French Men, Women and Books

M. Betham-Edwards

FRENCH MEN
WOMEN AND BOOKS

BALZAC. *From a Painting by* BOULANGER, 1837 [*Frontispiece.*

FRENCH MEN WOMEN AND BOOKS

A SERIES OF NINETEENTH-CENTURY STUDIES

BY

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PREFATORY NOTE

I MUST again express my great indebtedness to French authors, publishers, editors and others for their ungrudging services, one and all having rendered every help in their power. To M. Calmann Lévy, for the choice of a Balzac portrait; to M. Lapret, for a reproduction of Madame Hanska's bust; to Mlle. Louise Read, executrix of Barbey d'Aurévilly; to MM. Paul and Victor Margueritte, M. René Boysleve, M. Joseph Reinach, Mme. Veuve Demolins; also to M. Langlois, photographic artist, I tender my grateful thanks, nor must I pass by the courtesy of Mr. J. A. Spender and other English editors who have kindly allowed reprints from their pages.

M. BETHAM-EDWARDS.

Hastings, March 9, 1910.

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FRENCH DOMESTIC POETRY

FRENCH DOMESTIC POETRY

SEVERAL learned and valuable works have lately appeared here upon that vast and inexhaustible field of literature, French poetry. We have seen anthologies, annotated editions for students, and volumes devoted to historic criticism. Among the latter by far the most important are Mr. Bailey's *Claims of French Poetry* and Mr. Eccles's recently published *A Century of French Poets*. Both these works are strictly academic. Admirable as they are alike editorially and critically, and representative as are the citations given, one phase of the subject, and that a most important one, is entirely left out. The first, with but two exceptions, is devoted to the great classics of a former period, Racine, Corneille and La Fontaine. The second is no less restricted in scope. From neither volume do readers obtain a hint of what is most vital, most living in French verse, the poetry of the people, of the work-a-day world. Indeed, as we glance at Mr. Eccles's list, we may safely aver that several, nay, most of the poets here memorialized are as unfamiliar to the majority of their country-people as to most English readers. The fireside muse, the muse of the farm, the vineyard, the workshop, the garrison, the cabaret, with its touch of nature making all men kin, find no place in these academic selections. For such learned

and laborious compilers the song-writer, the ballad-maker and the fabulists, La Fontaine excepted, do not exist.

The explanation of such wholesale omission is easy. The poetry of the people in France, as elsewhere, is only to be appreciated on native soil. We must also realize the fact that in France poetry is appreciated rather by the ear than by the eyes. In no other country is the art of declamation so persistently, so adoringly cultivated. The reciter, as the troubadour of old, has his status, his special calling. Thus at rustic weddings, after the long breakfast, each course being interspersed with a song from the guests, the professional story-teller and declaimer comes forward. Pieces grave and gay are given, care being taken—at least such has been my own experience—that no jest or word should be heard unfit for youthful ears. Meanwhile the light, unheady champagne is passed round, speeches are made, young and old finally rising, the four or five hours' sitting followed by as long a spell of the waltz.

Recitation is cultivated both as a domestic accomplishment and a profession, the former often equalling histrionic art.

In Parisian salons and in country chateaux I have heard, amongst other pieces, Nadaud's *Trois Hussards* and Barbey d'Aurévilly's *Le Cid* superlatively recited by a lady amateur. The dramatic power with which the ballad was rendered and the pathos put into the other poet's narrative cast a spell over the audience. Every one drew a deep breath.

French folks—I speak here of the non-literary

class—do not read poetry; they hearken to it as did the Greeks of old to their rhapsodists. And here I will mention a fact overlooked by Mr. Bailey in his chapter dedicated to the greatest French fabulist—La Fontaine is above all, dramatic. Thoroughly to appreciate him we must hear his fables recited before native listeners. How the famous and unfortunate actress, Adrienne Lecouvreur, thrilled her public with her recital of "The Two Pigeons" we have all heard. For myself, I shall never forget the effect of "The Animals Sick of the Pest" that I heard recited at Nantes many years ago. The late gifted Madame Ernst had drawn an enormous audience. Packed from parterre to gallery was the great theatre, and when she came to the verse—

"Ils ne mourraient pas tous, mais tous étaient frappés" ("Not all perished but all were stricken")

there was hardly a dry eye in the place.

Nadaud's witty Gasconnade, *La Garonne* (The Gascon's River), came as a relief. A combined ripple of laughter greeted each refrain.

Immense attention is given to speech and declamation in French schools, hence the admirably clear and coherent utterance of our neighbours, and children will be found expressing themselves with quite extraordinary promptness and lucidity.

On this subject educationalists and teachers should consult a recent manual of speech and elocution (Diction[1]), published for use in primary

[1] *Pour bien lire et bien réciter*, par M. Jean Blaize, Professeur de Diction agrée d'Écoles normales. This gentleman, who has brought out several works on the art of recital and prelection, holds the Government appointment of visiting lecturer in normal colleges.

schools. Not only are voice, articulation and accent treated of, but look, pose and gesture, these latter being illustrated.

There is another and equally noteworthy point with regard to what I call French domestic poetry. Here the robust morality, the healthy acceptance of life as it is, rather as it can be made, offer a striking contrast to the morbidness and ofttimes suicidal pessimism of the classical school. Let readers turn to the charming anthology named below for home and school use.[1] The volume is divided into four sections under the heads of poetry domestic, picturesque, moral and patriotic, many unknown names figuring beside the world-wide famous. Victor Hugo, Lamartine, Sully Proudhomme are amply represented. Robert Caze and Albert Delpit will certainly be new to English readers.

The most interesting point to note of the vast category is the uniformly wholesome and bracing attitude towards existence, its joys, sorrows and limitations. Life, human and animal, is revered, and many beautiful devotional pieces are included. Toil is nobly apostrophized, and the book is a delightful literary companion for both old and young. It is also a corrective of insular prejudices, revealing the homely, home-loving aspect of French life and the integrity of the family circle. By these poets such writers as Zola, Maupassant and Mirbeau for once and for all are refuted. Realistic are many pieces, but realistic in the true, honest sense of the word. The best, not the vilest characteristics of

[1] *Choix de Poëtes du XIX^e Siècle*, par Gustave Merlet, Inspecteur Général de l'Université, Paris. Colîn.

human nature have inspired these writers, whilst even for the latter there is ever a note of brotherly compassion. Like the miners described by General Sherman, the lyrists have "panned out the pure gold from the black sand."

"From the appearance of *La Maison de Sylvie*, by Théophile de Viau" (1590–1626), writes M. Remy de Gourmont, "until that of *La jeune Captive* of André Chénier" (1790), "French poetry was dramatic, satiric, artificial, burlesque, eloquent, witty, even at times tender; it was never lyric."

Few readers even in France now-a-days read the long love-poem in sonnets, which, it is said, La Fontaine knew by heart. Théophile, however, as he is usually styled, left a shorter and less artificial idyll, called *Le Matin*, which contains several domestic and quite natural verses. Here is a rendering of one or two, pictures of rural life we may still come upon any day in France.

I

When as the morning's primal beam
  Wakes man and beast to daily toil,
The ploughman cheers his trusty team
  Awhile his coulter cuts the soil.

II

Her spindle docile Alix brings
  The day's allotted task to learn,
Her mother round the distaff rings
  A nicely measured length of yarn.

III

The blacksmith hastens to his forge,
  See, how the sparklets come and go!
His brawny arms the bellows urge
  Till fiery red the metals glow.

Huguenot, afterwards converted to Romanism, free-lance alike in his life and with the pen, Théophile was condemned to burning at the stake, a sentence later commuted to perpetual exile.

Chénier's pathetic poem is perhaps out-distanced in favour by Fabre d'Eglantine's pastoral—*Il pleut, bergère, il pleut* (It rains, it rains, my shepherd maid), which is one of the first every French child learns by heart, and of which Renan wrote: "I can never hear—*Il pleut, bergère, il pleut*—without tears." The tender little story may be said to focus rural life, in revolutionary times as now, simple, honest and eminently domestic. We have here the good faith, the neighbourliness and the romance of the peasant portrayed naïvely yet with emphasis, the last verse being especially characteristic. After the storm and the night's shelter with the lover's mother and sister, his shepherd maid is formally to be asked in marriage. The sacredness of wedlock in rustic circles is here brought out in poetry as it is similarly revealed in village archives, by the marriage contracts so carefully and religiously preserved through centuries of civil wars, religious persecution and social and political upheavals.

Mr. Eccles regards the Revolution as a non-poetical epoch.[1] But, as M. Rambaud points out in his "History of French Civilization," those cata-

[1] "The pompous vacuity of Chénier's political odes half concealed by merits of structure shows, as well as his brother's hymns and tragedies and most of the other poetry of the period, how little the Revolution and the Empire availed immediately to speed on the long-expected spring. That time of stress held in suspense the hopes of disinterested art."—"The Claims of French Poetry," p. 43.

clysmal years produced a poetic flower in its maturity. The Revolution developed the genius of Song. Indeed, what need of proof, argument or dissertation, seeing that the most famous national hymn in the world, *La Marseillaise*, belongs to this period?

Gustave Nadaud, whose *Carcassonne* is now cosmopolitan property, belongs to the nineteenth century (1821–1893). Immensely popular, this prolific poet appeals to all tastes. From his pen have come bucolics, drinking songs, satires and patriotic pieces. But above all, as one of his contemporaries has said, *Nadaud a respiré la bonne odeur de la terre* ("he has breathed the good air of the soil"). In *Carcassonne* and the *Three Hussars* we have poetically embodied for us the very essence of peasant life and nature; in the first, that indomitable, nostalgic thrift chaining him to the soil, not allowing even the privilege of a day's holiday and the sight of a town only three leagues off; in the second, the innate joyousness and rollicking spirits of the soldier, overmastering love of travel and adventure, the clinging to home and early loves, above all, filial devotion. This is a particularly dramatic and moving piece, and is very often recited both in drawing-rooms and on the platform.

Quite different in tone and spirit is the little *chef-d'œuvre*, called *Les deux Gendarmes*, a witty and subtle delineation of the non-reflective type, the perpetual assentator. Who, after audition or perusal, without curiosity can witness a couple of mounted gendarmes ambling along a country road? A quite different type is that of the monosyllabist's com-

panion, the no less perpetual ponderer on men, things and human destiny.

La Garonne may be regarded as a poetic variation of the immortal *Tartarin de Tarascon.*

The next piece is by Nadaud's contemporary, Pierre Dupont, playwright as well as ballader (1821–1870), and is in quite a different style. *Mes Bœufs*, with its apparently cynical, even brutal refrain, is neither one nor the other. When Dupont's peasant reiterates the ungallant sentiment—

"Dear is my good wife Jeanne, her death I should deplore,
But dearer are my beeves, their loss would grieve me more,"

he foresees the material catastrophe, even ruin brought about by the disablement or death of his team. As a running commentary on the poem I cite an incident that happened during an inundation of that revolutionary river, *ce torrent révolutionnaire*, as Michelet calls the Loire.

A rescuing party hastened to save an old peasant who had betaken himself and his pig to the garret of his cottage, already almost chimney-high in water. The boat was small, and the rescuers shouted—

"No room except for yourself, my good man. Hurry up," or rather down.

But above the sound of swirling waves and raging winds came the plea—

"Never mind me. Save my pig."

Here, without doubt, poor piggie's owner was actuated by the same motive as Jeanne's husband. Who knows? Perhaps the animal represented a daughter's dowry? As practical interests are never lost sight of in France, doubtless the old man gained

his point. Piggie was plumped into the boat with his master.

Paul Déroulède, nephew of Émile Augier and volunteer in 1870, will never wear the Immortal's uniform, but enjoys a fame far transcending any that academies can bestow. He is above all things the people's, the patriots' poet, the Körner of nineteenth-century France. The one man who could have written a Marseillaise had not Rouget de Lisle forestalled him, his *Chants de Guerre*, or songs of war, stir the blood as do the strophes of the national hymn, and, it must be added, of that song of social revolt, the *Internationale*.

Outsiders who have witnessed the departure, passage or home-coming of conscripts will understand his *Bon Gîte* (The Soldier's Reception), its deep feeling and homely pathos. But for the labour and responsibility involved in translating such poetry, I should have given more of Déroulède's impassioned muse.

Of Richepin, son of the palmy, sunny France beyond sea. the other's junior by three years, it is hardly necessary to speak, so cosmopolitan is his fame. Dramatist, lyrist and "the bard of the beggars," as I have elsewhere called him, M. Richepin, whilst familiar with strata of life below the slum-line, nay, with thieves' dialect, yet possesses the daintiest, purest fancy. His poems in vagabonds' jargon, requiring translation from the appended glossary, I could not hope to render; from the celebrated *Chants des Gueux* I have extracted one little piece, a pearl indeed, or rather, as that word recalls another of evil omen, I will call *La Flûte*.

The poet, I am glad to say, has expressed his satisfaction at the rendering, over which his translator spent a whole week!

Albert Delpit, nearly of an age with the two last-named, was born in New Orleans, but of French parentage, and is patriot of the patriots. After the Franco-Prussian War his volumes of verse, called *L'Invasion* and *Les Dieux qu'on brise*, received the prizes of the Academy. In *Petit piou* (Soldier, paid a sou) we have the disillusion, not a scintilla of the glamour of war. This highly popular piece is one of the most characteristic in M. Delpit's volume. A *garde-mobile* during that infamous and most unnecessary war, like Paul Déroulède, Albert Delpit sings of what he knew and felt, not sentimentally hymning war and its miseries by a comfortable fire. Every line rings true.

Not of military glory and disaster sings Robert Caze, who died young (1853–1886), author of *Poèmes Rustiques* and other simple idylls. The little picture outlined in the piece here given is one familiar enough to the tourist through provincial France.

Rustic Hospitality is no exaggerated apostrophe of the peasant. Thrifty, even parsimonious although he be, Jacques Bonhomme has ever a corner in his heart for the *chemineau*, the beggar at the gate. Edie Ochiltrees on French soil have survived Revolution and *régime* after *régime*. Toulouse, indeed, would be a suitable paradise to that lover of beggars, Charles Lamb. In certain country places what in England were formerly called trampers have now-a-days, as of old, their regular rounds, calling

at one farmhouse for their basin of soup, at another for their broken victuals, at a third for their draught of *piquette*, or sour wine. No one hustles them; "move on" is not a watchword of rural police; the *chercheur de pain* (seeker for bread) remains an institution in what is still nominally Catholic France.

The Cid has no place in domestic poetry properly speaking, but is now so popular as a recitation that I have included it in my little collection. Barbey d'Aurévilly (1808–1889) forms the subject of a later chapter, and I will not here add a critical or biographical note. Journalist, romancer, poet and critic, brilliantly gifted under each head, maybe this splendid and most original poem is all that will outlive a reputation altogether posthumous.

Not perhaps, technically speaking, should follow the names of Florian and Lachambeaudie, fabulists separated by a century, the former dying amid the throes of Revolution (1794), the latter exiled by that shoddy Cæsar, the *soi-disant* third Napoleon.

But if not poets of domesticity or lyrists of the fireside, these philosophers in verse essentially belong to daily life, and not only of any especial country, but of the civilized world. France is pre-eminently the land of the fabulist, her goodly list crowned by the immortal La Fontaine, the beautiful and joy-giving tradition being carried on till our own times. And if not possessing the great master's unrivalled and, at times, cynical raillery of human nature, the eighteenth-century Florian and the nineteenth-century Lachambeaudie possess compensatory wit, fancy and unfailing *bonhomie*. Both are constantly on the lips of reciters and prelectors. Both

equally move to tears and laughter, and both are equally beloved of old and young.

Florian, simply considered as a poet, is uniformly charming, and did apology in such case ever serve any purpose, my palinode would be long. Of his musical and witty pieces I could only hope to give the meaning, or rather the spirit. Lachambeaudie's flowing narratives offer fewer stumbling-blocks to the translator. Indeed, to a facile versifier the rendering into native tongue of these is mere pastime, the delightful recreation of spare moments.

I add that, with the exception of Jean Richepin, no poet here represented appears in Mr. Eccles's long list. His predecessor, in *The Claims of French Poetry*, mentions Florian, but gives no citations from the small legacy of famous fables.

THE RAIN IS FALLING, SHEPHERD MAID (IL PLEUT, BERGÈRE, IL PLEUT)

I

THE rain is falling, shepherd maid,
A storm is coming fast,
Let's hasten to some friendly shade
And shelter till 'tis past.

II

Hark how the big drops patter down,
The water runs in streams,
Whilst from yon clouds that darkly frown,
Fiercely the lightning gleams.

III

The thunder growls, my shepherd maid,
Delay not, take my arm,
Gather your sheep, be not afraid,
We're near my mother's farm.

IV

Ah! there she stands, the housewife dear,
And with her, sister Anne;
See both, a visitor is here,
Beguile her as you can.

V

With sister Anne, sit down, *ma mie*,
The peat shall soon burn bright;
Your little flock shall cared for be,
And folded for the night.

VI

Good-night, good-night, my shepherd maid,
The storm has passed away,
But sister makes your little bed,
There sweetly dream till day.

VII

To-morrow, with my mother, I,
—May fortune us betide!—
Unto your father we will hie,
And ask you for my bride.

FABRE D'EGLANTINE.

CARCASSONNE

"I'M growing old; just threescore year,
In wet or dry, in dust and mire
I've sweated, never getting near
Fulfilment of my heart's desire.
Ah! well I see that bliss below
'Tis Heaven's will to grant to none,
Harvest and vintage come and go,
I've never got to Carcassonne!

"The town I've glanced at many a day,
You see it from yon mountain chain;
But five long leagues it lies away,
Ten long leagues there and back again.
Ah! if the vintage promised fair,
But grapes won't ripen without sun
And gentle showers to make them swell,
I shall not get to Carcassonne!

"You'd think 'twas always Sunday there,
So fine, 'tis said, are folks bedight,
Silk hat, frock coats, the bourgeois wear,
Their demoiselles walk out in white.
Two generals with their stars you see,
And towers out-topping Babylon.
A bishop, too—ah me! ah me!
I've never been to Carcassonne.

"Yes, truly did our *curé* call
Pride the besetting sin of man;
Ambition brought on Adam's fall,
And soaring wishes are my bane.

Yet could I only steal away
  Before the winter has begun,
I'd die contented any day,
  If once I'd been to Carcassonne!

"*Mon Dieu! Mon Dieu!* Forgive my prayer,
  I'm but a poor presumptuous fool.
We build fine castles in the air,
  When grey as when new breeched at school.
My wife with our first-born, Aignan,
  Have even journeyed to Narbonne,
My grandson has seen Perpignan,
  I've never been to Carcassonne!"

So sighed a peasant of Limoux,
  A worthy neighbour, bent and worn.
"Ho, friend," quoth I, "I'll go with you,
  We'll sally forth to-morrow morn."
And, true enough, away we hied,
  But when our goal was almost won,
God rest his soul! the good man died,
  He never got to Carcassonne!

GUSTAVE NADAUD.

THE THREE HUSSARS (LES TROIS HUSSARDS)

I

FURLOUGH had set three Hussars free,
  Swift their steps and their hearts were light;
They sang, they laughed in roisterous glee
  When scenes familiar came in sight.

II

"Now shall I see my chosen maid,
  Her name is Marguerite," cried one.
"Mine, Madeleine," the second said.
  "Mine," quoth the third, "is Jeanneton."

III

They met a neighbour on the road.
"Bell-ringer Simon, as I live!"
"How goes?" "What's happed of bad or good?"
"Faith, soldiers, I've no news to give."

IV

"Well, tidings of fair Marguerite?"
"I tolled[1] her vows a year ago;
She's now a cloistered Carmelite
In yonder convent that you know."

V

"Something tell me of Madeleine,
Alway prim and sedate of tongue?"
"Bride and matron. Twelve months between;
Twice for her have I joy-bells rung."

VI

"Mine now a word of Jeanneton;
With the maiden are all things well?"
"Aye, truly! Just three months have flown
Since I pealed for her the funeral knell."

VII

"Bell-ringer, to the cloistered nun
Friendly wishes let some one bear;
Tell her, ere vintage be begun
My wedding-bells shall shake the air."

VIII

"Bell-ringer, tell the matron staid,
I'm once more in my native place,
Promoted to a captain's grade
And wedded only to the chase."

IX

"Bell-ringer, seek my mother out,
Pardon ask her on bended knee.
Back to the colours. Right about.
Home is no longer home to me!"

IBID.

[1] The death-bell is tolled when a nun takes the veil.

THE ETERNAL "YES" (LES DEUX GENDARMES)

GENDARMES twain on a Sunday bright
Slowly along the green lanes rode,
Brigadier,[1] with his badges white,
Yellow the other's sword-belt showed.
Said the first: "'Tis a morning fair,"
His voice sonorous, reaching far.
Answered his mate with solemn air,
"Faith, Brigadier, right you are."

The sun, his day's work almost done,
Still found them ambling side by side,
Only the chief's commanding tone
Breaking the hush of eventide.
"See," quoth he, "how they gold-tipped lie,
Yon clouds beneath a rising star!"
"Brigadier," made his mate reply,
"Faith, Brigadier, right you are."

"A hard trade drive we, you and I,"
The first went on, "in field and town,
Bound evil-doers to espy,
Light-fingered gentry to hunt down,
And all the while we're forced to roam,
Her sole protection, bolt and bar,
The fond wife's left to guard the home."
"Faith, Brigadier, right you are."

"A gallant have I been, *pardie*,
One sweetheart loved I best of all—
A saucy wit, and fair to see—
Long did she hold my heart in thrall.
But hearts, wherefore I cannot tell,
Like soldiers, love to rove afar,
In one place, never fain to dwell."
"Faith, Brigadier, right you are."

[1] Brigadier, *sous chef* of gendarmerie, commanding a brigade, his white braid or *galon* marks a *grade* or superior.

"What men call glory is a chain
  Of rose and laurel intertwined.
Mars have I served with might and main,
  To Venus ever been inclined.
A spouse and Brigadier to-day,
  No more I serve the god of war;
Yet doth the goddess still hold sway."
  "Faith, Brigadier, right you are."

They ambled on the night throughout,
  Only the rhythmic hoofs were heard.
Both seemed absorbed in dreamy thought,
  The Brigadier spoke not a word.
But when at last the east grew red,
  And vanished slowly star by star,
From time to time his comrade said:
  "Faith, Brigadier, right you are!"

IBID.

THE GASCON'S RIVER (LA GARONNE)

I

HAD the Garonne been inclined
  When it issued from its source,
Leaving native scenes behind,
  Following a southern course,
Valley cleft, with hill and plain,
The Garonne might have watered Spain!

II

Had the Garonne been inclined,
  Northern latitudes to woo,
Rivers three that upward wind,
  Charente, Loire and Seine cut through,
Paris passed—an avalanche
The Garonne might have swelled the Manche!

III

Had the Garonne been inclined,
What easier than to reach the Saone?
Then (to Gascony unkind)
Hurrying on towards the Rhône,
Rhine and Danube crossed—*pardie,*
The Garonne would drink the Black Sea!

IV

Had the Garonne been inclined
Arctic regions to explore,
Round Siberia having twined,
Quitting Oural's, Volga's shore,
With an ever onward roll
The Garonne might have thawed the Pole!

V

But the Garonne, disinclined
Other streams to put to shame,
Triumphs such as these resigned,
Native soil her only claim,
Tarn, she took, Lot and Dordogne,
The Garonne would not quit Gascoigne!

IBID.

MY BEEVES (MES BŒUFS)

I

Two oxen have I in my shed,
Milk-white with spots of ruddy hue.
'Tis by their toil the plough is sped,
Thro' witner's slough and summer's dew.
'Tis thanks to them, with golden store
My barns are piled from year to year,
In one week's time they gain me more
Than what they first cost at the fair.
Dear is my good wife Jeanne, her death I should deplore,
But dearer are my beeves, their loss would grieve me more.

II

When grown up is our Coralie,
And likely suitors come to woo,
No niggard will I prove, *pardie!*
Gold shall she have and farm stock too.
Should any ask my beeves beside,
Straightforward would the answer be,
My daughter quits me as a bride,
The oxen will remain with me.
Dear is my good wife Jeanne, her death I should deplore,
But dearer are my beeves, their loss would grieve me more.

III

Aye! eye them well, a goodly sight,
As snorting loud they stand abreast,
Upon their horns the birds alight,
Where'er they stop to drink or rest.
Each year when *Mardi Gras* falls due,
The Paris butchers come to buy;
But see my beeves decked out for view,
Then sold for slaughter?—no, not I!
Dear is my good wife Jeanne, her death I should deplore,
But dearer are my beeves, their loss would grieve me more.

PIERRE DUPONT.

THE SOLDIER'S RECEPTION (BON GÎTE)

I

"GOOD dame, pile not your logs so high,
Keep them for winter store.
My soaked habiliments are dry,
I quake with cold no more."
She shook her head, and for my sake
The bellows lusty plied,
"Hush, soldier, hush, and comfort take,"
She said, "my hearth beside."

II

"Good dame, such lavishness forbear,
Let shelf and cellar be,
Yon snowy cloth, yon Sunday fare,
Are all too good for me."
Heedless she set out bread and meat,
Uncorked the long-stored wine,
Murmuring the while, "Eat, soldier, eat,
Refresh that frame of thine."

III

"Good dame, what means that new-made bed,
Those sheets so finely spun?
On heaped-up straw in cattle shed
I'd snore till rise of sun."
The kind soul hearkened not a word,
Careful the pillows laid,
Smoothing the soft sheets lavendered,
"Rest, soldier, rest," she said.

IV

At dawn I find my haversack
Fall laden at my feet.
"Good dame, your largesses take back,
Why thus a stranger treat?"
But smiling ever mum she kept
Until I turned to go.
"Why, soldier, why?" she said, and wept,
"My boy is soldier too!"

PAUL DÉROULÈDE.

THE FLUTE (LA FLÛTE)

A REED was I, so poor and frail a thing
That any bird might crush with careless wing.
Behold me, once of no account and mute,
Transformed into a rapture-yielding flute.
For, as he wandered by the marsh one morn,
An aged tramp, deeming I looked forlorn,

Bore me away, and ere the year was spent
With pains had made a perfect instrument.
Now when his fingers touch the pierced octave,
My being vibrates, and whilst wave on wave
Of sound melodic, hither, thither float,
Is vaguely echoed every passing note,
The hearts of man and beast thus stirred by me
Surrendering to the soul of harmony!

JEAN RICHEPIN.

SOLDIER, PAID A SOU (PETIT PIOU)[1]

PETIT pioupiou,
Soldier, paid a sou.
What gained you on the Russian shore,
When with the bravest and the best
'Mid deadly fire and cannons' roar
You bore our flag and took no rest?
O'er hard-won fields our eagles flew,
Our cup of victory was full.
But what was glory's meed to you?
—A name—that of Sebastopol.

Petit pioupiou,
Soldier, paid a sou.
What gained you on the Italian plain,
When, fierce as warriors of old,
You fought with madness in the brain,
Your deeds in history's page enrolled,
Forgotten, beggared, aged, to-day,
Of battlefields, and blood-stained fame.
What your reward, I prithee say?
—'Twas Solferino's glorious name.

Petit pioupiou,
Soldier, paid a sou.
What gained you in that last great stand,
When Prussian forces like a flood
From east to west o'erspread the land,
France crimsoning with her children's blood?

