 1809, at the age of sixty-eight, was in particular deeply versed in Italian. A fine tree in the ground is still called "Gray's tree," and until recently was surrounded by a circular bench which is said to have been a favourite seat of the poet. Among the curiosities of literature is an Italian "Canzone," prefixed by Mr Mathias, one of the chief biographers of Gray, to a collection of lyrics from the most illustrious Italian poets, and dedicated, "Al erudito e nell' amena letteratura versatissimo Norton Nicholls." In this singular piece Gray figures several times. He is called

"Quel Grande che canto le tombe e i Bardi."

and later figures somewhat grotesquely as one of the well-known "swans of the Lord of Delos, who are seen disporting, and whose cries are heard, along the learned stream."

Mr Norton Nicholls went up from Eton to Cambridge in 1760. Apparently he had already learnt Italian at Eton. His first acquaintance with Gray, he tells us, was one afternoon, drinking tea, at the rooms of a Mr Lobb,¹ a Fellow of

¹ Dr T. A. Walker, Fellow of Peterhouse, has furnished me with some entries from the College records which show that this must have been the Reverend William Lobb, a Somersetshire gentleman, who was about this time Junior Dean, Greek Lecturer, and Chaplain in the College.

Peterhouse. Was afternoon tea, too, one of Gray's modern tastes? Collins, poor lad, used, we know, to give tea-parties in his undergraduates' rooms at Magdalen.

The conversation, Mr Nicholls goes on to say, turned on the use of bold metaphors in poetry, and that of Milton was quoted, "The sun to me is dark and silent as the moon."¹ Nicholls does not say, indeed, "quoted by Gray," but it is probable that this was so, for Gray seems to have affected the quotation, and makes it, as will be seen later, in his "Journal in the Lakes."

Nicholls, a humble freshman, ventured to ask if it might not possibly be imitated from Dante's "Mi ripingeva la dov' il sol tace." Gray turned quickly round to him and said, "Sir, do you read Dante?" "I have endeavoured to understand him," was the reply. Gray was much pleased, addressed the chief of his discourse to him for the rest of the evening, and invited him to Pembroke Hall. Nicholls afterwards told a friend of the awe he felt, at the time, of the poet, and the lightning of his eye, that "*folgorante sguardo*, as the Tuscans term it," but "Mr Gray's courtesy and encouraging affability," he said, "soon dispersed every uneasy sensation and gave him confidence."

This "snapshot," if we may call it so, gives a glimpse, for which we cannot be too grateful, of the poet in the environment of the Cambridge of his day, and of his personality and interests. Was Gray's surprise rather that young Norton Nicholls knew Italian at all, or that he read Dante?

¹ "Samson Agonistes," v. 85.

Perhaps we are not justified in saying the latter. After they became friends, it seems clear, though it is not stated, from several quotations and allusions which are scattered up and down the "Reminiscences," that they read Dante together. "Gray," Norton Nicholls proceeds, "had a perfect knowledge of the Italian language, and of the poets of Italy of the first class, to whom he looked up as his great progenitors, and to Dante as the father of all; to whose genius, if I remember right, he thought it an advantage to have been produced in a rude age of strong and uncontrolled passions, when the Muse was not checked by refinement and the fear of criticism."

This reminiscence by Norton Nicholls is, to speak strictly, almost the only piece of external evidence we have of Gray's study of Dante. The rest is all, or almost all, internal.

It is characteristic of Gray that he only once in his life asked for any preferment; that when he asked for it, he half expected and half hoped to be refused, and, as a matter of fact, was refused. What he solicited, yet shrank from, is also significant of the "futile don." It was a Professorship, that of Modern History and Modern Languages. This post became vacant in the year 1762, and Gray made some little interest to obtain it. Five years earlier he had declined the office of Poet Laureate offered him on the death of Colley Cibber. That he did so seems a pity. Gray evidently did not really despise the office, though he made fun of it. He wished somebody might be found to "revive its credit," but he shrank from trying himself. His prevailing reason seems to have been

his donnish temperament, his constitutional, chilly hesitancy. Had Gray accepted the post, Scott might apparently afterwards have done the same. The tradition of Spenser and Ben Jonson and Dryden would have been revived; that of Southey, Wordsworth, and Tennyson would have been anticipated; the series would have become, by so much, at any rate, the more continuously illustrious. That Gray was well suited for it is shown by his Installation Ode, one of the best examples in the language of an official "Pindaric" written for a set occasion, but he declined it. He would have been even better suited to be Professor of Poetry; but Cambridge had not, like Oxford, such a Professorship.

The Chair of History, to which he now aspired, was given to a Mr Brockett, a friend of Gray's pet aversion, Lord Sandwich. Fortunately, if it is permissible to say so, the Professorship was, three years later, again vacant. Mr Brockett, who had been dining with his noble patron, fell from his horse on the way back to Cambridge and broke his neck. Augustus, Duke of Grafton, that often and over-much maligned potentate, for whose quiet merits the pen of that accomplished Vice-Chancellor and Burgess of Oxford, Sir W. Anson, has at last procured recognition, had the good sense at once to select Gray, and the tact to write—no easy matter—a letter which secured his acceptance, and Gray became Professor.

Being Professor in those days unfortunately did not involve lecturing, and though Gray drew out an admirable sketch of an inaugural lecture, he never inaugurated. One duty, however, attached

to the office of Regius Professor of History, which Gray discharged, as it happened, with a very interesting sequel—the duty of providing teachers such as those under whom he had himself studied, in French and Italian. The Italian teacher whom Gray introduced was one Agostino Isola, afterwards editor of Tasso. Under Isola's tuition Gray himself took the opportunity of renewing his acquaintance with the Italian poets. The same teacher some years later taught Italian to Wordsworth, while his granddaughter, Emma Isola, became the adopted daughter of Charles and Mary Lamb, and later, the wife of Tennyson's friend, fellow-traveller, and publisher, the friend, too, of other poets beside Tennyson, and himself an author, Edward Moxon.

We said it was a pity that Cambridge had no Professorship of Poetry. Not that Gray would have been more likely to lecture from the Poetic than from the Historic Chair, but that he would have filled it specially well, and it might have induced him to write, if not to deliver, what he projected, and what he could have executed better than any one else. His letters show him to have been as good a critic of poetry as he was poet. He projected a history of English poetry. He dropped the scheme as he dropped so many, but he handed on a sketch of his intentions to his friend the Oxford Professor, Dr Thomas Warton. The idea, he told Warton, was in some measure taken from a scribbled paper by Pope.

The sketch, which is still extant, is naturally a dry and dull syllabus, but has its interest in the light it throws upon the extent of Gray's reading

and the scope of his conception. After an "Introduction": "On the poetry of the Gallic or Celtic nations as far back as it can be traced; on that of the Goths; on the origin of rhyme," etc., the "First Part" was to have been: "On the school of Provence, which rose about the year 1100, and was soon followed by the French and Italians. Their heroic poetry or romances in verse, allegories, fabliaux, syrviertes, comedies, farces, canzoni, sonnets, ballades, madrigals, sestines, etc. Of their imitators, the French, and of the first Italian School, commonly called the Sicilian, about the year 1200, brought to perfection by Dante, Petrarch, Boccaccio, and others."

Had Gray carried out the design, of which this is the outline, we should have known more accurately the extent of his acquaintance with Dante. But he did not do so. All that remains of it are some scattered essays or collections of notes, on English metre, on the Pseudo-Rhythmus, and on Rhyme, etc. These notes are again annotated, and the annotations contain several references to Dante. Scattered and haphazard as these are, they are sufficient to show an acquaintance with Dante's works of no common kind. Thus they show Gray to have been familiar not only with the "Divine Comedy" but with the "Canzoni," and, what is still more remarkable, with Dante's prose work, the "De Vulgari Eloquentia." This last Gray quotes at least six times. He understands and discusses its literary and philological allusions; Arnould Daniel, Guido of Arezzo, Dante's master, Brunetto Latini, are all familiar names to him. He discusses the *provenance* and

history of the decasyllabic metre, "our blank verse," and of the *Terza Rima*; and the form and use of the Sonnet, the *Sestine*, and the *Canzone*. He notes the employment of a mixture of languages, as appearing not only in Dante's "*Canzoni*," from which he quotes in illustration, but also in the "*Divina Commedia*" itself. To illustrate the omission of final syllables in the older poets, he cites "*Purgatorio*," xiv. 66.

"Nello stato prima(io) non si rinselva."

A good deal of this lore is avowedly derived from Crescimbeni. Some, too, no doubt, was drawn from the old Italian commentators; for it is pretty clear that in studying the Italian, as in studying the ancient classics, Gray read everything that could possibly help him to understand or illustrate his author.

We said just now that his library, had it been preserved, would doubtless have furnished abundant evidence of this; some evidence is afforded even by such record of it as remains. Messrs Sotheby's Sale Catalogue of 1851, alluded to above, is fortunately unusually descriptive. It contains an account of two items which in this regard are of much significance—Gray's copy of Dante and his copy of Milton. The former appears as follows:

"Dante (Alighieri) *Opere con l'esposizioni di C. Landino e di A. Vellutello, etc.*, Hogskin, gilt leaves; fol. Venet. 1578, with an extract from "*De Bure*" relative to this edition, and an elaborate note on the word "*Comedia*," "*The Mysteries*," etc., with passages from Weever's "*Funeral Monu-*

ments" and "Crescimbeni della Volgar Poesia": all in Gray's autograph."

The Milton is described as "interleaved, annotated and illustrated with abundance of passages from various authors, ancient and modern, wherein a similitude of thought or expression to that of Milton has been considered observable by Gray." Among the quotations it is noted are some, as there could hardly fail to be, from Dante.

Where the Dante may now repose I know not, though it is doubtless, like so many of Gray's books, in existence. They were, to judge by the specimens extant, mostly good copies, and the annotations in the poet's autograph give them an additional value which has ensured their preservation.

The Milton is fortunately in the best of hands. It is preserved in the Library of the Marquis of Lansdowne at Bowood, and, thanks to the kindness of the owner, I have been able to inspect it. It answers exactly to the description in the catalogue. It is full of quotations, beautifully written out by Gray in his own scholarly hand, from the Greek authors both in prose and poetry—Homer, Æschylus, Sophocles, Plato, Diodorus Siculus; from the Latin—Lucretius, Virgil, Horace, Statius, Claudian; from our own Spenser, to whom, as Gray knew, Milton had owned himself specially indebted; but above all what concerns us most here, from the Italian poets. These last are very numerous. The first quotation of all upon the first page, to illustrate the expression "Things unattempted yet in prose or rhyme," is from the

Paradiso, the second from Ariosto. There are many drawn from Tasso, but most perhaps from Dante. All go to show that easy and full command of the "Tuscan poets" that we should expect.

Gray's commonplace books in the master's Lodge at Pembroke bear the same testimony. They contain several pages of parallel passages from the Latin and Italian poets.

In the meanwhile, an interesting and eloquent testimony to the fact and value of Gray's remarks is to be found in the use made of them by one of the earliest, and still the best, translator of Dante, the scholarly and poetic Cary.

To return, however, from Gray the student and philologist to Gray the poet, the same Sale Catalogue quoted above contains a notice of a manuscript translation by Gray of "Inferno," xxxiii. 1-75, the Ugolino episode. A note in the catalogue suggests that it was probably written very early, and when Gray was commencing the study of Italian. It also exists in a MS. now in the possession of the Earl of Crewe. It was among the new matter which the industry of Mr Gosse recovered and printed, and may be consulted in his edition. Mr Gosse, a little kind, perhaps, to his discovery, speaks of it as dating in all probability from Gray's best poetic years and possessing extraordinary merit. The ground on which he so dates it is the spelling. It may be doubted, however, whether this evidence is very conclusive. The merit, considering that it is the work of Gray, can hardly be rated so high, and, all things considered, it appears more probable that the note in the Sale Catalogue is right, and that the

piece is a youthful exercise belonging to the period when Gray, as appears from his letters, was much occupied with translations, when he translated Statius for the delectation of his friend West, and when, as we know, he translated for his teacher the "Pastor Fido."¹ A translation of Tasso,² also printed by Mr Gosse, probably belongs to the same period, for, as we may remember, he speaks of Tasso to West in the letter quoted earlier in this paper.³

It should be remembered, too, that the story of Ugolino is one which has fastened on the imagination of the world. It is probably, with the exception of that of Paolo and Francesca, the best-known picture in the many-chambered gallery of Dante. In Italy especially, where the study of Dante has been, as a rule, more popular, not to say superficial, than in England, and with fashionable teachers of Italian, it has always been specially popular, and it is the more likely for that reason that it was suggested to Gray by Signor Piazza than that it was selected by his own taste.

At the same time it must be admitted that, if selected by Gray's own taste, it would be an excellent illustration of the remarks made by him and quoted earlier about the "rude age of strong and uncontrolled passion, when the Muse was not checked by refinement and the fear of criticism."

¹ Dr Toynbee has pointed out to me that Mr Mason actually said as much. *Vide* "Gentleman's Magazine" for 1846, vol. i., pp. 29 ff.

² "Gerus. Lib. Cant.," xiv., St. 32.

³ I am glad to find in Mr Tovey's new and careful edition of "Gray's Letters," for which all lovers of Gray will be grateful, that this view has the confirmation of his favour.

The point, after all, is not one of much moment ; what is far more interesting is to note that Dante would seem to have been an author much in Gray's mind and often on his lips.

One of the most characteristic and striking of Gray's remains is his "Journal in the Lakes." It has often been noticed how he anticipates Wordsworth in his love of this lovely region ; how, for instance, he made the observation, the use of which is one of Wordsworth's most admired touches, of the noise caused by the streams at night, "the sound of streams inaudible by day."

It has perhaps not been noted that his Journal, short as it is, contains two quotations from Dante. One indeed is only that already referred to, derived from Dante through Milton : "The moon was dark to me and silent, hid in her vacant interlunar cave." The other is more important. The whole passage in which it occurs is significant and merits reproduction *in extenso*. It is a description of Gowder Crag. "The place reminds one," says Gray, speaking of it with admiration, "of those passes in the Alps where the guides tell you to move on with speed and say nothing, lest the agitation of the air should loosen the snows above and bring down a mass that would overwhelm a caravan. I took their counsel and hastened on in silence" ;

"Non ragionam di lor, ma guarda e passa!"

The quotation is now quite hackneyed ; was it so in Gray's day ? Perhaps it is impossible to tell. In Italy very likely it was. But certainly the whole passage, with this line occurring in the context and manner in which it is here found, is

a striking utterance for the year of grace, 1769, in England.

To love the lakes, even tremblingly to admire, as we know Gray admired, the Alps, to compare the one with the other, to be reminded by both of Dante, all this says much for the shy self-suppressing scholar, the "futile don," who in the small hours of the classic period was a romanticist before the dawn. Wordsworth in his well-known preface pours special scorn upon Gray's "Elegy" on West. But Gray was a far better critic than Wordsworth. His account of the nature of poetic diction is far more just and scholarly than that of Wordsworth. And if always learned and often artificial, yet he did not, as the direct large sympathy of Burns at once detected, want for genuine passion. Burns admired Gray not for diction, but for passion, professing, strangely enough, that he himself is unable

"To pour with Gray the moving flow
Warm on the heart."