[1] Popular sobriquet of the infantry, formerly paid a *sou*, or halfpenny, per diem.

Defeat, invasion brought us low,
Long held the foe our soil in fee,
What gained you in that overthrow?
—My answer, friend—A memory!

ALBERT DELPIT.

RUSTIC HOSPITALITY (CHARITÉ)

THE farm-folk dine; a grateful steam
Of soup, like incense, clouds the board;
Each, quitting plough and stabled team,
Now takes his place without a word.

About them clings the healthful air
Of fresh-stacked haulm and upturned mould:
Upon the shelves the copper ware
Gleam as if made of burnished gold.

A tattered starveling blocks the door
With outstretched hands and piteous whine.
"Sit, brother, sit, there's ample store,
None hungry go when farm-folk dine!"

ROBERT CAZE.

THE CID (LE CID)

THROUGH the Sierra rode at eve the Cid,
Campéador,[1] his golden arms a-glow,
Splendour redoubled as the sun sank low.
All gold and gems he seemed, but though half hid
By rubied casque, still shot a fierier ray
His eyes than dazzling armour as it shone.
His foes subdued, he now subdued the sun
As proud and peerless he pursued his way.

[1] Campéador (Spanish), a warrior; here used as a distinctive appellation.

Wondering from heights afar, the shepherds saw
That flaming form, that warrior clad in gold.
"Saint James, Campéador," they cried; "Behold!"
Hero and patron-saint confused in awe.
Slowly the radiant horseman rode alone,
When from a darksome hollow came a sound
Sad and sepulchral; as he glanced around
His eyes fell on a figure lying prone,
Human but horrible, so dread a sight
That when the scarecrow rose mouthing a prayer,
As if the dust thus blown befouled the air
Backing, the charger caracoled with fright.
Calm sat Campéador, his plumes a-flame;
Then as archangel from his lofty seat,
Bending towards the outcast at his feet,
Lordly, he gave alms asked for in Christ's name.
Now happed a thing most moving to relate.
Upon his knees, incredulous, surprised
That he, a leper, shrunk from and despised,
Plague-stricken, castaway and reprobate,
Should thus meet looks of pity and of love,
Stirred by an impulse, overmastering fear,
Unto that form majestic drawing near,
The suppliant dared to kiss the knightly glove,
No human form touched by him till to-day!
And knowing that contagion could not pierce
Such envelope, with gratulation fierce
He let his brow upon the metal stay.
Unhorrified, unangered, suave and grand
Looked on the Cid. What sudden thought now flashed
His mind across? His gauntlet off he dashed
And to the kneeling leper gave his hand!

BARBEY D'AURÉVILLY.

VANITY (LE PETIT CHIEN)

I

Once on a time and far away,
The elephant stood first in might,
He had by many a forest fray
At last usurped the lion's right.
On peace and reign unquestioned bent,
The ruler in his pride of place,
Forthwith to life-long banishment
Doomed members of the lion race.

II

Dispirited, their best laid low,
The vanquished could but yield to fate,
And turn their backs upon the foe
In silence nursing grief and hate.
A poodle neatly cropped and clipped,
With tasselled tail made leonine,
On hearing of the stern rescript,
Straightway set up a piteous whine.

III

"Alas!" he moaned. "Ah, woe is me!
Where, tyrant, shall I shelter find;
Advancing years what will they be,
My home and comforts left behind?"
A spaniel hastened at the cry,
"Come, mate, what's this to-do about?"
"Oh, oh," the other gulped reply,
"For exile we must all set out!"

IV

"Must all?" "No, you are safe, good friend;
The cruel law smites us alone;
Here undisturbed your days may end,
The lions must perforce begone."

"The lions? Brother, pray with these,
What part or lot have such as you?"
"What part or lot? You love to tease;
You know I am a lion too."

FLORIAN.

"OH! WAD SOME POWER," ETC. (LA TAUPE ET LE LAPIN)

I

SMILE at my story as you may,
'Tis strange enough,
Nathless things happened as I say,
One moonlight night in dappled glade,
Like human sort, some rabbits played
At blindman's buff.

II

With bents and dock-leaves twisted round
In bandage wise,
By turns each had his peepers bound,
Then all the rest about him frisked,
Their white-lined tails they gaily whisked
With frantic cries.

III

Disturbed by such unusual rout,
In burrow near,
A social-minded mole crept out,
And deeming 'twas a common dance,
The *mêlée* joined, at first advance
Caught by the ear.

IV

"Good gentlemen," the leader said,
"It were a shame,
Our neighbour here who lacks the aid
Of organs that we thus employ,
Should not some privilege enjoy
In such a game—"

V.

"—I then propose—" "Beg pardon, sirs—"
Burst forth the mole,
"—No favour, please, no kind demurs,
I see, I tell you, with the best,
I'll be blindfolded like the rest,
And break no rule."

VI

The courteous coneys of his mind
Now feigned to be,
But as he felt them careless bind,
"No make-belief!" irate he cried.
"Your bandage is too loosely tied,
For still I see!"

IBID.

A FABLE FOR ALL SEASONS (LE PRÊTRE DE JUPITER)

I

A PRIEST who served Olympian Jove,
Two daughters owned, both passing fair,
And whom as did such sire behove
He reared with all but mother's care.
Their doweries modest; priests must live
On what the generous choose to give.

II

Protectors sortable for both
He deemed it his behest to find,
Ere long discovering, nothing loth,
Sons-in-law suited to his mind.
Men following each a proper trade
And looking out for help-meets staid.

III

The first, a favoured stretched of ground
Enriched with never-tiring care,
As seasons in their turn came round
Producing fruits beyond compare.
Such grapes and melons! At the sight
Mouths watered all, as well they might.

IV

The next a potter's name had won,
With skilful and ingenious turns
Exposing to the noonday sun
Amphoras, lamps and funeral urns.
To many a foreign far-off mart
He shipped the triumphs of his art.

V

Passed honeymoons, the sire made haste
To see the brides. "Well, daughter mine,
Have matters turned out for the best,
A prize, this wedded lot of thine?"
"Aye, truly," the young matron said,
"No maid was ever happier wed.

VI

"A model husband is my spouse,
For home, affection, counsel, apt,
But one thing makes him knit his brows,
The springs are dry, the earth is chapt,
They perish, sweet herbs, fruit and flowers,
Do, father, beg of Jove some showers."

VII

"Be easy, child, Jove's festival
I celebrate to-morrow morn,
Into his ear I will not fail
To pour thy prayer, my loved first-born,
Adieu, adieu." Then off he hied
To interview the younger bride.

VIII

"Yes, father," was her prompt reply,
"My good man's business prospers well,
And best entreated wife am I.
But desperately we need a spell
Of cloudless sun to dry the ware,
Do whisper in Jove's ear a prayer."

IX

"My darling, fain I'd intercede
On thy behalf, thy sister's too,
But whilst fine weather is thy need,
'Tis rain she'd have the Sire bestow.
To leave these things is better far,
Than men, the great gods wiser are!"

IBID.

THE PHILOSOPHER AND THE OWL

ONE of the wiser sort, as haps
In this poor world of snips and snaps,
Was hustled, bustled, jeer'd at, boo'd,
Then outlawed for his country's good,
He must away.
Of fortune, home and friends bereft,
Only philosophy was left
To be his stay.
Wandering one eve a thicket nigh
He heard an agonizing cry,
And swiftly making for the sound,
Perceived an owl upon the ground.
Magpie and crow, jay, rook and daw
Tearing his flesh with beak and claw.
"Our country's foe, vile wretch," they shout,
"Those wicked eyes we'll now pluck out."
Vainly he spoke in self-defence,
"Was ever heard such impudence?"
But seized with fright
By loud "Halloo!" the miscreants flew,
Leaving their fellow all but dead,
A piteous sight.
Sorrow and wisdom as we know
Soften the heart to others' woe.
"Prithee, poor victim," asked the sage,
"The reasons of such murderous rage?"
—"The reasons, master? There's but one,
Dark night my eyes could pierce alone!"

IBID.

CRITICISM APPRAISED (LA FAUVETTE AND LE ROSSIGNOL)

I

From noon till eve the Warbler sang,
'Twas all the happiness he knew;
At last the chaffinch came one day
To prattle of an envious crew.
"The sparrow, jay, and crow," said he,
"Birds great and small, both old and young,
Even the stupid goose, declare,
It's getting time you held your tongue.

II

"Yet you sing on and pay no heed,
Throughout the livelong summer day;
I fain such patience would learn too,
The secret of it tell, I pray."
"Brother," the Warbler said, and smiled,
"The Nightingale once praised my song;
When mighty masters thus approve,
Why should we heed the vulgar throng?"

Lachambeaudie.

THE ORCHESTRA (L'ORCHESTRE)

I

Cynic and Optimist one day
Discussed their systems grave and gay.
"Good friend," quoth Pessimist, "you see,
Your Golden Age can never be.
Each mortal holds his special creed.
When did you find ev'n two agreed?
We all are brethren, I admit,
Yet somehow no good comes of it."

II

Just as friend Optimist began
Describing his Utopian plan,
A bill upon a door hard by,
Headed "Grand Concert," met his eye.

They took their tickets, entered in.
Was ever such discordant din?
Each instrument, both great and small,
Musicians tune them, one and all.

III

Cried Pessimist, "What parallel
My theories sets forth so well?
Such din and turmoil, to my mind,
Depict the state of humankind!"
A moment later, at a sign,
Discord is harmony divine.
No note is lost till strong and full,
The thousands make a glorious whole.

IV

Said Optimist, triumphant now,
"Good friend, thus much you must allow,
If no two men e'er thought as one,
A mass can move in unison.
When each has found his proper sphere,
As hath each trained musician here,
Life and society will be
One vast concerted harmony."

IBID.

THE WINDS AND THE ZEPHYR

As was their wont, to hold divan
In caverned gloom the winds had met,
Where blusteringly each began
His special prowess to relate.

'Twas now a tale of splitting decks,
Of drowning cries and tempests' roar,
Of rafts engulphed and tottering wrecks,
And brave men's bodies washed ashore.

Came next a list of inland squalls,
Of devastated thorpe and town,
Of home-folk caught by crumbling walls,
And roof-trees tossed about like down.

A third with self-elation told
Of flowering orchards bared in May,
How cornfields, erst as ruddy gold,
Mere mash of blackened stover lay.

Meanwhile into the antre stole
A Zephyr, who with horror heard
The shameless vaunts of crime and dole,
The cheers that followed every word.

Desired his deeds to tell in turn,
"My brothers," modestly he said,
"When as the dog-days fiercely burn
I fan the rose's drooping head—"

"—To waft a breeze upon the brow
Of labourers who sweat and swink,
To freshen streams that hotly flow
For parched-up man and beast to drink—"

"—Of such my tasks—" his soft voice died
Mid outbursts of lugubrious mirth,
That threatened havoc far and wide,
And shook the very roots of earth.

"Rejoice in miscreance if ye will,"
The Zephyr said, and turned to go,
"Be mine the meek ambition still,
Kind influences to bestow!"

IBID.

WISE AND WORLDLY-WISE

QUOTH Worldly-wise to Wise—"Good brother,
Why about wisdom all this pother?
You rack your brains *re* good and evil
Why one man's saint and t'other devil,
Take my advice, pray, cease to ponder,
Follow me to the great stage yonder,

Shut up those books, put out your candle,
Men for your uses, learn to handle,
Adroitly play on human nature,
And every fellow is your creature.
Place, power and millions, all are easy
If, in the getting, you're not queasy."
"I thank you," was the ready answer,
"Certes, you read a merry dance, sir.
But—why on earth this sudden hurry,
Just now you seemed in no such flurry?—
Your methods have but one objection,
There's such a thing as retrospection!"

IBID.

THE RHÔNE AND LAKE LEMAN

FROM the mountains onward dashing,
Hurtling, tumbling, without break,
Rushed the Rhône like lightning flashing
As it overtook the lake.

"Stay, oh, stay!" soft Leman pleaded;
"Here thy waves may gently glide,
Unembarrassed, unimpeded,
Sheltering rocks on every side.

"Why this unrestrained endeavour,
Every inch wrung from your foes,
Wind beset and storm-tossed ever,
Whilst awaits you such repose?"

Vainly importuned and beckoned,
Swift as when its course began,
Never tarrying for a second,
On the noble river ran.

Wide and wider passage cleaving,
Right and left its boons bestowed,
Fertile fields, rich gardens leaving
Where before a desert showed.

Like to thee, majestic river,
Is the soul by faith possessed,
Of high gifts the would-be giver,
Careless of delight or rest.

Naught to him is fierce contention,
Naught to him what joys might be.
On he hastes without abstention,
As the river to the sea.

IBID.

These poems do not come under the head of Domestic Poetry, but are added to make my collection of renderings from French verse complete.

CAIN

BEFORE Jehovah's awful face fled Cain, and dire
The tempest raged above his abject head!
And with him went his children and his wife,
Dishevelled, wild, and clothed in skins of beasts.
All day they went, led by their sombre guide,
But when night came and they had reached the foot
Of some vast mountain towering o'er the plain,
The weary women and the children prayed
That he would let them rest awhile and sleep;
So all lay down upon the mountain side.
Cain, pondering, slept not; when at last he rose
To peer into the darkness of the night,
He saw an Eye that watched him where he stood.
"I am too near," he cried, and straightway roused
His sleeping sons, his daughters, and his wife;
And following him they fled across the waste.
For thrice ten days and nights he hurried on,
Nor spake he, nor looked back, nor rested once,
But shaken as an aspen by the wind
At every sound, he led them to the sea.
"This halting-place is safe, here will we stay,
For we have reached the limits of the world,"

He said, and there they tarried; but behold!
He saw the Eye that he had seen before.
Then, "Hide me," he cried, and quailing coursed to earth.
His children trembling as they saw his fear.
"Stretch out the tents," he bade, "and make a wall,
That I may see no more;" and Jabal, sire
Of shepherd-dwellers in the pathless waste,
Did his behest, and screened him from the sky.
"Thou seest nothing, O my father, now?"
Asked fair-haired Zillah, Lamech's wife; but Cain
In desperation said, "I see it still!"
Then Jubal, sire of those who touch the harp
And swell the organ stops to mighty strains,
Raised high a brazen wall, but Cain, behind,
Saw still the Eye that watched him from its place.
And Enoch said, "We'll gird a city round,
With walls so thick, and towers so horrible,
That, when once closed, nought shall have power to pass."
Then Tubal-Cain, sire of all those who work
In brass and iron, sire of the forgers, set
His hand unto the earth, and cunning built
A city, superhuman, vast and dread.
They bound each granite block with brazen band,
They piled the walls as high as mountain sides;
And on the portal they had written clear,
"Here Heaven enters not!" Infernal stood
The city, making darkness o'er the plain.
Within a central tower they placed their sire.
And once again the gentle Zillah asked—
"Thou seest nothing, O my father, now?"
But Cain in fear replied, "I see it yet.
I will no longer dwell upon the earth,"
He said, "but underneath, alone
Will spend my days, nought seeing, of none seen."
They dug a cave, sepulchral, dark, and deep,
And Cain, well pleased, descended, and the door
Was closed upon him, shutting out the day;
But when he sat him down within this tomb
The eye of Conscience was upon him still!

VICTOR HUGO.

TO A BLIND YOUTH (L'AVEUGLE)

I

Nay, not too bitterly bewail,
Dear youth, a lot bereft of light,
The dark impenetrable veil,
That shrouds the outer world in night.

II

No more, alas! to mortal eyes,
Is earth a wholly beauteous place,
For what man's use of Paradise,
But with vile passions to deface?

III

Seek comfort in that perfect day,
That realm untouched by soil or sin,
For bright as star or solar ray,
The radiance that dawns within!

IV

Blind Homer and his great compeer,
The mighty Milton, moved sublime,
Each in his soul-illumined sphere,
A sphere bequeathed to Man and Time!

Émile Mariotte.

TWO WAYS HATH LIFE (LES DEUX ROUTES)

Two ways hath Life. One as a stream
With flowers environed quits the source,
The even tenor of its course,
Hardly betrayed by transient gleam.
No echo marks the onward roll
Of waves that without plaint or sigh,
Winning scant glance from passer-by,
Unhasting reach the appointed goal.

One as a torrent unconfined
  Bursts forth headlong with frenzied will,
  No agency its rage can still
Nor barriers curb, nor forces bind.
The first achieves, the second aims,
  One limits hath, the other none
  With every day its task begun—
Patience, Ambition, are their names.

ALFRED DE MUSSET.

SADNESS (TRISTESSE)

I

My life is wasted, strength is spent,
  My friends have vanished one by one.
Light-heartedness and proud content,
  The poet's faith in self is gone!

II

Truth once I looked on as a friend,
  She smiled responsive for a day,
Cruel I found her in the end,
  And turned my head another way.

III

Eternal all the same is Truth,
  Let any that great fact ignore,
And witless as in cradled youth
  They fall asleep to wake no more.

IV

God speaks and we must make reply
  Though hearkening with reluctant ears.
The little left me till I die,
  I owe unto a few sad tears!

IBID.

BARBERINE'S SONG (CHANSON)

I

O KNIGHT resplendent, off to wars afar,
Why must you roam,
Remote from home?
Note yon dark sky without a single star.
And snares o'erlay
The wanderer's way.

II

Could you believe the love you left behind
An hour ago
Was fickle too?
Vain seekers of renown, 'tis yours to find
That glories pass
As breath on glass.

III

O knight resplendent, why must you be gone,
With lance and shield
To battlefield?
Whilst I, what can I do but weep alone,
Who charmed erewhile
With careless smile?

IBID.

SONG TO HOPE (CHANSON)

WHEN coquettish Hope, the sweeting!
Beckons but to give the slip,
Now advancing, now retreating,
Ever with a smile on lip.

Willy-nilly, we must follow,
Hardly knowing where we tread,
Not so swift of wing the swallow,
As the heart by fancy led!

Heeds she aught whilst we pursue her,
Arch enchantress, tricksome elf?
Strange the chit should have for wooer
Destiny, Time's second self!

IBID.

THE POET'S CALLING (IMPROMPTU)

BUILDING verse to eternize
Momentary phantasies,
Wooing beauty, goodness, truth,
Never parting with his youth,
By haphazard, grave or gay,
Laughing, weeping, on his way,
Little nothings as he goes
All sufficing for his muse,
Into pearls transmuting tears,
Thus the poet spends his years.
Such the passion and the dream
That the poet best beseem!

IBID.

II

A GREAT LOVE-STORY

MADAME HANSKA

[*Facing p.* 45.

A GREAT LOVE-STORY

"Il faut un peu d'esprit pour aimer."
Lettrès à l'Étrangère, vol. i, p. 143.

I

SURELY the greatest in the world! And in literature the longest.

The first two volumes of Balzac's Letters to his *Étrangère*, the Polish lady who after seventeen years' correspondence became his wife, must contain respectively as much printed matter as *Clarissa Harlowe* and *Sir Charles Grandison*. A third, in preparation, is promised the public about a year hence; a fourth is to follow at some indefinite period. A hundred and sixty-one letters, written between January 1833 and the beginning of 1842, fill the first volume of 575 closely-printed large octavo pages; the second, carrying on the story until the close of 1844, contains eighty-seven missives, filling fewer pages by a hundred. When the collection is complete, these famous love-letters will dwarf any others in existence. By comparison, the immortal outpourings of Mlle. de l'Espinasse, the equally famous *Lettres d'amour* of Mirabeau are mere booklets, anthologies for the pocket. The Balzac love-letters will require as many shelves as the Balzac literature!

Was ever, indeed, such a monument raised to a woman? Compared to this tribute in paper and ink, the tomb of Cecilia Metella sinks into insignificance, mausoleums raised to Egyptian queens are mere

bagatelles. And not one, but a dozen circumstances render Balzac's *Lettres à l'Étrangère* unique in interest. In the first place, for many years the correspondence was clandestine. Again, the transmission of letters to and from France and a remote corner of Russian Poland was beset with other difficulties. On the lover's part, letters written after eighteen hours' literary labour were often delayed by cost of postage. The lady belonged to the Polish nobility, and although immensely rich could always get her own missives franked, but they had to be dispatched surreptitiously. In winter, moreover, the six miles of steppes lying between her chateau and the nearest post-house would often be impassable even to a mounted Cossack.

Every feature, indeed, of this almost interminable courtship on paper is romantic in the extreme.

The sun-king, as that arch autocrat and shameless voluptuary, Louis XIV, was called, fell in love not with Madame de Maintenon's self, for he had not as yet seen her, but with her epistolary charm. After similar fashion was magnetized the author of the *Comédie Humaine*. For months, nay, a year and a half before seeing the object of his idolatry, Balzac's passionate, almost frenzied love-making on paper went on. Opening with a *pianissimo*, we soon reach a *con multa espressione*, a *crescendo*, a *molto furore* quickly following. Every musical term, adjectival, substantival, adverbial, occurs to us as we read the thousand and odd pages of the two volumes. And, carried away by the witchery of a romantic attachment, the laborious novel-writer here lets the pen do with him as he will.

Balzac, and none knew the fact better than himself, was no stylist. He was utterly without the peculiarly French gift of perfect expression. Too large, far too generous for jealousy, we learn that he envied his friend Gautier's ravishing prose. A sentence would be sometimes gone over by him seven times, his manuscripts were veritable palimpsests, his proofs, corrected, re-corrected and re-corrected again, being the despair of compositors, and diminished his profits by thousands of pounds. Yet long-windedness, reiterations, inelegancies abound. Judging from results, we should suppose that for style Balzac cared not a gry. Rhythm—in Michelet's opinion, the corner-stone, the crown of style—is absent. So careless, indeed, was Balzac that in citing a foreign word, the English, my dear, he did not take the trouble to look at a dictionary, and "dee" for "dear" remains in *Le Lys dans la Vallée* to this day.

But the letters, notes and postscripts dashed off to his adored, one may almost say deified *Étrangère*, have often the charm and grace of spontaneity, also a poetic turn absent from his masterpieces. That all have escaped destruction is a fact for which lovers of Balzac and psychologists generally cannot be too grateful. No more remarkable human document exists.

II

The story of Balzac's life has been so agreeably told for English readers [1] that I will only glance at a few leading and elucidatory facts.

Honoré de Balzac was of peasant birth; his father was born in the parish of Saint-Martin de Canezac, and was there registered as Bernard François Balssa, son of à labourer. How it came about that the patronymic was changed and that the novelist regarded the particle as his by right of ancestry remains mysterious. "My father was quite within his rights," he wrote proudly and much to the amusement of his contemporaries, "having on this subject consulted the Archives."

The baptismal register preserved in the little Languedocian village proves the contrary, and that Balzac adds another name to Alphonse Karr's interesting catalogue of illustrious peasants.[2] Instead of belonging to the aristocratic Auvergnat house from which in the sixteenth century arose Jean Louis de Balzac, one of the earliest masters of French prose, his name-sake came of homelier stock, the right to nobility being earned by his pen.

Balzac was no fetish, no idol, as is the French child of to-day. One of four, two sisters and a brother, his father being a self-centred, whimsical and impractical man with literary ambitions, and his mother somewhat hard of nature and given to favouritism, the boy's early years recall David Copperfield

[1] *The Life of Balzac*, by Mary F. Sandars. Murray, 1904.
[2] *Paysans Illustres, Plutarque des Campagne.* Paris, 1838.

and other tragic childhoods on record. Balzac *père*, or, as we should say, Balzac senior, held an official position of respectability. Means do not seem to have been straitened, but the great man to be was apparently that unfortunate being, a child in the way. Imagine a sensitive, affectionate boy of eight sent to a prison-like school kept by priests, no woman as matron, there kept for six whole years without a single day spent beyond its precincts, by fits of idleness and wayward moods incurring the ferule, the dark cell and other barbarous punishments. School life over, he was forced into a routine odious to him, the dead-alive atmosphere of a lawyer's office; thence, after a year and a half, transferred to a notary's, finally gaining his freedom and his heart's desire. On reaching majority, but not without sharp contention, he was allowed to try his fortunes as an author. Henceforth till he died in his prime, physically and mentally a wreck, much, it is to be feared, broken-hearted also, his life was a tragedy. No narrative in the ironically called *Comédie Humaine* exceeds it in illusion and gloom. No biography was ever half so romantic or half so depressing.

Who, as he reads, can help recalling that wondrous story of Maroof in the *Arabian Nights*, the penniless wanderer with the formula "Abundance" ever on his lips?

In worse case than the oriental cobbler wooing a princess, promising camel-loads of gems and gold, Balzac, hunted down by creditors, perpetually in danger of arrest, revelled in phantasmal wealth. Never for a single moment of his literary career was

he solvent. Only for occasional and brief intervals was he, in mariner's phrase, "luffed up in the lulls" like a ship in a storm. Glimpses he caught of the Palace Beautiful, the Delectable Mountains, the delicate plain called Ease, and the land of Beulah, but, unlike Bunyan's pilgrim, ever remaining burdened as when he set out.

"Was ever poet so trusted before?" exclaimed Dr. Johnson, on learning of poor Goldie's indebtedness, the author of the immortal *Vicar* owing a thousand pounds at his death. What must the sage have thought of Balzac's thousands owed, bills, pledges, mortgaged brains, and the rest? Little wonder that the question of money dwarfs every other throughout his novels.

III

The ten years following are one continuous record of the most extravagant hopes and the most crushing disappointments, sisterly affection, romantic attachments and literary fellowship affording help and consolation. In his devoted sister Laure he had a tender confidante and trusty counsellor, in Mme. de Berny, so-called the *Dilecta*,[1] he found closest sympathy and intellectual stimulant, also material support, and in the "good, sound, household common-sense" of the excellent Mme. Carraud, another unfailing friend. Among early associates of his own set were Théophile Gautier, Émile de Girardin, Jules Sandeau, and other men of letters more or less famous, at least

[1] As this charming lady was ever called by her adorer. A book concerning her has lately appeared in Paris, *La dilecta de Balzac.*

before the world, in their day. To set against such advantages and the audition of such lecturers as Guizot, Cousin and Villemain, also the sight of Talma in *Cinna* and the run of the great Paris libraries, came disaster after disaster.

First of all fell the kind of card-house raised by most literary aspirants. Arch-El Doradist from the first, firmly convinced of his dramatic genius, Balzac produced an historic play called *Cromwell.* The solemn reading by himself before his family and friends fell flat, and evoked from an authority consulted later, the verdict—the young author was fitted for any other profession but literature. Undismayed, Balzac betook himself to novel-writing, not as yet, in the words of Tristram Shandy, "to be famous, but to be fed." He wrote dozens of novels, most of which are now forgotten, receiving for these sums varying from a few hundred to a thousand francs, and often paid by bills at long dates. Between the years 1821 and 1824 no less than thirty-one volumes were written, besides pamphlets, on political and historic subjects. In the last-named year it really seemed as if fortune had knocked at his door, and that his visions of oriental wealth and splendour were all but realized.