It is this fusing passion that is the true secret of the success of the "Elegy." It seldom flamed up or burnt bright in Gray's poems. But he was a very real poet and knew what real poetry was. He knew his own limitations and those of his age. He knew that what poets most need, as one of the very best of our own living poets has said, is inspiration. He knew and wrote that his was not a time of great poets :

"But not to one in this benighted age
Is that diviner inspiration given,
That burns in Shakespeare's or in Milton's page,
The pomp and prodigality of heaven."

But he knew and loved the great poets as few have loved, and still fewer have known, them. And among the greatest in his estimation, the first in his regard, must clearly be reckoned the author of the "Divine Comedy."

VII

TENNYSON AND DANTE

“Nessun maggior dolore,
Che ricordarsi del tempo felice
Nella miseria.”—DANTE (“Inferno,” v. 121-3).

“This is truth the poet sings,
That a sorrow’s crown of sorrow is remembering happier things.”
TENNYSON (“Locksley Hall”).

BOTH the voice and the echo are famous. The lines from Dante are among the most often cited of his many often cited utterances. The words of Tennyson form not the least well-known quotation from the English poet who has furnished to his countrymen more quotations than any other poet since Shakespeare.

George Eliot, as many will remember, makes signal use of both. To the central and touching chapter in “Daniel Deronda,” which tells how Deronda saved Mirah Lapidoth from suicide, she prefixes Tennyson’s lines, and shortly after, when she makes her hero sing a snatch from the gondolier’s song in “Otello,” in which, as she says, Rossini has worthily set to music the immortal Italian; “Dante’s words,” she adds, “are best rendered by our own poet in the lines at the head of the chapter.”

Such is the *versura*, the “give and take,” of literature and art. But even this is not all. As the

late Mr Churton Collins pointed out, the passage in Dante had already, before Tennyson echoed it, been imitated by Chaucer in "Troilus and Cresside."

"For of fortune's sharpe adversitée
The worste kind of infortune is this,
A man to have been in prosperitee
And it remember when it passed is."

And after all, even in Dante, it is probably not original, but came to him from Boethius, who, in his "de Consolatione Philosophiæ," writes, "*In omni adversitate fortunæ infelicissimum genus est infortunii fuisse felicem et non esse,*" and he again may have derived it from Pindar or Thucydides, who both have something very like it. Whence Pindar derived it we know not. It may, as Macaulay would say, possibly have been new at the court of Chedorlaomer. Tennyson himself did not apparently take it directly from Dante, but from Byron. For Byron he entertained, it will be remembered, a boyish passion. At fourteen, when he heard of Byron's death, he felt as if the world was darkened, and carved on a rock in the Holywell glen, "Byron is dead." Two years earlier than this he had written to an aunt, Miss Marianne Fytche, a letter, the earliest specimen of his letters preserved, and one which it is difficult to believe is the work of a boy of twelve, so full is it of learning and of critical judgment. It is devoted to discussing "Samson Agonistes." This passage, he writes,

"Restless thoughts, that like a deadly swarm
Of hornets arm'd, no sooner found alone
But rush upon me thronging, and present
Times past, what once I was, and what am now,"

puts me in mind of that in Dante which Lord Byron has prefixed to his "Corsair," "Nessun maggior dolore," etc.¹

Tennyson's cognisance then, and in a sense his appreciation of Dante, began with his childhood, though perhaps he would hardly have said, with regard to him, what he does of Virgil, when in the culminating stanza of his famous Ode he most felicitously salutes that poet with Dante's own epithet, "Mantovano," and continues,

"I that loved thee since my day began,"

for Dante is not one of the list of authors, long as it is, which he and his brothers, as we are told, "mostly read out of their father's well-stocked library." Nor do we, as far as I remember, find again any allusion to Dante, or to Italian, until he went to Cambridge and came into contact with "his friend the brother of his soul," Arthur Hallam. Then at once, any love he may have cherished for either the Italian language generally, or Dante in particular, received a powerful stimulus alike of knowledge and sympathy.

It was in 1828 that Tennyson entered Trinity College, Cambridge. Hallam came up somewhat later in the same year. Full of poetic and philosophic interests, of literary loves and aspirations, he was full in particular of the Italian poets and of Dante. He had for them a natural elective affinity. Already at Eton, as a boy of fourteen, he had translated the famous and favourite episode of

¹ It may be noted that Byron prefixes other less striking quotations from "Inferno," v., to the second and third Cantos of the "Corsair."

Ugolino into Sophoclean Iambics, although he possessed at this time, as his father says in the brief but touching memoir prefixed to the *Remains*, but little acquaintance with Dante or with Italian. Two years later, still a mere lad, he had left Eton and gone with his father for a prolonged tour in Italy. There he fell at once and eagerly upon the study of Italian, with marvellous rapidity mastering the language so completely as to be able to write in it sonnets on which Panizzi pronounced a high eulogy. Dante he studied especially. No poet, says his father, was so congenial to the character of his own reflective mind; and, again, "Petrarch he admired, but with less idolatry than Dante."

It was fresh from these scenes and studies that he arrived in Cambridge, to be the leader, the "master-bowman" of that wonderful undergraduate set immortalised by "In Memoriam," where, as William Cory sings,

" Arthur, Alfred, Fitz, and Brooks
Lit thought by one another's looks,
Embraced their jests and kicked their books
In England's happier times."

They flung themselves upon religion and politics, upon poetry and natural science, upon literature old and new, upon all things human and divine. In poetry the German school of Coleridge had much influence with them, but fortunately not the German alone.

"At this time," says the present Lord Tennyson, writing of the year 1829, "my father, with one or two of his more literary friends, took a great

interest in the work which Hallam had undertaken, a translation from the ‘Vita Nuova’ of Dante, with notes and preface. For this task Hallam, who in 1827 had been in Italy with his parents, and had drunk deep of the older Italian literature, was perfecting himself in German and Spanish, and was proposing to plunge into the Florentine historians and the mediæval schoolmen. He writes to my father: ‘I expect to glean a good deal of knowledge from you concerning metres which may be serviceable, as well for my philosophy in the notes, as for my actual handiwork in the text. I propose to discuss considerably about poetry in general, and about the ethical character of Dante’s poetry.’”

In 1829 the two friends competed for the prize offered by the University for an English poem. The subject was the unpromising one, how or why chosen I have often wondered, of “Timbuctoo,” suited only, it might be thought, for the famous rhyme about the cassowary, or for Thackeray’s well-known mock heroics in “The Snob.”

“In Africa, a quarter of the world,
Men’s skins are black, their hair is crisp and curl’d,
And somewhere there, unknown to public view,
A mighty city lies, called Timbuctoo.

: : : : : :

“I see her tribes the hill of glory mount,
And sell their sugar on their own account ;
While round her throne the prostrate nations come,
Sue for her rice and barter for her rum.”

Tennyson took it a little more seriously than Thackeray. His father had pressed him to be a candidate. He altered the beginning and ending

of a poem he had by him upon the subject, save the mark, of the "Battle of Armageddon." He sent this in, and it won the prize. If it has about as much to do with Timbuctoo as with Armageddon, it is a striking piece of rhythm and fancy, and possesses not a few points of interest, but they are foreign to this paper. Arthur Hallam took it more seriously still. He offered a poem in Terza Rima and containing several Dantesque lines, but he was, as we saw, not successful.

It was in the same year, 1829, that Arthur Hallam's attachment to Miss Emily Tennyson began. Mr Hallam did not at first give it full sanction; but after this first year Hallam visited Somersby regularly as a recognised lover.

In 1830 Tennyson published his first individual volume, "Poems chiefly Lyrical." Of knowledge or love of Dante in the Italian I have not myself been able to trace any noteworthy indication in its pages. But his friend Hallam, reviewing the volume in the "Englishman's Magazine," thought he detected some resemblance.

"Beyond question [he writes] the class of poems which in point of harmonious combination "Oriana" most resembles, is the Italian. Just thus the meditative tenderness of Dante and Petrarch is embodied in the clear searching tones of Tuscan song. These mighty masters produce two-thirds of their effect by *sound*. Not that they sacrifice sense to sound, but that sound conveys their meaning when words could not."

In February 1831, owing to his father's failing state of health, Tennyson left the University prematurely. His friends sent after him his "Alfieri,"

which one of them had borrowed and not returned. His father died in the March of that year, and he never went back to Cambridge. But his friends came to him, and especially Hallam, for his own sake and for his sister's.

"How often, hither wandering down,
My Arthur found your shadows fair,
And shook to all the liberal air
The dust and din and steam of town :

: : : : : :

"O bliss, when all in circle drawn
About him, heart and ear were fed
To hear him as he lay and read
The Tuscan poets on the lawn !"

"When Arthur Hallam was with them," says Lord Tennyson, "Dante, Petrarch, Tasso, and Ariosto were the favourite poets, and it was he who taught my Aunt Emily Italian and made her a proficient scholar." Has he not left his own exhortation in verse, a sonnet addressed to his mistress ?

"Lady, I bid thee to a sunny dome
Ringing with echoes of Italian song ;
Henceforth to thee these magic halls belong,
And all the pleasant place is like a home.
Hark on the right with full *piano* tone
Old Dante's voice encircles all the air ;
Hark yet again, like flute tones mingling rare,
Comes the keen sweetness of Petrarca's moan.
Pass thou the lintel freely ; without fear
Feast on the music ; I do better know thee
Than to suspect this pleasure thou dost owe me
Will wrong thy gentle spirit, or make less dear
That element whence thou must draw thy life ;—
An English maiden and an English wife."

In one of the interesting bundles of letters from Hallam to W. H. Brookfield, which were published by Colonel Brookfield in the "Fortnightly" a few years ago, Hallam makes an allusion to his absorption in his attachment which is a pretty comment on this sonnet. "Even Dante," he writes, "even Alfred's poetry is at a discount."

At the end of the year, 16th December 1831, Hallam, who had obtained the first prize for a Declamation, pronounced it, odd as the venue may seem to modern ideas, in the College Chapel. It was upon the influence of Italian on English literature, and Wordsworth was, it is said, present on the occasion. Gladstone, as we know from "Mr Morley's Life," certainly was. In it the orator spoke of Dante as "an entire and plenary representation of the Italian mind."

About the same date Hallam seems to have introduced Alfred Tennyson to Moxon, a publisher of poetic and Italian proclivities, married later to Emma Isola, whose grandfather had taught Italian at Cambridge successively to Gray and Wordsworth. Moxon was just then publishing for Hallam a reply to a treatise, interesting alike on account of its authorship and its occasion, the "Disquisizioni sullo spirito Antipapale," of Gabriele Rossetti, Professor of Italian at King's College, known for himself, still better known for the personality and productions of his illustrious children—Maria, Dante Gabriel, Christina, and the sole survivor, William. Professor Rossetti had previously published a "Commentary on Dante's Comedia," which contained in germ the main idea of these extraordinary volumes, the idea, namely, that the "Divine

Comedy" is a gigantic cryptogram, conveying, under cover of an artificial jargon, an attack on the Papacy and all its works. The book evidently created, at the time, a considerable sensation, not unlike that recently produced by the so-called Bacon-Shakespeare theory, and the two volumes were in 1834 translated into English by Miss Caroline Ward, who dedicated her translation to the Rev. H. F. Cary. But Hallam had already issued his rejoinder in a brochure entitled "Remarks on Professor Rossetti's Disquisizioni, by T. H. E. A.," published by Moxon in 1832.

It was his last, and I agree with Mr Le Gallienne, his strongest literary effort. He sent it in the autumn to Tennyson, who, at the end of this year, again appeared before the world as an author. He had now for some time been working at a number of poems for a new volume. Many of them were submitted to the judgment of his friends, especially of Arthur Hallam. Foremost among these was the "Palace of Art." "All at Cambridge are anxious about the 'Palace of Art,'" writes Hallam, "and fierce with me for not bringing more," and Dean Merivale writes to W. H. Thompson (the future Master) "that a daily 'divan' continued to sit throughout the term, and the 'Palace of Art' was read successively to each man as he came up from the vacation." It is fair, however, to say that in this mutual admiration society there were some who scoffed, and asked whether the "abysmal depths of personality" meant the "Times" newspaper. James Spedding was not one of these, for he knew it by heart, and spouted instead of reading it.

In this poem, as all will remember, Dante appears both directly and indirectly :

“For there was Milton like a seraph strong,
Beside him Shakespeare bland and mild ;
And there the world-worn Dante grasp'd his song
And somewhat grimly smil'd.”

So runs the well-known stanza now, as, after being touched with that *curiosa felicitas* of which Tennyson is such an amazing master, it appeared in the edition of 1842.

But in the 1832 volume, and doubtless in these undergraduate recitations, it had run quite differently :

“There deep-haired Milton like an angel tall
Stood limnèd, Shakespeare bland and mild,
Grim Dante pressed his lips, and from the wall
The bald, blind Homer smiled.”

That the later is the happier version there can be no sort of doubt, but to any who would study Tennyson's appreciation of Dante both are interesting alike in their common element, and in their divergence. In the earlier, the number of figures introduced was far larger than in the later. A stanza a little further on ran :

“And in the sun-pierced oriel's coloured flame
Immortal Michael Angelo
Looked down, bold Luther, large brow'd Verulam
The King of those who know.”

In 1842 only two figures appear :

“And thro' the topmost oriel's colour'd flame
Two god-like faces gazed below ;
Plato the wise, and large-brow'd Verulam
The first of those who know.”

“Bold Luther,” one of Tennyson’s youthful heroes, has given place to Plato. Some who do not consider the “Divine Comedy” a Protestant cryptogram, might, in the abstract, regret his disappearance, but all will recognise that if the poet was to appropriate Dante’s famous phrase, “*Il maestro di color che sanno*” to any other than Dante’s nominee, the great German reformer was not so suitable a substitute as Aristotle’s own master.

For the rest the traditional mien of Dante so happily described here seems to have specially interested Tennyson. Bayard Taylor thought the poet himself like Dante. Something in his lofty brow and aquiline nose, he said, suggested Dante. A bust of Dante, as many will remember, was the first object that struck the visitor who was admitted through the sacred gate into the ante-room at Farringford. How long the poet had possessed it I know not, but it is in connection with these lines that Fitzgerald records a famous remark of his: “The names of Dante and Michael Angelo in this poem,” he writes, “remind me that once, looking with Alfred Tennyson at two busts of Dante and Goethe in a shop window in Regent Street, I said: ‘What is there wanting in Goethe which the other has?’ Alfred Tennyson replied, ‘The Divine.’”

The best comment, however, on the bust of Dante, and on Tennyson’s epithet, “grim,” is probably to be found in the story of his friend Sir Frederick Pollock’s nurse, told by Sir Frederick himself in his “Remembrances”:

“Sir Frederick was laid up in 1878 with an attack of fever, and employed the services of a professional nurse. Some time afterward this same woman attended a lady of his acquaintance, and in reading a book to her, came on the name of Dante. ‘I know him,’ she said. The lady was astonished, and asked, ‘How do you know him?’ ‘He’s a great friend of Sir Frederick Pollock’s. There’s a bust of him on his staircase. He’s a very severe-looking gentleman.’”

Another poem, not unlike the “Palace of Art,” is “The Dream of Fair Women,” which Aubrey de Vere picks out as

“A marvellous specimen of one especial class of poetry, that of Vision, which reached its perfection in Dante, whose verse the young aspirant may have been reading with a grateful desire to note by this poem the spot on which his feet had rested for a time.”

To return, however, to Tennyson himself. In March 1833, writing to his aunt, Mrs Russell, he quotes the third line of the “Divina Commedia,” and in August of the same year Hallam, leaving for Vienna, gave to Emily Tennyson an Italian book, “Silvio Pellico.” But these are only tiny straws, showing the way the wind blew. A few weeks later, the stroke came which was to give a bias profound and lasting to all Tennyson’s life and art. Hallam left England for Austria, and there, on the 15th of September,

“Within Vienna’s fatal walls,
God’s finger touched him and he slept.”

Fifty years later, almost to a day, two men, his compeers, now two of the most famous in England, or indeed in the world, as they sate on board a steamer passing up the coast of Scotland, in a rare moment of rest and relaxation, were deploring the death of this friend of their youth, saying what a noble intellect he possessed, and how great a loss he had been to Dante scholarship; they were Gladstone and Alfred Tennyson.

At the moment Tennyson was stunned. He thought he could and would write no more. But soon, little by little, and in broken efforts, he began again. He betook himself to work and study, minded like Dante to prepare himself to write better than he had ever hitherto done. Among his studies was Italian; and we might well imagine that in Italian Dante would hold the place he must always hold in the Italian studies of a serious, philosophic, and poetic mind. It is noticeable as an indication of the study of Dante in the Tennyson set at Cambridge that Dean Alford, another special friend of Arthur Hallam, writes in 1833: "I have rather of late inclined to allegory, not that of more modern times, but a mode of that of our sweet Spenser and the great and holy Dante." But there is more specific indication in Tennyson's own letters and in the poems which he published later. For the present he gave nothing to the world, writing and re-writing, but observing strictly the Alexandrine and Horatian motto,

"Nonumque prematur in annum."

When, however, the ninth year brought their

publication, the new pieces showed how he had been occupied at this earlier period. Conspicuous in the 1842 volume is the famous piece "Ulysses," as many think, the most condensed and complete expression of Tennyson's genius at its best. It was this poem that convinced Carlyle that Tennyson was really a poet. It was this again that Lord Houghton made Sir Robert Peel read when he induced him to grant the Civil List pension. Finally, it was in Dante that Tennyson found the fitting quotation when he wrote to his friend Rawnsley to tell him of his good luck and the carping of "the causelessly bitter against me and mine," and said, "Let us leave them in their limbo ; *Non ragionam di lor ma guarda e passa.*"

For this was the period at which "Ulysses" was composed, as he said himself, "soon after Arthur Hallam's death, and it gave my feeling about the need of going forward and braving the struggle of life perhaps more simply than anything in 'In Memoriam.'"

It is then the earliest first-rate piece written after the great experience of shock and sorrow, and drawing from that much of its strength. This is its personal origin; its literary inspiration is obvious. "I spoke with admiration of his "Ulysses," says Locker-Lampson. He said, "Yes, there's an echo of Dante in it." And surely there is more than an echo.

"Fatti non foste a viver come bruti
Ma per seguir virtute e conoscenza."

"To follow knowledge like a sinking star
Beyond the utmost bound of human thought."

The mould of the piece is Homeric, but the mood is Dantesque. But the publication of "Ulysses" was still far off. When he wrote it, the poet was in personal need of the lesson it contains, and, indeed, it may be said to be a soliloquy addressed to his own heart. Meanwhile a new light had broken on his clouded path. He had begun to correspond with the happy bridesmaid to his brother's bride, his new sister-in-law, Miss Emily Sellwood.

With admirable and rare reticence, Lord Tennyson has given only a few brief extracts from the sacred love-letters of his father and mother! They contain some of the most striking things the poet ever said. Among the earliest is this :

"I dare not tell how high I rate humour, which is generally most fruitful in the highest and most solemn human spirits. Dante is full of it. Shakespeare, Cervantes, and almost all the greatest have been pregnant with this glorious power. You will find it even in the Gospel of Christ."

In 1840, after three brief years, their correspondence was broken off, forbidden because there seemed no prospect of Tennyson being able to marry. At last the time came when they were permitted to resume their intercourse, and finally, as Tennyson said, in words worthy even of Dante, "the peace of God" came into his life before the altar of Shiplake Church, when he wedded his wife there on 13th June 1850. The same month saw the publication of "In Memoriam," in some ways the greatest of Tennyson's works, possibly too the most Dantesque. Not, indeed, that "In

Memoriam" can be called very Dantesque. The resemblance between it and Dante's grand poem is of the slightest. Yet slight as it is, it has been more than once remarked, and with perhaps a little more reason than at first sight appears. Aubrey de Vere, a critic certainly well qualified to judge, seems to have been much impressed by it. He notes the similarity of occasion. "As in the case of Dante," he writes, "a great sorrow was the harbinger of a song greater still." Tennyson himself, too, had some vague idea of the resemblance in his mind. "In Memoriam," he says, speaking more particularly of the Epilogue on his sister Cecilia's marriage to Professor Lushington, "was intended to be a kind of Divina Commedia, ending with happiness."

The ultimate triumph of Love over everything—sin, pain, and death—was, we are told, a constant idea with him, and he would often quote the words inscribed on the portals of Hell,

"Fecemi la divina potestate
La somma sapienza, e il primo amore,"

as if they were a kind of unconscious confession by Dante that "Love will conquer at the last." Both Introduction and Epilogue certainly convey this idea, and for this reason, amongst others, I am not one of those who could relinquish either, or think that they do not add to the richness of the whole. It is the fashion to decry the Epilogue with its "white-favoured horses" and its "foaming grape of Eastern France," and to call it trivial or even *banal*. Were it less stately and exquisite than it is, I could not have given up the lines with which it ends. These

at least may claim to be Dantesque in their simplicity and sublimity.

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

Tennyson's marriage and the publication of “In Memoriam” marked his definite assumption of a settled place in life and letters, which by the happiest of coincidences was authoritatively endorsed by his appointment, also in the same year, to the post of Laureate.

In the Memoir written by his son, Dante from time to time appears. The “Divine Comedy,” we are told, was usually taken with him on his travels, and his wife and he read the “Inferno” together in the Crimean winter of 1854, when he was writing “Maud.”

Lady Tennyson's Journal for 7th May 1865 notes a more special reference: “Last evening, in answer to a letter from Florence, asking for lines on Dante, he made six, and sent them off to-day, in honour of Dante's six hundredth centenary.” The lines are graceful in thought and expression, but not perhaps striking, certainly not to be put into the same category with the spontaneous “Ode to Virgil.” What is chiefly characteristic, especially in a man so simple and sincere as Tennyson, is their humility. They run as follows:

TO DANTE

(Written at the request of the Florentines)

“KING, that hast reign'd six hundred years and grown
In power, and ever growest, since thine own

Fair Florence honouring thy nativity,
 Thy Florence, now the crown of Italy,
 Hath sought the tribute of a verse from me,
 I, wearing but the garland of a day,
 Cast at thy feet one flower that fades away."

About them there is preserved an interesting and characteristic story. Tennyson gave them to Lord Houghton, who was going to Florence for the occasion, to recite to the Florentines. Lord Houghton repeated them to a brother of Canon Warburton. Fifteen years or more later Tennyson was talking to Canon Warburton about the probable short duration of all modern poetic fame.

"Who," said he, "will read Alfred Tennyson one hundred years hence? And look at Dante after six hundred years."

"That," answered Warburton, "is a renewal of the garland-of-a-day superstition."

"What do you mean?"

"Your own words!"

"Why, what can you mean?"

"Don't you remember those lines which you gave to Milnes to read for you at the Dante Centenary?"

My father had forgotten the lines.

Warburton then wrote them out as far as he could remember them, and shortly afterwards Tennyson recalled the correct version. And he included them in that wonderful volume published in his seventy-first year, "Ballads and Poems," which contains "Rizpah," "The Revenge," "The Voyage of Maeldune," "De Profundis," the Sonnets on "Old Brooks," and on Montenegro, and the Epitaph on Sir John Franklin.

In 1883 came the memorable voyage in the *Pembroke Castle*. Gladstone and Tennyson began, as already mentioned, at their first breakfast, upon Hallam and Dante. Dante they discussed a good deal, not always agreeing. Tennyson, it seems, had on one point the better of the argument, although he ends a letter written to Gladstone a little later with a postscript: "I have totally forgotten what passage in Dante we were discussing on board the *Pembroke Castle*." If report speaks true, they discussed, *inter alia*, the question whether Dante was ever cruel. Tennyson was not blind to Dante's limitations. As he told Miss Anna Swanwick, he could never bring himself to pardon Dante for his cold-blooded perfidy in refusing to wipe the frozen tears from Frate Alberigo's eyes.

Without multiplying references then to the Life, it is evident that Dante was constantly in Tennyson's hands, and still more in his head; that when he speaks of him, he speaks with knowledge, and that we need not be surprised if we find in his writings some traces or echoes of a poet he knew and loved so well. His recorded criticisms of Dante are worth quoting.

"We must distinguish [he said] Keats, Shelley, and Byron, from the great sage poets of all, who are both great thinkers and great artists, like Æschylus, Shakespeare, Dante, and Goethe. Goethe lacked the divine intensity of Dante, but he was among the wisest of mankind, as well as a great artist."

And again:

"Ugolino, and Paolo and Francesca, in Dante, equal anything anywhere."

When he was planning Aldworth, he said he would like to have the blank shields on his mantel-piece emblazoned with devices to represent the great modern poets: Dante, Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton, Goethe, Wordsworth.

Talking with Gladstone at Hawarden soon after the *Pembroke Castle* trip upon Dante, he expressed the view that "as the English language is much finer than the Italian for variety of sound, so Milton, for sound, is often finer than Dante." He quoted Milton, Virgil, Dante, and Homer to illustrate his meaning, and then said, "What, for example, can be more monotonous than the first lines of the 'Inferno,' with their 'a's'?"

" Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita
Mi ritrovai per una selva oscura
Che là dritta via era smaritta? "

Of echoes or imitations of Dante in Tennyson there would seem to be few that are indubitable, beside the two or three already quoted, and admitted by the poet himself. Mr Churton Collins, with his marvellous memory, did, indeed, suggest several.

With the lines in the "Gardener's Daughter,"

" We wound about
The subject most at heart, more near and near
Like doves about a dove-cote, wheeling round
The central wish, until we settled there,"

he compares Dante, "Inferno," v. 81-83 :

" Quali colombe dal disio chiamate
Con l' ali alzate e ferme, al dolce nido
Vegnon per l' aer dal voler portate " ;

but excepting that doves flying "to their windows" appear in both, the parallelism is hardly very close.

With the well-known

“Our wills are ours we know not how,
Our wills are ours, to make them thine.”

he compares Dante, “Paradiso,” iii. 66-87, the famous passage which culminates in the famous line

“In la sua volontade è nostra pace”;

but Tennyson seems to emphasise rather the freedom of the will on earth than its tranquillity when it has reached the heavenly satisfaction, which is Dante’s point.

A more probable parallel is his next, between the well-known passage in Dante, “Purgatory,” xi. 91-117, about fleeting fame, and the passage from “In Memoriam,” lxxiii. ;

“What fame is left for human deeds
In endless age? It rests with God.”

Another passage of “In Memoriam,” from Canto lxxxv.,

“The great Intelligences fair
That range above our mortal state,”

Mr Collins ingeniously and very probably traces to the “Convito,” ii. v. 5 :

“Li movitori di quello (Cielo) sono Sustanze separate da materia, cioè Intelligenze, le quale la volgare gente chiama Angeli.”

Canto lxxxvii. he pronounces to be almost a paraphrase of the very beautiful sonnet attributed to Dante, beginning

“Ora che ’l mondo s’ adorna.”

But here again, surely, the resemblance is of the most general kind and somewhat slight.

Much closer is the parallel which he suggests

between the striking passage at the end of the
 "Paradiso," xxxiii. 55-57,

"Da quinci innanzi il mio veder fu maggio
 Che il parlar nostro, ch' a tal visto cede
 E cede la memoria a tanto oltraggio,"

and Tennyson's

"At length my trance
 Was cancell'd, stricken through with doubt.
 "Vague words! but ah, how hard to frame
 In matter-moulded forms of speech,
 Or even for intellect to reach
 Thro' memory that which I became."

"In Memoriam," xcv.

Tennyson himself, in the Annotations published by his son, acknowledges a few more. The abyss of tenfold complicated change in "In Memoriam," xciii., refers to Dante's ten heavens. The "howlings from forgotten fields" are the eternal miseries of the "Inferno," as described in Canto iii. 25-51.

I have often myself looked out for echoes or analogies. Not many have occurred to me. I think it possible that the well-known and most effective onomatopœiac repetition in the Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington :

"With honour, honour, honour, honour to him,
 Eternal honour to his name,"

may have its germ in the well-known repetition and play by Dante on the words "honour" and "honourable" in Canto iv. of the "Inferno," though the assonance is less marked in the Italian.

The beautiful passage in "Tithonus" :

"I earth in earth forget these empty courts
 And thee returning on thy silver wheels,"

is doubtless indebted for a lovely phrase to Dante's

"In terra é terra il mio corpo."

"Paradiso," xxv. 124.

Another undoubted parallel, suggested to me by a friend, is between the description of Merlin's beard in "Merlin and Vivian,"

"The lists of such a beard as youth gone out
Had left in ashes,"

and that of Cato in "Purgatorio," i. 34 :

"Lunga la barba e di pel bianco mista
Portava, e suoi capegli simigliante,
De' quai cadeva al petto doppia lista."

There are, again, of course, certain common-places of literature and nature, which are found in both. Such is the "Wheel of Fortune," so happily utilised by both Dante and Tennyson, though Tennyson's

"Turn, Fortune, turn thy wheel and lower the proud ;
Turn thy wild wheel through sunshine, storm, and cloud,"

resembles more the well-known song ascribed to Guido Cavalcanti,

"Lo! I am he who makes the wheel to turn,"¹

than either "Inferno" vii. 5, or "Inferno" xv. 95.

Such, too, are "the sparks flying up from the smitten log" of "Paradiso," xviii. 100, and of the Epilogue to *Morte d'Arthur* ; or

"The many-wintered crow that leads the clanging rookery
home"

of Locksley Hall, and the daws of "Paradiso," xxi. 35, in which Longfellow notes a parallelism.

But these chance parallels are of doubtful

¹ Rossetti, p. 151.

importance. As often as not they are merely a product of a common cause; often mere coincidences. It is more to the purpose to ask if there is any general resemblance between Tennyson and Dante, still more whether the study of the younger poet, whose record is so full and fresh, can help us better to understand and appreciate the elder, a line of argument which I well remember Mr Pater, with the mixture of artistic sympathy and common-sense which was so memorable in him, once introducing very effectively in a discussion as to Dante's probable manner of life and writing.

At first sight, perhaps, it would seem as if few poets could resemble each other less than the great poet of Italy of the thirteenth and the great poet of England of the nineteenth century. Dante's chief poetic effort is so grand in scale as to throw into the shade, almost at times to cause us to forget his lesser poetical productions. No one work of Tennyson's stands out, either among his pieces or in the world of letters, in anything approaching the same way. And even his larger works seem compacted of smaller, so much so that we are inclined at times to think of him chiefly as a poet of short pieces. "In Memoriam" is a collection of *canzoni*, "The Epic of Arthur" a series of idylls, "The Princess" a string of jewels on a golden but slender thread. Tennyson wanted then, or at any rate did not display, the "architectonic" genius which Dante exhibits consummately, more consummately, indeed, than any other poet, and in respect of which, if not in other respects, he is superior even to Homer and Shakespeare.