Again and again Balzac averred that the two ambitions of his life were to become famous and to be loved. But a passion dominating these was his passion for wealth, for a bottomless purse wherewith to outshine Haroun-el-Raschid himself. As a lawyer's clerk he had shown exceptional ability, and for his misfortune a well-meaning family friend bethought himself that the writing and publishing of

books must prove profitable in association. The business started on capital supplied by this friend and his family proving a dire failure, more money was borrowed, and with hopes unabated Balzac restarted life as a printer and type-founder. A second time bankruptcy stared him in the face, and although the bankrupt was no longer pilloried with the green cap on his head before the Bourse or Exchange as during Napoleon's time, he was still regarded, which indeed is the case now-a-days, next door to a criminal. Money was scraped up, family honour escaped stigma, Balzac, now aged twenty-nine, finding himself a debtor to the extent of four thousand pounds, first fetter of the ever-lengthening chain dragging him down till the end. The next few years brought him recognition, soon developing into fame, a romantic love-affair or two, squabbles innumerable with printers, publishers and editors, and occasional glimpses of prosperity. The years 1829–1832 gave the world *La Peau de Chagrin*, this *chef-d'œuvre* one of almost countless works. When we learn that he wrote from two o'clock in the morning till six, from nine till noon, and, after a light breakfast, from one till six sat at his desk correcting proofs, we can understand how in a single year were produced seventy works, novels and essays.

What seems less comprehensible is the labour he would occasionally spend in construction, sometimes a whole night on a single sentence. Boileau, who wrote *Je cherche et je sue*, "I seek and I sweat," for the one word wanted, the right word, the equally laborious Flaubert, whose style is impeccable, attained their object, but with Balzac the toil was

wasted. What, indeed, does a great novelist want with style! Our own Sir Walter, our equally beloved Dickens, for instance—would the polish of a Pater, the brilliance of a De Quincey, have raised them by the thousandth part of an inch?

All this while Maroof's emulator was reiterating that delusive word, his eyes looking for the camel-loads of treasure so slow to come. Utterly impractical and stone-blind to results, he indulged in luxuries that would be ludicrous were his life-story less tragic. Thus in 1830 we read here of horses, grooms, princely banquets, and other extravagances, there of not having the wherewithal for a dinner! From this time, too, he began the ruinous habit of drawing bills, in order to satisfy his more importunate creditors. And the more he owed and the greater grew the craving for splendour, the more desperately he worked. Indeed, the crowning marvel of this marvellous career consists in the fact that he had not worn out alike iron frame and adamantine brain before destiny came disguised as a letter.

IV

It was on the 28th of February, 1833, that Balzac, then in Dante's "midway of this our mortal life," and in the aurora of European fame, received his first note from *l'Étrangère*.

The talismanic charm of that missive will never be textually known, Madame Hanska's letters, one and all, having been destroyed. But talismanic it must have been. The author of *La Peau de Chagrin*

was now constantly receiving epistles from admirers or critics of the other, the letter-writing sex. Why, then, should one especial sheet have wrought such a spell? Was it the fact of remoteness, that the envelope had traversed Europe? Was it the delicately worded suggestion of romance to come? Or did fastidious handwriting, choice paper, scented wax, above all, the impression of a coronet, work the witchery?

"To be famous and to be loved"; thus again and again to his sister and other confidants Balzac had summed up his ambition. But the woman who loved him must not only be spirited, intellectual, beautiful, she must come of good birth, possess the indispensable attraction of noble carriage, refined manners and social distinctions.

All we know is that from the day of reception a star arose in this man's life on which henceforth his hopes, dreams and aspirations were ever fixed. It seems as if great geniuses never loved but once. Sir Walter could never banish from memory the love of his youth. Fleckless was his domestic career, a model was he ever of fireside virtues; yet we learn that the white-haired, broken-down old man would sit down and poetize the romance of early days, "the barb that rankles in the heart."

Byron, too, in that *Last Phase*,[1] lately so well recounted by a judicial enthusiast, if the phrase will pass, remained true to one memory. The adored image of Mary Chaworth flitted before him as he lay dying in a wretched hovel of Missolonghi, final stage of a moral ascension, a noble, an annealing

[1] By R. Edgecombe. Murray, 1909.

page that may well put to shame his immaculately respectable detractors.

The Polish *châtelaine* was somewhat younger than Balzac. The portrait affixed to the French edition of the letters represents her as a full-blown beauty, exceptionally intelligent, at the same time sensuous, self-conscious and romantic. The bust gives a pleasanter impression. Wife of a rural magnate and millionaire almost double her age and with whom she had little in common, existence in the drearily situated chateau must have been dull enough but for two distractions : the education of an adored little daughter and reading. For upwards of a century French literature had been assiduously cultivated in the land as yet without a literature of its own. We can easily conceive how the works of a wholly new and most original novelist would be welcomed at Wierzchownia. The correspondence came about in this wise. Balzac had written *La physiologie du Mariage*. With many of his women admirers, Mme. Hanska took umbrage at the tone of this work, and her note contained an expostulation, as well as much warmly expressed praise. Why would he give cruel portraiture of her sex instead of worthier ideals, as depicted in the *Scènes de la Vie Privée?*

This first letter from the muse of the Ukraine reached Balzac through his publisher, Gosselin, rather one of his manifold publishers, for their name was legion.

Naturally, on Mme. Hanska's part great caution would be necessary. Ready as was the great lady to rush headlong into a romantic adventure, the wife

of a Polish nobleman could not openly correspond with a famous French author, an author, moreover, of works deemed scandalous.

Throughout this history the conviction is forced upon us that much as his *Étrangère* may have loved Balzac, or rather the love of Balzac, she loved rank more. The lodestar of his own horizon never paled. His passion gathered intensity as the long, weary years of waiting dragged on. In the case of the *châtelaine*, wife and adoring mother it was otherwise. From the first, enthusiasm, affection, love, call it what we will, came second; far outstripping romance stood maternal devotion. And here, as it was with Madame de Sévigné, alike intellectually and warmth of feeling, the daughter could not for a moment be compared to the mother.

V

The first letter, dated January 1833, only, like its successors, a very long one, began and ended with the accustomed formalities, "Madame" and "respectful homage." But how much Balzac's interest had been excited by his unknown correspondent's initiative the following highly poetic passage shows—

"Maybe you will never receive another line from me, and that the friendship you have awakened is doomed to perish like a lightning-blasted flower of the woodlands. Rest assured, anyhow, that this friendship is warm and sincere, and that you are respected and adored, as every woman would wish to be by one whose heart is youthful and uncon-

taminated. Have you not shed perfume on my hours? Do I not owe you the word of encouragement that is as a drop of water in the desert?"

The second letter, following the other during the same month, becomes quite confidential, and ends with the dithyrambic—

"Adieu; had not my rose faded I would have sent you a petal. Were you less of a fay, less wayward, less mysterious, I would say—write to me often."

The third missive, written a month later, is openly lover-like. He writes—

"If you only knew with what avidity an unsought, solitary soul seizes upon a true affection! I love you, unknown one, and this so strange thing is but the natural outcome of an empty, unhappy life, a life filled only with ideas, its misfortunes alleviated by dreamed-of joys. To myself, if to any one in the world, should such an adventure happen. I am like some prisoner hearing in his cell a sweet, far-off woman's voice. The influence of that voice possesses his entire being. After long hours devoted to reverie and hope, after imaginary journeys in search of the young, beautiful dream-woman, to find her would be joy beyond mortal endurance. All this you may look upon as madness, but it is the truth, and more than the truth. What if heart, imagination and romantic passion are given in my works far short of the writer's passion and romance! No one is more wedded than myself to the poetry of sentiment."

The fourth very long letter, written after several weeks' interval, ends with the words—

"I have confided to you my life-story, which is as much as to say, mind, heart, soul are yours."

And in the fifth occurs the following—

"Ah! if you only knew how a secret passion vivifies, renders exultant one's existence!"

But the dream-woman of the Ukraine knew this only too well. With her, passion might be transient whilst it lasted, the intoxication possessed her entire being no less than was the case with her lover. We divine from his own letters how the flame was fanned by the lady's, not one of which, unfortunately, can be otherwise appraised.

A striking feature of the correspondence is the nonchalance displayed by both writers. Mme. Hanska's letters reached Balzac by roundabout ways and under the utmost secrecy. Her lover's long missives were also dispatched and delivered with caution. But neither the one nor the other seem to have felt a qualm of conscience. As far as we learn, Balzac's adored Eve—her real name was Evelina—had no reason to complain of her husband, except that he was naturally dull and double her age. She was outwardly a rigid Catholic, and literally worshipped her plain, giggling nonentity of a daughter. And she stood high in worldly esteem. Yet this sentimental acquaintance on paper was soon allowed to stand before wifely, motherly and social duty. For many years love of Balzac, rather his love for herself, rendered exuberant a hitherto unsatisfying life. We must believe that when, later, again and again the lover praised her "splendid forehead," he did not exaggerate, and that her recog-

nition of his genius and sympathy with his aims betokened an intellect above the average.

Strange to say, but for the lady's initiative the pair might never have met, a contingency, *certes*, happier for both! A few months later of this year, to Balzac's great joy, Mme. Hanska announced her forthcoming trip to Switzerland. Accompanied by her husband, daughter and governess, she should be at Neuchâtel towards the close of the summer.

A letter from him, dated end of August, he writes thus: "Oh! beloved Evelina, a thousand blessings for this gift of your love. You have no idea with what fidelity I love you, as yet unknown, yet known of the soul. . . ."

And farther on, after a gentle remonstrance concerning her jealousy of his *dilecta*, "a second mother, a woman of fifty-eight who has proved my guardian angel," he adds: "*Una fides*, yes, angel of my adoration, one love only, one single love is yours. Be joyous, then, beloved; your name means my entire life, for you I am ready to suffer the worst."

Wild and whirling words as such utterances may sound, not a syllable of the last sentence was belied. Throughout the remaining years of his career, Mme. Hanska's name meant all in all to him; for her sake he did indeed suffer the worst.

VI

The Neuchâtel meeting did not end after the fashion of Bret Harte's delightful story. In *The*

Sappho of Green Springs he describes how a city editor seeks his unknown muse, a poetess living in some remote country village. On reaching the little station and inquiring his way to the lady's house of a lad "freckled as a thrush's egg," he is taken aback by the reply, "Lor, that's my ma!" The sweet singer was a middle-aged, careworn housewife whose knack at verse-writing helped the pot to boil.

Quite otherwise was it in Balzac's case, although the lady's confidences to her too obsequious Swiss governess may have told another story.

On a certain September afternoon, then, the pair met in a walk overlooking the lake, both, we may be sure, with beating hearts.

What was Balzac's ravishment to behold the living embodiment of his dreams, a handsome, aristocratic, exquisitely dressed lady—he would not have been a Frenchman had he passed by the least little perfection of toilette—birth and breeding betokened by stately carriage, no ideal characteristic wanting!

Probably Balzac's wonderful eyes prevented anything like a crushing disillusion, and very soon his equally enchanting tongue would awaken enthusiasm matching his own. Thickset, inclined to corpulence, his somewhat Napoleonic features marred by an extraordinarily heavy chin—has not some one written of Balzac's "dewlap"?—carelessly, shabbily habited, the outward man could hardly prove attractive.

But the meeting ended in rapture, kisses and interchange of lovers' vows. To his sister and confidante the great novelist wrote of all these things, of his adored one's raven locks, fine olive com-

plexion and pretty hands. He wrote also with happy unconcern of having made M. de Hanska's acquaintance. Why the particle is never used in citing the lady's name we do not know.

A pathetic figure is that of the elderly, unendowed, *ennuyé* and easily beguiled Polish gentleman. Balzac's conversational powers, maybe a little well-timed flattery, soon rendered him a great favourite of the discounted husband. Indeed when, later on, two burning love-letters accidentally fell into his hands, quite unsuspectingly he accepted the explanation of writer and recipient. The matter had been a joke, pure and simple!

Nevertheless, the utmost precautions were always taken regarding the transmission of letters. Again and again Balzac urged care. Soon after the meeting he writes: "Oh! angel mine, it is only through letters that misfortunes happen. On my knees, I implore you, have some sure hiding-place, some cave, some mine-like depositary for these witnesses of our love. So order things that not even a momentary disquietude on this account can trouble you."

The four days at Neuchâtel had been a brief respite from piled-up anxieties, law-suits, quarrels, literary disappointments, debts, duns and stultifying impecuniosity.

Henceforth Balzac journalizes to his beloved. The most fervent and ofttimes poetically expressed declarations being followed by distressing confidences. Thus, immediately after "the beautiful days at Aranjuez," he writes—

"Ah, when shall I possess thy beloved portrait? If mounted, let it be placed between enamel plates

no thicker than a five-franc piece, for I would have it perpetually next my heart. It will become my talisman, so placed, the source of strength and courage."

A fortnight later she receives these dreary details—

"Money is an appalling thing. By hook or by crook I must scrape up four thousand francs, in order to get peace and quiet" (the money due was an indemnity to one of his numerous publishers for broken promises), "and here I am obliged to obtain loans on my books and belongings. Ten thousand francs more must be got somehow six weeks hence, besides the three thousand I owe my mother. Such things are enough to drive one mad, and all the while what I need for composition and work is the utmost calm and complete forgetfulness."

Three days later, at five o'clock in the morning, he writes in a strain alternating between hope and despair—

"I have just sent Mame" (the publisher before alluded to) "four thousand francs, my last penny. Poor as Job, this week I must find twelve hundred francs, in order to stave off another litigation. Ah! how dear is fame. How difficult mankind render the acquirement of it! No, great men are not to be had cheap. . . ."

Further on he adds: "Heavens! how do business matters engulf time. When I think of all I get through, my manuscripts, proofs, corrections, transactions! But I sleep tranquilly, although I have two thousand four hundred francs due on bonds payable in six days' time. Such is my existence, and such it has been for thirty-four years, not once, how-

ever, being forgotten of Providence. Thus it comes about that I possess unbelievable self-assurance. . . . Now let us no more talk of material affairs. How, for thy sake, do I hunger after wealth! Ah, my sweet Eve, how do I adore thee! We shall meet again soon. Ten days more and I shall have done all that I set myself to do. I shall have published four octavo volumes in a single month. Only love could accomplish such things."

Love, genius and hurly-burly!

For nothing is a greater mistake than to suppose Olympian calm, a sovereign atmosphere for imaginative masterpieces. In "double, double, toil and trouble," in the most desperate circumstances and perpetual hurly-burly have been written the greatest romances of the world, to wit, *Don Quixote*, *The Vicar of Wakefield*, and, to come down to our own times, *David Copperfield* and *Le Cousin Pons*. Does *Wilhelm Meister*, penned in princely opulence and ease, do the well-bred folks so elaborately, one may say mathematically, thought out in the long Meredithian series possess the movingness contained in a page, even a sentence of the foregoing books? No, a thousand times, no. As with the poets, so the romancers must "learn in suffering what they teach in song."

Among the "things" of which Balzac wrote were *Eugénie Grandet* and *Le Médecin de Campagne!*—the most Balzackian and the least Balzackian of his encyclopædic collection.

VII

From that meeting in 1833 until his death, seventeen years later, Balzac belonged to Mme. Hanska: heart, mind, soul were held captive by a passion proof against time, change and piled-up disappointments.

No sooner did he find himself in Paris again than all his energies were bent upon securing another meeting. The Hanska party, doubtless by the lady's arrangement, prolonged their Swiss sojourn, and Balzac determined, if possible, to be with them by Christmas. The principal obstacle, as usual, in the carrying out of his plans was pennilessness, and all is now confided to his "northern star." With equal nonchalance he writes of his desperate circumstances and of his whims. Despite duns, overdue bills, pawned or borrowed plate, he recounts the purchase of curios, regal banquets given by him to literary brethren, and other pet indulgences, as he called them, disclosures that would be grotesque in a history less tragic. The never-failing deep, nay, solemn note of passion running through every page moves rather to tears than hilarity.

"My Eve, my beloved," he writes early in December, "you not only give me courage to support daily difficulties, you enlarge my genius, anyhow you stimulate it. One must love, would one describe the pure, the immense, the proud love of Eugénie Grandet. Ah! my sweet, my benignant, my divine Ève, how terrible is this separation, this inability to confide to you at the close of each day all that I have thought, said, achieved."

On Christmas Day he arrived at Geneva, there spending some weeks, daily, hourly intercourse not hindering correspondence. Here are one or two extracts giving an idea of the rest—

"My beloved, my only life, my only thought, oh, that letter of thine! It is indelibly written on my heart. Fame, vanity, self-love, literature, all these are so many vapours on our heaven, swept away by the approach of your footstep twenty times a day."

A few lines lower down such wild utterances are thus modified—

"One force, and one force only, constrains me to accept existence"; that is to say, separation from herself. "WORK. It is this force that subdues the claims of a fiery nature."

Again and again he recurs with much bitterness to the network of indebtedness in which, like Gulliver, he remains a prisoner.

"I would sell my talent for two thousand ducats," he writes. "Then I would follow you like a shadow. Unfortunately I cannot absent myself from Paris without first stopping the mouths of editors and creditors."

Equally behind with regard to these, he owed much to friendly money-lenders, his mother being one, Mme. Hanska being soon included in the number.

Much more than jetty ringlets, full red lips, beaming eyes, a fine brow and reciprocated infatuation must account for Balzac's ever-increasing passion. Of his beloved we have only a one-sided portrayal. Quite certain it is that no ordinary woman could have captivated such a man. A second Cleopatra in his

eyes, time could not wither her, nor custom stale her infinite variety. Her literary taste and intuition, too, are evidenced by his confidences regarding each new work and his anxiety for her opinion.

During this stay at Geneva a definite promise was made by Mme. Hanska that if she became a widow she would marry him, the motto adopted by both being: *Adoremus in æternum.* And all the while, as before, no touch of self-reproach apparently disturbed the intoxicated pair.

Balzac was now made one of the family, and was especially welcomed by the elderly, not easily amused Polish Count, who presented him with a magnificent malachite inkstand. We are told that Balzac was a charming table-talker and story-teller, gay, brimming over with spirits and drollery, a report difficult to believe, seeing the unmitigated, pitiless pessimism of his works.

Be this as it may, one great obstacle in the lovers' way was now removed. M. de Hanska unsuspectingly revelled in the society of his wife's adorer, whilst, on his side, Balzac threw himself heart and soul into the family concerns. Eve's adored child, the little Countess Anna, as she is always called, became an object of the greatest interest in his eyes, and even her Swiss governess was henceforth remembered in his letters. The second spell of intercourse and love-making, as before, only rendered Balzac almost frantically impatient for a third. Tied to his desk as a galley-slave to his rowlock—even whilst at Geneva he was busy upon *La Duchesse de Langeais*—he lived in the future. No youthful lover, no expectant bridegroom, could be more

utterly spell-bound, more wrapt up in dreams of dual bliss, a home, an existence spent with the beloved.

In 1834 appeared two famous stories, the charming *Recherche de l'Absolu* and the almost unhuman —if the good old word is permissible—*Le Père Goriot*. Throughout the next seventeen months the correspondence went on apace, Balzac confiding everything to his wife-to-be, as he now regarded her. In a long letter, dated October, he writes—

"As to my joys, they are innocent enough. Here they are: a renovated cabinet, a walking-stick of which all Paris is gossiping" (this was the famous stick the handle of which was inlaid with turquoise), "a divine opera-glass, made for me by the optician of the Observatoire; besides these, gold buttons for my blue coat, buttons chased by fairy-like hands. A man carrying a cane worthy of Louis XIV himself could not possibly wear vulgar pinchbeck buttons. Such innocent whimsicalities make me pass off for a millionaire. For a month I have not been to the opera. I have, I believe, a box at the *Bouffons*" (a theatre). "But just think for a moment, jewelled walking-sticks, engraved gold buttons, opera-glasses are my only distractions! Do not, therefore, blame me on the account of these things."

In the same letter he says that he is wearing the monk's dress familiar to her, and that he is hidden from sight. Hiding from somebody, indeed, he always was, now, like Dick Swiveller, from duns, now from gendarmes on account of resisting military service. It was not until May 1835 that he started for Vienna, the appointed meeting-place, travelling,

prince-like, in a private post-carriage, and carrying with him the half-finished *Lys dans la Vallée*, to Mme. Hanska's intense vexation working on it twelve hours a day.

VIII

The next few years are a record of splendid triumphs, extravagant dreams, law-suits, constant indebtedness, galling disillusions, and of equally constant attachment.

Money now flowed in like water, and like water flowed away. Not content with being, as Barbey d'Aurévilly expressed it, "a literary Napoleon without a Waterloo," all the while Balzac was perpetually relegating fiction to a secondary place, seeking showers of gold and world-wide renown in other fields.

Thus, after reading of Sardinian silver-mines in Tacitus, he scraped up necessary funds and set out for the island, unfortunately disclosing his schemes of a mining company to a wily Italian. When, after considerable delays on the way and five days' tossing in a fishing-boat, he reached his destination, it was to find that he had been forestalled! His charming and sympathetic listener, the Genoese merchant, and a Marseilles company had already obtained a concession.

Balzac always took such discomfitures philosophically, and, although clamoured for by duns and editors in Paris, he made the most of his holiday, visiting, amongst other places, Corsica, which

naturally for him possessed a special interest. In a letter to Mme. Hanska, dated March 26, 1838, occurs the following curious details—

"Yesterday I visited the home in which Napoleon was born, a poor cabin. And I there obtained the rectification of several errors. His father was not a process-server, as has been often falsely stated, but a very rich peasant. Also I learned that on Napoleon's return from Egypt, when at Ajaccio, instead of being received with acclamations and accorded a triumph, a price was put upon his head, and he was fired at. He owed his life to the devotion of a poor countryman, who carried him off to the mountains. All this I learned from the nephew of the mayor who outlawed him. Made First Consul, Napoleon begged his preserver to demand a favour. The peasant asked for one of the Bonaparte farms, worth a million francs, which he obtained, and his descendants to-day are among the richest folks in the island."

Stories gathered on the way, notes archæological, artistic, political, picturesque, particulars of expenses and accommodation, all these are jotted down to his muse of the Ukraine. Day by day the diary, as it may be called, is resumed.

The letter just quoted ends thus—

"I am so worn out by the struggles which I have confided to you that unless they soon come to an end I shall succumb. Ten years of labour have been fruitless; what they have certainly brought are calumny, slander and litigation. With regard to the latter, you write the sweetest things to me imaginable. I repeat, a man can only possess a certain portion of

endurance, courage and hope, and my own is exhausted. You do not fathom the depth of my sufferings. I ought not, I cannot disclose everything to you. All that I have to do now is to seek repose. I have made several plans of acquiring a fortune; if the first fails, then I try the second; if it all come to naught, I fall back upon my pen, which, meantime, will not have been laid aside."

Ever a pertinently inquisitive traveller, Balzac on his journeys is always entertaining, and tells us something about almost everything, no detail of interest escaping that myriad-faceted intellect.

"The public library of Ajaccio," he writes a few days further on, "contains absolutely nothing. I have just re-read *Clarissa Harlowe*, and for the first time have read *Pamela* and *Grandison*, both of which I found horribly tedious and stupid. What a destiny was that of Cervantes, Richardson and also Sterne, each the author of a single book!"

But are not all the great gods in literature similarly fated, their names inevitably linked with a single *chef-d'œuvre*, a sovereign masterpiece, around this shining their lesser works as the satellites of a planet? As it is quite unlikely that Balzac carried books with him on his travels, the entry is highly suggestive. Think of Richardson's novels finding their way to Corsica, one of the most beautiful countries in the world, but as yet only semi-civilized, so at least Balzac describes it in 1838. Poor Richardson! How would a vision of such fame have made his cup to overflow!

One dream of millions coming to naught, the undaunted Utopian threw himself heart and soul

into another. With pockets turned inside out, like Maroof of Arabian story, Balzac's cry now was ever: Abundance, abundance, and ever more abundance.

Some time before he had purchased, or rather acquired, a plot of ground at Ville d'Avray, five miles from Paris, and thereon built that famous house without a staircase, and the wall which was perpetually falling down. The history of Les Jardies long made the Parisians merry, and would, indeed, admirably suit Gilbertian opera.

This acre of land, then a mere waste, was in part to be covered with glass-houses for the culture of pine-apples. Like another hero of the *Arabian Nights*, Balzac sat down and with mathematical precision calculated his profits. Counting on the warmth of the soil, he made certain that pine-apples could be easily reared and sold at five francs apiece, instead of the twenty charged in Paris. Deducting expenses, he saw himself the happy pocketer of £16,000 a year—"and this without writing a page," he confided to his friend Théophile Gautier. So convinced was he of success, that he even looked about for suitable business premises, in other words, a shop in Paris, to be gorgeously decorated and have the sign: *Ananas des Jardies*.

Thus glowingly, a few weeks after his Sardinian discomfiture, he pictures his future to Mme. Hanska—

"For ten sous and in ten minutes from this place I can reach the Madeleine, that is to say, the heart of Paris! Thanks to this circumstance, the purchase of Les Jardies can never turn out a bit of folly, and its value will be enormous. Nothing is as yet planted

on my acre of ground, but in the coming autumn we shall turn it into a corner of Eden. In Paris and in the environs everything is to be had for money; thus I can procure magnolias of twenty years' growth, lime-trees of sixteen, poplars of twelve, birch-trees, etc., brought hither with their roots and clods in baskets. Ah! how admirable is such civilization! Here I shall remain till my fortune is made, and so pleased am I with the place that, when I have purchased repose, here my days will end, hopes and ambitions sent to the right-about. Failure after failure have told upon my character—upon my heart; no, thence doth hope perpetually spring. A horse to ride, plenty for the table, daily needs assured, such is the little lot I crave under the sun—a lot acquired and planned, but not paid for—as I pay interest on borrowed money instead of rent. Here I am at home, delivered from importunate landlords. As to the rest, my debts and pecuniary worries are what they were. I gather courage in reducing my wants to the minimum. Adieu, *cara*. I will chat on paper with you again during the week. Adieu, dear."

Airily as for the moment Balzac might indulge in dreams with which his genius had nothing to do, it was ever with him, "The play's the thing." Throughout his career, and after repeated checks, a successful play topped other castle-building, and in the next letter we read—

"My salvation lies in the drama. A single success will bring me £4000. Two successes would render me solvent, and two successes, after all, what are they but a matter of intelligence and hard work?"

IX

In January 1842, just upon ten years after Balzac's first letter from *l'Étrangère*, a black-sealed envelope was put into his hands. The missive announced fateful news, what must, indeed, have seemed the last word of destiny.

M. de Hanska was dead, his death having occurred several weeks before. Balzac immediately replied, the following extracts from his very long letter giving the spirit of the whole. Under similar circumstances no man could have expressed himself with more pathos, dignity and uprightness. Every line does the writer honour. It is quite evident that by this time, maybe long before, the great lady of the Ukraine had got the better of passion and romance, and also, quite naturally, had been taken aback, even horrified by her lover's revelations. To be the Egeria, the confidante of a famous writer was one thing, to share the fortunes of a Bohemian and hunted-down debtor was another. Her letter, therefore, as we gather from Balzac's answer, did not touch upon his dreamed-of future, and made no allusion to oft-reiterated vows and declarations. The one obstacle to union, as he had fondly hoped, was gone. Yet she seemed hardly less separated from him than before.