Yet poles apart as in this regard they are, they

have much in common. Both are artists, and conscious artists. Both are, to use Aristotle's distinction, "finely gifted" rather than "finely frenzied"; both, too, in Leonardo Bruni's adaptation, are "*poeti literati et scientifici*," who compose, "*per istudio, per disciplina ed arte e per prudenza*." Both are idealist and realist at once. Mr P. H. Wicksteed, in a most original article which appeared now a little time back, called attention to the absolute indifference, nay, studied carelessness of Browning as to strict fact. "The good news," he notes, "was never brought by the three galloping horsemen from Ghent to Aix"; "there is no evidence that Raphael ever wrote a single sonnet,¹ much less a century," while "Browning's geography and seamanship," he says, "are equally concrete and equally careless."

Dante would never have allowed himself such licence. He would have feared

"Perder viver tra coloro
Che questo tempo chiameranno antico."

Tennyson had the same love for accuracy as Dante. He wanted to change a line because he found that scientific observers had altered their calculations as to the probable duration of the sun's power of giving heat to the solar system. That was exactly in the manner of Dante. Both thought that poetry should be true to fact.

"Si che dal fatto il dir son sia diverso"²

But yet both were thorough artists. Both held

¹ This particular statement is not quite correct. Drafts of one of his sonnets by Raphael are extant.

² "Inferno," xxxii. 12.

that poetry should be beautiful; that it was right deliberately to embellish it, to give it, as Dante said, "*dolcezza e armonia.*" And both, with this end in view, laboured infinitely at technique and studied poetic diction. As Mr W. P. Ker has brought out, it is clear that Dante was much interested in poets from whom he could learn nothing but style; that in learning his art he made distinct artistic studies, so that, like Catullus, he combined the most passionate directness with the fullest mastery of Alexandrine artificiality.

In the early poems of Tennyson, more particularly in many suppressed by him in later years, such as the "Hesperides," we see just the same characteristic, the cultivation of preciousness, so fascinating to the young artist, who has not yet learned that poetry should be "simple," as well as "sensuous" and "passionate." Both may be said to have passed through their pre-Raphaelite period. Both, as a result, were to the last pre-eminently careful of style, and used, what Dante so well advocates, the sieve for noble words. Both were "*docti poetæ*"; yet both held that poetry should be clear and have a definite meaning. For both, again, were eminently philosophic, their lore embracing alike natural, and mental and moral philosophy. They possessed, too, more than one specific interest in common. Both loved the stars. "Since Dante," says Mr Theodore Watts-Dunton, "no poet in any land has so loved the stars as Tennyson." He meditated a great poem on them. Perhaps the nearest in this love is the living poet, a poet better, however, in prose than in verse, Thomas Hardy.

Both loved the story of "the flower of kings," Arthur of Britain: "*Pulcherrimæ regis Arturi ambages*," as Dante terms it, and the episodes of Mordred and Gallehault, of Guenevere and Lancelot and Tristan.

And both, as already hinted at, loved pre-eminently one of the elder poets.

"I salute thee, Mantovano,
I that loved thee since my day began."

"Vagliami il lungo studio e il grande amore
Che m' ha fatto cercar lo tuo volume."

"What Horace did for Sappho, that Dante in his noblest passages, your father in his most perfect poem, have done for the '*altissimo poeta*.' The one has expressed the veneration of the modern, as the other of the mediæval world." So wrote the poet and seer, lover and student both of Virgil and of Dante, recently lost to us, Frederick Myers.

Widely different then in age, in circumstance, and in almost every detail of their surroundings, they yet had not a little in common in taste and temperament. It is not without significance then that the words which his gifted son uses to conclude his summing up of Lord Tennyson's character should be those of Dante.

"If I may venture to speak [he writes] of his special influence over the world, my conviction is, that its main and enduring factors are his power of expression, the perfection of his workmanship, his strong common-sense, the high purport of his life and work, his humility and his open-hearted and helpful sympathy.'

"Fortezza, ed umiltade, e largo core."

VIII

ANCIENT AND MODERN CLASSICS AS INSTRUMENTS OF EDUCATION¹

“LET us consider, too, how differently young and old are affected by the words of some classic author, such as Homer or Horace. Passages, which to a boy are but rhetorical commonplaces, neither better nor worse than a hundred others which any clever writer might supply, which he gets by heart and thinks very fine, and imitates, as he thinks, successfully, in his own flowing versification, at length come home to him when long years have passed, and he has had experience of life, and pierce him, as if he had never before known them, with their sad earnestness and vivid exactness. *Then* he comes to understand how it is, that lines, the birth of some chance morning or evening at an Ionian festival, or among the Sabine hills, have lasted generation after generation for thousands of years, with a power over the mind, and a charm, which the current literature of his own day, with all its obvious advantages, is utterly unable to rival.”

The quotation is probably well known to many of you, though all may not recollect where it is to be found. It occurs in Cardinal Newman's "Grammar of Assent." It is not unfitting, perhaps, that an

¹ An Address delivered to the Modern Language Association on 21st December 1905.

Oxford man like myself, in speaking of the ancient classics, should have recourse to one of the most eloquent voices and profound natures that Oxford has ever produced, one, moreover, to whom literature appealed most deeply, and not least deeply in its educational aspect, and who was one of its sanest judges.

But, indeed, I might find many witnesses, from many countries and creeds.

“The present age makes great claims upon us. We owe it service; it will not be satisfied without our admiration. I know not how it is, but their commerce with the ancients appears to me to produce, in those who constantly practise it, a steadying and composing effect upon their judgment, not of literary works only, but of men and events in general. They are like persons who have had a very weighty and impressive experience. They are more truly than others under the empire of facts, and more independent of the language current among those with whom they live.”

Such is the pronouncement of Matthew Arnold.

His father, taking a wider range, dealing less with style and more with substance and spirit, had written before him no less impressively.

“In point of political experience, we are even at this hour scarcely on a level with the statesmen of the age of Alexander. Mere lapse of years confers here no increase of knowledge; four thousand years have furnished the Asiatic with scarcely anything that deserves the name of political experience; two thousand years since the fall of Carthage have furnished the African with absolutely nothing. Even in Europe and in America it would not be easy now to collect such a treasure of experience

as the constitutions of 153 commonwealths along the various coasts of the Mediterranean offered to Aristotle. There he might study the institutions of various races derived from various sources: every possible variety of external position, of national character, of positive law, agricultural states and commercial, military powers and maritime, wealthy countries and poor ones, monarchies, aristocracies, and democracies, with every imaginable form and combination of each and all; states overpeopled and underpeopled, old and new, in every circumstance of advance, maturity, and decline. Nor was the moral experience of the age of Greek civilisation less complete. This was derived from the strong critical and inquiring spirit of the Greek sophists and philosophers, and from the unbounded freedom which they enjoyed. In mere metaphysical research the schoolmen were indefatigable and bold, but in moral questions there was an authority which restrained them: among Christians the notions of duty and of virtue must be assumed as beyond dispute. But not the wildest extravagance of atheistic wickedness in modern times can go further than the sophists of Greece went before them; whatever audacity can dare and subtlety contrive to make the words 'good' and 'evil' change their meaning, has been already tried in the days of Plato, and, by his eloquence, and wisdom, and faith unshaken, has been put to shame."

So speaks Dr Arnold.

Let us turn to a very different authority.

Rousseau is accounted among the most modern, the least classic, the most independent and individual of writers. He is the arch-anarch, the originator of the Romantic upheaval in European thought and letters. Yet the celebrated return of Rousseau to Nature is a return to Plato.

“Would you form a conception of public education [he writes]? Read the ‘Republic’ of Plato. It is not a political work, as those think who judge of books only by their names. It is the finest treatise on education that has ever been written.”

One more quotation, and I have completed my array of testimony. This, the utterance of the late Mr Frederick Myers, bears rather on the language of antiquity than on its ideas.

“No words that men can any more set side by side can ever affect the mind again like some of the great passages of Homer. For in them it seems as if all that makes life precious were in the act of being created at once and together—language itself, and the first emotions, and the inconceivable charm of song. When we hear one single sentence of Anticleia’s answer, as she begins :

οὐτ' ἔμεγ' ἐν μεγαροΐσιν εὐσκοπος ἰοχέαιρα—

what words can express the sense which we receive of an effortless and absolute sublimity, the feeling of morning freshness and elemental power, the delight which is to all other intellectual delights what youth is to all other joys? And what a language! which has written, as it were, of itself those last two words for the poet, which offers them as the fruit of its inmost structure and the bloom of its early day! Beside speech like this, Virgil’s seems elaborate, and Dante’s crabbed, and Shakespeare’s barbarous. There never has been, there never will be, a language like the dead Greek. For Greek has all the merits of other tongues without their accompanying defects. It has the monumental weight and brevity of the Latin without its rigid unmanageability; the copiousness and flexibility of the German without its heavy uncommonness and guttural superfluity; the pel-

lucidity of the French without its jejuneness; the force and reality of the English without its structureless comminution."

Such are a few out of the many testimonies which might be cited as to the value and potency over the mind of the Greek and Roman classics. Could any similar claim be put forward for the modern classics? Can they in particular take the place of the ancient as instruments of education? Can they teach the same moral and mental lessons, exercise the same elevating and formative influence on the style, and on that which we all know is the style, the man himself? It is a question of present and pressing importance.

The monopoly of the ancient classics has been broken into. What some might call "their ancient solitary reign," even in their most "secret bowers," is molested and disturbed. Utilitarianism, the self-consciousness and the self-confidence of the modern spirit, both combine to aid the substitution of the modern for the ancient tongues in education.

"With all its obvious advantages," says Cardinal Newman, speaking of the current literature of our own day. But are its advantages so obvious? From the point of view of culture and education there are many obvious advantages attaching to the ancient classics. Greece and Rome offer to us two great compact literatures. In a sense, the two may almost be called one body of literature, so close is their alliance. They are the sun and moon illuminating us with a common light. Greece gives us examples, great examples, of almost every *genre*. Epic, Dramatic, Lyric, Gnostic, Bucolic, Idyllic; Tragedy, Comedy, History, Philosophy,

Rhetoric, Critic, Logic, Physic—their very names are Greek. If anything is wanting in the oratorical, epistolary, or satiric vein, the deficiency is supplied by Rome. Again, every style and mood is represented by some author, by some great author. The classic, the romantic, the *précieux*, the decadent, the rude and primitive, the euphuistic and artificial, the simple, the elaborate, the laconic, the diffuse, the Attic, the Asiatic, the Corinthian, the Dorian, the turgid, the spare, the “golden mean,” of each and all, in the range from Homer to Nonnus, from Thucydides to Procopius, from Plato to Lucian, from Ennius to Apuleius, examples may be found, and examples so great, so well defined, as to furnish norms and canons. It is the same if we take the various departments severally, the grandiloquence of Æschylus, the perfection of Sophocles, the romance of Euripides, the grace of Lysias, the masculine reasonableness of Demosthenes, Isocrates’ florid decoration, Theocritus’ melodious murmuring, Menander’s silver wit, the intellectual passion of Lucretius, the emotional and personal passion, the *odi* and *amo* of Catullus or Sappho, the worldly wisdom and the elaborated felicity of Horace, the easy *causerie* of Ovid. Each is an example in its way. They are eternal standards, for they have

“Orbed into the perfect stars,
Men saw not when they moved therein,”

and become fixed constellations.

By them modern lights can be measured and estimated. They give us a base for literary triangulation.

Can we find parallels to them in modern

literature? We can find parallels, perhaps, if we take all modern literatures, if we add to Shakespeare, Racine and Calderon, and Molière and Lessing and Goethe, if to Rabelais we join Heine, if with Bossuet we couple Burke, if we combine Froissart and Macchiavelli and Gibbon, Pascal and Addison and Ruskin in one list.

But we cannot get them from one modern literature alone, and it may be claimed that by learning the two languages, Greek and Latin, we get what would involve learning three or four modern languages. Nay, I may put it more forcibly. If I may assume that Latin is necessary for all really educated persons, then I may claim that by learning one additional tongue, the literary student will acquire an acquaintance with a wealth or variety of masterpieces which he could only acquire by learning two or three modern tongues.

Further, not only do Greek and Latin furnish a fixed standard, but they also furnish a common standard. Without the classics, literary Europe would be broken into a set of provinces with no *lingua franca*, no common international heritage. This criticism, indeed, applies to the whole classical tradition, the whole of our envisagement of Greek and Roman antiquity.

The great names and events, the great characters and situations of antiquity stand out detached, and even denuded, sifted, concentrated, by time. Much they have lost, but something they have gained, by the falling away of local and temporal detail and environment.

We do not know too much about them, as

we do about so many things modern. The achievements of Marathon, of Salamis, of Cannae and Pharsalia, the characters and careers of Aristides, Alcibiades and Alexander, of the Gracchi, Catiline, Cæsar, Nero, Belisarius, of "Plutarch's men," as they are called, these are the commonplaces of all time.

And they start with the advantage of greater simplicity. I know not where this is so well put as in a short poem by a poet too little known, but of the highest culture, and at times singularly discerning, the late Lord Houghton. It is called "The Men of Old."

"To them," to these "men of old," he sings :

"To them was life a simple art
Of duties to be done,
A game where each man took his part,
A race where all must run ;
A battle whose great scheme and scope
They little cared to know,
Content, as men at arms, to cope
Each with the fronting foe.

"Man *now* his virtue's diadem
Puts on and proudly wears,
Great thoughts, great feelings came to them
Like instincts, unawares ;
Blending their souls' sublimest needs
With tastes of every day
They went about their gravest deeds
As noble boys at play."

Modern history, modern nations, have their great examples too, both good and bad—Arthur, Alfred, Charlemagne, Richard the Lion Heart, Hildebrand, Joan of Arc, The Cid, Tell, St Francis, Borgia, Elizabeth, Frederick the Great,

Peter the Great, Catharine the Great, Nelson, Napoleon, Abraham Lincoln, Bismarck.

But, again, they are sporadic, they are scattered up and down the nations, and even yet there clings to them something of national or ecclesiastical prejudice or association, a halo or a haze, which refracts our vision and affects our judgment.

So it is with the modern classics.

A few, the very greatest, have acquired the fixity of the ancients. Dante, Cervantes, Shakespeare, Molière, Goethe, about these there is no doubt.

But if they are as great as the ancients, they do not replace the ancients, or enable us to dispense with them, any more than Canova, or Thorwaldsen, or Rodin himself, even were their genius yet greater than it is, could enable us to dispense with Pheidias and Praxiteles. This is in the nature of things. There is only one Homer. There can never be another. The miracle of his poems generation after generation of scholars have endeavoured to explain, but vainly. A miracle it is. They combiné primitive naturalness with consummate art, absolute freshness with absolute finish. I quoted Mr Myers just now about the language of Homer. The same paradox is to be found in the substance. The character of Achilles, his almost savage fury, yet his heroic knightliness; his splendid imperiousness, yet his artistic self-restraint and magnificent compassion; or, again, the maidenhood of Nausicaa, her girlish grace and her royal dignity, natural as Pocahontas or Ayacanora, yet as true a lady as any out of the most glittering court of chivalry's most golden

day : is there anything like it elsewhere? I have a very faint idea of the "Nibelungenlied" or the "Chanson de Roland," but I believe it is only here and there that they rise to anything like this symmetry and harmony, this fusion of strength and beauty, of force and form.

Can we get the same effect from the other greatest of the great, from Dante, from Shakespeare?

Dante would not have thought so.

*"Mira colui con quella spada in mano,
Che vien dinanzi a' tre sì come sire,
Quegli è Omero, poeta sovrano!"*

Much we get from Dante that we do not get from Homer, lessons of civil virtue and high philosophy, and faith higher still, but not just what Homer gives.