"With regard to myself, my adored," he writes, "although this event renders attainable all that I have passionately desired for just upon ten years, before God and yourself I can aver this on my own behalf. Never for a single moment, and under the most cruel circumstances, have I lacked submission. Never have

I polluted my soul with unworthy wishes. Involuntary inspirations no one can help. Often and often have I said to myself : how easy were life with *her !* Without hope, neither faith, courage, nor all that means self, could be sustained. . . . I know you too well, or believe that I know you too well, to lose faith in you for a single moment, and often, to my cost, I have feared that it was not the same with yourself. Since our first meeting you have been my very life. Let me assure you of this, after, indeed, having proved it, you alone have supported me through my wretched struggles."

Then he repeats the oft-told and, alas ! invariably chimerical tale of speedy success and release from debt.

" I have worked with double force in order to meet you this year, and now see my way clear. Since I last wrote I have only spared two hours nightly for sleep. Besides going on with the novels in hand and contributing articles to journals, I have written two five-act plays, one of which is to be rehearsed at the Odéon to-morrow. To sum up, another year and a half of work like the last I was hoping would free me from crushing obligations and save my Jardies. This intermittent work has for five years made a hermit of me. Now, what I am most anxious about is to be able to show my title to a parliamentary candidature.[1] Lamartine has a borough at my disposal and a seat in the Chamber ! Therein lies our future. . . . Think you that on my own account I would

[1] In order to present oneself it was necessary to prove the payment of a certain amount of taxes.

seek such distinction? Oh! I am perhaps unjust, but if so, it is my heart that is to blame. Vainly in your letter I sought for two little words, two little words for him who has never spent ten minutes by his desk without looking at the picture of your home on the opposite wall."

Then, after passionately expressed solicitude about her health and domestic affairs, comes another and still more moving appeal—

"Dear, you have put so many things in your note having no reference whatever to myself. But I do expect an answer to this; you have now had time for reflecting, for thinking of the six years spent in Paris without seeing you. Oh, tell me that henceforth your existence belongs to me, that we are now to be happy, no cloud on our horizon possible! Oh! how often, in the midst of bitterest disillusions, struggles and sorrows, I have glanced northward, for me, an aurora, peace and happiness!"

An aurora, peace, happiness? In Balzac's case these were destined to remain so many symbols, mere figures of speech. The ten years' courtship by letter, as this first volume of the *Lettres à l'Étrangère* shows us, had been one prolonged struggle.

And now, immediately after such tremendous news, came another and yet a deadlier dramatic fiasco. The play which was to free him from debt, procure him a seat in the Chamber, and, in fine, render possible fireside happiness with his beloved Eve, fell flat. For nineteen nights only, and after many excisions and suppressions, *Quinola* ran at the Odéon. With the usual irony we find in literary

biography a few years after Balzac's death, the play was revived at the Vaudeville, and proved an unqualified success.

X

The second volume of the correspondence, which is almost as bulky as the last, opens on January 11, 1842, and closes just two years later. During the space of twice twelve months, therefore, Balzac wrote very nearly as many pages to Mme. Hanska as during the previous decade. Want of frankness, silence, shilly-shally might damp his hopes; not for a single second could they subdue unchangeable, ever deeper passion. Painful conviction, indeed, he refused to accept, preferring the blindness of hoping against hope.

Naturally enough, he at once entreated permission to set out for the Ukraine, and, naturally enough, the newly-made widow reluctated. Conventionalities stood in the way. At least a year must elapse, she said, before he could with propriety meet her, and then it could not be in her own home, the rendezvous selected being St. Petersburg.

These letters are of the deepest psychological as well as biographical interest. Now confining himself to business matters, the lady's as well as his own, now indulging in philosophic dissertation, between whiles Balzac becomes a poet. Many passages are veritable lyrics in prose, and lyrics passionate as any poured out by Byron or Musset. Here is an

exquisite passage; after reiterating his entire reliance on her constancy, he writes—

"In human tenderness, as in Alpine scenery, there is ever a sovereign summit, immaculate, eterne, austere. Below such an altitude lie flowery spots, valleys beautified with changeful seasons, and these may be compared to the passing joys of love and devotion. But that Jungfrau towering above symbolizes the link, the completion of love. Friendship incapable of change is the aliment of those riches on a lower level, riches all the more precious because they are certain to be renewed. Thus is this love of mine based upon, vivified by the faithful friendship of ten years."

Later in the same letter he adds—

"Alas! angel mine, it was no great matter I asked of my Eve; all I wanted to know was this: that in eighteen months, nay, in two years' time we may be happy together. I only craved the dual word and a date. With these you would have imparted strength and energy somewhat flagging in a never-ending conflict."

In a quickly succeeding letter he writes—

"A man loves—or he does not. For myself, I love; fortune or poverty, either would be supportable by your side. . . . I would willingly *become Russian*, naturalize myself as a Russian, provided you see no objection to the step, and personally demand the Czar's permission to marry you. Let me have your views. . . . Remember that I love you more than ever."

Unbelievable as it seems, no Russian subject in

the nineteenth century could marry and remove personal effects or investments from the country without imperial sanction.

Mme. Hanska was the impersonation of conventionality and worldly wisdom. She was enormously rich, and was wrapt up, heart and soul, in her daughter Anna, now a giddy and apparently—except in Balzac's eyes—unattractive young lady emerging from the schoolroom. After much zigzaggery on paper, his muse of the Ukraine fixes the date and place of rendezvous. On July 17, 1843, the much-travelled Balzac reached St. Petersburg. Much travelled he certainly was; perhaps no literary man of his epoch had so little of the French stay-at-homeness about him, and this is one of his numerous un-French characteristics.

Lodged, uncomfortably enough, close to Mme. Hanska's private hotel in a fashionable quarter, seeing his adored mistress daily, hourly, the correspondence went on, and, curiously enough, in a diary belonging to the lady he wrote the following: "About midday, July 17, Polish, *i. e.* Russian style, I had the happiness of once more seeing and paying my respects to my dear Countess Eve in her Hôtel Kontarzoff. After seven years' separation I found her young and beautiful as before, the interval having been spent by her amid endless wastes of cornland, by myself in that vast, peopled desert called Paris. She received me as an old friend, whilst to me the long parting recalled cold, unhappy, joyless hours. Ten years have passed since we first met, and, contrary to general experience, with years,

the sorrows of absence and piled-up disappointments, my feelings for her have but deepened. We cannot recreate affection nor call back time. Petersburg, September 2, 1843."

The guardedness of this entry is significant. Proud of the great man's friendship, up to a certain point only loyal, Mme. Hanska's album was not wholly for herself. The passage might disarm gossip; at the same time, it was a tribute of which any woman would be proud.

Meantime, whilst within a stone's throw of each other, tender little *billet-doux* were exchanged. Now Balzac informed his *chère minette*, or darling puss, that he was as well as could be expected after a sleepless night in his pestiferous lodgings, now he begs her to send him a stick of sealing-wax, now he asks the loan—it must not be an ill-omened gift—of a penknife, adding a thousand caresses to his *lou-lou adorée*, or duckey-diddums, as we might say in the nursery, or as an amorous bean-feaster might address his lady-love. And so on and so on, for the first time his epistles being signed, "Your Honoré," or "Your *moujic* Honoré." At every step of the homeward journey he wrote passionate love-letters, but if any promise had been made during his stay, it was a vague one. Worldly-wise relations and friends of the rich, high-born *châtelaine* stood between her lover and his hopes, working against him by the sap, raking up stories of his debts—of these Mme. Hanska knew already enough, having often been a creditor—of his Bohemian ways, his extravagances and mad

schemes. Little wonder, therefore, that the longed-for word and date did not come.

The two years' journalizing of this volume but repeats the story told by its predecessor. And what a story! French printing-presses flooded with sombre Balzacs, a piling up of Pelions upon Ossas; in other words, bills, notes of hand and debts—an equally constant projection of wild enterprises and hopes, the nineteenth-century Don Quixote always borne back to the starting-point in an ox-wagon, instead of proudly riding Astolfo's winged chariot; of treasures accumulated but never owned, outdoing those hidden in Monte Cristo's grotto, and of ever-enduring, ever-deepening love. Seven years and more, a second Laban, had he served for an Eve, young, sparkling, romantic, beautiful. Yet another was he to serve for an Eve, now middle-aged, verging, indeed, on elderliness, become practical, worldly-minded, but for him the ideal of a rapturous past. On his dreary way he went, believing in the unbelievable, hoping in the hopeless.

A final word regarding the undignified go-between of this strange history, the Swiss governess. Her name recurs again and again throughout this second volume.

Impressed—so, at least, the story goes—by the long drawn out and elaborate ceremonial of her late employer's funeral, conscience-stricken at the thought of her own double dealing, Mlle. Henrietta Borel entered the Roman Church and took the veil in a Parisian convent. Balzac, who gave her the pet name of Lirette—every one belonging to his be-

loved Eve became a pet—attended the ceremony, and often visited the recluse, who became, as is the case with most converts, devotee of devotees. Quarrelsome by nature, Balzac was ever ready to do a kind act, not only to friends, but to any one in need of his services—witness his benevolence to the somewhat ungrateful Jules Sandeau.

XI

The last letter of the second volume is dated December 28 (1844), and ends in this strain—

"A thousand loves to my pet. Yesterday I broke a bit of the same tooth broken at St. Petersburg, and, as before, in eating salad. What is the significance of such a coincidence?"—Balzac was ever superstitious—"Has anything befallen you? For Heaven's sake, a letter. Adieu, adieu, write all kinds of pretty, tender things. Love thy poor Noré."[1]

That the great Balzac should have a baby name perforce makes us smile.

For the chronicling of the next six years readers must bide their time.

The daily life of Balzac, therefore, during the above-named period, as recorded by himself, for the present remains inaccessible, and that of the two years following, last years of a miraculously preserved life, will ever be a blank. From 1843 to 1848 we have mere repetitions of the same story. One by

[1] The thee and the thou alternate with the more respectful you throughout the entire correspondence.

one Balzac's projects toppled like card-houses. Endeavour after endeavour to obtain the Deputy's scarf and the Immortal's sword[1] failed, and on the same account, his money affairs, or, rather, moneylessness, standing in the way. Drama after drama fell flat, and plans of dramas innumerable came to naught. A scheme for transplanting sixty thousand blocks of Russian oak to France, and thereby rendering him solvent and happy, of course followed suit, and all the while a colossal intellect and a herculean frame were being undermined. Insanely protracted labour, hopes, alike spiritual and material, perpetually deferred, Care, as personified by Spenser, ever at his elbows, plaguing him with "disquiet and heart-fretting pain."

At last, and when it was too late, the one word, if not the date, came from Wierzchownia. Broken down, an old man in middle life, already in the grip of mortal sickness, supercharged with obligations, pecuniary and literary, in September 1847 he set out, as he now believed, to fetch his bride.

His beloved Les Jardies had been sold for a fourth of its cost long before, and a house in the Rue Fortunée, now Rue Balzac, awaited its mistress. Enlarged, sumptuously decorated, chokeful of art treasures, the home belonged to Mme. Hanska, the art treasures supposedly to Balzac; in any case, there they were. Mme. de Balzac's home in Paris would be worthy of the high-born Polish lady.

For a few weeks Balzac lived a charmed life. In the society of his beloved, and amid exhilaratingly

[1] Inconsistently enough, the uniform of the French Academy is semi-military, a sword dangling at the wearer's belt.

novel surroundings, lawsuits, quarrels, importunate editors, etc., were forgotten. The blacksmith Care ceased to disturb his slumbers. But pleasant as might be the palatial proportions of this chateau, agreeable as it was to write home of his delightful suite of rooms—drawing-room, study and bedroom —all somewhat bare but elegantly furnished, enchanting as it was to find himself one of the family, the frolicking Anna, her husband and the rest of the circle evidently delighted with his company, when winter set in, matters wore quite another aspect. So intense was the cold, he wrote home, that alike stoves, fires and furs proved ineffectual. And willy-nilly in February of the following year he found himself compelled to revisit France, at the end of a terrible journey finding Paris torn by Revolution and his own affairs as desperate as ever. Settling these as best he could, seeing that all things were ready for the expected bride, six months later again he started for the Ukraine. A second arctic winter soon did its fatal work. An attack of bronchitis was followed by breakdown upon breakdown, many weeks being spent in bed. The tedium of inert, painful days, the first unoccupied days of his life, were relieved by talks with one and another, the Countess Anna, now a bride of sixteen, and her good-natured husband taking their turns at the bedside. Later, when the party had journeyed to Kiel for the sake of a little gaiety, Anna would visit Balzac before setting out for balls or theatres, amusing him with the sight of her millinery and jewels.

Mme. Hanska doubtless did all in her power

for her suffering guest, but the Russian doctor's remedy of pure lemon-juice, taken twice daily, far from alleviating Balzac's chronic aneurism of the heart, only made matters worse. In June 1849 a terrible attack brought him to death's door; hardly had he recovered from this than he caught what was called Moldavian fever, and the opening months of the following year found him slowly dying.

The last work touched by him was that cruel book, *Les Paysans*, in which, by anticipation, he out-Zola'd Zola, and ran counter to the quite opposite views of peasant life and character described nearly two decades before. *Le Médecin de Campagne* crushingly refutes its predecessor.

We now come to the strangest part of this most tragic romance.

Syren and Sphinx, that rarest combination, sensuous beauty and worldliness linked with a virile intellect, Mme. Hanska will ever remain a psychological problem. For upwards of seven years she had been free. During that period, as at the present juncture, she could have taken the step now suddenly decided upon; easy four or five years ago as to-day had it been to make over her fortune to her daughter, become an annuitant, and by such means obtain the imperial consent to her remarriage with a foreigner; Balzac's involvements were no more serious now than formerly; rich, handsome still, spirited, as Mme. de Balzac she might well have dreamed of queening it in Paris, centre of a brilliant literary circle.

Why, then, such protracted hesitancy, this tardigrade decision?

Was she actuated by self-reproach, magnanimity at the last redeeming worldly considerations, and on his side, heart-chilling delays? Or in marrying a prematurely aged, a worn-out, indeed a stricken man, did she set herself right with another point of conscience, thus annealing a past offence against social and moral laws, putting herself right with her Church and the world?

Be this as it may, things happened so. On March 14, 1850, the marriage took place at the village of Berditchef some miles away, rites being performed by a Count Abbé in the presence of numerous witnesses.

And next day, in strains rapturous as those of a boyish bridegroom, he announced the news. The Countess Eve was now Mme. de Balzac. "Thy brother Honoré having reached the summit of human happiness," was the last word to his favourite sister.

XII

In dramatic horror the climax of this long drawn out love-story is unmatched throughout Balzac fiction. Bride and bridegroom were both in wretched health when, six weeks later, they set out for Paris. Mme. de Balzac had of late suffered so much from rheumatic gout that at times she could neither hold a pen nor walk. Balzac, although dreaming of a compensatory autumn, an aftermath of happiness more than atoning for his troubled, lonely youth and middle age, was in truth a dying man. Both were

wholly unfit for an expedition that might well have daunted all but the hardiest. Between Wierzchownia and Dresden many miles had to be got over by carriage, and at this season of the year the roads, or roads so-called, were often impassable, melted snows having turned them into ruts and morass. Again and again after frightful jerking the vehicle would be blocked, bands of peasants only extricating the unhappy travellers after long delay. Imagine two shivering invalids, the one indeed sick unto death, going through such an ordeal, their six days' drive occupying three weeks. So ill was Balzac that his sight temporarily failed, and he was unable to read or put pen to paper. Madame de Balzac revived at Dresden, the delights of a dazzling city charming away fatigue and ailments; moreover she was evidently far from realizing her companion's condition.

After a few days' rest and, on the lady's part, delightful shopping, the homeward route was continued, Paris being reached just two months and a half later than the wedding day.

It was long past nightfall when the home almost royally fitted up for its mistress came in sight.

We must turn to *Le Cousin Pons* for a prefigurement of the interior, gorgeous descriptions of the *Arabian Nights* here put to shame.

A dining-room in which each piece of furniture was a masterpiece, a drawing-room upholstered in gold damask, with ebony cornices, a library with tortoiseshell and copper shelves, a boudoir elegantly frescoed, on every side displayed "that magnificence of human handicraft" so laboriously yet enthusiastically described in the story.

But the apex of splendour was reached in the gallery, a vast oblong lighted from above and panelled in white and gold, the white mellowed, the gold deepened by time so as not to dim the pictures.

In this palace of art were the collected treasures of a lifetime—choice French and Italian canvases, specimens of the lost Limousin handiwork, of Palissy's marvellous painting in clay, of the deft mediæval carvers in ivory and wood, in fine, all the *bricbracquologie*, as Balzac fantastically calls it, the fruit, again quoting him, of "that genius of admiration" to which he owed perhaps ecstasies and anxieties in equal measure.

Proudly as the carriage drove up must he have noted how scrupulously his orders had been carried out. From roof to basement the façade blazed with light. Flowers could be seen from every window. The entire aspect was of resplendent gala. But what had happened? Vainly the bell was pealed a second, a third, and yet a fourth time. Not a footstep, not a voice was heard, not a shadow flitted across the panes. The dazzlingly lit, garlanded mansion was silent as a tomb. When at length. and after what seemed an interminable interval of suspense to the worn-out, shivering travellers, a locksmith had been unearthed and the portal forced open, a gibbering, gesticulating maniac proffered ghastly welcome.

The responsibility of carrying out Balzac's superminute instructions had turned his faithful manservant's brain. He had gone stark mad.

Two months and a half later, aged fifty-one, Balzac

died, and to her eternal honour, be it said, his widow fulfilled wifely duty. That *constant actif* or unbroken solvency lauded in *Le Médecin de Campagne*, and never destined to be his portion in life, at least belongs to his memory. Every penny left owing by him was finally paid. She survived him by thirty-two years, her later story being one of domestic troubles, senseless expenditure and final ruin.

Had those few months of fireside duality, the daily companionship of his seventeen years' love, proved a disillusion? Who can say? The adored Eve at least took his name, and that fact perhaps is the nearest solution to a much-contested enigma. Like Balzac's own her character remains a mystery; by neither were even nearest relations and closest friends taken into entire confidence.

In writing of Balzac who can resist the temptation of touching upon that misnamed *Comédie Humaine*, surely the most tragic series ever penned, a remorselessly penetrating intellect dealing with all that is most revolting and sordid in humanity?

Never for a single second can a reader rise from a Balzac volume with the sentiment, "My soul is as a watered garden," rather is he tempted to quote another great Hebrew poet, "Wherefore is light given to him that is in misery, and life unto the bitter in soul?"

Balzac has not flooded France with sunshine, rather has his genius, like a sable pall, eclipsed French gaiety, not, certes, for all time, but at least for more than a generation. In his wake has followed a school of pessimists, crueller, more pitiless

still. Make-believe worseners of human nature and human life, Wertherian, Byronic or *à la* Musset have given way to the trio of the blackening pen, Flaubert, Zola, Maupassant, and later on their heels comes a wit as brilliant and versatile as Voltaire's, but without Voltaire's hopefulness and faith in humanity—Anatole France.

Balzac's work has immensely enriched the intellectual capital of the world, has it made the multitude, the "rascal many," happier or better? Has it afforded the man and woman in the street so much delight as lesser gems of fiction, an *Abbé Constant*, a *Petit Chose*, a *Colomba*, or even the ephemeral works of those Liliputians who do not reach Gulliver's ankles? No, a thousand times, no! Seldom does a volume of the *Tragédie Humaine*, thus the series should be called, awaken a smile. Humorous indeed is the opening scene of *Béatrix*, that daily reunion of quaint folks at Guérande. Mirth provoking is half a page of that most lugubrious of lugubrious Balzacs, *Le Médecin de Campagne*. I allude to the rough soldier's puzzlement over Napoleon's comparison of Austrian princes to Medea.[1] Genestas believed Medea to be the title of an Austrian archduchess, finally being enlightened by a performance of Corneille's play at the Comédie-Française.

To Balzac belongs the laurel wreath, but around the brows of his great compeer shines an aureole. Victor Hugo, whose watchword was *Versez l'espérance*, "Fill the cup with hope," by virtue of

[1] "Comme Médée les princes Autrichiens avaient de leurs propres mains égorgés leurs enfants," p. 8.

measureless love and measureless pity, allied with imaginative gifts equally immeasurable, towers above his contemporaries as his catafalque towered above the hundreds of thousands following their dead poet to the Pantheon.

One or two words more about Hugo's twin-brother in cosmopolitan renown.

No *voyant*, no true visionary in politics was Balzac, and in more than one respect, indeed, he must be regarded as the least French of French writers. That *flamme épée, la Révolution*, again to quote Victor Hugo, that sword aflame, '89, never electrified the other's being. Reactionary, an autocrat alike in religion and politics, stone blind to the signs of the times he remained to the last. We might almost suppose that in his case the much-cherished particle, the *de* so fondly clung to and so firmly believed in, really meant noble ancestry and *fleur-de-lis*. If he despised the *bourgeoisie*, still stronger was his dislike of the peasant and the masses.

In the story just quoted, his much-admired hero, Dr. Benassis, says: "The people are the minors of a nation and should ever remain in tutelage." Farther on, the good doctor focuses nineteenth-century jingoism in a sentence: "Christianity bids the poor suffer, the rich to succour their wretchedness; in these words I perceive the essence of laws divine and human."

Concerning political liberty, the village oracle thus lays down the law—

"The man who possesses a vote, discusses, and authority discussed ceases to be authority. Imagine social order without authority. It is unimaginable.

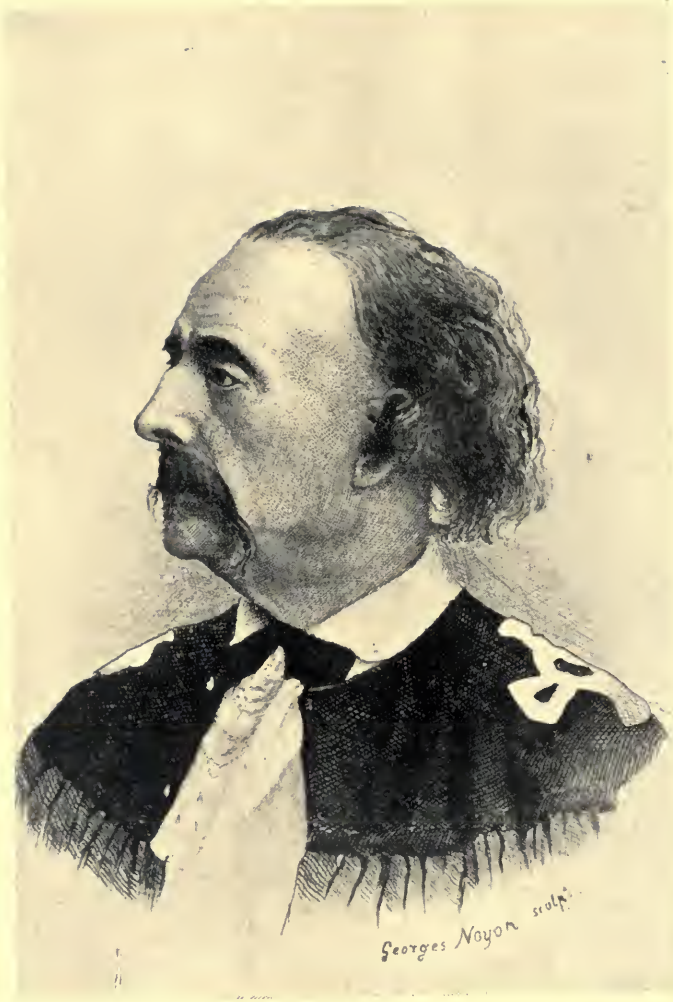
Power implies force. Force must be based upon *des choses jugées*," *i. e.* pronouncements of the law.

The italics are Balzac's own, and make us wonder how he would have emerged through the moral crucible of a decade ago.

It seems hard to believe, although believe we must, that an author who never makes us smile could have been the gay, sociable, mirth-giving being described by his friends. But in whichever light we regard him personally, his marvellous work or his equally marvellous life, one noble aspect stands out in bold relief. Nothing in his own fiction or in any other, records a love greatening as the tedious years wore on, a love sovereignly overcoming doubt, despair and disillusion, such a love as the great Balzac's for *l'Étrangère*.

III

FRENCH AUTHOR AND PUBLISHER BARBEY D'AURÉVILLY AND TREBUTIEN



BARBEY D'AURÉVILLY

[*Facing p.* 95.

FRENCH AUTHOR AND PUBLISHER BARBEY D'AURÉVILLY AND TREBUTIEN[1]

Did author and publisher ever before affectionately and unbrokenly correspond for twenty-six years? Such was the case with that strangely gifted being, that "unacceptable author," as he ever styled himself, Jules Barbey d'Aurévilly and Trebutien, the disinterested, highly cultivated and genial provincial publisher. Quite irrespective of their literary claims, therefore, these impatiently awaited volumes possess a strong human interest. Of the collection Barbey wrote to his friend: "This will be the finest feather in my wing, and by virtue of it I ought to become a glorious bird. The very best of myself is in these letters; therein I speak my true language." Modesty was no foible of this now famous writer, as we see. No letters of Trebutien's are given, but through his correspondent's pen we become acquainted with a charming personality.

"Mr. Tonson,—Some kind of intercourse must be carryed (*sic*) on betwixt us whilst I am translating Virgil," stiffly wrote Dryden to the great English publisher in 1695. Very different is the tone taken by Barbey to his generous friend and patron. Throughout the two and a half decades every letter testifies to that genius for friendship

[1] *Lettres de Barbey d'Aurévilly à Trebutien.* Blaizot, Paris, 1908, 2 vols.

which characterizes the French people. The pair seldom met, but for years their affectionate relations suffered no change.

Twenty years ago the death of Barbey d'Auréville, voluminous critic, novelist, journalist and poet, excited little notice in the literary world. In 1909 his deferred centenary—he was born November 2, 1808—was celebrated in Paris. Two monuments have since been erected by public subscription to his memory, the one at Valognes, Normandy, his birthplace, the other over his grave in the capital. Meantime, critics, lecturers and publishers have been busy with his works; never was such an aftermath. Edition after edition, even of short papers for daily journals, are being reprinted and apparently are eagerly devoured. The reputation so passionately desired by the author is accruing to him in the tomb. Despite Brunetière, Zola and other fierce detractors, public opinion is veering round to the re-considered and eulogistic views of Sainte-Beuve, written nearly seventy years ago.

Much of these caustic and admirably worded missives are concerned with the experiences of a constantly disappointed and embittered *littérateur* —we should say, perhaps, genius. Barbey d'Auréville loathed the necessity of writing for money, and lived and died poor. The impersonal remnant of the correspondence gives us criticisms, *bons-mots* and personalities by turns witty, epigrammatic and profound. Every page is worth reading.

Reactionary of reactionaries, Ultramontane in his creeds, but aggressively independent, made up of anti's, England to this writer was loathsome as the

journalistic profession, yet no foreigner has written more enthusiastically of Shakespeare. "When Shakespeare," he writes, "speaks of Destiny, he speaks with the voice of Destiny itself. His utterance is of such potency that it seems to come from the last depths of his thought, and that beyond there is nothing. What can lie beyond the Infinite?" Elsewhere he says: "For some time past I have been gorging myself with Shakespeare, inwardly saying, *All that is not Shakespeare or akin to him is nothing.*"

Here are a few literary pronouncements—

"There is no real genius in romancers without geniality. Therein lies the force of Walter Scott."