And Shakespeare, much again we get from Shakespeare, abundantly much, that Homer has not. But there is not even in Shakespeare's "native wood-notes wild," that purity, that clarity, that youthful bloom, that divine simplicity which mark the Iliad and the Odyssey. It is the renascence of the world we feel in Shakespeare, in Homer it is the nascence. Often, too, in Shakespeare is found that renascence element of the extravagant and the "conceited" which made Matthew Arnold say that "Homer was as far above Shakespeare as perfection above imperfection."

Virgil, again, the inspired country-carrier's son, the Celtic provincial swept into the spreading citizenship of the newly-founded empire of Rome :

Virgil, in whom all the old lore of woodland, lake, and mountain is brought into touch with the last word of the science and mysticism of the Pagan world as it trembles on the threshold of the new era, "*le tendre et clairvoyant Virgile*," as Renan writes; "*qui semble répondre comme par un écho secret au second Isaïe*;" Virgil, that strange, pensive spirit, yearning for immortality "*tendens manus ripae ulterioris amore*," proudly patriotic and imperial, yet feeling the pathos of the conquered, and steeped in the tears that lie so close to every mortal action, can we get the effect of Virgil anywhere but in Virgil? Again we must say "No." Something of it we may get in Tasso or in Tennyson, and much we may find in these that is not found even in Virgil, but just Virgil, "No."

Or Plato, the only philosopher, as it has been said, who possesses a really great style, the greatest prose-poet of the world, whose philosophy incarnates itself with form and colour, and speaks in a living voice: Pascal, Berkeley, Kant, Coleridge, Ruskin, all have Platonic elements, but in none of them, nor in all, can we find all that is in Plato.

Or take History. How many styles the ancient classics offer, and what signal specimens of each! There is the prattling chronicle of the born storyteller Herodotus, which yet contains far more of art than appears upon the surface, and the shrewd, cynical, political philosophy, the scientific logicality, the intense dramatic skill and glow of Thucydides. Do you remember how the poet Gray writes about the description of the Retreat from before Syracuse? "Is it or is it not," he

says, "the finest thing you ever read in your life?" There is the smooth, insinuating ease of Xenophon, or again the masculine and military brevity of Cæsar, his own war correspondent, the decorative, Rubens-like pictures of Livy, the pungent epigram of Tacitus.

Partial parallels doubtless we may find in Froissart, in Macchiavelli, in Gibbon, but we must travel from land to land to find them.

Yet, as has been already implied, the modern languages and literatures have also their character, their wealth, their force, above all their individuality.

Culture needs, then, both, alike the ancient and the modern. If from the Greek and Latin languages and literatures we can draw the lessons we have indicated, from the modern tongues we can learn lessons too. From French we can get lucidity, logic, lightness, *justesse*, *finesse*, *verve*, *plaisanterie*. How many good qualities there are so peculiarly French that there are for them only French names! From Italian come lessons in flexibility and music, from Spanish in humour and dignity. German can show us sincerity, depth, thoroughness, science and scholarship, piety both of the heart and the head; our own rich literature, poetry, colour, the play of free individual and free national life, masculine force, public sense, patriotism.

So with the writers. What lessons may not be learned, not to recite again the authors already named, from the great French tragedians, from the French critics, from Montaigne and La Bruyère, from Villon and Ronsard and Béranger, from

Boileau and Voltaire, from Hugo and Leconte de Lisle, from the great preachers and *savants*, from Bossuet and Buffon; or, to turn to other nations, from the scholarly philosophy of Lessing, the scholarly piety of Herder, from the mockery of Heine, the melancholy of Leopardi, from Milton and Dryden, from Burns and Wordsworth, from the "rainbow radiance of Shelley and Byron's furious pride"?

They are classic, these moderns. It has long ago been admitted; I need not labour the point to an audience like this. But why are they classic? For the same reason as the ancients are classic.

Many here will remember how, in that beautiful, central, magistral essay entitled "What constitutes a Classic?" Sainte-Beuve quotes Goethe. When these two agree in an opinion there is not much room for a third.

"For me [says Goethe] the poem of the Nibelungen is as much classical as Homer, both are healthy and vigorous. The writers of to-day are not romantic (he uses the word in a temporary and limited sense) because they are new, but because they are feeble, sickly, or even sick. The ancient masterpieces are not classical because they are old, but because they are energetic, fresh, and lively."

What is the moral? That if we are to give a classical education in the modern languages, it is the strong modern classics, to a large extent the great, difficult, distant, modern classics, we must employ, not the feebler and more fleeting and easier authors.

They have their natural advantages, these modern

classics. They come home to the modern mind. They have for it an appeal, an allure, all their own. The great classics of antiquity are unrivalled. But to appreciate them requires, excepting for the rare genius of a Winckelmann or a Keats, an immense effort, a long labour.

To lure forward the sluggish or inattentive mood of the average boy or girl, of the ordinary "average sensual man," the modern writers, speaking the language of their own day, are far more potent.

I am under no illusion. There are "many men, many women and many children," to use Dr Johnson's phrase, in England at any rate, whom no classic, ancient or modern, will attract. Poetry has for them no voice, since they have for it no ear, as some have no ear for music.

But there are many more for whom the modern classics may do much. If there are hundreds who may learn, and learn to love, Greek and Latin, there are thousands who may learn, and learn to love, English, French, and German. Teach them first their own tongue. Be it remembered that the Greeks learnt no other. The French, the most literary of modern nations, till the other day learnt no other. Teach them next some one other great European language and literature. Begin, if you will, with easy and familiar pieces. But sooner or later in all these languages let the real classics be taught, and taught as classics by scholars or the pupils of scholars. Use the same methods which have proved successful in giving the highest education in the ages gone by, only making sure that they have really proved successful.

Let there be at the top of your profession real scholars, real *savants*, vowed to learning, transcribing, commenting, correcting, comparing editions, ransacking libraries, sifting glosses, drudging in dictionaries and grammars, thinking nothing too small or irksome, like Browning's grammarian, giving their lives to settle the business of a particle.

Let us honour these *savants* even if we have not time or means, or ability, to follow their example ourselves.

Let our millionaires found professorial chairs for them, no less than for the ancient tongues, or for the abstruser and less lucrative portions of natural science. Let them have their learned societies and their erudite journals. Let them seek and discover the *vraie vérité*, in philology and philosophy; without this, the study of modern language in its more ordinary walks will have neither dignity nor the best educational value. Let us beware, of course, of those very dangers, those defects of its qualities, which too often have impaired the effectiveness of classical education in the past, formalism, convention, dry-as-dust pedantry, abstraction from living human interest. Do not let modern literature and modern languages throw away their natural, their obvious advantages.

They are living languages, and can be taught as such. Our pupils must learn to speak as well as to write them. But not merely to speak nor merely to write them for business purposes.

Let our teachers aim at teaching style as well as knowledge. Do not count this as of little importance. If Buffon's celebrated phrase, which I have quoted already, is true, and "the style is the

man," or essentially "of the man," then let us remember that if we can teach, can modify, the style, we are teaching, modifying the man himself. And there is no doubt that it is so. The conscience and the taste of the real scholar find their reflection, if not always clearly, in his character.

"And more—think well! Do-well will follow thought,
And in the fatal sequence of this world
An evil thought may soil thy children's blood."

And since thought and words are most subtly connected, and expression reacts on ideas and sentiments, we cannot be too careful of expression.

Who shall say how much of the superiority of the ancients depends on the immense pains which they took with their expression?

Plato wrote the opening words of his "Republic" over and over and over again, many times. At the age of eighty he was still polishing up his dialogues. Isocrates spent ten years on one, by no means lengthy, composition. Demosthenes, as both the legends and the more sober stories about him show, took similarly infinite trouble with expression, with the cadence and rhythm, almost with every syllable of his great speeches.

Julius Cæsar wrote a treatise on the correct use of Latin while engaged in conquering Gaul. The advice of Horace as to the "nine-years pondered lay" is proverbial.

It is here that French can help us so much. The French are the only modern people who really, as a nation, take pains about writing, who have a national sense of style, a national conscience as regards solecisms. Is it not significant that they

are the only modern nation, perhaps the only nation, that has ever legislated about grammar?

In England and in Germany there are cultivated classes, there are literary coteries. We have, in poetry especially, poets who are consummate and careful artists: Chaucer, Spenser, Milton before all, Pope, Gray, Tennyson; but we have, too, the caprice and the eccentricity against which Matthew Arnold was ever flashing the rapier of his raillery, we have the negligence of Byron, the lapses and *longueurs* of Wordsworth, the freaks and roughnesses of Browning.

Goethe, that noble and classic artist, a literature in himself, Goethe said that "he had had nothing sent him in his sleep;" there was no page of his but he well knew how it came there. Lessing writes prose like a scholar, and Heine with a brilliancy which reminds us that Paris was his second home. More recently, Helmholtz, Mommsen, not a few others, without naming the living, have written excellently.

But who can say that while it has made great advance and shows promise of yet more, the average German prose does not still need much improvement in point of arrangement and diction? It is to France that we and Europe turn for the model of lucid order and logical disposition, of crystalline form and brightness, of nicety and *netteté* of expression. *Le mot juste, une belle page*, these are ideals of every French writer, of how few English! Here and there a genius arises like that of Bunyan or Burns or John Bright, trained mainly on its own tongue—though Burns knew some French and some Latin—a natural genius, which expresses

itself with incomparable felicity ; but the majority of good European writers have been reared on the ancient or on the modern classics, practically on Greek and Latin, on French, or Italian.

And in truth, style could be taught through these last languages as well or nearly as well as, probably to many pupils even better than, through Latin and Greek. But the same steps must be taken to teach it, the same high standard must be set. The young classical scholar is asked not merely to compose in Latin and Greek, but to compose in various manners and styles, in the oratorical, in the philosophical, in the epistolary manner, in the style of Thucydides or Plato, of Cicero or Tacitus. He is required to write not only prose but verse, and in many metres, Hexameter, Elegiac, Alcaic, Anapaestic. *Sic fortis Etruria crevit.* It is thus that the fine flower of English scholarship is grown, thus that such a genius as that whose loss is so late and lamented among us, the genius of Sir Richard Jebb, with its Attic grace and lofty humanism, was prepared and polished and perfected. The modern language teacher, with his most advanced pupils, should aim at no less.

But he has a yet higher vocation. The old classical education, let it always be remembered, gave a training not only of the head but of the heart. It produced for several centuries in England, and indeed in Europe, a type of character with some defects but with many merits—sage, sane, masculine, public-spirited. I see it passing away, or greatly narrowed in its influence, and scientific education more and more pressing in and spreading.

For giving training on how to observe and to reason from facts, scientific education is admirable. It supplies what the classical education did not. For training in character, in patriotism, in heroism, it is not so potent. It requires then to be supplemented by a discipline in the humanities, if not the ancient, then the modern humanities.

I hope, then, and believe that an interesting and not inglorious future lies before the modern languages and literatures in the field of education. One obvious advantage they have. They are still alive, still growing, every generation adds to their wealth.

When, in the sixteenth century, that fine scholar and poet, Du Bellay, compared the forces of the old and the new tongues; when even in the eighteenth century, men in England and in France made the same comparison, the glorious and divine array of the ancients was nearly what it is now. How many great authors did that eighteenth century itself add to the host of the moderns, in England, in France, in Germany! How many more has the nineteenth added, in every country of Europe, and in America! Yet the ancients, as we have seen, can never pass away. Nay, it is strange but true, that the rise of new modern types often makes us understand and value the ancient more fully. Molière long ago taught the world a larger appreciation of Plautus and Terence. Racine and Goethe illustrate Sophocles. Lady Macbeth and King Lear render Clytemnestra and Œdipus more intelligible. Tennyson helps us to appreciate Virgil, and Ruskin reflects light on Plato. It may even be said that Ibsen has brought out with new

force the realism in Euripides, so strong, so strange is the *solidarité* of humanity, and of its expression, the "humane letters."

All, then, who really love literature, and wish to give their lives to it, should study both. "Let us," as Goethe cried, "study Molière, let us study Shakespeare, but above all things the old Greeks and always the Greeks."¹ The teachers of modern languages in the future should, if possible, be brought up themselves with a knowledge of the ancient. If this cannot be, at least they should be scholars and humanists in their own tongues. Thus only will they be able to hand on to their pupils through either medium, the older or the younger, those high lessons, that discipline and culture and inspiration of the human soul, which mathematics and physical science alone, all potent and all necessary as they too are in their own region, cannot give, and with which our race cannot, and in the long run will not, be content to dispense.

¹ Eckermann, "Conversations with Goethe" (1827), Oxford's Translation, i. 384.

IX

“IN MEMORIAM” AFTER FIFTY YEARS

THE appearance at Christmas-tide 1905, in the familiar green cloth so dear to lovers of his poetry, of the modest little volume “In Memoriam” annotated by Tennyson himself, was in its quiet way something of an event in the literary world, and an event without a parallel. It came like a voice from another world, and indeed such in a sense it was. That a poem should be published either in its first or second edition with notes by its author during his lifetime, is not unknown. That it should be annotated after his death by another hand is still more common; indeed, it may be said to be the appointed destiny of a classic. But that a series of annotations by the author himself should be given to the world after he has passed away is a thing unprecedented, and it is an unexpected piece of good fortune that this should have happened in the case of “In Memoriam.”

When a poem is famous, the poet's talk or that of his intimate friends about it, is often preserved. The professional commentator, who may be a friend himself, collects and compares such remarks and adds to them from other sources.

In Tennyson's case this has already been done to a considerable degree.

Tennyson was at once shy and sincere, retiring and outspoken. He was anxious to be rightly understood, but he did not think that everything in poetry should, or could, be made readily plain to the meanest intelligence. With those whom he knew and liked, he was very willing to talk about and explain his poems, and he would even spontaneously point out special features in them which he thought worthy of note, with much amiability and readiness. But notes he disliked. As readers of his volumes will doubtless remember, the one note which they contained, conspicuous by its singularity, was that upon the berry of the spindle-tree,

"The fruit
Which in our winter woodland looks a flower."

He held with Gray. "I do not love notes," wrote Gray to Horace Walpole, who was printing his Odes for Dodsley, the bookseller, "though, you see, I had resolved to put two or three. They are signs of weakness or obscurity. If a thing cannot be understood without them, it had better not be understood at all." And again, in a delightfully humorous letter, "I would not have put another note to save the souls of all the owls in London. . . . It is extremely well as it is; nobody understands me, and I am perfectly satisfied."

Gray inscribed on his title-page two words from Pindar—*φωνάητα συνετοῖσι*, "With a voice for the wise." He was delighted when to those who called his verses obscure, the witty and charming

Miss Speed repeated this magic formula, as she frequently did, no doubt with an arch air of oracular *intimité*. "This is both my motto and my comment," he said. He even affected to be pleased when a "peer of the realm" understood his allusions to Elizabethan times to apply to Charles I. and Cromwell. "It is very well," he wrote; "the next thing I write shall be in Welch."

There were originally four notes to the "Bard" and none to the "Progress of Poesy." But later on, when the "Critical Review" suggested that he might have continued the quotation from Pindar which runs thus, "With a voice for the wise—but for the general, needing interpreters," Gray adopted the suggestion, cited Pindar in full on his title-page, and added some further explanatory notes. Tennyson has done the same. He was persuaded to leave a body of notes on his collected poems which might be given to the world by his son, if and when his son thought fit.

All through his life, and especially in his later years, he was constantly being plagued and pestered, orally and by letter, with inquiries, often of the most foolish kind, as to the meaning and allusion of phrases. Assertions as wild and wide of the mark as those of Gray's "peer of the realm" were made with regard to his pieces. The "broad-brimmed hawker of holy things" was said to be John Bright; the Northern Farmer and Mariana were identified with special persons and places near his home. Even so good a critic as Lord Coleridge stated categorically that the Pilot in "Crossing the Bar" was Lionel Tennyson, while others said it was Arthur Hallam. Such

statements he found himself obliged to correct. So again those who, to give a new application to Shakespeare's line, delight to

“Delve their parallels in beauty's brow,”

were constantly suggesting that he had borrowed phrases or ideas from books which he had never read.

To these inquiries and statements and suggestions he made answer in different ways. Some of these answers have long ago been published, as, for instance, the long and most interesting letter he wrote in 1882 to Dawson, the Canadian editor of “The Princess.” Palgrave's edition of the Lyrical Poems contains some notes based on remarks made to him by the poet. Dr Gatty's “Key” was, as he says, “glanced at by Tennyson himself, who made some invaluable corrections, but did not, of course, give his *imprimatur* to all he did not alter.” Not very long after his death Mr (afterward Sir) James Knowles published a “Personal Reminiscence,” in which, *inter alia*, he gave his recollection of the poet's talk about “In Memoriam,” and in particular the natural groups into which it falls. Some of these recollections the annotations confirm. To such partial and piecemeal comment the “Life” was to add a great deal more. But meanwhile in his lifetime the poet had at last yielded. He did so with much reluctance. “I am told,” he says, in a brief preface to these annotations, “that some of my young countrymen would like notes to my poems. Shall I write what dictionaries tell to save some of the idle folk trouble? or am I to fit a moral to each poem?”

or to add an analysis of passages? or to give a history of my similes? I do not like the task."

Another reason for his reluctance was that he held that poetry was not an exact scientific statement. "It is like shot silk," he said, "with many glancing colours." "You must not say this means this, and that means that, and no more." Poetry, he thought, suggests rather than defines, and "every reader must find his own interpretation according to his own ability and according to his sympathy with the poet."

As he had sung long ago

"Liberal applications lie
In Art, like Nature, dearest friend,"

as he sings in "In Memoriam" itself—

"Words, like Nature, half reveal
And half conceal the soul within."

Still he was ultimately persuaded. And there can be no doubt that he was right, and that his son was right then in adding his weight on that side of the scale, and that he is right now in publishing these annotations and in beginning with "In Memoriam." The case was somewhat the same with the biography. Tennyson himself was much averse to allowing his life to be written. Yet we cannot be too grateful that he gave permission for the task to be essayed by his son, who, with whatever drawbacks, as he himself admitted, of close kinship, knew the facts as none else could, and, what is more, inherited, both physically and mentally, the tradition, spiritual and intellectual, of his illustrious father.

That "Life" was in itself a comment at once general and special on the poems. And it may further be said that the brief notes here given are an extension of the "Life." In particular they are an extension of the noble central chapter on "In Memoriam," chapter xxv., which is very appropriately used again as an introduction by the editor of these annotations.

The Life and the notes together indeed afford us an opportunity quite unique. Of no poet of equal importance has the career been written with such fulness and authority. The story of Gray has already been told. Gray's contemporary Collins added notes to his own poems. Matthew Arnold, in some instances, did the same. To the poems of Shelley, Lady Shelley has appended here and there authoritative annotations. But no poet has hitherto lent with his own hand such aid to his readers as is afforded by these annotations on "In Memoriam." What would we not give for annotations as brief, yet as illuminating as these, by the author, on the "Œdipus Tyrannus," or the "Sixth Æneid," or Dante's "Divine Comedy," or Shakespeare's "Sonnets," or Goethe's "Faust"?

"In Memoriam" in itself calls for note and comment. It is a high and difficult poem. As Professor Andrew Bradley says in the very judicious preface to his edition, "To those who think all commentary on 'In Memoriam' superfluous I will venture to reply that they can never have studied the poem." It is also in a sense Tennyson's central poem and the key to half the others. To understand "In Memoriam" it

is necessary to understand Tennyson. The whole of his life led up to this particular poem, and is in various ways represented in it.

It is well briefly to remind ourselves what that life was. Tennyson's career, which ended so gloriously, did not indeed begin exactly "in low estate." On the contrary he was of a well-connected family. But he had the immense advantage of starting in a quiet, unobserved way, in touch with the lowliest and humblest. His life began on a "simple village green," in a modest home, under the shadow of an ancient church, beside a pastoral rivulet, in a sequestered hamlet, nestling in the green depths of the English country, quiet and far from men even now, still more so at the beginning of the last century. Here, among village folk, farm-hands, ploughmen, shepherds, blacksmiths, playing with their children, hearing their talk, the great problems of life stole softly upon him, in field and churchyard, by wood and wold.

"Know I not death? the outward signs?"

"I found him when my years were few;
A shadow on the graves I knew,
And darkness in the village yew."

He studied nature in herself and in books. He watched the dragon-fly bursting his husk, drying his gauzy wings, and flying a "living flash of light" through the dewy crofts, the "sea-blue bird of March" flitting by under the "barren bush," the grayling hanging in the stream. He listened to the "low love-language of the bird, in native hazels tassel-hung," the boom of the bittern, the "sudden

scratches of the jay," the nightingale's "long and low preamble," the rare notes of the mounted thrush; he spent the night with shepherds on the hills, gazing at the stars, or lay on the dunes at Mablethorpe listening to the league-long breakers.

He went to school in the neighbouring town of Louth, marked the manners of the *bourgeoisie*, came home again and continued his pursuit of scholarship and science, especially astronomy and geology. The early poems by "Two Brothers" which belong to this period, interesting in themselves, are still more interesting in their significance. They show a curious combination of these two elements of study. Quotations from Martial and Horace, and Virgil and the "Araucana," are interspersed with references to "Baker on Animalculæ"; poems on Persia or Apollonius Rhodius, with pieces on phrenology and on "Love the Lord of Nature."

Then he went up to Cambridge. Small, provincial, clerical, narrow, unreformed, Cambridge had yet that peculiar privilege of the English Universities, the college life, the intercourse of young men, at once free and close. Neither Tennyson, nor Darwin, who was there at exactly the same time, derived much from the set studies of the place; but whereas Darwin, oddly enough, fell in with a sporting set, hard-riding, jolly, almost, as he says, too jolly, who no doubt "crashed the glass and beat the floor," Tennyson consorted with a very different coterie. "Ils avaient vécu ensemble," says a French writer, speaking of Tennyson and Hallam, "une de ces magnifiques jeunesses que connaissent seules dans le monde

moderne les universités anglaises. On dissertait de *omni re scibili*, sans faire fi d'ailleurs des *quibusdam aliis*." They

"held debate, a band
Of youthful friends, on mind and art,
And labour, and the changing mart
And all the framework of the land."

"They had among them," says Carlyle, in his "Life of Sterling," "a debating society called the Union, where on stated evenings was much logic and other spiritual fencing and ingenious collision, probably of a really superior quality in that kind." But the esoteric circle which Tennyson's lines depict was not the Union but the Conversazione Society, commonly known as the "Apostles." Chief of this society was Hallam, the "master-bowman," the hero and the friend of all. In particular he was the bosom friend of Tennyson. Together they pursued the same studies, literature, science, philosophy. Plato and Milton and Dante were among their favourite authors. They acted Shakespeare together.

"Say, for you saw us, ye immortal *Lights*,
How oft unwearied have we spent the nights?
Till the *Ledæan Stars*, so famed for *Love*,
Wondered at us from above.
We spent them not in toys, in lusts, or wine,
But search of deep *Philosophy*,
Wit, *Eloquence*, and *Poetry*,
Arts which I loved, for they, my *Friend*, were *Thine*.

"Ye fields of *Cambridge*, our dear *Cambridge*, say,
Have ye not seen us walking every day?
Was there a *Tree* about, which did not know
The *Love* betwixt us two?"

If any poetry but his own were needed to illustrate Tennyson's relation to Hallam, these lines from an earlier "In Memoriam," written by a poet of his own Trinity, just two centuries earlier, the lines of Cowley on the death of Mr Harvey, might be cited.

They travelled together, first in 1830 to the Pyrenees and the Spanish border in aid of Torrijos and his insurgents. Together they paced the valley of Cauteretz,

"Beside the river's wooded reach,
The fortress, and the mountain ridge,
The cataract flashing from the bridge,
The breaker breaking on the beach."

Later, in 1832, they went to Rotterdam, Cologne, and Bonn.

"You leave us: you will see the Rhine,
And those fair hills I sail'd below,
When I was there with him; and go
By summer belts of wheat and vine."

They wrote poetry together and intended to publish in one conjoint volume. Hallam went down to Lincolnshire, stayed at Somersby, and became engaged to Tennyson's sister Emily. Tennyson went up to London and was a guest at 67 Wimpole Street.

An amusingly *naïf* and simple notice of the last of these visits, recorded in the "Life," is very significant of Tennyson. Hallam and he visited together the Elgin Marbles, the Tower, and the Zoological Gardens! Together they looked through microscopes at moths' wings, gnats' heads, and at all the lions and tigers that lie *perdus* in a drop of water. "Strange," said Tennyson, "that

these wonders should draw some men to God and repel others. No more reason in one than the other." Nothing is more interesting than to trace their interchange of interests and ideas—Hallam widening Tennyson's interest in literature, Tennyson imbuing Hallam with science. Then came the crash :

"Within Vienna's fatal walls
God's finger touched him, and he slept."

It is always difficult, in a sense it is impossible, for imagination to recover or art to preserve the first poignancy of actual present grief, as of any other living emotion. More and more as time goes on the personal becomes impersonal, the individual general. It is their appeal to the general heart, quite as much as the personal passion which throbs through them, that keeps alive Catullus's lines with their

"*Ave atque Vale*, of the Poet's hopeless woe,
Tenderest of Roman poets, nineteen hundred years ago."

The voice of Horace, when he calls Virgil "a white soul" and "half his own," sounds faintly from the far ages. We are tempted to regard these as only happy literary phrases borrowed from some earlier source which never had any personal meaning. Doubtless in this we do the kindly, friendly, warm-hearted Horace wrong. So to-day the echo in turn begins to grow more distant—

"I, the divided half of such
A friendship as had mastered Time."

When "In Memoriam" appeared, the critics thought its passion excessive, extravagant, unreal.

The poet met, as he expected, with "scoffs and scorns." Yet the grief, the passion was very real in Hallam's circle when, in Carlyle's phrase, "the days and the hours were." His loss cut deep, and went hard, with every one of them. Gladstone, Lord Houghton, Alford, Brookfield, Kemble, all bear the same witness. "You say nothing more about Hallam," writes Alford. "I do not remember anything for many years which has distressed me so much as his death: I sometimes sit and think of it till I feel quite unhappy. It seems indeed a loud and terrible stroke from this reality of things upon the fairy building of our youth." "I walked upon the hills," says Gladstone in his diary, "to muse upon this very mournful word which cuts me to the heart. Alas for his family and his intended bride." With Tennyson it cut deepest, and went hardest, of all. He was at first absolutely stunned. Arthur Hallam died at Vienna on 15th September 1833. But in those slow-moving days it was three months before the remains were brought home by sailing ship from Trieste, and the funeral actually did not take place till the next year, 3rd January 1834. As the winter wore on Tennyson began to write, and jotted down some fragmentary lines which, as his son says, proved to be the germ of "In Memoriam."

"Where is the voice I loved? ah, where
Is that dear hand that I would press?
Lo, the broad heavens cold and bare,
The stars that know not my distress!"

They are also, it may be noticed, the germ of that wonderful threnody "Break, break." To the same

epoch belongs the beginning of the "Two Voices" or "Thoughts of a Suicide," and on this followed the first sections of "In Memoriam"

"Fair ship, that from the Italian shore."

"When Lazarus left his charnel cave."

"It draweth near the birth of Christ."¹

He also began the "Morte d'Arthur" and "Ulysses," which last, these notes tell us, gave especially his feelings about the "need of going forward and braving the struggle of life." Though probably he little realised it at the time, it was to be long before any complete poem on Hallam was to appear. Seventeen years actually elapsed, a long interval, carrying him from first youth far into manhood, and even middle age. This long period of the gestation of "In Memoriam" needs to be realised. It contained many ups and downs of mood and fortune, many changes of place and domicile. When he began to write, Tennyson was living quietly in the old house at Somersby, with his mother and sisters, roaming solitarily by wold and marsh and seashore, working at Science, German, Italian, and Theology, diving deeper into the Classics, reading Dionysius of Halicarnassus, correcting and adding to the 1832 volumes. Two years later he met, acting as bridesmaid to her sister, his brother's bride, his own future wife, of whom he had once before had a glimpse, a vision as of "a Dryad or an Oread" in the Holywell Wood, near his own home. An understanding, a half-engagement, grew up between them. Joy began

¹ They were known among his set as separate poems, "The Fair Ship," "The Christmas," etc.

to blossom again. He wrote too to his friends and visited them occasionally. But he was poor, he had to sell his Cambridge medals. Letters were expensive, travelling almost impossible. Then in 1837 came the break-up of the old Somersby home, in itself no slight sadness. Tennyson went to reside first with his mother at High Beech and then at Tunbridge Wells and Boxley, near Maidstone, then to London and the "dusty purlieus of the law." He continued, as Mrs Richmond Ritchie beautifully says, "living in poverty, with his friends and his golden dreams."

Gradually he regained tone and vigour. His friendship with Edmund Lushington, and Lushington's marriage with his sister Cecilia, replaced to some extent the double loss incurred by the death of Arthur Hallam. In 1842 he published the two volumes, the old volume recast, with many new and noble pieces. He became a world-poet, known in America and in Germany, recognised at home by Rogers and Carlyle. He had been silent for ten years. But he had not been inactive. The French writer already quoted has summed up the situation better perhaps than any other critic—

"Rien de plus fécond que ces dix années qui s'écoulaient entre le vote du bill de réforme et le rappel des Corn-Laws. Le caractère général de l'époque est facile à définir en deux mots : il est libéral et spiritualiste. C'est précisément dans le même sens que s'était dirigée l'évolution particulière de Tennyson. Perdu dans son deuil privé, oublié de tous, méditant à l'écart sur une tombe, il était resté à l'unison avec l'âme de son pays. Aussi

dès qu'il reparut devant le public en 1842 fut il immédiatement reconnu et salué comme le grand poète de l'Angleterre."¹

But the end was not yet. The failure of the "earnest frothy" Dr Allen, the philanthropic pyroglyphic pirate, the loss of his own and much of his sisters' and brothers' patrimony, the necessity of breaking off his engagement with Miss Sellwood, sunk him again in the depths. Something of the bitterness of his heart in this trying crisis speaks in the scathing lines wrung from him by the inconsiderate sneers of the "New Timon," the only bitter lines of Tennyson's ever published, and then not by himself. After this he began once more to climb slowly, and this time surely. The pension which "Dicky" Milnes, stung by Carlyle's strong language, obtained by making Sir Robert Peel read "Ulysses," lifted him from the ground. He was able to travel, went with his publisher-friend Moxon to Switzerland in 1846, came back and published "The Princess" in 1847, and travelled again in Cornwall, Scotland, and Ireland in 1848. In 1849 he wrote the Prologue. At last, in 1850, "In Memoriam" was completed, and its author was content to give it to the world. The poem shows again and again the marks of its manner of composition. It is a golden chain of many curious links, interspersed with shining jewels. Each individual link is most highly wrought. The jewels have been collected and polished in various spots and at different moments. The original chain has been lengthened. Either end has been finished off with a special added ornament. Some,

¹ A. Filon, "Revue de Deux Mondes," September 1885.

and those not the least lovely of the links, have been introduced late and as by after-thought.