Yet of perhaps the least genial story-teller, if one of the greatest the world has seen, he writes with unbounded enthusiasm—

"Balzac—that literary Bonaparte who suffered neither abdication nor a Waterloo."

And elsewhere—

"That California, Balzac, from whose works I have culled (for publication) three thousand and odd sayings."

Of Burns he wrote—

"My favourite, my adored Burns, I have often dreamed of translating, but no one knows better than myself that poets are untranslatable."

Of Heine: "A magnificent talent that had lost its way."

Of La Fontaine: "The greatest expressionist (I translate Barbey's coined word by another) in the French language."

Of Victor Hugo he was ever a scathing critic, and

in a volume of short studies, recently re-issued, the greatest French poet modern times have seen is described as "that Emperor of our literary decadence."

Epigrams he showers as Hood showered puns, and in aphorisms he was a second Vauvenargues.

In his lecture recently published in the *Revue Hebdomadaire* Bourget described his friend as a great conversationalist, his brilliant talk being "spoken Saint-Simon."

"You were *en verve*, at your best," wrote Eugénie de Guérin to him when in Paris, 1881; "your conversation was a magnificent display of fireworks."

Of conversation itself Barbey d'Aurévilly wrote: "Give me instead of books *quatre barbélés*" (four arrow-headed words), thus italicized. Here are some of his own arrow-headed words—

"From his aphorisms, a man can mentally be better reconstituted than bodily from his bones. With an aphorism of Brummell's I become his Cuvier. An anecdote is the best *toise à conscrit* (measure of a man) that I know.

"I like the word fragments, applied to literature. All is fragmentariness alike in the head, heart and life of any individual. *Ensembles* (wholes) are denied us, and the most complete man is but a fragment.

"Are you not at one with me on the subject of Art—namely, that, after all, Art is always less interesting than Life, which is the Art of God?"

On applause: "Distinguished flattery does not displease me, flattery being an ingredient of the

intellectual *cuisine* the least lending itself to vulgarity.

"Letters are the plaster of Paris of life, not the reality. The reality again into being when we chat with our friends, but only transiently." He adds: "I would give twenty-five volumes of our correspondence for a few *tête-à-tête* talks with you."

"There are three things of which born gentlemen and Nature's gentlemen never speak—of their birth, their courage, and their success in love affairs."

What a warning to literary aspirants is the following: "Ah! let R. (a poet) beware of the facility that enervates whilst it carries him away. Let him stay his idea, finally fixing it as in a vice."

Many pages are devoted to those too faintly outlined but imperishable silhouettes in literary portraiture, whose English introducer was Matthew Arnold three-quarters of a century ago. Maurice and Eugénie de Guérin are not figures that appeal to the majority of readers. The poetic genius of the one, the religious mysticism of the other, less interest many than their pathetic story. Left motherless at an early age, the sister mothered her brother younger by five years, and her devotion to him was only equalled by the spiritual fervour of later and lonelier days.

It is a very common story, that of the idolizing sister losing her second self, seeing the brother's clinging affection superseded by passionate love; in Eugénie de Guérin's case one loss, that one by the grave, speedily following the first. The brilliant young poet, when fairly launched on a literary career, had married a Creole heiress, and a few

months later, in the midst of happiness and promise, died of consumption. Of his work Sainte-Beuve wrote: "No French poet or painter has so well rendered the feeling for Nature—the feeling not so much for details as for the *ensemble* and the divine universality, the origin of things and the cardinal principle of life."

For both brother and sister Barbey entertained high admiration. Of the former's work he wrote—

"Guérin's poems are mere sketches. His prose is poetry perfected. There you have sculptured marble, etherealized yet breathing, delicate as the aerial medium around. . . . Rhythm, rhythm—that is a mere craft for a learner, but melody—melody Guérin possessed; the instrument was imperfect, on the point of breaking, it was nevertheless the breath of a youthful God that had stirred the reed. Poet and painter, of Nature he is alike child, slave, master and king."

For him Eugénie's Journals were a second "Imitation of Christ," transmitted through the hands of a woman.

George Sand, ever generous of the generous in discovering and announcing genius in others, was the first to appreciate Maurice's poetic talent. An appreciation from her pen appeared in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, May 15, 1840. The equally generous Trebutien published his collected works twenty years later. Eugénie's journals and letters may be called famous, and have been published and republished in English translations.

To suggest any other sympathy linking the saintly Eugénie with her brother's friend than that

of friendship and gratitude is much like bracketing Saint-Theresa and Mephistopheles. That Barbey d'Aurévilly reverenced the *fille d'en haut* (the heavenly maid), as he called her, is again and again shown by the correspondence; that there was ever any question of warmer feeling on either side seems hard to believe. Yet such is the upshot of a very interesting monograph by M. Seilliere contained in a recent number of the *Revue des Deux Mondes*.

Barbey d'Aurévilly and Maurice de Guérin had been fellow collegians and, later, close friends. On the brother's death, the sister seemed to take his place in the other's affection. For years he was her confidant and correspondent; *frère vivant* (her living brother) she called him, and if, with reason, he reproached himself for fickleness, neglect, or unkindness, he made noble, albeit tardigrade reparation. To him, aided by Trebutien, was due the issue of her collected writings years later.

Unfortunately, like Balzac, Barbey d'Aurévilly possessed, if not the gentle art of making enemies, at least a fractious, wayward disposition. Not only did he lose Eugénie de Guérin's friendship, and cause intense sorrow to herself, but, sad to learn, author and publisher quarrelled at the last, this separation, as well as the other, remaining a mystery.

A comprehensive survey of his literary works, poetry, criticism and novels, each now being republished, will doubtless ere long occupy another English writer. For many readers these two volumes will suffice, and, as poetry is ever the perennial flower of literature, who can say? Maybe that brilliant little poem, *Le Cid*, given above,

will alone hand down his name to future generations!

"Great is bookishness and the charm of books," writes the witty author of *Obiter Dicta* (what a pity that so much wit should be wasted on Blue Books and politics!), and no apter motto could head this brief notice. The bookseller, bibliographer and publisher who set up a veritable Chiswick Press in a Normand town was not a rose, but he breathed its atmosphere. Throughout his life literature remained the dominating influence, the object of an unflagging devotion. A most dignified and pathetic figure is this humble bookseller of Charlotte Corday's beautiful old city. Fame he only sought to enjoy vicariously; fortune never came within the compass of his dreams.

Placidly, disinterestedly, lovingly he plodded on, in his workmanship finding the desired reward. As wrought mediæval artists, builders and craftsmen whose achievements are monumental, but whose very names have perished, so wrought Barbey d'Aurévilly's publisher.

François-Guillaume-Stanislas Trebutien (1800–1870) came of an old and highly respectable family long settled in Normandy. Destined for the Bar, his passion for books decided the future. A few years were spent in Paris, during which period he was occupied with ill-remunerated journalism and bibliographical undertakings. In 1833 he paid a short visit to England, bringing back some knowledge of our language, and, as his biographer tells, ever recalling the experience with affection. Many friends he made whilst among us, and it is not sur-

F. G. S. Trebutien

[*Facing p.* 102.

prising to find this devout Catholic and fastidious critic bringing out a translation of Newman's *Dream of Gerontius*. This was published in 1869, the literal rendering being the work of a lady, and the book, from a bibliographical point of view, being described as a *chef-d'œuvre*.

The same seems to have been the case with most of the works issuing from Le Blanc-Hardel—thus Trebutien's press was called. Among other elaborate and costly volumes published by him—rare treasure-trove in Paris now-a-days—may be mentioned a costly work on Normand *faïence*, and many editions of old French lays. But it was Oriental literature that exercised the strongest fascination over the bookseller's mind. Not only was he editor but translator of the *Arabian Nights*, and—thus avers his biographer[1]—the introductory story, on which the others hang as on a thread, is Trebutien's invention.

Trebutien had projected a volume on Oriental literature, and studies of Racine and of Mme. de Sévigné. Death cut short these activities. The Benvenuto Cellini of a publisher, as his friend Barbey d'Aurévilly called him, died, after a short illness, in 1870. Throughout his life he had been an invalid, suffering especially from the cold winds of Caen.

By the kind permission of Mlle. Read, I cite the following lines from a letter addressed to Barbey

[1] *Un Editeur de Barbey d'Aurévilly*, par Léon de la Sicotière. Blaizot, Paris, 1906. "Trebutien avait inventé le dénouement de l'histoire principale qui sert de cadre a toutes les autres que renferme le recueil."

d'Aurévilly in May 1845. Writing of Jesse, the translator of the other's work on Beau Brummell, he adds: "Brummell is terribly French for a translator. Captain Jesse seems plunged in difficulties"; he says: "'M. d'Aurévilly has put some cayenne pepper in the original, and you will observe that I have been obliged to do the same. However, I trust that I have (not) been too pungent!'" The negative has here evidently been omitted by mistake. The warmth of Trebutien's heart and the sincerity of his friendship are gathered from the closing lines—

"Adieu, dear friend. I take still more interest in your happiness than in your success, and still more in your well-being than in your books. To say this is to say much.

"TREBUTIEN."

IV

AN ANGLO-FRENCH ROMANCE
MARY CLARKE AND CLAUDE FAURIEL

AN ANGLO-FRENCH ROMANCE

MARY CLARKE AND CLAUDE FAURIEL

I

During the siege of Paris and the Commune, a vivacious little old lady, English by birth, French by bringing up, German by marriage, was visiting country houses in England.

A *habituée* of Mme. Récamier's famous salon, a friend of Chateaubriand and of his contemporaries, a generation later Mary Clarke, afterwards Mme. Mohl, gathered about her wits, scientists, philosophers. During the Second Empire it was in a modest flat of the Rue du Bac that M. and Mme. Mohl kept up French traditions, brilliant conversation, advanced Liberalism and intellectual speculation only unlocking the doors.

Jules, or rather Julius Mohl, philologer and Orientalist, was a native of Stuttgart, but early in life he had accepted French nationality, later attaining high Academic honours. Mary Clarke, who took his name when both were long past their prime, belonged to a cultured family settled in France. Without beauty or attractive sweetness, she possessed gifts pre-eminently valued by our neighbours; vivacious, clever, an inspirer of good talk rather than a good talker, above all she was what French folks call *malicieusement spirituelle*, ready wit being ofttimes seasoned with malice. Thus endowed and thus circumstanced, the Englishwoman, then as in

her youth, attained great popularity in the first literary circles of Paris, from first to last her career proving a social success.

Chateaubriand died in 1848, Mme. Récamier in 1849, Mme. Mohl in a measure taking the great lady's place. From the date of her marriage to the fall of Louis Napoleon, she figured as the queen of a salon, daily reunions keeping up the spirit of an illustrious period. Informal dinners were given on certain days during the week, certain *habitués* having their covers always laid for them; among these being Mignet, Thiers, Michelet and Victor Cousin. Dinner over, the men would nod in the smoking-room, the ladies would curl themselves up on sofas in the salon and take a nap, waking for the general reception. Then the battledore and shuttlecock of wits, the intellectual give and take began afresh, not only Parisian, but cosmopolitan *beaux esprits* taking part in the symposium.

It was during May 1871 that I happened to be the fellow-guest of Mme. Mohl in a Sussex country house. Not only had she sedulously cultivated the mental, but also the modish traditions of a former epoch. In her person she evoked the image of an aged, but in this case not beautiful Récamier, still wearing curls and *robe décolletée*. Who for a moment could have supposed that this society-loving, quaint little old lady was the heroine of a romance only second to the most sentimental story in modern history? Yet so it was. Until a few years ago perhaps even the name of Julie de Lespinasse was unknown to but a restricted English public. Her career having been turned into a story

by a popular novelist is now pretty generally known. But *Lady Rose's Daughter*, however skilfully treated, could not be half so absorbing as the career of the *immortelle amante*.

Widely as Mary Clarke differed from the French sentimentalist, circumstances and character alike provoke a comparison. Both women owed their fascination to mental and social gifts only, to both for many years love-making on paper was the prime business of the day, both fell ardently in love with two men at the same time, and neither married either of their lovers. Divergences of character were wide indeed. The Frenchwoman adored by D'Alembert among others, the Egeria at whose feet sat men of the great Turgot's calibre, was sympathy and amiableness impersonated. Therein lay her magnetism.

Mary Clarke, on the contrary, staunch as she was in her friendships, was fiercely jealous in her love affairs, and lacked that tact, intuition and penetrative appreciation of others in which Julie de Lespinasse was supremely endowed. Writing in a foreign tongue, too, her letters want the spontaneous grace of one who wrote French as she spoke it, in all its purity and strength. But as a piece of self-revelation, the love-story revealed in the correspondence just given to the world has no little interest.

II

In 1824 Mary Clarke, being just twenty-five, met a middle-aged *littérateur*, now forgotten, named

Claude Fauriel. The first impassioned letters from which the late M. Rod recently published selections in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, were written by her in Italy during the aforenamed year, and we must turn to the last, penned at St. Leonards-on-Sea two decades later, if we would understand this strange history.

From Florence she thus wrote to her lover after a very brief acquaintance: "Who is it who governs every action of my life, if not yourself? Are you not from me the beginning, the middle and the end of everything?"

To such outpourings Fauriel from the very first replied in measured terms. Thus in a quite early missive he told his "*douce, chère amie*" (his sweet, dear friend)—"I could wish that in every step you take there should be some inducement wholly irrespective of myself, in fact, that you decide upon every course as if I did not so much as exist."

It seems quite evident that despite the magnetism of Mary Clarke's personality—rather, we should say, intellect—this self-coddling, self-occupied bachelor, many years her senior, had evidently no thought whatever of marriage. Herein lies the pitifulness of the story. Perpetually asking bread, ever put off with stones, for upwards of twenty years Mary Clarke nursed chimeras. Never, surely, did any woman allow herself to be so blinded! Fauriel, moreover, as was well known, had for years been the devoted and open *cavaliere servente* of the fascinating Marquise de Condorcet. As known to us by this correspondence he does not at all appeal to our sympathies. Beginning life as a soldier, later occupying

an official post, later still he entered on the career of authorship, and with some success. He was an intimate friend of Manzoni, and his guest when in Italy. His most important work, a history of Provençal poetry, has long been superseded. A man spoiled by feminine adulation, one far more inclined to let himself be adored than to adore, such was the protagonist of Mary Clarke's romance.

On the other hand, it must be admitted that the lover's hanging-on is as much to be wondered at as the lady's constancy. Why did not a precise explanation for once and for all make matters clear? Fauriel had no intentions either honourable or the contrary, no desire to offer Mary either his name or a left-handed devotion. Sentimentality, a lover-like friendship sufficed, and rather than forfeit these he put up with bitterest recrimination, outbursts of fierce jealousy and quite unconventional suggestions. In other words, it was from herself, not from the lover, that came a proposal of marriage!

In one of his letters, most of which are apologetic or in a strain of self-defence, he wrote: "When you deigned to express your desire that our destinies should be made one, I held back, alarmed at the uncertainty of my future and of my income." And elsewhere, apparently after some more plain speaking on her part, he wrote that her heaped-up reproaches made him tremble for the future, that is to say, the future she desired.

In another letter he tells her that the work in hand on Provençal poetry was the object of his life. Yet she refused to accept his views. The years rolled on, each bringing effusive intercourse on

paper, with alternating quarrels and patched-up reconciliation. On one occasion Fauriel had again and again expressed his intention of not taking a certain route to Italy, thereby meeting her on the way. Because she had set her heart upon this plan she persisted in believing that he would renounce his own, which he refused to do. "Dear friend," Fauriel replied to her angrily reproachful letters, "it would be much less sad if we ceased this correspondence altogether than to continue it, as letters only cause misunderstanding and render us both unhappy."

Mary Clarke candidly avowed that all her troubles arose from ill-regulated passion and imagination.

"May God give me power to overcome these!" she ejaculates in her diary. In 1832, that is to say, after eight years' intercourse and letter-writing, she realizes that marriage was as far from Fauriel's thoughts as ever. In an enormously long and passionate outpouring she bitterly upbraids him, ending thus: "I believe in your goodness of heart and that your nature is good, but you little realize the value to me of every moment spent in your presence, of every word that drops from your lips, each a pearl to treasure up—memories of these recurring again and again when I am alone."

III

We now come to an incident in Mary Clarke's career more than any other recalling that of Julie de Lespinasse. Just as the eighteenth-century *bel-*

esprit was deeply in love with the loyal young Marquis de Moira and the flighty *dilettante* Guibert at the same time, so the arch-attractive Englishwoman was one day writing long letters to her "dear angel" Fauriel, and the next having a lover-like *tête-à-tête* with her second adorer, this one no lesser personage than Victor Cousin. The leader of a great philosophical and literary movement, the splendid orator, brilliant writer and member of all the learned bodies in France, could not resist Mary Clarke's caustic wit and keen intelligence. It is even surmised that at one time he thought of marriage; if so the mood quickly passed. With his friend and rival, Cousin's attitude was perfectly straightforward. He showed the utmost desire not in the least thing to compromise the lady, and for a time a curious tripartite game was played.

Fauriel hoped that the other's declaration would free him from an embarrassing situation, Cousin holding back, as he said, actuated by motives of delicacy, Mary Clarke by turns hoping, despairing—and, it must be admitted—roundly reproaching both.

By the philosopher her exacerbations were answered thus: "What would you have me do, Mary? We cannot separate ourselves from Fauriel." In her diary an interview with Cousin is thus described—

"I rested my head on his shoulder, he folded me in his arms, I regarded by turns the heavens and his countenance. But heavens, how can such transports be described!"

This dallying with sentiment, this courtship resulting neither in marriage nor in self-abandonment

would be inexplicable on the part of the two men but for Mary Clarke's intellectual charms and perhaps also for the manners of the times. Despite her captious temper and moods of fiery jealousy, despite her terrible English accent, the hard-featured little Englishwoman proved talismanic. The Cousin interlude soon ended, but the correspondence with Fauriel was carried on, her last letter, dated from St. Leonards-on-Sea, November 1843, being a mere wail of despair. "My letter is very sad," she wrote, "but it is less sad than myself. Every object to which I turn is leaden-hued. I should be better off in Paris, not that I should be in the least degree happier, but there I could drown care in diversion. Wisely Madame de Staël says that Paris is the only place in the world in which happiness can be dispensed with. Here not a creature exists the sight of whom gives me pleasure. Folks go and come leaving me absolutely indifferent. At dawn I can never say to myself that before going to rest I shall have enjoyed a single moment. What a colourless, insipid existence is mine! Adieu, I have no longer sufficient courage to wish for another meeting, not knowing whether it would give you pleasure or enough pleasure. Moderation I execrate."

Four years later the following notification was sent to French friends and acquaintances—

"To Monsieur and Madame . . . . . Mrs. Frewen Turner has the honour to inform you of the marriage of her sister Mary Elizabeth Clarke to Monsieur Jules Mohl, Member of the Institute, Paris, 11th of August, 1847."

The heroine of this romance was now fifty-seven, M. Mohl being ten years her junior. A diverting story is recounted of the civil marriage. According to French law, a bride is obliged to tell her age; when requested by the Mayor of the *arrondissement* to comply with this formula, this one replied, "You may throw me into the Seine, Monsieur le Maire, but you will never get me to tell you how old I am."

A gallant Frenchman, no matter how tried by red tape, could not, of course, show himself obdurate, and the matter was passed over with presumably polite guesswork. Then followed twenty-three years of social success, the historic salon in the Rue du Bac being only broken up by the Franco-German War. Meantime Fauriel had died, and with great generosity the learned Orientalist published the work of his wife's lover on Provençal poetry.

The most curious part of this Anglo-French romance remains to be told. In a testamentary document dated April 1855, Madame Mohl, being then sixty-five, ordered that her entire correspondence with Fauriel and her voluminous journals should be published at a given period after her decease. Further instalments of both are promised consisting of criticism and reminiscences.

What could have induced this woman of the world to desire such publicity? Only one motive seems acceptable. For the disinterested *savant*, her husband, her feeling was evidently of intellectual comradeship only. He was no *cher ange*, but simply "Mohl"; to the last she loved Fauriel and believed in him; posterity, she perhaps thought, would render

justice to his works. Divided throughout life, their names should be linked together in literary history.

M. Mohl died in 1876; his wife, who had ever dreaded longevity, lived to be ninety-three.

V

A 'GOD-INTOXICATED' FRENCHMAN
JEAN REYNAUD

A 'GOD-INTOXICATED' FRENCHMAN: JEAN REYNAUD

If I were to choose an epithet for the subject of this paper, I should style him perhaps the most ethereal-minded among later French writers, or I might aptly borrow the words of one German poet applied to another, and describe him as a "God-intoxicated" Frenchman. The purest and deepest religiousness lay at the root of all his thoughts and actions; and though his chief philosophical work was condemned by an ecclesiastical conclave of Périgueux as teeming with mundane science and blasphemies, it would be hard to name any other thinker of his time more thoroughly imbued with the real spirit of Christianity. But before examining his works, let us look at himself.

Jean Reynaud was born at Lyons in 1806 of an honourable and once rich family. Owing to reverses of fortune, he was brought up with his two brothers in the simplest and hardiest fashion. His mother was a remarkable woman. As if foreseeing the contemplative future of the boy, she led him in his earliest years to observe natural objects, especially the stars, of which he was to write afterwards so enthusiastically. She reared him a child of the open air, and a child of the open air he remained till the last. With the rapt appreciation of a Thoreau, he has described natural beauty alike on a grand

scale or in detail. His schools and tutors were the hills and woods, starry nights and flowery fields. He not only enjoyed nature, but tried to understand it, giving himself to close observation and silent pondering. Nevertheless he received the needful training for a practical career, and in 1827, with one of his brothers, quitted the École Polytechnique among the foremost students, and entered upon a course of studies and travel as a pupil of the École des Mines. These travels in the Black Forest, the Harz Mountains and Corsica contributed to develop the mental and physical endowments from which he was afterwards to reap good results. No peril or hardship daunted him; nothing escaped his quick eye. He was a born mountaineer, astonishing even the chamois hunters by feats of daring and dexterity, his delight in scenery and adventure leading him to higher contemplation. From Corsica, in his twenty-fourth year, he thus wrote to his mother: "Oh! my mother, an immense joy fills my soul. No more emptiness, no more *spleen* for me. Yesterday the idea of God became manifest to my mind without a cloud."

About this time a new intellectual era had set in throughout France. Men's minds, especially young minds, were stirred with a fervour that was not entirely social, political, or philosophic, but a mixture of all these. The Socialistic tendencies of the time are evinced in this motto, chosen by a band of students of the École Polytechnique: "Amelioration, both physical and intellectual, of the poorest and most laborious classes." No wonder that to an enthusiastic nature Socialism should appear the

inauguration of a golden age. St. Simon, one of the purest and most elevated of Socialistic leaders, had taught his disciples to look for a perfected state of society and regenerated humanity on earth, rather than in the fabled epochs of poets or the celestial mansions of theologians. "The golden age is before us and not behind," he wrote: "it is for us to hasten its coming for our children." Jean Reynaud, then in all the effervescing enthusiasm and self-devotion of youth, joined the Saint Simonians, so aptly styled by Henry Martin, *ce rendez-vous de tant d'intelligences destinées à prendre des routes si diverses* (this rendezvous of so many intellects destined to follow paths so divergent). St. Simonianism by no means ended where it began, and the follies and excesses of Menilmontant were far from entering into the programme of its founder. This may be summed up in the word altruism. "I have given up everything to follow these men," wrote the young philosopher, on renouncing the career he had begun so promisingly. "I will fight under their banner till my death, for it is holy."

He had not long enrolled himself as a St. Simonian, when he was destined to bitter disenchantment. The Père Enfantin, then at the height of his popularity, soon enounced those doctrines concerning the relation of the sexes which cast so much odium on Socialism generally. Jean Reynaud, after eloquently combating such ideas in vain, retired from the society mortified, disquieted, and not knowing where to seek new ideals. I must pass briefly over the following years of hard study, mingled with active literary life in Paris. He

joined Pierre Leroux in the editorship of the *Revue Encyclopédique*, and when that journal ceased to appear from want of contributors, became sole editor of the *Encyclopédie Nouvelle*. He also contributed largely to the *Magasin Pittoresque*, and a selection of his miscellaneous papers was published under the title of *Lectures Variées*. From 1834 to the eventful year of 1848 was a period of continued intellectual development and creativeness. The striking fragment, "L'Infinité des Cieux," published in the *Revue Encyclopédique*, proved the germ of his chief work, *Terre et Ciel;* and the still more original paper on Druidism, which appeared in the same journal, doubtless suggested to him the book by which, in his own country, he has been finally appraised, namely, *L'Esprit de la Gaule*. The revolution of February for a time put an end to these quiet labours. Like every other true patriot, he threw heart and soul into the popular movement, displaying upon every occasion that perfect mastery of self, and that serene, indomitable courage which marked him as a leader among men. Associated with his friend, the noble-minded Schoelcher, in the Provisional Government, and named Deputy and Under Secretary of State, he put his shoulder to the wheel and concentrated all his energies on the subject of educational reform. But his Socialistic tendencies manifested in a circular wherein he insisted upon the necessity of recruiting representatives of the people among the people—surely a logical sequence of a democratic government!—excited great acrimony. Reynaud declared himself in favour of electing not only the

peasant proprietors, but school-masters, to the Chamber, a class of men at that time held in unjustifiable contempt, and on the appearance of this programme he was violently abused by anti-Republican journals. We must study M. Hanotaux's great work to realize the slow growth of the democratic idea in France. Reynaud was a theorist in advance of his epoch, and his political career a failure. His ardent patriotism, passionate pity for the poor and the ignorant, noble aspirations and ideals, had not been sufficiently tempered in the school of practical life, or perhaps, as those concluded who knew him best, he retired too soon from the combat. "In six months' time he would have been stronger than all of us put together," said one of his colleagues in the Government; and Béranger, always coy of praise, openly expressed his admiration for Reynaud's lofty attitude and gifts of oratory. He seemed to be one of those born to govern; pose, look, mien, speech, all combined to inspire reverence and enthusiasm. Disappointed at the failure of his efforts, he now retired from the arena of political strife altogether, and absorbed himself in philosophical studies.

The last important act of his life was a refusal to accept the candidateship for the Chamber when it was offered to him at the general elections of 1863. "I regret," he wrote to the electors, "not to be able to accept the honour you press upon me, but I cannot reconcile it with my conscience to acknowledge a constitution which has not liberty as its basis."

Such in its barren outline is the man's uneventful

life, but when we fill in the details it becomes very interesting as a study of character. The most unimportant incident, the least little trait, betokens the magnanimity of a nature whose keynote was heroism. An eye-witness relates the following occurrence that took place during the blood-stained days of July: "We were camped on the Place de la Concorde with the National Guards of our commune. It was on the third day of the contest. The battle was drawing to a close. All at once a workman, unarmed, and wearing a blue blouse, appeared, walking quietly across the place. The combatants, crying, 'A traitor, a traitor!' rushed upon him with pointed bayonets. We tried to hold them back in vain, and the unfortunate man, overcome with terror, set off at full speed, pursued by some cuirassiers of the Champs Elysées, who, seeing his flight, deemed him guilty. In an instant he was surrounded, and fell to the ground, his blood flowing, when a civilian rushed forward from the crowd, and at the risk of being shot down threw himself between pursuers and pursued. Quick as lightning, without opening his lips, he tore from his breast his Deputy's scarf and threw it about the victim. The swords were at once lowered, the bayonets dropped; the Deputy's scarf—symbol of the nation—became a palladium. The unknown saviour was Jean Reynaud!"