To use other language, the songs were given to the singer as the word of inspiration to the prophets of old, in "many ways and many portions." They echo many places, many moods. Some came to him in the deep and leafy lanes of his own Lincolnshire, or as he stood on her high wolds looking over the marsh to the sea; some in Wales; some in Gloucestershire; others at High Beech or Tunbridge Wells; some where the brimming Thames swims by the "silent level" and "osiered aits" of Shiplake; others yet again amid "streaming London's central roar." The beautiful canto—

"The Danube to the Severn gave,"

which, as Canon Beeching so happily says, "has given to the Wye a place and character among poetic rivers," was, like the lovely blank verse lyric in "The Princess,"

"Tears, idle tears,"

composed in that most romantic of ruins, which inspired Wordsworth to one of his noblest strains, Tintern Abbey. The stanzas beginning—

"Sweet after showers, ambrosial air,"

came wafted on the evening breeze which swept up the estuary of Barmouth, where the "hornèd flood," between its high-peaked promontories, pours into the sea. The terrible early days, the home-bringing, the funeral, the succeeding Christmas-tides, which recall once and again, with

varying moods, this first sad season; his brother's wedding, his sister's wedding—all are reflected. The Epilogue is in a sense his own as well as his sister's epithalamium. Its festal happiness and glorious hope echo his own return to friendship, joy, and confidence, and his deepening sense of love.

The mode of its composition was queer and unmethodical. He kept a "butcher's ledger" sort of book, and in its long columns wrote these immortal cantos as they came to him. At first they were a scattered sequence of songs. "Elegies" or "Fragments of an Elegy," the poet thought of calling them. Tennyson says himself, "I did not write them with any view of weaving them into a whole, or for publication, until I found I had written so many." But gradually the poem came together. He also called it sometimes the "Way of the Soul," and it has indeed an organic unity. This has nowhere, perhaps, been more distinctly or authoritatively stated than in a letter, too little known, which the author himself addressed in October 1877 to an Italian admirer, Count Saladino Saladini Pilastrri of Cesena. This gentleman had translated some of the less difficult cantos of "In Memoriam" into Italian, and asked the poet's approval of his publishing them. Tennyson replied, "I thank you for your very interesting letters and for the honour you have done me in translating some of the poems in my 'In Memoriam.' You are doubtless aware that though in the form of distinct poems, it is a consecutive whole." Count Pilastrri proceeded to translate the whole poem, and in 1901 gave it to the world.

It is now more than seventy years since Hallam passed away. It is more than fifty since "In Memoriam" was published. In the seventeen years between the conception and the birth the passion gradually took an altered character. It did not, indeed, yield to the "Victor Hours"

"That ride to death the griefs of men,"

but it became

"A grief, then changed to something else."

And in the crowded and hurrying half-century since its appearance it has necessarily assumed a different aspect. "In Memoriam" has had an immense vogue and popularity, which is still strongly maintained. Messrs Macmillan alone have sold some 40,000 copies of the separate editions since the book came into their hands, besides the sale of the collected works. The moment it came out of copyright it was pounced upon, and almost every publisher has now produced an edition of it, either alone or with other pieces of Tennyson. Innumerable selections from it have appeared. In 1856 came the first American edition, published at Boston, to be followed by many others. It has been translated into Latin, French, German, and Italian. It was first translated into German three years after its publication; there are now in that tongue three complete translations and many more renderings of selected pieces. The French translation, a very careful one, with an introduction and notes by M. Léon Morel, appearing only six years ago, affords evidence that the interest in France increases rather than

diminishes. It is also significant of a further phenomenon.

Around "In Memoriam" there has grown up a whole literature of elucidation, illustration, and commentary. When it first appeared, F. W. Robertson of Brighton, the well-known divine and preacher, hailed it as containing "to my mind and heart the most satisfactory things that have ever been said on the future state," and began almost at once to lecture on it. A little later he wrote an analysis for the use of his hearers. About the same time the author of "Alice in Wonderland," Mr Dodgson, at Oxford, with the aid of his sister, compiled an index or concordance to the poem for their own use, which they afterwards published. Dr Gatty's "Key" appeared in 1881, and went through several editions. In 1884 came the thoughtful, careful, and still valuable study by Mr John F. Genung. In 1886 a young lady, rarely gifted and deeply read, Miss Elizabeth Rachel Chapman, included in a striking volume called a "Comtist Lover, and other Studies," a series of "arguments" to "In Memoriam," which she afterwards published in 1888, as a separate "Companion" to the poem. This the poet pronounced to be the best he had seen. A little later, in 1900, followed a very dainty and delicately appreciative edition, with notes, by Canon Beeching, and then in the two succeeding years two very important works by two professed and indeed professorial English critics of much experience, Mr Andrew Bradley and the late Mr Churton Collins.

These two last editions may be said to complement each other. Both are scholarly and able,

and make valuable contribution to the understanding of the poem. Professor Collins is the more copiously illustrative, Professor Bradley the more analytical. Professor Collins's marvellous memory and large learning suggest to him innumerable parallels which are extremely interesting as illustrating the phenomenon of literary resemblance or coincidence, but the majority of which, it may be pretty certainly said, were not present to Tennyson's mind.

It would be very easy to multiply them still further. An ingenious and suggestive little book by an American scholar, Professor Mustard, of Haverford College, entitled "Classical Echoes," has already done this as regards the Greek and Roman poets. But, as Professor Collins and Professor Mustard themselves say, ever so many of these parallels are parallels, but no more. To accuse Tennyson of plagiarism is, as Browning finely put it, to "accuse the Rothschilds of picking pockets." The light thrown on this long-vexed question of Tennyson's borrowings by these new annotations is very interesting. He himself, or his son for him, indicates parallels and perhaps debts to Alcman and Pindar, to Lucretius and Catullus, to Virgil and Horace, to Dante, to Shakespeare and Milton, and to Goethe. Some of them had already been pointed out before. The ingenuity of Professor Collins had discovered the key to the "great intelligences fair" of "In Memoriam," LXXXV. vi. in Dante's "Convito," ii. 5. This is confirmed by the editor. So again is the reference to the "Brocken Spectre" in

"His own vast shadow glory-crowned."

Sometimes his silence seems to belie Professor Collins's and Professor Mustard's surmise. Some again of the most beautiful, such as the parallel between "the life that lives melodious days" and Statius' *Pieriosque dies et habentes carmina somnos*, indicated in this volume by Tennyson himself, had escaped the notice of previous commentators. As to occasional paraphrases from certain Latin and Greek authors to be found in "In Memoriam," as elsewhere in Tennyson's poem, the poet himself says frankly and once for all, "They seem too obvious to be mentioned."

Tennyson's language is so vivid and so luminous, so rich in life and colour; to use Milton's famous formula, even when it is not "simple" it is so "sensuous and passionate" that it produces a very distinct and direct impression, so distinct and direct, indeed, that the reader does not ask himself whether it is exactly and in detail clear. He is not, therefore, usually considered a difficult poet, in the sense, for instance, that Browning is difficult. "In Memoriam" contains perhaps a dozen lines as difficult as scores in "Sordello." But it has these difficult lines. What exactly, for example, are the "howlings from forgotten fields"? If we turn to these annotations we find that this phrase, which fills us with confused horror and seems to suggest ever so many things all at once, refers primarily to the "eternal miseries of the Inferno,"¹ but it is coloured by associations with Virgil's "Mourning Fields," perhaps also with Tennyson's own doctrine of lower lives left behind in the scaling of man from brute life upwards.

¹ Especially to Dante, "Inferno," iii. 22-51.

Again, there are difficult phrases, such as those over which commentators like Professor Bradley have spent endless trouble. "God shut the doorways of his head" (XLIV. i.). The notes tell us this means no more and no less than the time when the sutures of the infant skull close up. There are difficult constructions, as, for instance, "Could I have said," etc. (LXXXI. i.). The editor confirms a note of James Spedding on the MS. of "In Memoriam," "Could I have said," means, "I wish I could have said," and "Love then . . ." does not mean "Love in that case would have had," but "Love actually had at that time." The famous, much-debated expression, "the larger hope," meant, it seems, the hope to which Tennyson's loving nature clung, that in the end the whole human race would reach salvation and happiness: "at last—far off—at last to all."

An example of language of a different kind, calling for a note, is to be found in the couplet in LXXXIX.—

"Before the crimson-circled star
Had fall'n into her father's grave."

The lines are, no doubt, allusive, an allusive description of the planet Venus, which, according to La Place's theory, was evolved from the sun, and which sets so soon after the sun as to dip into the crimson of his setting. Professor Bradley finds fault with them as marring a beautiful passage, and Professor Collins thinks them over-Alexandrine. But it is the sort of ornament that abounds in Virgil and still more in Dante. For instance—

"La concubina di Titone antico
Già s' imbiancava al balzo d' oriente."
(*"Purgatorio,"* ix. 1-2.)

Canon Beeching, again, in the famous opening passage which, as we now know, echoes Goethe—

"That men may rise on stepping-stones
Of their dead selves to higher things"—

finds fault with the use of "stepping-stones," which, he says, is "curiously inaccurate." Why it should be inaccurate is not easy to perceive. It is a very natural use, and if it was once novel, this passage has made it a household word, as Canon Beeching might have seen if he had noticed a certain very amusing caricature in the "Daily Graphic" during the last General Election, entitled "Stepping-Stones to Office."

But this is only one example of the risk of finding fault with a great master. It would be easy to multiply instances. One thing specially noticeable about these annotations is the way in which they disregard ever so many such criticisms. Their brevity and terseness are remarkable. They do not overload or overlay the poem. They err on the side of telling too little rather than too much. We can see now why Tennyson liked Miss Chapman's "Companion." It did not go too much into detail. Tennyson's beauties and difficulties are of the Virgilian order, and of him it is true what Virgil's most famous commentator said of that author, *Virgilium difficile est et cum interprete recte legere et sine interprete*. But at least the effect of these notes is to leave the exquisite original, so fine, so chaste, so chiselled in form, unspoiled, to let it tell its own tale as before.

Many beautiful poems have been written on the death of a friend. Indeed, few subjects have

called out poetry more beautiful in all literatures. The lament of David over Jonathan; the famous dirges of Theocritus, of Bion, and of Moschus, with their imitation by Virgil; Ovid's lament for the death of Tibullus; are among the most memorable. English literature displays Milton's "Lycidas," the "Adonais" of Shelley, Arnold's "Thyrsis," all different, each original, yet all conforming to a common traditional type. "In Memoriam" holds a place apart from all these. "Thyrsis" in some ways approaches it most nearly. It was written at various times during two years, and different portions, *e.g.* the passage about the cuckoo on the wet June morning, or the stanzas beginning "Where is the girl," are, as Arnold's letters record, reminiscent of different places and moments. But "Thyrsis" was not written till long after the early companionship with Clough, on which it was based, had come to an end.

"In Memoriam" is in a sense "Lycidas" and "Thyrsis" in one; or rather it may be said to begin by being like "Lycidas" and to end by being like "Thyrsis." "Adonais," again, marks one moment, the moment of the death of a genius, to some extent but not very specially, a personal friend. The theme, therefore, is far more restricted. There is, as Professor Bradley acutely points out, the same general movement, the same "transition from gloom to glory," but it is effected with "a passionate rapidity" that suits the one concentrating hour and thought, of a premature and deplorable death.

The closest parallel to "In Memoriam" is to be sought perhaps, paradox as it may sound, not in

poetry at all, but in a piece or pieces by the greatest poet that ever wrote in prose, in the "Dialogues" of Plato which deal with the death of Socrates, more especially the "Phædo." It is true the friendship is different. The friendship of Plato for Socrates is that of a young for an older man, not that of two youthful compeers. But it is an intellectual friendship, sustained over a considerable time, pushing itself into, and filling with personal emotion, many deep places of human thought. When Socrates was torn from him, suddenly, sharply, unexpectedly, Plato was thrown back upon those speculations which he had shared with his adored master, which he had delighted to pursue step by step and side by side with him. He asked himself anew, with poignant personal interest, "Where is my friend now? What is the soul? Is it immortal? Where and what will be the existence after death?" This is the natural cry of passionate yearning :

"Ah, Christ, that it were possible
For one short hour to see
The souls we loved, that they might tell us
What and where they be."

Stunned at first, like Tennyson, Plato, too, slowly "beats his music out." He goes over again all the arguments of religion, of tradition, of the newest philosophy and science, all the evidence of psychical and cerebral phenomena ; he pieces them together ; despair and desolation gradually give place to hope and happy confidence. At first he says only, "They rest," and "their sleep is sweet." Then his voice "takes a higher range." If he does not go so far as Tennyson and say :

"They do not die,
Nor lose their mortal sympathy,
Nor change to us, although they change,"

yet he suggests that the noble dead are living on in some happier state, and ends by saying in effect, "So he has fulfilled the will of God, this wisest, and justest, and best of men I ever knew." And the ultimate basis is not science, but faith and love, born particularly of high aspiration and pure life.

It is not accident that has coupled "In Memoriam" with the "Phædo" as one of the great utterances on Immortality. It traverses the same ground, uses many of the same arguments and topics. It is a philosophical as it is a religious poem. But it is not a philosophical treatise or a religious tract. It is a poem. If the substance suggests Plato's "Phædo," the form, as has often been said, suggests Shakespeare's Sonnets. Nor, again, is it a biography. Like Plato, the author allows himself large liberty in dealing with dates and places and persons. The arrangement is only partly logical or chronological. It is artistic. Further, "In Memoriam," though no doubt coloured by a prevailing philosophy, is not to all the same extent involved with any system. It is not a religious or philosophical poem in the sense that "Paradise Lost" is a religious poem, or the "Essay on Man" a philosophical poem. These, it has been said, live in spite of their tenets and their systems, by virtue of their incidental poetry. It has been prophesied that the same will be the fate of "In Memoriam." How far is this true? Two great factors there are undoubtedly present in "In Memoriam," two great factors found side by side

in the age to which it belongs—Christianity and Evolution. The doctrine of Evolution is the great paramount doctrine of the nineteenth century. It was in the air with Lamarck and Cuvier in the early years of the century. It was hinted at by the "Vestiges of Creation" in 1844, and was finally definitely promulgated by Darwin and Wallace in 1858 and 1859. The rest of the century was filled by its gradual absorption and acceptance. "In Memoriam"—the date is striking—appeared in its central year, 1850. When the poem was published, still more when it was begun, it was, as Mr Andrew Lang has pointed out, far before its age. The "ape and tiger" was not yet a household word. The "Origin of Species," the duello at Oxford in 1860 of Bishop Wilberforce and Professor Huxley, like the famous speech in which Disraeli in the Sheldonian theatre sided with the angels, were still to come. So were "Essays and Reviews" and the "Vie de Jésus."