There was austerity, nay, stoicism, mingled with intensest enjoyment of intellectual and natural beauty, in this gifted nature, as many stories of his early life testify. In those days he had been obliged to undergo many privations, and he so schooled himself as to "break the body," in monastic phrase,

and attain a serene indifference to material ease and luxury. Take the following example of his rigid adherence to what was a guiding principle of life. At a time when he often dined upon dry bread, he called upon a friend at the dinner-hour, and was invited to stay and partake. Blunt refusal. "Then you have already dined?" asks his host. "No." "Why, then, refuse to dine with me?" "Because I have no dinner at home." "The more reason for sharing mine." "The less reason," answers Reynaud. "In the first place, I will not turn a friend's house into an inn, and friendship into parasitism. Secondly, if I sit down hungry at your board to-day, I shall come to-morrow and sit down to it, just because I am hungry. Thus my body would have asserted its authority, and I will have no masters, least of all that one." His friend looking at him astonished, he continued gaily, "Oh! I have accustomed this body of mine to obey me, I assure you; in my long student travels I used to say to it, on setting out, you will have no breakfast till you have accomplished six leagues. The six leagues passed, it begins to grumble. Two more, says I, and it goes grumbling on. Come, I add sharply, grumbling is of no use; go on and be quiet. And I was obeyed, as I shall be obeyed to-day." Whereupon he went home to eat his bit of bread.

He had a passionate fondness for animals, and the mystery of their sufferings troubled him greatly. When, in 1842, he retired to the solitary hamlet of Vineuil, near Chantilly, there meditating and writing out his two chief works, he surrounded himself with pet animals, especially birds. Peacocks had a

strange fascination for his artistic nature. One day, watching them with a friend, as they sat majestically perched on a roof-top at sunset, he said, "Do they not seem to salute the god of their native country, and delight to scintillate their plumage in the fire of its departing rays?" He delighted also in flowers and plants, and was a skilled botanist and geologist. But perhaps his darling study was that of the stars, and none has written of starry lore more rapturously. "I doubt not," he writes in *Terre et Ciel*, "that if there existed on the surface of the world a single spot only from whence we could survey the mysterious structure of the universe, travellers would flock from the most remote parts to that privileged place; as it is, the habit of seeing the stars ends by blunting this noble curiosity in most of us."

His contemplative solitude at Vineuil was broken in the most romantic and unexpected manner. At the age of thirty-seven he had retired apparently from the world and given up domestic life, to consort with nature and his books only, when the daring but kindly intervention of friends saved him from a life-long isolation.

There was living at the same time, within fifty leagues of his retreat, a very wealthy lady, almost as solitary as himself—with equal ardour devoted to the pursuit of science and philosophy. Why not bring these kindred souls together, thought common friends who knew them intimately? The project was matured, and, in spite of Jean Reynaud's timidity and apprehension at the thought of linking another existence with his own, ultimately carried out. A meeting was effected between the young but

prematurely white-haired philosopher and his Egeria, which resulted in twenty years of blissful married life. By his marriage, too, his worldly circumstances improved; a small inheritance, added to his wife's fortune, enabled him to live in that independent ease and rustic elegance he could so thoroughly appreciate. After the storms and conflicts of his youth came smooth years of domestic harmony, and the amenities of country life. Here he occupied his leisure hours in gardening, glowing with all a naturalist's ardour over a new botanical specimen or rare plant. Long before his death, however, the insidious and painful disease from which he died had made havoc of that finely organized constitution and Herculean frame, and already, in 1861, he wrote to his friend Henri Martin, the renowned historian: "I am discontented with myself. I have fallen into a sort of inertia. Yes, at my age we find ourselves so near the other life that we are more disposed to take interest in that than in the present. We say our task is ended; and in seeing its insignificance, become resigned in thinking that another time it will be better done."

But even those who knew him best refused to believe that the end was so near. Though overcome with fits of profound melancholy, he lost none of his imposing presence and great personal beauty, "cette apparence Olympienne," as his biographer, M. Legouvé, styles it, and of which all his friends speak so enthusiastically. He died in 1863, and was buried according to the rites of the Catholic Church in the village cemetery of Neuilly. Although

a conclave of bishops had condemned Jean Reynaud as a heretic and a blasphemer a short time before, the Church did not refuse her blessing over his grave.

The task of summarizing such a life is easy; but when we come to an estimate of the author and his writings great difficulties present themselves. We have only to look at two of the many criticisms passed upon them to see how differently they are regarded by writers of opposed tendencies. M. Taine, reviewing *Terre et Ciel* in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* soon after its appearance, whilst fully appreciating the elevation of thought and beauty of style characterizing the work throughout, regards it as utterly failing to establish that harmony between religion and science which was the end the author proposed to himself. M. Henri Martin writes of the same work, after a careful analysis: "The only praise becoming a book of like scope may be summed up in a few words, 'C'est un livre de vie'" (it is a book full of life); and he adds: "To sum up our own opinions on these vast questions—Theodicy, namely, the science of God, exists, in so far as it can exist; and the religion of the Middle Ages, the philosophy of the eighteenth century, and the various sects of the nineteenth, have proved insufficient for the spiritual needs of humanity. The effort of Jean Reynaud is, therefore, legitimate and necessary. The way he opens to us is a true way, and we utter the prayer from the bottom of our hearts that this magnanimous appeal to the spirits of France may be responded to."

The characteristic of the philosophical work,

Terre et Ciel, is a consistent and logically developed protest against the theological teaching of the Middle Ages. The writer's mind is overwhelmed with commiseration for those who, in his poetic phraseology, have enrolled themselves *sous la triste bannière du passé* (under the melancholy banner of the past). In his opinion, the writers of the eighteenth century have also done their work, and in order to prevent us from returning to the mediæval spirit and paganism, a new and pure school of religious metaphysics is necessary. Then, as a natural sequence of this proposition, he sets before him those problems which have perplexed philosophers, from Pythagoras down to Schopenhauer.

What is the nature and destiny of the soul? he asks. Whence does it come? Whither does it go? What is the part played in the scheme of the universe by the worlds around us? Are they peopled, and what is the nature of their inhabitants? To sum up, he seeks the universal law of life, and the conclusions he arrives at are, if not in the interest of certain dogmas of the Church, incontestably in the interests of religiousness and morality. M. Legouvé observes in his criticism of this work, and all those who are thoroughly acquainted with French youth will concur in the opinion, that the vital issue now is no longer between Protestant and Catholic, Unitarian and Trinitarian, but between scepticism and belief. The cardinal points of Jean Reynaud's doctrine—namely, that the soul is immortal, that human life is but a link in the chain of universal being, that humanity is progressive, ever marching

onwards towards perfection, that there is neither heaven nor hell, but that our planet, indeed, is itself a part of heaven—can but lead the mind to a loftier conception of existence, whether regarded as a whole or a part. He accepted the dictum of the great Kepler: "Hoc enim cœlum est, in quo vivimus et movemur et sumus, nos, et omnia mundana corpora" (This is heaven, the Cosmos, the universe itself, in which we live and move and have our being, with all other corporeities). No one was ever more strongly impressed with that belief in immortality, of which he writes so eloquently and which he traces back so proudly to his intellectual progenitors of ancient Gaul. Death for him meant merely a translation from one stage of being to another; in perfecting themselves, others, and the world in which they live, human beings nearest approach God.

The plan of the work is not happy, or at best hazardous, being thrown into the form of a dialogue between a philosopher and a theologian. In fact, it is a dialogue after Platonic fashion, but wanting Platonic drama and movement. This defect is in a great measure redeemed by the charms of style and the originality of thought predominating throughout. Reynaud's prose is admirable. There are passages that recall the solemnity of Pascal and Bossuet, whilst, as has been aptly said, he is never the author, but always the man.

Take as a specimen of his speculative mood the following passage from *Terre et Ciel*, where he is writing of the probable progress of the world, and the effect of scientific knowledge carried to a pitch

even to-day hardly to be realized. With regard to international commerce and its results upon general advancement and well-being, he says—

"Adam did not more entirely possess the fruits of his narrow Paradise than we in the present day possess all the combined products of the seas and continents of our vast inheritance. This common enjoyment of the fruits of the earth would not be a sufficient corrective of its vast size, were it not for the ease with which, in contradistinction to our ancestors, we are enabled to transport ourselves from one place to another, and to maintain our relations with various parts of the globe. Such is the result of world-wide intercourse. So lively has become the correspondence between the various quarters of the world, that letters and travellers are perpetually crossing each other on their way. And as voyages and journeys become longer and more frequent, these also increase in speed and facility, so that the extent of the globe and its relation to man are determined, not by relative size, but by the ease with which we can reach the most distant parts, the result being that the dimensions of the world, instead of being fixed, progressively diminish from day to day. Who, indeed, does not perceive that, viewed by the light of geography, the earth is infinitely smaller to us than it was to our forefathers —that each year, in consequence of the improved methods of communication, it suffers further diminution, and that it is destined to become still more limited to our descendants? So, so far as the transmission of thought is concerned, distance no longer exists; by a miracle, before which our forerunners

would have stood confounded, we shall soon be enabled to converse with the antipodes as easily as with our next-door neighbour. Thus, whilst the ancients could admire Divine power in bowing before the majesty of the earth, we should see ourselves compelled to take a very limited view of the handiworks of the Creator if we were obliged to judge of them by an abode where already we begin to find ourselves cramped for space, where the longest voyages are mere beaten tracks, and, to sum up, where already statisticians begin to tremble when they think of the little room that will be left for posterity. Happily we are more than compensated for the lost majesty of the earth by the new vistas astronomers have opened in the heavens, so that whilst the first appears narrower and narrower, the sidereal world conversely astounds us more and more by its immensity."

This passage is cited more as a sample of the author's manner of thinking than writing, which is here, perhaps, a little prolix. He is so anxious to be understood that he is apt to elucidate over-much. But it is, above all, of the stars that he writes with understanding and witchery. "Ah!" he writes, "how well I can understand the irritation of the Middle Ages against Galileo! That problem of the sun's fixity contained so many others. The terrestrial globe ceasing to occupy the centre, and to form a rallying-point of the universe, all preconceived cosmical ideas being overturned, where then to look for Paradise and Hell?" And in this dialogue between the philosopher and the theologian, the last fares, of course, worst. Not only

Purgatory and Hell, but the celestial Paradise of the Church crumbles to pieces—

"No more time," says the first; "no more change; never more anything new; no more acts of charity displayed by one human being towards another; no more salutary reflections, no more aspirations after the Divinity; the elect in their places for ever and ever in Paradise, the damned in theirs below. The time is gone when good men can delight themselves in lifting their brethren out of evil, and in feeling that even the created world yields to their efforts and gains each day, owing to them an added grace, and added beauty, where those who have had the misfortune to go astray are able, after their lapse, to return to virtue and follow the straight road in company of the righteous. . . . There is no more progress to hope for in this terrible succession of age upon age, neither for oneself, nor for others, whether in heaven or in hell, and the law of unchangeableness is henceforth the law of the universe. . . . Ah! how this Paradise repels me! how infinitely I prefer my life, with all its misery and tribulations, to such an immortality and such a beatitude!

"There were virtues in the world. There are none in heaven. The logic of theologians has expelled them," he adds; and a hundred passages might be cited to show how intensely the superstitious teaching of the Church in these days weighed upon his spirits. He saw that the only hope for France lay in the emancipation of the young from sacerdotal guidance; and when he combats at such length the cardinal doctrines concerning original sin, eternal punishment, and the nature of

angels, there can be no doubt that it was the ignorant and the younger of his countrypeople he had in view. The fact that great scientific attainments should be brought to bear upon these questions in France is not astonishing; but that a philosophic teacher, the basis of whose system is the purest and most ardent Theism, should be a Frenchman, and that he should have had a large following, may perhaps seem matter for astonishment. The edition of *Terre et Ciel* before me, published in 1866. is the fifth, and has been superseded by others. Such recognition of a work which, according to the bishops in conclave at Périgueux, could hardly be matched for monstrous blasphemies, must, at the time, have given uneasy feelings to many a professor of theology. Whether, indeed, science and religion are reconcilable remains matter for debate. Certain it is that Jean Reynaud's attempt in this direction has resulted in a memorable book.

His speculative turn, added to wide scientific attainments, led him to curious and subtle inquiries into natural phenomena and the probable results of advanced knowledge. Take, for example, certain passages in the first division of the volume, upon the sea, rain, the desert. Here, instead of metaphysical theories, we have lucid expositions of such problems as offer themselves to observers of nature.

And he goes on to predict, with regard to all phenomena, an increasing development of man's power over nature. The keynote of the work must be sought in that ancient Druidic doctrine of the continuity of existence and the immortality of the soul still further developed in the *Esprit de la*

Gaule. True heritor of the spiritual teachers and pontiffs of ancient Gaul, for him, in the words of his favourite classic poet, death, indeed, was but a midway halt in never-ending existence—

Longæ vitæ
Mors media est.

It is easy to conceive the ardour which would be kindled in the breast of any noble-minded French boy by the perusal of Cæsar's narrative. Like Jean Reynaud, he would glory in the notion of kinship with the magnanimous Vercingetorix, and would delight in every fragment of tradition bearing on the sad but splendid piece of history of which the youthful "chief of a hundred chiefs" forms the central figure. The keynote of the *Esprit de la Gaule* is to be found in this clinging to primitive nationality. Jean Reynaud saw in himself a scion rather of the Gaul than of the Roman or the Frank; and his outburst of enthusiasm gave the impetus to those Celtic studies in France which have since borne such rich fruit. To use M. Legouvé's words, "Son livre reveilla l'esprit Gaulois en France." M. Henri Martin, in the first volume of his history, largely acknowledges his frequent obligations to one who was the inspirer not only of the historian and the archæologist, but the dramatic poet. Montanelli's tragedy of *Camma* sheds added lustre on that heroine of ancient Gaul whose story is so pathetically told by Amédée Thierry in his *Histoire des Gaulois*. These are instances among many. The author's method of treating a subject is nowhere better seen than in this work. Tradition, folk-lore, architecture, customs, are all laid under contribution, the result

being a compendium of fact and suggestion quite marvellous when we consider the scantiness of the materials at command. Of all the classic writers, Lucan alone seems to have grasped the spirit of that race so terrible to its foes because it "feared not death"—that race which Cæsar with all his legions found so hard to conquer—that race which, like the Hebrew, had arrived at a belief in one God invisible and alone. Even Lucan, evidently full of interest and sympathy though he be, consecrates a few lines only to the theme of the Druids and their belief. I give Christopher Marlowe's translation of this famous passage, as being more poetical than Rowe's, though in many respects Rowe's is preferable—

> And you, French Bardi, whose immortal pens
> Renown the valiant souls slain in your wars,
> Sit safe at home and chant sweet poesy.
> And, Druides, you now in peace renew
> Your barbarous customs and sinister rites;
> In unfelled woods and sacred groves you dwell;
> And only gods and heavenly powers you know,
> Or only know you nothing; for you hold
> That souls pass not to silent Erebus,
> Or Pluto's bloodless kingdom, but elsewhere
> Resume a body; so (if truth you sing)
> Death brings long life. Doubtless these Northern men,
> Whom death, the greatest of all fears, affrights not,
> Are blest by such sweet error; this makes them
> Run on the sword's point, and desire to die,
> And shame to spare life which being lost is won.

From Lucan and other writers, ancient, mediæval, or modern, who have touched upon the subject, Jean Reynaud builds up a structure which, if not history, is at least a mine of suggestion. No one can read even the cold narrative of Cæsar without being dazed by the heroic qualities displayed on the losing

side, and the Roman conqueror is himself forced into an occasional expression of admiration. Putting together Cæsar's narrative and every fragment contributed by Lucan, Strabo, Pomponius Mela and other writers, there is little enough, yet ample wherewithal to inspire an enthusiastic and thoroughly national writer. For him, indeed, the theme was sacred, and his ardour awakened a keen interest in Celtic literature and antiquities in France. We have only to turn to writers like Cambry, travelling through the dolmen regions of Western France nearly a hundred years ago, to realize the former apathy of French people with regard to this subject. This state of things seemed not much better when Jean Reynaud wrote three-quarters of a century ago.

"Whilst the smallest fragments," he says, "bearing on the civilization of Greece and Rome receive the most minute care, those monuments which belong to our own history are left to the same fate as the stones by the wayside. In the early Christian epochs they were doomed to destruction by fanaticism, but this has been less guilty than our own neglect. It is time that a different feeling should be displayed. Such venerable monuments ought to be invested with authority as the traditions of our ancestors. Too long silent, they should now discourse to us on the genius and independence of our race."

Elsewhere he says, in writing of fairies, "We do not see why our national mythology, without excluding the Greek, should not accompany it in elementary education"; and he appeals to his countrypeople to rescue from oblivion every fragment of fairy- and folk-lore, in order that the imagination of their

children may be moulded after the fashion of their fathers: "remontant aux sources de la Gaule pour nous y retremper, nous moulons l'imagination de nos enfans sur les heureux patrons de l'imagination de nos pères." This was written in 1844, and we well know how the appeal has been answered. With the fascinating volumes of Émile Souvestre and Villemarqué in his hands, to say nothing of contemporary writers, the traveller of to-day may now re-people the ancient Armorica with its fairies and hobgoblins as he traverses one romantic district after another. Brizeuz and others have poetized local customs and traditions; and a goodly list of writers in a soberer field might be given who have devoted themselves to Celtic lore and archæology in France. But it must ever be remembered that Jean Reynaud was one of the first to lead the way.

On the subject of fairies he has many ingenious reflections. Whence arises the difference, he asks, between the Circes of ancient Greece and the Melusinas of Gaul? Why are the enchantresses of the latter nation guardian angels, workers of good and beneficence, whilst with the former they are dire sorceresses only? And he sees herein, as well as in the equality of Druids and Druidesses, a feeling due to the inherent respect for women of his remote primogenitors. Again, he remarks that we need not be astonished in France at the tenacity of belief in fairies, despite clerical anathemas. "It is a belief that comes not only from the imagination, but from the heart, a perpetual protest of the Gaulois character against the too sombre importations of Rome and Judea."

Let us see his appraisement by contemporaries.

In a notice of Schopenhauer by M. Paul Janet (*Revue des Deux Mondes*, May 15, 1877) occurs the following: "The only contemporary French philosopher for whom Schopenhauer shows any admiration is Jean Reynaud"; and he cites this sentence of the great pessimist—

"I see that Jean Reynaud thinks exactly as I do, and that he naturalizes without needing either Kant or the transcendental philosophy. He teaches the innateness of the moral character, believes that we have existed before our birth, and, in fine, sets forth doctrines altogether Brahmanistic and Boudhistic. Bravo!"

Had Schopenhauer studied Reynaud's writings, he would have discovered his error. Jean Reynaud has as little in common with the doctrines of Boudha as with those of their latter-day apostle, Schopenhauer himself. The characteristic of Reynaud's teaching is its hopefulness. For him, life and the world are mere synonyms of progress, and thus putting himself directly in opposition to the theory of the Nirvana, he says: "It is, above all things, the principle of action and progress that likens us to God." He could not conceive of any religious or philosophic system which should exclude hope and movement as the first and best gifts of the Creator to man.

Let these last words, cited from the essay called *Élevation vers Dieu par la Nature*, close this sketch, since they better portray the author's mode of thought than any commentary could do—

"No exercise gives the soul more strength and

vigour than its efforts to arrive at a contemplation of God. The more it is chained down by the toils and obligations of life, the more it needs deliverance from time to time by search after celestial things. This occupation, so different from those of every day, becomes a kind of repose, and assuredly many men, worn out with the daily vexations of existence, would easily be solaced and revived if such aspirations entered more regularly into their habits of thought. It is only by such means that we can succeed in freeing ourselves from the shadows and illusions of the world, and dwelling on infinite perfection. By these exercises the loftiest geniuses that adorn humanity have been formed, and all of us are thereby gainers, since the best way to maintain inner calm amid worldly agitations is to know how to rise, no matter how transiently, above the horizon of daily life."

Deep religious faith and hope in the destiny of humanity, tenderest sympathy with his kind, patriotism in the loftiest sense of the word, and noble ideals, such were the teachings of a Frenchman condemned by a conclave of bishops in the nineteenth century as an enemy of religion, a perverter of youth, and a blasphemer! [1]

In 1879 I often met Jean Reynaud's widow; she used to call upon me in her handsome carriage, and receive me in her vast reception-rooms superbly fur-

[1] With regard to Jean Reynaud's condemnation of the theory of eternal punishment, the conclave of bishops at Périgueux decreed as follows: "Quant à la doctrine que l'auteur met principalement en relief dans son livre touchant les peines des méchants après la mort, nous la condamnons pareillement, nous la repoussons, et nous l'avons particulièrement en horreur, parce qu'elle

nished with gold brocade and ebony—a pathetic figure. All but stone-deaf, childless, apparently very much alone in the world, and of unattractive appearance, one spiritual ray, and one only, illuminated that heavy personality—Jean Reynaud and the memory of what to her was a supreme, an immortal nature constituted her inner joy, her very life. I fear that his name is chiefly remembered now by the £400 a year *Prix Jean Reynaud* accorded to the *Académie* in perpetuity by his widow. It is a legacy given to works written in the interests of moral science and philosophy, also of any conducing to the intellectual advantage of mankind. Most worthily was this prize awarded a few years ago to Arsène Darmesteter and his collaborator Hatzfeld on the completion of their great etymological-historic literature of the French language.

est infiniment pernicieuse. Certes, l'amour divin n'est que trop souvent étouffé dans le cœur de l'homme sous le poids des passions: qu'arrivera-t-il si une doctrine hypocritement flatteuse vient y détruire la crainte, et offrir à la génération des pervers un Dieu sous le gouvernement duquel les vices affranchis se mettraient à l'aise?" But the closing sentence best shows the temper of the bishops: "Enfin, nous déclarons que quand bien même, non seulement un homme ou le monde entier, mais, par impossible, *un ange du ciel enseignerait une doctrine contraire*, la nôtre doit demeurer pour tous les chrétiens l'objet d'une foi très-ferme et tout-à-fait immuable. Si quelqu'un agit autrement, qu'il sache qu'il s'est exclu lui-même de la foi catholique et qu'il a encouru ces mêmes peines éternelles dont il nie l'existence." (The italics are my own.)

VI

THE NEW FICTION

MM. BOYSLEVE AND HENRY BORDEAUX

RENÉ BOYSLEVE

[*Facing p.* 145.

THE NEW FICTION: MM. BOYSLEVE AND HENRY BORDEAUX

FRENCH fiction has passed through many phases since the death of Balzac, in Henry James's opinion "the father of us all." First, and questionless, the outcome of Balzac's stupendous achievement, came Zola, *Zola, gros, grossissant, grossier* (immense, coarsening, coarse), thus the historian of contemporary France sums up his genius. And cruelly, yet, it seems, presciently, M. Hanotaux adds: "The future will remember his name, but future generations will not read him. Celebrated alike for his strength and his falsity, finisher of romanticism already in its decadence, Zola will figure as another Petronius, a Petronius sombre and lacking all sense of proportion."

Paris booksellers tell you now-a-days that whilst Zola lies on the shelf, Flaubert is as much in demand as ever; but Flaubert was an artist. Maupassant, his disciple and follower, for the same reason—perhaps unfortunately—will live. In any case the arch-pessimistic psychological, or rather physiological, novel has suffered eclipse.

First an epidemic of ethical enthusiasm suddenly seized French novelists, just as the drama had of late usurped the pulpit, play after play being produced, and successfully produced, having a moral

purpose; so romancers turned from too familiar, nauseous themes to social propaganda.

That facile and pleasantly unexciting writer René Bazin led the way with his novel against wet-nursing, showing the evils of a system rife to-day as when Rousseau wrote over a hundred years ago. Then followed stories written in the interests of temperance, especially abstention from absinthe, disinterested marriages, voluntaryism in the choice of partners, and other questions, social as well as material, co-operation, among the latter. And of late years we have seen, especially in the time-honoured but consistently reactionary *Revue des Deux Mondes*, a long series of what may be described as Ultramontane, anti-Progressive, anti-Republican fiction, with wearisome reiteration being insisted upon, the evils of divorce, the sufferings of law-breaking, self-exiled priests and nuns, the evils of toleration in theological matters, in fine, a mass of literature curiously mediæval both in expression and in spirit. This phase has now happily been varied by another, that one with *le tennis*, *le golf*, *le five o'clock*, tailor-made costumes and many other things a direct importation from England, and in other respects not the least happy results of the *Entente Cordiale*.

French novelists have at last begun to find themselves, that is to say, their ordinary selves and their fireside life, absorbing. They have turned from the interminable stories of three, *la jeune femme*, her husband and lover, to the domestic novel. We have now pictures of existence *à la* Trollope, *à la* Gaskell and other mid-Victorians. The late Edouard Rod

made an unsuccessful venture in this direction, his *Annette* proving a narrative of unmitigated boredom. Treated by other hands, middle-class life, alike Parisian and provincial, is full of interest, especially for the insular reader. To many, what I venture to call the new fiction will prove a revelation. "*Home Life in France?*" asked an untravelled Englishwoman, taking up a work thus entitled; "have the French really any home life?" Such novels as the two here noticed answer the query.

Each, as will be seen, illustrates a striking characteristic of the French *bourgeoisie*, the first, that Philistine attitude towards things æsthetic with which Matthew Arnold formerly twitted English Nonconformists; the second, that tremendously strong family feeling, those "hooks of steel" binding kinsfolk together, without a counterpart here or perhaps in any other country.

In the concluding volume of his great history, M. Hanotaux mordantly hits off the first-named aspect—

"The Third President of the Third Republic, the avocat of the Jura, represented," he tells us, "the provincial middle classes that (like the Royalists) had learned nothing and forgotten nothing, even after the terrible disasters of 1870–71, remaining absorbed in daily routine, ignoring international interests, holding aloof from the great intellectual awakening of generous souls, the emotions of thought and art, loving France but without comprehending their country." Humdrum respectability, almost Puritan indifference to the beautiful, characterizes the *bourgeoisie* of to-day as of a former generation. Here is an

illustrative anecdote. Last year a distinguished professor of elocution was reciting French poetry to an English friend, who asked his wife why, seeing his dramatic gifts, he had not taken to the stage. The reply was, "Simply because his parents were too *bourgeois* to entertain the notion." And the other day we read in Fromentin's charming letters that his *fiancée's* mother burst into tears as she announced the fact to her relations: "Alas! my future son-in-law is an artist!" The elder Coquelin's history is another case in point. Admirable as are the moral and social qualities of the French middle classes, too often is the æsthetic sense lacking. It is here that the story before us will be found illuminating. "*La jeune fille bien élevée*"— *i. e.* conventionally brought up—only risked the loss of that all-sufficing endowment because she developed musical tastes! Owing to family losses she finds herself dowerless, the forfeiture being atoned for, she feels, by these newly-discovered gifts. No sooner, however, do her parents discern the working of the girl's mind than they determine to marry her, willy-nilly. Marriage at least was respectable, whereas the career of a professional musician was not. So after many matrimonial peripatetics such a calamity was avoided by the advances of a priggish but well-placed architect, ten years the demoiselle's senior; the mother's farewell after the wedding ending thus: "Never forget, my daughter, that your husband has chosen you because you have been '*bien élevée*.'"