For the rest of the century "In Memoriam" remained well abreast of its age. How does it stand now? The exact moment of collision, of the conflict of these then new doubts with the old faith in its old form, has perhaps past. The conflict has at least taken a new phase. But Tennyson at any rate went right to the bottom and the bedrock. No one has put this more forcibly than Henry Sidgwick. Nowhere is the real service rendered by Tennyson to the hopes and hearts of men expressed so well as it is in the searching letter which will be found in the "Introduction" to these notes, and which gains yet a new light as reproduced in the "Life" which

has just appeared, of that profound and rare spirit.

The questions raised by "Essays and Reviews," the problems of the Higher Criticism, the questions with which Browning and Matthew Arnold were so much preoccupied, were bookish questions, deep, yet in a sense superficial. They made "God's gift hang on grammar." When they had cleared away, as they did clear away, for Sidgwick and his generation, the deeper difficulty was found still remaining. And in Sidgwick's view "In Memoriam" still held good, because of Tennyson's truth to Nature and to Natural Science, because he was the poet of Natural Religion and of Natural Science, the poet "who, above all others who ever lived, combined the love and knowledge of Nature with the unceasing study of the causes of things and of Nature's Laws."¹

The fact is, Tennyson is at once a highly artificial and also a strongly natural poet. He is at once, like Catullus or Virgil, scholarly, artistic, almost Alexandrine, charged with learning and allusion, with philosophy and science, and yet at times direct as Catullus himself, and even more elemental than Virgil. It is so in his dealing with man; it is so in his dealing with nature. He studies his books, but he also, and far more often, "looks in his heart and writes." Like Dante, while filled with all the learning and science of his age, he has yet the "new, sweet style which consists in following even as love inly dictates." Walt Whitman, the poet of democracy, "non-literary and non-decorous," as he styles himself, felt

¹ Nature, 13th October 1892.

this. He calls Tennyson "feudal," but he quotes as a specimen of simple directness, parallel to that of Burns, the "old, eternally told passion of Edward Gray":

"Love may come, and love may go,
And fly, like a bird, from tree to tree;
But I will love no more, no more,
Till Ellen Adair come back to me."

So it is as regards nature and life in the largest sense. Tennyson was a great natural force, a simple, sincere, childlike disposition, face to face with the realities of the universe. And what were they? Around him, the material world, "star and system rolling past," and within his own heart, the conviction of God as more near, more real than the realities of the material world, the conviction of his own personal immortality, the conviction of God's love ruling the universe,

"Tho' Nature, red in tooth and claw
With ravin, shrieked against his creed."

It was from this side that he approached Christianity. The love of God appeared in the human heart, in godlike men, above all in Christ Himself—His whole life with its "splendid purity," the embodiment of His message—and in His disciples, especially in the beloved disciple who preached Love, and whose language, as these notes tell us, colours "In Memoriam."

It has been said that "In Memoriam" is not Christian. It is not dogmatically so. Yet when it appeared, Frederick Denison Maurice, like F. W. Robertson, hailed it as a gospel. He dedicated his Theological Essays to Tennyson, as

having taught him to enter into those deepest thoughts and feelings of human beings with which true theology must correspond; and touching on the meaning which he and his set attached to Tennyson's words, he said how they had longed that the bells of our churches might indeed

"Ring out the darkness of the land,
Ring in the Christ that is to be!"

And a republication of Maurice's "Essay on Inspiration" along with this letter, as one of the "Faith and Freedom" pamphlets, seems to show that there are still those who find this a living pronouncement.

What are the essential factors of Tennyson's faith? First, that the universe moves, and man with it, towards some grand and good end, some "one far-off divine event"; that there is an elemental process from lower to higher, from worse to better. This may be obscured by temporary or local variations.

"No doubt vast eddies in the flood
Of onward time may yet be made."

But the spirit of man is immortal: "From state to state the spirit walks." It will see the good end perhaps in the next world, perhaps many worlds and æons after this. Next, that the law of the universe is a law of love. This we can know only by faith. Here was Tennyson's great mainstay. Of no one in modern times can it more literally be said that he "endured as seeing Him who is invisible." He had then in his own being the elements which make Christianity seem natural

and probable, and "the creed of creeds." The one question which he put to Darwin on the one occasion when they met, was whether his theory of evolution made against Christianity; to which Darwin answered, "Certainly not." His latest poems strike the same note as his earliest.

"That Love, which is, and was
My Father, and my Brother, and my God."

"This," says his son, "was the ultimate expression of his own calm faith at the end of his life."

If this is not Christianity, it is something very near to and very like it; if it is not all Christianity, it is a large part of it. Moreover, Christianity to Tennyson was part of the upward process. How the process began we know not; we know not how or why it was necessary. What was the origin of evil? This too was one of the problems which constantly exercised Tennyson. He leaned to the old Platonic doctrine of the Demiurge. What we do know is, that we are called on consciously, willingly to follow the law.

"Our wills are ours, we know not how;
Our wills are ours, to make them thine."

Love made us free, gave us free-will. Did love as part of this gift also make sin? On this too Tennyson had pondered.

One of the most important of the notes in this new volume is that which tells us that the "Living Will" of the memorable closing canto—cxxxI.—is not, as so many, as even Miss Chapman, at first thought, the Divine Will, but "that which we know as free-will in man."

And a variant of the noble and splendid verse from the Prologue, just quoted, a variant which Tennyson allowed intimate eyes to see, and which might well have found a place in this volume, ran—

"Thou seemest human and divine,
 Thou madest man, without, within,
 But who shall say thou madest sin?
 For who shall say, 'It is not mine'?"

Sneers have been levelled at "In Memoriam," as "weak doubt confronted by weak faith." Nothing could be more beside the mark. Henry Sidgwick did not think so. The concluding lines of the culminating passage, he says, "I can never read without tears." "In Memoriam" was a veritable "fight with death." The doubt, the despair, we have seen, were intense. All through the first half they sound and sigh, agonising, shattering. Only a faith as strong as themselves, helped by love, that "countercharm to space and hollow sky," could have made head against them when,

"Like a man in wrath, the heart
 Stood up and answered, 'I have felt.'"

"Old Fitz," Tennyson's early friend and a privileged grumbler, did not like "In Memoriam," partly because others liked it—"Alfred has published his elegiacs on A. Hallam," he said; "these sell greatly, and will, I fear, raise a host of elegiac scribblers"—partly because he did not like anything new of Tennyson's—he had not liked "The Princess" or the songs in "The Princess," except the "Bugle Song"—partly

because he had fallen into a desponding, pessimist mood and thought England's day was waning, and that Tennyson ought to play Tyrtæus rather than Simonides. A few years after "In Memoriam" came out he published his own "Omar." Tennyson too was sad about England, but he was not a pessimist. "Omar" and "In Memoriam" are like the Yea and Nay in "The Two Voices." "Omar" too has had, is having, an immense vogue; it answers to one side of human nature. But both sides are contained in "In Memoriam." Fitzgerald said of "Omar," with sadly true self-criticism, that it was "a desperate sort of thing, unfortunately at the bottom of all thinking men's minds." So it is, but at the bottom of thinking men's minds too, deeper still, perhaps, in the Pandora casket of the heart, is Pandora's last treasure—Hope. Evolution is at least hopeful; it looks upward. It may be only part of a cycle, but man is *ex hypothesi* at present on the ascending road.

No poetry can be the same to two generations. Above all, no poetry can speak to later ages quite as it speaks to its own, to those who share in their own personality the influence and impulse of the epoch, who come under the living form and pressure of the time. There is, as Professor Mackail well puts it, a "progress of poesy" in these matters, by which its power and function seem to change to us from era to era of the world's history, as they do between youth and age in our own individual experience.

A very tender and touching passage in the "Life of the late Archbishop Benson" describes his reading

"In Memoriam" with his children. He contrasts his own intense personal feeling about it with his children's merely literary appreciation. He had taught them to love it, and they loved it, as poetry. But his own feeling was something very different. "'In Memoriam,'" he says, "was inexpressibly dear to me for the best part of my life. It came out just when my mother's sister died. I sank in it and rose with it. They loved it as I did, but they were quite unconscious of the passionate and absorbing interest with which it had gone with me through the valley of the shadow of death."

Yet this it has done for many, from the late Queen to the humblest of her subjects. It may be said, indeed, that there are two classes of readers of "In Memoriam"—those who read it as a poem and a work of art, and those who read it for its inner message, to whom it has been a sacred book. Will it so continue? What really is it, after fifty years, and in the light of all we now know about it? It is before all a message of hope. Like the other great scientific poet of modern times, to whose beautiful words, spoken towards the close of his life, "Von Aenderungen zu höhern Aenderungen"—"In Memoriam" makes such signal and happy use—like Goethe, Tennyson "bids us to hope." "It's too hopeful," he is reported to have said, "this poem, more than I am myself." More, perhaps, than he sometimes was, not more than was his habitual temper shown, as in the earliest, so in the latest of his poems.

What did he write, towards the close of his days, to Mary Boyle?

"What use to brood? this life of mingled pains
 And joys to me,
 Despite of every Faith and Creed, remains
 The Mystery.

"Let golden youth bewail the friend, the wife,
 For ever gone.
 He dreams of that long walk thro' desert life
 Without the one.

"The silver year should cease to mourn and sigh—
 Not long to wait—
 So close are we, dear Mary, you and I,
 To that dim gate."

What did he write, yet later, when he was
 closer still, when life's "long walk" was over?

Browning, that noble brother spirit, had passed
 away with an exultant note, as one who

"Never dreamed, though right were worsted, wrong would
 triumph,
 Held we fall to rise, are baffled to fight better,
 Sleep to wake,"

and who bade his fellows

"Greet the unseen with a cheer! . . .
 'Strive and thrive!' cry 'Speed,—fight on, fare ever
 There as here!'"

Tennyson, if less boisterously optimistic, is not
 less fearless and confident.

"Spirit, nearing yon dark portal at the limit of thy human state,
 Fear not thou the hidden purpose of that Power which alone is
 great,
 Nor the myriad world, His shadow, nor the silent Opener of the
 Gate."

In a very interesting Letter given in the "Life"
 recently published, Henry Sidgwick describes how

he has just been re-reading “In Memoriam.” What strikes him is the “balanced rhythmical fluctuation of moods.” “A certain balancedness,” he goes on to say, “is the most distinctive characteristic of Tennyson’s mind among poets. Perhaps this makes him the representative poet of an age whose most characteristic merit is to see both sides of a question.” This is true, but it must not be forgotten how the balance finally inclines, as in “The Two Voices,” so in “In Memoriam,” so everywhere in Tennyson.

“Mourn in hope!” These are the last three words of the last poem in Tennyson’s latest volume. “Mourn in hope!” No words could better summarise the meaning and the message of his deep and lofty and exquisite “spiritual song,” “In Memoriam.”

APPENDIX

EXTRACT FROM A LETTER OF PROF. ULRICH VON WILAMOWITZ-MÖLLENDORF

WESTEND, BERLIN, *24th January 1904.*

Your Essay has keenly interested me. It is specially helpful to see objects with which we have long been familiar reflecting themselves in the mirror of an entirely different mind, and for us in Germany this experience is much more instructive when it comes to us from England than when it comes from France, for French is much less novel to us, and moreover the firmly established familiarity with the Greek poets in the country of Bentley and Porson, especially in view of that constant development which is England's unrivalled advantage, is something quite peculiar.

Your characterisation of Sophokles has an echo of the teaching of our fathers, and it is good for us at times to be reminded of that teaching. I gather that you enjoy Lessing, and I can assure you that in our schools he is for Tragedy the master authority. When I myself was at school, I, too, was dominated by him. It is true that most of us to-day depart pretty widely from him—I do so myself—just as we depart from Aristotle. However it is not about that I wish to speak. I am attracted by your literary parallels, what you say about Goethe, which will be contested by more than one, and also, what to my mind carries entire conviction, about the intimate affinity between Tennyson and Virgil. However I will not criticise this, and will further keep silence as to my own private opinion and inclination. These facts, however, as facts of experience, will arouse your interest. With my co-operation, "Oedipus the King" and "Antigone" were given here some two years ago, in part by

leading actors. The Oedipus produced a profound impression. The Antigone one not so profound. On the other hand, the Oresteia, although both the mounting and the representation left very much to be desired, proved a quite unparalleled success; for many, indeed, it was tragedy at its highest. It kept the stage, and, even in a provincial town without literary life, it has shown itself able to survive five representations. Dramatic force made its way where spiritual depth would not have been appreciated.

But I do not want to leave the personality of Sophokles. In my opinion, in considering that personality, two facts first established by the inscriptions deserve most serious attention. The first is that Sophokles became President of the "Hellenotamiai," and that in the year which, following on the peace with Sparta, and the ostracising of Thucydides, brought a new assessment of taxation of the federated states. The man who could fill this place was in a very special sense an official politician. He must have possessed some real insight into State management of the most difficult kind. For instance, he must certainly have been a member of the Council. He was also a pronounced party man: a colleague of Perikles. This means more than a place on the staff of generals. A man who had gone so deeply into political life had more of the politician about him than the Weimar Minister. The parallel is rather that of a Member of Parliament in England becoming a member of the Ministry. I believe that Kreon in the Antigone, is a sketch from life, based on the experience which Sophokles had enjoyed of doctrinaire politicians, on the Pnyx and in the Council, experiences which were wanting to Euripides. *Per contra*, Sophokles did not understand the great spiritual movement of his time. Anaxagoras was nothing to him.

This brings me to the second point. As the inscriptions of the Athenian Asklepeion have taught us, Asklepios is a deity only introduced after the Peace of Nikias. This introduction was a step both religious and political, and a step in which Sophokles played so intimate a part as to earn for himself canonisation as Dexion (*The Entertainer*). Nay, more, he placed among his household gods the snake of Asklepios, or some Asklepios fetich, and gave credence to the magic of the Asklepios incubation. What a contrast to Anaxagoras and to both Sophokles' tragic compeers! That a man of this temper

was, in very truth, religious, I do not deny, rather I hold everything in him as genuine and pure, but I think that what Hellas has left us as her highest legacy, is another kind of piety, is indeed just the victory over this kind. -

Finally, I see no shadow of probability that the self-criticism on his stylistic development, recorded by Plutarch, of Sophokles in his *De profectibus in virtute*, is derived from any other source than from the poet himself: a thrice-precious confession, "After I had played out the bombast of Æschylus (played with it till I had worn it out), and then the pungency and artificiality of my own composition, I discovered at last the form of expression which contains the highest degree of 'Ethos' (I would say, in German, Innerlichkeit, inwardness, but we understand it better in Greek), and is the best." The second statement is one which no stranger would have ventured to make. I find it absolutely appropriate, for Sophokles' style to the end kept much of artificiality, hence the innumerable alterations which every *savant* to-day rejects. That is certainly evidence for what you say, that he was a very conscious artist, but it falls short of a demonstration that everything Sophoklean is classical. The old critics, with their complaints about his unevenness (*ἀνωμαλία*), had right on their side. In Euripides, no doubt, this unevenness is still more marked.

The Terracina statue is very fine. That is somewhat how you picture the poet. But it is a little wanting in individuality, and if it conceals his *embonpoint*, I am all the more pleased that this can still be detected. For I seek to discover the man, as far as possible, just as he was.

ULRICH VON WILAMOWITZ-MÖLLENDORF.

Note.—The Lateran statue certainly presents somewhat of what is called a "fine figure of a man," and may be said to demonstrate Sophokles' physical as well as mental *εὐκολία*, and to show him as the *εἰς τῶν χρηστῶν Ἀθηναίων* whom Iophon ridiculed. But, as to its final values, I agree with Professor Campbell.

T. H. W.