This is the theme, and of plot the story possesses none. The touch of a master hand lies elsewhere. We have here, as focussed on a Dutch canvas, French provincial life, every figure is a distinct per-

sonality; every incident is part and parcel of the little domestic drama, not a scene, not a conversation could be left out. Nor is the background forgotten, and herein comes under notice another feature of the new fiction. Local colour contributes to the reality of these realistic but non-repellent studies. Those of us who can number good friends among the French *bourgeoisie* feel here transported to familiar scenes and circles. Skilfully, too, does M. Boysleve put the story into the heroine's mouth. One fancies all the while that instead of a man's novel, we have a young girl's diary in our hands.

M. Henry (note the prevailing anglicizing of French names) Bordeaux's essentially French novel, *Le Croisée des chemins*, deals also with middle-class life. We have here no would-be English types and no Anglicisms. Folks do not reiterate "Play" over lawn tennis, or in every sentence use English colloquialisms. The subject is thoroughly French, and for once we have no history of a fascinating and erring wife, *divorcée* or widow. The unmarried heroine is a young, beautiful and—needless to say—always prefectly dressed Parisian. Indeed, all French novelists of the other sex might be supposed to get hints from the Paquins and Worths, so minutely and elaborately are their ladies' dresses always described.

To enter thoroughly into the spirit of this life-story we must have been familiarized on French soil with narratives of a white elephant in the shape of *une succession*, in other words, property, or the reversion of property, handicapped with debts and charges.

Pascal Rouvray is a brilliant young doctor in

Paris, fairly on his way to fame, fortune and a most desirable marriage, when he receives a telegram from Lyons announcing the death of his father, he also a medical man of high position in that great city. But the elder Rouvray had been the victim of a most cruel *succession*, heroically striving throughout life to pay off the financial burdens encumbering the ancestral estate, and all the while keeping his anxieties and responsibilities to himself.

Here, then, comes Pascal to the parting of the ways. Shall he, must he renounce the dazzling career dreamed of and already entered upon in the capital, or what, from a pecuniary point of view, is much more certain, take up his father's practice, prevent his mother's patrimony from absorption, educate his young brother and sister—and, above all, perhaps relinquish his love? For in this case passion and worldly advantage have been allied. The young scientist has fallen deeply in love with the handsome, elegant, spirited Laurence Avenière, Parisian of Parisians. Will she follow him into what, to her, would be dreary exile?

Conscience, or rather that intensity of family feeling so characteristic of French natures, decides Pascal. Individualist as he is, he chooses self-sacrifice, hoping against hope that Laurence will follow his example. She fails him, and there the first portion of the story ends, the second taking up the hero's fortunes thirteen years later. By this time his duty has been nobly but coldly done. He returns to Paris, there to take up the dreamed-of career of former days, and there to meet the same evil genius, that worldly Parisian to whom love only

meant power and social advancement. The old spell is cast over Pascal's unforgetting love, wife and children are momentarily relegated to a secondary place, when a most dramatic scene, a scene to which only Sarah Bernhardt could do justice, cuts the Gordian knot. M. Bordeaux's long and forcible story lags in places, and none of the characters, except the doctor's mother—ah! how lovingly do French novelists draw these maternal portraits!—arouses sympathy, but as a study of French life it is to be warmly commended.

M. Boysleve's novels are divided into two categories, the first dealing with middle-class life, one of which has been translated into English. This is *L'Enfant à la Balustrade—The House on the Hill* (Nutt), *La Becquée* having followed it as a sequel. Under the second head come stories of love and romance, *Le Bel Avenir* and *Le Meilleur Ami.* An author's favourites among his own works is always an interesting point, M. Boysleve's being the translated story and the last two.

M. Henry Bordeaux's novels are familiar to readers of *La Revue des Deux Mondes*, in which also appeared *La jeune fille bien élevée.* Both novelists are in their prime, so that their readers may hope for many more "French novels to read," as the two here outlined may safely be labelled.

VII

A GREAT PROSE EPIC, 1870–71
THE BROTHERS MARGUERITTE

VICTOR MARGUERITTE

[*Facing p.* 155.

A GREAT PROSE EPIC, 1870–71
THE BROTHERS MARGUERITTE

Sons of a splendid soldier, rendered fatherless by Sedan, inheritors of a legend, what more natural than that Paul and Victor Margueritte should become the chroniclers of *l'année terrible*, year of bloodshed, devastation and fiercely combated despair?

Appropriately is their first volume dedicated to the memory of a father they were not too young to forget, and whose name will ever live in French military annals. Among the many dramatic incidents of the Franco-Prussian War, none are more striking than the great cavalry charge, the last, so say military authorities, that will ever be recorded, in which General Margueritte lost his life.

Those who, like myself, witnessed the grand review at Bethény near Rheims in honour of the Czar a few years ago, can realize such a spectacle, and a fearful one it is even when given as a gazing-stock, a mere parade. Upon that occasion 25,000 foot and horse soldiers were mustered, the greatest number, I learned, ever taking part in a French review. The culminating feature of the day was the cavalry charge. The dark, immovable lines on the heights above the vast plain slowly breaking up, deploying as if mechanically set in motion, by little

and little becoming visibly human, not moving walls, but living men — the cycling contingents — the mounted bands—the flags—martial strains, and prevailing enthusiasm—all these were forgotten in the cavalry charge. It was an avalanche, a cataract, a swooping horde, cavaliers and their chargers so uniform in movement, so closely serried as to form one huge, compact and, as it seemed, invincible body, no more to be withstood than earthquake, thunderbolt or mountain torrent.

All was lost when General Margueritte headed that final rally, the cavalry charge, at Sedan, a stand now being made, as another brave commander, Douai, declared, for honour only.

At the onset a ball struck the leader, shattering his jaw and carrying off a portion of his tongue, but before falling, and with a supreme effort, he got out a resonant, guttural cry—

"*En avant, en avant!*" (Forward, forward!)

"*En avant!*" echoed chasseurs d'Afrique, lancers, hussars. "Vive Margueritte! Let us avenge his death!" without another thought thousands rushing to their own.

Gallifet at once took command, coolly saying to his officers, "Our business is to protect the army. In all probability, gentlemen, we shall not meet again. I wish you farewell!"

This iron soldier, however, lived to see many another bloodstained day, in those playing a merciless part, and only died last year.

It was in this awful *mêlée*, or rather wholesale massacre, that the Emperor William cried—

"*Ach, die tapfere Kinder!*" ("Ah, the brave

boys!) so lost was he in admiration of the Frenchmen's bravery.

It was Coventry Patmore who thus parodied the old king's pietistic telegram that evening to his consort Augusta—

> Thank the Lord, my dear Augusta,
> We have fought the French a buster,
> Ten thousand Frenchmen sent below
> Praise Him from whom all blessings flow!

The prose epic written by the two brothers in collaboration appeared in four volumes—*Le Désastre* (Metz, 1870); *Les Tronçons du glaive; La défense nationale*, 1870–71; *Les braves gens* continuing the history of the same struggle; lastly came *La Commune*.

The first volume opens strikingly. We have here a picture of that final and sinister gala at Saint Cloud, the Emperor perhaps seeing the *Mene, mene, tekel, upharsin* written on the wall. Amid the brilliant scene he is described as evidently feeling himself alone, on his face, usually inscrutable, a mask, now written only passive resignation, his whole aspect that of a man worn out in body and mind. Then for a moment his half somnolent physiognomy lit up, the approach of the little prince his son calling up a sad, faint, adoring smile.

Next is described the Empress as in all the blaze of her despotic beauty and surrounded by obsequious courtiers she passed through the reception-rooms, "her eyes shining with frigid splendour, her expression of mingled pride and determination; now according a smile to one, now a word to another,

now an inclination of the head to a third, she was seen for a moment, leaving behind an unforgettable image." Follows a sketch of the delirium in Paris, the performance of *Masaniello* at the opera, the frenzied acclamations of the audience when at the close the prima donna, draped in white and gold like a priestess, and holding aloft the tricolour, recited the long-forbidden, but to-day resuscitated *Marseillaise*, finally the shout, caught up by the crowds outside, echoed that sleepless night from one end of Paris to the other—

"*Vive l'Empereur, vive la France, à Berlin!*"

With this volume ends the first stage of the war, indeed the war itself, properly speaking. The Emperor a prisoner, MacMahon's army broken up, Metz on the eve of surrender, henceforth French blood was shed like water, but the struggle was no longer for mastery; legion after legion, as if miraculously, came into being on behalf of national existence.

The second volume, of which I give a sketch, is still more absorbing than the first, and is planned in similar fashion. Whilst strictly adhering to historic detail, each narrative reads like a romance, domestic tragedy—and even comedy—being interwoven with public events. An air of verisimilitude is thus accorded to the shifting scenes, and whilst following these we also follow individual fortunes.

The book opens at Tours with the arrival of Gambetta, escaped from Paris in a balloon. Like the great Revolutionaries of 1792, Gambetta was then in the very flower of his youth. The young tribune at whose voice armies sprang up from every corner of

France, who by his colossal energy and sway over men, without doubt, changed her destinies, was only thirty-two! Eight years later Gambetta was known as "the old man of forty." When the present writer heard that stupendous voice at Versailles in 1878, he was already grey, haggard, a mere wreck, exhausted by conflicts that might well have undermined the constitutions of the most robust. In what a position did the young dictator take the reins!

"Sedan having capitulated with a hundred thousand men, fifty generals, a marshal of France and an Emperor, our remaining troops, a hundred and seventy thousand men, pent up in Metz under the eyes of Prince Frederick Charles, the flood of invasion continuously pouring in through the blood-stained breach of Alsace and Lorraine; the heels of the conquering Prussian tramping Gaulish soil; a fourth of our departments under sway of Teutonic préfets; Paris, despite her girdle of forts and her immense improvised army, separated from France, hemmed in by the enemy. The war seemed to have come to an end. It had only begun!" write our authors.

Gambetta's arrival checked the general despondency and changed the face of everything. But the magnificent stand now made against German arms on behalf of Republican France was in part due to another civilian—one, alas! for whom his countrymen have shown sparse gratitude. It was Freycinet, a railway engineer, who speedily organized the transport, telegraphic and cartographic service, also the commissariat, and managed all so well that General Chanzy, the hero of Le Mans, said

of his men, "Not only did they never want for anything, but enjoyed *une orgie*" (a feast).

We are here introduced to one of those large family groups which form a veritable clan, and for which we have no equivalent among ourselves. Three generations of Réals, a good old Touraine family, people these pages, their fortunes being skilfully interwoven with moving incidents and catastrophes of the war. The scene changes from the ancestral chateau near Amboise, now to a young sculptor's studio in besieged Paris, now to an encampment on the banks of the Marne, now to Autun, head-quarters of the Garibaldians, and so on, the immense canvas being filled with life-like characters and stirring events. Where the brothers Margueritte have eminently succeeded is in giving us the psychology of war, the waking up of average men and women to a hideous reality, the gradually hardening effect of bloodshed and international hatred upon naturally noble natures.

In the hero, Eugène Réal, the bridegroom torn by patriotic duty from his two-days' wife, this presentment is especially striking. His first impulse when brought face to face with a horrible death is flight, then, higher motives asserting themselves, he plays a soldier's part valiantly, yet with bitterest recrimination—"The monstrosity of war revolted him beyond measure. As a schoolboy the hateful word had meant glory, trumpet blasts, waving trophies, hurrahs, Turenne victorious, Ney galloping after his men in the snow. Never had he conceived these revolting realities, this delirium of massacre, this exaltation of brutal instincts, this letting loose of

the wild beast in man. He execrated those miscreants who with light heart had plunged his country into the bloody vortex."

The victory of Coulmiers was followed by defeat after defeat, mainly due to want of concerted action on the part of the generals. During the terrible retreat from Loigny, Eugène not only loses heart, his very instincts of humanity seem to have forsaken him—

"So great was his moral torpor and physical lassitude, that he thought no more of his young wife, of his home, his past life. A smouldering rage consumed him, the rage of outraged patriotism, the shame at having to retreat before the invader. Only to have done, was the inward prayer. As the march continues he grows more and more insensible to everything but brutalizing, bodily suffering. So weary was he that he would gladly have thrown himself down upon the miry road as upon a downy bed. But to do that was to die; he knew well enough that once on his back he should never rise again. It was no longer duty to his country or love for Marie, that made him cling to life, but the purely animal instinct of self-preservation. He had become a moving automaton."

The tragic fortunes of Eugène Réal and his house take us from one scene of the terrible year to another, his father, brother, uncles, and cousins all risking their lives in the cause of France and her young Republic. Domestic life had come to a standstill, the wheels of routine are silent, every moment is fraught with cruel experience, with national and individual suspense.

Yet amid these fearful scenes we get occasional touches of cheerfulness, even of humour.

Here is a charming account of the carrier pigeons just arriving at Tours from Paris—

"'Come here,' said Poncet to his visitor, 'I have something to show you.' Noiselessly and carefully he opened the door of a room in the Prefecture transformed into a pigeon-house. On a perch near the wall a number of the birds were asleep, others were bathing and pluming their wings in pans of water. 'The first thing they do on arriving,' said Poncet, as he fed them from his hands, 'is to take a bath and perform their toilette. Famished they may be, but after confinement in the car of the balloon their desire is to disport themselves in water.' Then, taking up a pigeon in his hands, he kissed it, crying, 'Dear little creature, little thou knowest, when instinct takes thee back to the dove-cote, the part thou playest, the prayers that follow thee, the hopes with which thy arrival is awaited.'"

Here is a serio-comic scene from besieged Paris—

"'What should we have said this time last year,' said M. Delourmel, 'had any one told us that we should now be eating rats?'

"'Jules had some for dinner yesterday,' replied Mme. Thédenat, 'it was a dinner given by professors of natural history. Here is the menu: Horse soup thickened with millet, minced cat with *sauce mayonnaise*, dog's liver with *sauce tomate*, dog cutlets, and green peas (dried, of course), dog *gigot* garnished with rat-tails, plum-pudding *à l'Anglaise* (horse marrow instead of suet).' 'How disgusting,' exclaimed a lady present, whereupon she was airily reminded

that under the circumstances, the twenty million rats in the Paris sewers afforded a resource of the greatest value."

Paris took refuge in bravado. Never in her darkest moments did the heroic city lose gaiety of heart and a hopefulness not always conspicuous in her children when everything goes well. Among the most touching episodes is the story of the young sculptor Martial, and his model, the frail little child done to death by privation during the siege.

Our authors make no attempt to minimize the brutality of German reprisals. "At Chateaudun, by order of the General in command, soldiers went from house to house smearing the woodwork with petroleum, each house being deliberately fired in turn, their owners, compelled by pistols held to their throats, to assist in the work. A mattress was ignited on which lay an aged paralytic. The old man was stabbed and thrust into the flames."

In a prefatory note they add that they should consider themselves well rewarded if a picture so harrowing and so unvarnished might inspire a detestation of war, and of those who would outrage humanity by daring to force it on the world. The brothers, be it remembered, here addressed a French public, let us hope to good effect, also publics outside the Republic. The enormous popularity of the series is attested by the following fact. A few weeks after the issue of *Tronçons du glaive* the volume had reached its thirty-eighth thousand!

VIII

A TYPICAL ARTISAN

AND

THE PEOPLE'S UNIVERSITIES

A TYPICAL ARTISAN AND THE PEOPLE'S UNIVERSITIES

THE *Université Populaire*, or People's University in France, is a movement of recent date. No allusion is made to these institutions by M. Rambaud in the revised edition of his work on French civilization (1901), yet within a few years they have spread all over the entire country. Townlings of not more than two or three thousand souls now possess their active centre of popular instruction. Experienced lecturers give their services gratuitously during the winter; literary, technical, and linguistic classes are held, and the fraternal spirit is fostered in various ways. The aims of the movement may be gathered from an interesting novel called *L'Opprobre* (Opprobrium), by a lady, the hero of which is an artisan. It is worth while to read this book, as it shows the wide scope of certain popular universities, material interests being combined with intellectual advancement. In Mme. Campain's novel an important feature, namely, a co-operative society, is introduced. I have been assured, however, that such objects are quite secondary, instruction, intelligent recreation and the knitting of social bonds being primarily held in view.

I will now describe a visit paid by myself a few years since to the *Université Populaire*, or *Co-opération des Idées*, in the Faubourg St. Antoine.

Not without a sense of relief I drove from the Paris that plays to the Paris that toils. So tremendous in the fashionable season is the press of vehicles between the Place de la Concorde and the Bois de Boulogne that the tail end of the long straight Rue de Rivoli and Rue St. Antoine seem almost quiet and provincial by comparison.

The once turbulent workman's quarter, that has figured in so many revolutions, is now primarily an emporium of upholstery. One shop-front after another has a display of the carved oak furniture that supplies France and Algeria. Handsome, massive furniture it is, although alike in workmanship and design inferior to the wares turned out in former days, so at least French folks aver, but, as we know, our neighbours are nothing if not hypercritical.

At the extreme end of the Faubourg I alighted before a doorway bearing the inscription in large letters, "Université Populaire," where a quietly enthusiastic *cicerone* awaited me. It is odd how everyday experience contradicts preconceived notions in France! This quiet, unassuming, neatly-dressed artisan, who had made time to run over from Charenton in his dinner-hour on my account, had nothing in common with the fiery French workman of tradition. What most struck me was his air of deep seriousness and profound convictions. Great pride he evidently took in what was partly his own creation, but in speaking of the institution I had come to see, he made me feel that merely intellectual aims were considered by him quite subsidiary to social ideals. As will be gathered from the following brief account, the primary notion underlying

these popular associations is that of cementing human fellowship, the embodiment indeed of Fourierist theories put forward three generations ago. Humanity is to be regarded not as broken up into nations or separated by racial distinctions, but as consisting of one large family. Towards this end all efforts are directed.

The very first explanation M. F—— gave me made this fact patent. Entering a long, somewhat dark corridor, where two women were busy with pails and scrubbing-brushes—the day being Saturday—my conductor opened the door of a small room or closet. "This little room," he explained, "we have set aside for the exclusive use of Russian refugees. The *Université Populaire* is absolutely non-political," he added emphatically; "politics, whether home or foreign, are rigidly excluded from our programme, but it has been felt that a place in which these unfortunate exiles could meet undisturbed would be an inestimable boon to them. They assemble here to talk, write letters, and otherwise profit by quiet and privacy."

"Your association is then open to outsiders?" I asked.

"Naturally, the sole conditions of membership being a subscription of half-a-franc a month and a consistent utilization of the opportunities offered, that is to say, we admit no nominal members. We now number 800, and of these a considerable number are foreigners, Russians, Poles, Germans, Spaniards and Italians, many of these having been exiled for political reasons. We have no English adherents, your country, happily like my own, being a free one.

Another point I will mention. We are not only non-political, but secular and non-alcoholic. Neither on these premises, nor at our château in the Bois de Boulogne, of which I will speak presently, are alcoholic drinks or stimulants permitted." We then passed through a succession of class-rooms, library and reading-rooms, finally reaching the vast lecture-hall, which also forms the auditorium of the theatre. One and all were characterized by the severest simplicity. No attempt whatever had been made to embellish the long suite of rooms, chairs and benches, tables and bookshelves forming the only furniture.

My guide's explanation, however, lent bare walls and unbeautified surroundings a quite different aspect.

"The first lecturers, the foremost actors of Paris come here," he continued, with pardonable pride. "Mounet-Sully, the Coquelins, not to mention others almost as famous, have acted on our stage, giving their services gratuitously. In the case of the former we do not even pay carriage hire. With lesser actors and actresses it is different; as they are put to considerable expense in bringing costumes and dressers, the cost of *fiacres* is always reimbursed."

Behind the stage I was next shown the dressing closets with which the stars of the Comédie Française and other leading theatres are content when making this artistic pilgrimage. Scenery is given on a restricted scale.

When we had completed our survey, M. F—— recurred to the *Château de Dimanche*, or *Château du Peuple*.

"We have recently hired a house on the Neuilly side of the Bois de Boulogne," he said, "for the purpose of enjoying fresh air and wholesome recreation on Sundays and *fête* days, also in order to promote social intercourse. Meals are taken out of doors at a common table, and only members are admitted. The monthly subscription is one franc, with small extra fees for certain entertainments."

My conductor then dwelt with emphasis upon what he evidently regarded as the most important feature of these people's universities, namely, the development of the fraternal, or rather the international, spirit. From this point of view the programmes of lectures and studies are highly suggestive. Not only is the choice of subjects cosmopolitan in the extreme, but for the advantage of foreign associates, lectures are occasionally given by natives in German, Russian or Italian, *inter alia*. Thus, during May of the year in question, a Milanese professor had delivered a course of lectures on Italian poetry in his own language, whilst Belgian, Swiss, South American professors, and others, have discoursed in French upon literary and scientific subjects mainly chosen from an international standpoint. The philosophy of Herbert Spencer had found a Russian exponent. Constantinople, with limelight views, had been described by a native; the agrarian movements in Italy, the Republic of Costa Rica figuring among the topics, showed the universality aimed at and the fundamental principle of the association. The motto of this especial people's university might be the following variation of a celebrated dictum often erroneously attributed to Voltaire, but which in reality was pronounced by Diderot: *Élargissez l'homme*

(Enlarge mankind), This attempt at promoting an international spirit I should set down, therefore, as the cardinal feature alike of the Faubourg St. Antoine and the *Château de Dimanche.*

Next in significance is the prominence given to the formation of literary and artistic taste. Music and the drama are assiduously cultivated, the best classic and modern pieces and compositions being given by amateur performers. Thus Bizet's *Arlésienne* had been recently put on the stage, also *Le Médecin malgré lui* and Musset's *On ne badine pas avec l'amour.* Besides these a variety of musical and dramatic entertainments had been given. Nor are the technical arts neglected. Among the courses of the last session had figured a series illustrating the progress of arts and crafts from the earliest times down to the present day, jewellery, tapestry, wall-papers, porcelain and pottery, soap-making, glass-making, furriery and other subjects being alternately taken in hand. Thus not only taste but technical skill are fostered by the French workman long after the termination of his apprenticeship. Such facts help us to understand French supremacy in so many branches of technical decorative art.

A third point I would emphasize is the moral, rather, I should say, the civic, training afforded by these people's universities. The institution of the Faubourg St. Antoine is absolutely without rules and regulations. Members are expected to make and observe laws for themselves, to maintain harmony and good order by means of self-imposed discipline and restraint. This is a highly commendable feature.

"New members," runs the prospectus of the

Château de Dimanche, "are greatly surprised to find no rules or warnings either in the buildings or grounds. We are convinced that these are unnecessary, and that each of us can advantageously act the part of his own monitor. If in the excitement of sport or in exuberance of spirit any member should be guilty of damaging, no matter how slightly, what is common property, more reprehensible than the culprit is that by-stander who should witness the act without administering a friendly reproach."

And in the same programme we read: "No matter how heated becomes any discussion following a lecture, let us take part rather as seekers after truth than as partisans, abstaining from turbulent manifestations alike of disapprobation or applause. It is also incumbent upon us to avoid anything that looks like pressure or an onslaught upon convictions. Within our free walls there must be no oppression of minorities. It is by such voluntary discipline that the institution confers dignity upon itself."

Thus it will be seen that in Paris large bodies of working men are leagued together, not for purposes of material advantage, personal aggrandizement or political propaganda, but for purely social and intellectual ends. The marvels of Paris almost sink into insignificance when brought face to face with such manifestations of human progress, morally speaking, as these *Universités Populaires*.

IX

ANGLOPHILE AND REFORMER
EDMOND DEMOLINS

EDMOND DEMOLINS

[*Facing p.* 177.

ANGLOPHILE AND REFORMER EDMOND DEMOLINS

In 1906 occurred the death of a great educational reformer and enthusiastic admirer of English institutions and character.

It is now nearly four hundred years since, under a mask of pleasantry, Rabelais satirized the educational system prevailing throughout France. Despite Voltaire's famous axiom, "Ce n'est que la ridicule qui tue" (only ridicule kills), the deadening influences combated by the great wit, Montaigne, and other would-be reformers were in vain. Napoleon, in so far as possible, turned the Lycées into barracks, scholars wore a semi-military dress, and were summoned to meals, lessons and recreation by the sound of a drum. With few and very ineffectual modifications the intellectual training and scholastic atmosphere of French youth underwent little change from Rabelais' day until the establishment of the Third Republic. And during the first two decades of this, the final *régime*, the hands of the Government were too full, and educationalists were too much occupied with primary instruction, to undertake a reformation of the Lycée. It was not till 1899 that a Government Commission was appointed with that end, the President being M. Ribot, whose report on the subject is of great interest.

Among the members of the Commission also

figured M. Lavisse, one of the first living French historians. Whilst this body of experts were laboriously preparing its four enormous tomes of reports and maturing schemes, a Frenchman, already famous in other fields, had taken the bull by the horns. Edmond Demolins' work, *À quoi tient la supériorité des Anglo-Saxons?* (To what cause is to be attributed the superiority of Anglo-Saxons?), had taken the world by storm.

Edition after edition was speedily published and devoured in France. With the utmost dispatch translations were prepared not only in the principal European but in several Oriental languages. No modern author has been more widely read and translated.

The principal points insisted upon in this work, namely, individualism, self-government and expansion, were made the basis of a practical experiment. At Verneuil, Eure, in 1898, M. Demolins opened a school, designed, in the matter of sports, independent habits and methods generally, to anglicize French education.

Warmly seconded by an influential body of men, the innovator was soon enabled to extend his scheme. From very modest beginnings, Les Roches, as the school is called, has become an important public institution, having a charter, a board of directors, and a staff of university professors, native and foreign. The premises comprise a congeries of spacious buildings standing amid several acres of garden and recreation ground.

Full particulars of his methods are given in the author's work, *L'Éducation nouvelle*, first published

in 1898, and reprinted again and again. Regarded alike from the physical and ethical point of view, Les Roches no more resembles the Lycée of former days than our own public schools resemble barracks. I say of former days, because many of the projector's innovations have within the last few years been carried out in Lycées. Football, cricket and other sports have become the order of the day. The system of constant supervision has been modified, and the famous dictum, that at a certain hour of the day the Minister of Public Instruction knows exactly what every school-boy throughout France is about, no longer holds good. On this subject M. Lavisse passed a scathing criticism—"The uniformity of our school routine," he wrote in his report, "is ridiculous. How inconsistent is it, for instance, that hours of recreation should be timed in all climates precisely at the same hour! From one to two o'clock p.m. in the south of France, torrid heat quite prevents pupils from enjoying the recreation ground. But similar rules are in force at Marseilles and Dunkirk!"

M. Demolins' successful experiment may be called the thin end of the wedge. Two vital changes introduced at Les Roches are hardly likely to find their way into the Lycée as yet. From the latter, feminine influence is as completely banished as from a monastery. A mite of nine who enters this scholastic prison never beholds a woman's face except on those days when his mother, sisters or aunts are permitted to visit him. Little boys at the new school, on the contrary, are placed in a preparatory school conducted by certificated lady

teachers, and are under the charge of a matron, whilst elder boys are lodged in the various houses of married tutors, social intercourse and home influences being thereby fostered.

Another and most desirable innovation, from a quite different point of view, is that of the foreign professor. Since the Franco-Prussian War, German as well as other native teachers of modern languages have been rigorously excluded from Lycées and State colleges.

Thus, when in Paris three years ago I was permitted to hear an English lesson given to the pupils of the Lycée Fénelon for girls, I found no countrywoman of my own in the professorial chair, but a French lady professor inculcating English grammar, idiom and pronunciation, which she did, I must say, the latter excepted, very creditably. In a private ladies' school that I know near Paris the difficulty is got over in this way. Paid foreign teachers being out of the question, English girls are received *au pair*, i. e. on reciprocal terms. And some years since I heard that a friend of mine, a French professor of German in one of the great Paris Lycées, "was spending the vacation on the other side of the Rhine in order to rub up his German." No wonder that, brilliantly intellectual though our French friends are, they do not usually shine as linguists!

It was a year or two after the opening of Les Roches that I spent a day with the founder and his family. A delightfully French day it was from beginning to end, one non-educational and whimsical incident proclaiming how, in a certain sense, our neighbours live from hand to mouth.

Three other guests had travelled by the same train from Paris, and with the Demolins family we numbered a large party. As we waited rather an embarrassingly long time in the drawing-room before the midday *déjeuner*, the lady of the house frankly explained such unpunctuality.

"The fact is," she said, "the baker has not arrived with the bread."

Our neighbours over the water are not only supereminently endowed in the matter of wit, but of digestion. From babyhood upwards they consume, and pretty largely, bread almost hot from the oven, hence the supply is taken from day to day, almost from meal to meal. The same is the case with other eatables, provisions being laid in for twelve hours' consumption only.

The baker having at last arrived we sat down to an appetizing meal. After a long survey of school buildings, some already completed and some in embryo, and the delay aforementioned, knives and forks clattered with unusual alacrity. M. Demolins' enthusiasm in the cause of education and his appreciation of all that is best in English methods were delightful to hear.

"See, yonder, that boy of mine," he said, pointing to a lad of thirteen; "he was so happy in his English school that he did not want to return, and has actually acquired an enthusiasm for porridge." The lad did not deny the soft impeachment.

The founder of Les Roches was above all things a Free Trader in education. What he wanted to see broken down was a narrowing sense of nationality. Hence a most original feature in his system

is the foreign sojourn. Each boy, before quitting Verneuil, is sent for a few months either to England or Germany, in order to acquire the idiom and accent of whichever tongue he has been studying. The expense of this so-called stage is included in the yearly terms.

Since my visit M. Demolins' scheme has been immensely developed. Additional buildings on a handsome scale have sprung up around the parent home, and the number of applications from parents is still, I hear, far in excess of accommodation. Such an experiment, some critics will say, cannot count for much as a factor in French education considered as a whole. But ideas spread fast, and, as we have seen, already some of M. Demolins' theories have been put into practice elsewhere. Even the late celebrated Père Didon in his college would loop up his *soutane* and have a bout with his pupils!

Here are a few extracts from French boys going through the English stage of the school curriculum, the letters being in each case addressed to Madame Demolins during 1900.

M. M., aged 13, writes: "Dear Madame,—I write to thank you for having sent me to Hartford House, for every one is very kind to me, and I am not at all sad in England."

H. D., aged 12, writes: "Dear Madame,—My brother and I are quite well. We are four in our bedroom; one boy is an Australian, who is very nice, the other an English boy, who is very amusing." A. C., aged 11, evidently had crossed the Manche with fear and trembling, for he says: "The English boys here are not, as I expected to find them, dis-

agreeable and naughty; on the contrary, one of them especially is very nice." L. N., aged 12, writes: "During the holidays I stayed at Dulwich, but I did not mind it at all, for now I am very fond of England, and of everybody here. The boys are very nice." R. I., aged 10, says: "I have now been six months in England, thanks to you, *chère* madame, and have been very happy there. I shall always like to think of Dulwich School, and of the family I lived with." And so on, and so on, with delightful reiteration occurs the sentiment, the English boys are *très gentils*.

It may be averred that few Frenchmen have done so much for the health, happiness and formation of character of his youthful compatriots as my lamented host of Les Roches. The joyousness by which Rabelais sets so much store is there made to enter into school life. "My master whipt me very well," said Dr. Johnson to his friend Langton. "Without that, sir, I should have done nothing." Wiser far is the theory carried out at Verneuil, that system according to which a boy's curriculum, in the words of Rabelais, "was so gentle, easy and delightful that it resembled rather the pastime of a king than the working hours of a scholar."

M. Demolins was a voluminous but always suggestive writer, and soon after the appearance of his famous book, was issued *Les Français d'aujourd'hui* (Frenchmen of to-day), an attempt at sociological geography—in other words, the mapping out of France into different sections and the tracing of collective character to pursuits.

Thus, according to this writer, the culture of the

vine originates one type of peasant, the care of flocks another, and so on, speculations, if not wholly convincing, certainly suggestive and interesting.

Later from this trenchant pen came a work essentially differing from its predecessors—a work paradoxical, if you will, but forcibly written, and showing great gifts in generalization. *A-t-on intérêt à s'emparer du pouvoir?* (Should political power be the aim of life?), like the volume dealing with Anglo-Saxon superiority, is a plea for individual action, a protest against the two dead weights upon French social and material progress—bureaucracy and militarism. In a series of striking parallels M. Demolins runs counter to accepted historic verdicts, showing that the true apogees of history were neither the imperial supremacy in Rome nor the autocracies of Philip II, Louis XIV, nor of Napoleon; instead, he says the real zeniths of progress and prosperity must be looked for in the Greek and Roman Republics, in the great French agricultural proprietors of the Middle Ages, in the rise of Parliamentary institutions and self-government among ourselves, in the colonial expansion of the British Empire, and in the rise of the United States of America.

Among the many original passages of this volume is M. Demolins' plea for the Middle Ages—"a period when as yet the weight of the State had not paralyzed individual action, and when silently and slowly were effected the suppression of slavery in France, the emancipation of the serfs, the abrogation of military service, the formation of the national

language, the growth of communal liberties, the development of architecture; lastly, the expansion of the Norman race and the conquests of England, Sicily and other regions. Less convincing is M. Demolins' views of the French Church and what he considers its neutral attitude towards the State and society. Has not the Church from the beginning nursed and upheld the very influences he holds so disastrous? Was not the Church ever on the side of the legists—in M. Demolins' own words, the fabricators of absolute power—ever on the side of that personal government which, under another form, to this day makes its tradition felt and would keep the French people under the tutelage of the State? When, moreover, comparing Anglo-Saxon individualism with French bureaucracy, M. Demolins leaves out of the question one essential factor—namely, Protestantism and free inquiry. Of deeper insight is M. Fouillée's conclusion in *Psychologie du Peuple Français:* "France missed her Reformation, and the consequences are felt to this day."

M. Demolins here avers that France is hypnotized by what, in sociological terminology, is called *la politique alimentaire*—in other words, the disease of place-hunting. France, to his thinking, is attacked by a hypertrophy or unhealthy growth of the political organization. Bureaucracy destroys individual initiative and reduces the bulk of young Frenchmen to mere administrative automata. If there is exaggeration in this view, there is also a good deal of truth. All things considered, however—rival factions, love of change, and the ebullient French temperament—

it is not altogether a disadvantage that the huge administrative machine, as the phrase goes, *marche toute seule*, goes of itself.

Our imitator, as we should expect, has many charming things to say about England and English methods, and also tells us some home-truths we should do well to lay to heart. He happened to be in England during the railway race to Scotland a few years ago, an incident which increased his profound admiration for Anglo-Saxon enterprise; at the same time, we get from him a note of warning against the rising spirit of militarism on this side of the Channel, so contrary to the pacific, practical side, the true source of England's greatness.

X

THE HISTORIAN OF A TRAGEDY
M. JOSEPH REINACH

JOSEPH REINACH

[*Facing p.* 189.

THE HISTORIAN OF A TRAGEDY
M. JOSEPH REINACH

One afternoon of August 1899 a large party was assembled for coffee in a beautiful old-fashioned garden at Montfort l'Amaury (Seine-et-Oise), consisting of several families who were here near neighbours, an English guest and one visitor who had run down from Paris for lunch. Meantime two of the number had quitted the group on the lawn, and now paced a shaded walk in earnest conversation. Coffee having been brought in, cups were rattled, other hints given to the laggards. Utterly oblivious of everything but the topic in hand, the pair still paced to and fro. "Shall I fetch Maître Demange and M. Reinach, papa?" asked a young girl of her father. "No, no," was the reply. "Leave them alone; don't you see that they are hard at work?"

Hard at work indeed were those first brave defenders of Dreyfus throughout every day—one might almost say every hour—of that year's long vacation. The great advocate would indulge in a little trout fishing with his young sons; the brilliant journalist would find distraction in society and cosmopolitan literature. But one subject, and one only, absorbed their thoughts, time and energies—namely, the vindication of a man condemned for a crime of which he was not guilty. Even at this stage of affairs the prospect of success was far from promis-

ing. "We were at first alone," said Maître Demange to the present writer, the "we" meaning Zola, Mathieu Dreyfus, Joseph Reinach and one or two others. By that time, according to the same authority, ten thousand Frenchmen and Frenchwomen, and ten thousand only of the thirty-seven million, clamoured for revision. Zola, indeed, had reckoned without his host. That brave and generous challenge, "J'accuse," had not roused his countrymen as a rally. Alike Church, Army, fashionable society, *bourgeoisie* and the people ranged themselves on the side of injustice and fanaticism, and, what was more remarkable still, with very few exceptions, the leaders of science and learning also. M. Anatole France alone of Academicians boldly quitted the reactionary ranks and joined the protestors.

A few days before this coffee-drinking the Henry incident had given a new aspect to affairs. As we were all sitting on the morrow in Maître Demange's drawing-room discussing probabilities, he had said, with a peculiarly significant look—

"You will see; to-morrow we shall hear that Henry has committed suicide." And, true enough, next day's papers brought the news!

Even these events did not change the advocate's judicial frame of mind; he ever balanced the for and against, refusing to be buoyed up by ill-based hopes. M. Joseph Reinach's attitude, on the contrary, never swerved; from the first he believed in ultimate success. "Would you believe it?" said our hostess, a brave lady, from the first standing up for justice; "weeks and weeks ago, when things looked their

very darkest, M. Reinach was every whit as cheery, as assured of victory as he is to-day. Nothing has ever daunted him." The great lawyer's misgivings, however, as to legal redress were but too well founded. The other's faith in moral triumph only years later vindicated itself. And if such moral triumph needed further attestation, we have it in his own words.[1]

Let not readers impatiently throw it aside, saying, "We have had enough and to spare of the Dreyfus drama." We have here no mere record of familiar facts, no putting together of stale material. From one point of view, indeed, M. Reinach's book is as absorbing as a detective novel by Gaboriau or Conan Doyle. It gives not only the genesis and elaboration of a crime, but shows us plain as day the motives for that crime, black as any defacing contemporary annals. With the proceedings of Revision and the Rennes trial we are here not concerned. The narrative begins with the discovery of the bordereau, and ends with the court martial and degradation of Dreyfus in 1894. Step by step, stage by stage, we are led through the labyrinthine intricacies of the abominable conspiracy, the entire plot in such hands becoming transparent. But the work does not only excel in insight and arrangement, as the following passages will show. M. Reinach's vigorous French often attains a high level of eloquence.

The book begins with a portrait of General Mercier, named Minister of War by M. Casimir Perier in 1893. At this time M. Joseph Reinach

[1] See *Le procès de* 1894, *L'Histoire de l'Affaire*, par Joseph Reinach.

had a seat in the Chamber of Deputies. He writes: "A man of tall stature is Mercier, attenuated, always well dressed, with sharp features, and an expression of coldness and reserve. His smile at this time, ever somewhat forced, became later a fixed parting of the lips, a grimace; his eyes remained provokingly half open. Courteous, self-centred, he gave an impression of energy, whilst with attention and not at first without surprise he followed the debates, studying a scene new to him. On the day when the Anarchist Vaillant threw a bomb filled with nails into the Chamber I was sitting just behind Mercier. A nail rebounded from my desk to his own. In the midst of the smoke, noise and confusion he handed it to me, saying, 'Cela vous revient' (This comes back to you). Not a muscle of his face moved." It may be remembered that on this occasion the President of the Chamber, M. Dupuy, in the words of a leading English journalist present, showed coolness worthy of the Roman Senate at its greatest. "Gentlemen," he said, without so much as a start or change of countenance, "the sitting continues."

Such impassibility did not always mask unswerving purpose. Early in this awful history our author writes: "Thus, on a sudden, the following problem presented itself to Mercier's mind. If scruples of conscience should prevent his colleagues from condemning a man hitherto unsuspected, on the mere fact of similarity of handwriting (the authorship of the bordereau had now been fastened upon Dreyfus), what would be his own position, himself already an object of general animosity, equally discredited by the État-Major and public opinion? To incur the

responsibility of such a scandal, namely, to proceed upon no other grounds than that document, would be to risk disavowal by the Government and dismissal at the hands of the President. On the other hand, to draw back, to resist the influence of his surroundings, was to pose before the General Staff, the public and the press as the protector of a traitor, of a rich Jewish officer. Who will ever know what was the inner conflict of this man, what counsels he now decided to follow, what arguments finally decided him? Only a great poet could re-create such inner warfare. The historian can merely relate facts." The chapter entitled "The Surrender of Mercier" is one of the most painful throughout the book. With no light heart evidently did a French general and Minister of War consent to the deed for which he is branded in the eyes of his contemporaries and of history.

Thus is another of Dreyfus's evil geniuses, the ignoble Henry, portrayed—

"The Commandant Henry was an officer risen from the ranks, gifted with good sense, unscrupulous, ambitious, pliant and quite uncultured. This peasant veneered, at home in all the cunning of Cheap Jacks at a fair, knew how to make his trickeries look like good faith. Plebeian although he was, he could read character, he understood with whom he had to do; brainless aristocrats and superficial *savants*, he could measure their detestation of the Jew and their thirst for his condemnation. Whilst Du Paty with the ferocity of an inquisitor casts about for proofs of guilt, Henry quietly sits down to forge them."

And whilst so occupied he pretended to sympa-

thize with his victim. It was Henry's task to escort the dazed, distracted Dreyfus to the prison of Cherche-Midi, pending his court martial. "My Commandant, this is frightful. I am accused of a hideous thing," said Dreyfus. "What kind of thing?" asked Henry, affecting kindliness. "My Commandant, I am accused of high treason." "The devil you are?" retorted the other with an innocent air. "On what grounds?" And all the while the apparent sympathizer with a comrade in distress knew exactly what had passed, was in part engineer of the crime. Hidden behind a curtain, Henry had just before heard the dictation of Du Paty and Dreyfus's consequent arrest. Du Paty, perhaps one of the most odious figures in M. Reinach's portrait gallery, had forsworn a splendid ancestry.

"The wrong-headed representative of the new military caste recruited from Jesuit schools, the inquisitor not only of Dreyfus, but of his young wife, his brother and nephew, was descended from an emulator of Voltaire, the rehabilitator of Calas. It was his great-grandfather, President of the Bordeaux Parliament, who, in 1786, rescued three men unjustly condemned to the atrocious punishment of breaking on the wheel. His *Mémoire Justificatif* produced a profound sensation at the time. In scathing terms he assailed the would-be miscarriers of justice. 'At least I demand,' he said, 'that the accused may be allowed means of defence!'" "Thus," adds M. Reinach, "spoke a former Du Paty under Louis XVI, just three years before the Revolution. But the Jesuit having again obtained authority in France" (as Gambetta truly said, "when

the country sinks, the Jesuit rises"), "a hundred and five years after the Declaration of the Rights of Man, another Du Paty assists in the destruction of liberty."

Once arrested and, according to military terms, placed "in pace," Dreyfus was as completely buried alive as is the Russian political prisoner of to-day. For seven entire weeks he was left to himself and his agonizing thoughts, no communication being permitted him with his family or his friends. By a refinement of cruelty, books, pens, ink and paper were forbidden. It was the hope of his persecutors that such treatment would madden him into some kind of avowal. Here M. Reinach's pen is truly eloquent—

"And not a book! Yes, that balm and consolation even of the murderer awaiting his doom was denied him. The narrative of travels, the story that for a passing hour makes the prisoner oblivious of his wretchedness or of his crime, that lifts him from his dungeon walls, transporting to blue skies of far-off lands or to the world of romance; this sacred thing was denied to another object no less sacred, namely, misfortune personified."

Having made clear the origin and motives of the conspiracy against justice, M. Reinach next shows how the condemnation of a man behind his back became possible. We have only to read the chapter entitled *La Libre Parole* to understand by what means the verdict was brought about. "In order that Dreyfus should be condemned by his judges," writes our author, "he must first be condemned by the people. Nothing easier! Rochefort, but above

all, Drumont, had for some time systematically undertaken the poisoning of the public mind. Perpetual invective, however, by degrees loses persuasiveness. Reiterated mendacities fail to convince. But what pious soul can distrust the utterances of *La Croix*, that journal whose emblem is Christ crucified, and *Le Petit Journal*, an innocent little newspaper disclaiming politics? Can simple folks feel suspicious of being led astray here? The section of the press still remaining honest is soon silenced by the torrent of barbarism revived, the hue and cry of the anti-Semites stifles their voice. Drumont, as did Robespierre during the Terror, calmly looks on. The French people, naturally kindly and good at heart, are goaded into ferocity. Even the peasants besiege their Deputies with the cry, 'When, then, are you going to deliver us from the Jews?'"

One especially revolting feature of this campaign, as M. Reinach shows, is that among its most ferocious leaders were Jews, or men having Jewish blood in their veins, these renegades hounding down their victim as if in his person to avenge the indignities suffered by their race. This portion of the book should be carefully read. No citations give an adequate notion of the French press as then represented by Drumont and his crew.

We now come to the trial. Here is a sketch of Maître Demange: "In the first instance, Mathieu Dreyfus had recourse to Waldeck-Rousseau for the defence of his brother, but this great advocate had long since confined himself to civil causes. He next recommended Edgar Demange, a brilliant pupil of

Lachaud. Demange, without identifying himself with any school of politics, by taste and family belonged to the traditions of the Empire. A sincere Catholic, a passionate lover of the Army, penetrated with the spirit of Berryer, the principles of liberty and justice were to him a religion. 'I will study your brother's case,' he replied. 'If I find the slightest reason to doubt in his innocence the *dossier* shall be returned to you.' Having thoroughly gone into the matter, he betook himself to the prison of Cherche-Midi, and informed the Jew that his innocence was patent, and that he would plead his cause."

But, as M. Reinach asks, on behalf of the seven officers who convicted an innocent man, how could it have occurred to these that Henry was a perjurer, and that the Mercier report was made up of forgery upon forgery? And here we are reminded of a fine passage in one of M. Anatole France's works. Under the head of *Le Bureau*, he pleads for Dreyfus's judges, and his country-people generally, on similar grounds. How was it possible to connect the French army with a gang of forgers shut up in a closet, men busy with penknife, pen and ink and sand-paper, inserting a word here, erasing another there, their business secret as that of false coiners? And Drumont had done his work well. A wave of veritable savagery now swept over the country. Even the poet of love and tender emotions, the once gentle, somewhat namby-pamby Coppée, now old and "converted"—rather, like some others, re-converted—could thus gloat over the coming degradation of the Jew. "Ah," wrote the author of *Le*

Passant, "let us all be allowed to see the vile face of the traitor; one by one let us spit upon him!" Mercier wanted the spectacle to be a sort of personal triumph, to have his unhappy victim marched from one end of Paris to the other in the eyes of the people! The Government, as we know, decided otherwise, but, even under more decent conditions, this scene was, without doubt, as shameful as any transacted in modern times. The report of it in English papers remains on the memory a permanent horror.

When all is said and done, the most astounding feature throughout this history is the character of Dreyfus himself. Very near madness he evidently was in the early stages of his martyrdom, but having once resolved to live, he resolved, at the same time, to remain sane. And shortly after his "pardon" a French friend thus wrote to her English correspondent: "I have seen Dreyfus. He talks calmly of the past, and without manifesting a trace of vindictiveness towards his judges, much as any man might do of another's misfortunes." But we have only to compare the portraits of the brilliant young officer before his arrest and the white-haired, prematurely aged man rescued from the Devil's Island, in order to realize the nature of his sufferings. Well, not only for France, but for other countries where Clericalism and anti-Semitism go hand in hand, that this tragedy has found so able an historian! M. Reinach's voluminous history of the final phase, the proceedings followed by Dreyfus's public rehabilitation and promotion in the army, I do not touch upon here. A word or two, however, about the writer,

whom I had the honour of meeting so often and under such memorable circumstances.

Born in 1856 of rich Jewish parentage, M. Joseph Reinach's honourable career as politician, historian, political economist and social worker has been uninterruptedly and colossally active. The French *Who's Who* for 1910 (*Qui êtes vous?*) gives a list of the high positions he has filled since first entering the Chamber in 1889. Were not the Dreyfus story so unutterably revolting, no little pleasantry might be extracted from the invectives uttered concerning him in fashionable and, it must be admitted, devout circles. Against a man who had risked position, loss of friends, the social ban, even imprisonment and life itself for the sake of truth, society rose in horror!

M. Reinach's *opus magnum* is his voluminous and exhaustive history of the Dreyfus tragedy, of which the volume here noticed was the introduction, the entire work being published in 1908. Only those who were at pains to follow the procedure of the first trial as afterwards given in the *Figaro*, can realize the time, labour and thought involved in such a work. It is indeed a stupendous, intellectual achievement.

A few words about his noble colleague, Maître Demange, in whose company I have also spent many pleasant and instructive hours. So near was my host's country-house to the great advocate's villa that we always heard his indoor breakfast and dinner bell. The two families, a neighbouring artist and his wife and a fourth resident living a mile or two off, constituted the pro-Dreyfus circle. Outside our little coterie all was downright hostility, or at least acceptance of unsifted evidence. Among ourselves,

telephone and telegraph were constantly at work, every day was marked by alternating hopes and fears, the entire period was one of excitement and tension. But there would be breaks, oblivious intervals, momentary relief from the strain.

The lead of a brilliant hostess, animated discussions on literature, art and social questions, M. Reinach's pointed, clear-cut sentences, Maître Demange's inexhaustible fund of stories, made table-talk a thing to remember. Amongst other clients of whom he told us had been the treasurer of the Paris pickpockets, a very gentlemanlike personage who brought up his sons to the learned professions!

An amiable trait of the criminal lawyer was his cordial feeling towards England at a time when such an attitude was wholly exceptional. English cookery he held in high esteem, especially that *chef d'œuvre*, a plum-pudding, (*le roi des suets*—the king of suets—as he called it). Upon several occasions I have had the pleasure of sending a Christmas pudding for the family gathering at Montfort-l'Amaury or in the Rue du Bac, Maître Demange, like every other professional man in France, being two-housed, having his town flat and his *campagne* or country retreat.

XI

FRENCH VIEWS OF ENGLAND
MM. CHEVRILLON, COSTE, BOUTMY AND OTHERS

FRENCH VIEWS OF ENGLAND
MM. CHEVRILLON, COSTE, BOUTMY AND OTHERS

I

HERE are set forth the views of several Frenchmen upon that all-engrossing topic—ourselves. However much the writers quoted may differ, from whatever standpoint we are regarded, their criticisms should prove suggestive and informing, not the least so such cursory and careless notes as those of a free-lance among the Boers. The well-known names of the late M. Boutmy and of M. Chevrillon head the list. In taking up French studies of English characteristics and institutions, meet subject for pleasantry as many of these may appear to the average French mind, we must remember that there is one European nation, and one only, for which our neighbours entertain not perhaps liking, but admiration, and that nation is England. Little enough of French opinion regarding ourselves is known at home. To use a homely Suffolk colloquialism, we must summer and winter folks before really learning what they think, and all who have summer'd and winter'd our friends on the other side of the Manche will doubtless assent to the above-named opinion.

M. André Chevrillon is the nephew of Taine,

and on his shoulders seems to have fallen the literary mantle of his illustrious relation. His studies of England and English life (*Études Anglaises*), originally published in the *Revue de Paris*, are not only delicate pieces of criticism; they abound in psychological insight. Thus the account of his experiences in England four months after the beginning of the Transvaal War is quite startling in its realization of the national mood. No English writer could have treated the subject so lightly and with so penetrating an irony. And we feel as we read that this genial guest on our shores finds himself in a land that is twofold strange. It is England, a country and a people as unlike his own as well can be, but it is not the England of tradition, of history, or of ideals.

M. André Chevrillon understands England and English literature perhaps better than any Frenchman living, and speaks our tongue as if to the manner born. In the flower of life, his contributions to literature, if not numerous, are one and all literature in the proper sense of the word, the most remarkable being the *Études Anglaises* and *Oriental Studies*.

M. Chevrillon reached London in February of 1900, finding, of course, the conventional fog. The month may be February or July, in England a Frenchman ever finds fog, or, which answers every whit as well, he imagines fog everywhere. He no more expects a blue sky or sunshine here than an English statesman suspected the possession of horses and guns by the Boers.

The first thing M. Chevrillon did was to attend the music-halls and other places of popular entertainment.

"I looked about me," he writes. "When will any one be enabled to compare a hundred Parisians and a hundred Londoners similarly brought together? How would such an experience enable us to understand alike the past, the present and the future of both countries? On the countenances here collected I read on every face, calm, force, simplicity, the features are clear-cut, stamped with energy, not coarse and unformed as those of the same class in Germany and Russia; on each physiognomy one could read stability of character and convictions, each reflected a life of repose and self-containment, as a rule free from violent perturbations either of heart or brain. The Parisian crowd I conjure up from memory is more impulsive, more impressionable, more easily intoxicated, more effeminate, and much more intellectual—I do not say more intelligent. The Parisian crowd is also more varied in type, less homogeneous, but equally stamped with the impress of nationality."

A philosophic Englishman could not more delicately and truthfully give us the word of "the man in the street" at this epoch. With keen-edged but playful irony, M. Chevrillon describes the crowds applauding limelight representations of our defeated generals. "One detail," he writes, "appeared to me extraordinary. Not only were the heads of the army cheered, but those just then conspicuous for their failures—Buller, Gatacre, Methuen. And incredible as it may seem, hip, hip, hoorays greeted one of the most disastrous incidents in the campaign, namely, a view of Lord Methuen watching the slaughter of Magersfontein! Three reasons explain this popularity of misfortune. To begin

with, the sporting spirit, the dictum—give a fellow another chance—the give and take of athletics, by which a man learns to honour his victor. Secondly is to be taken into account English pride. An engagement lost by the Queen's troops was never a defeat. Let a general announce a regrettable incident, all the same he is acclaimed out of respect for his nationality and the uniform he wears. Thirdly must be considered the remainder of the feudal spirit. The masses respect the old nobility to which Lord Methuen belongs—in their eyes, indeed, the only aristocracy existing."

Our author has much admiration for the "vast" policemen of London, any other word seems inadequate for the description of such physical proportions, also for the equally "vast" cooks of public grill-rooms, but he flees the capital in horror. The announcements and head-lines of Jingo newspapers, "Cronje dying hard," "Cronje in a death-trap," "Boers withering in a very hell of fire," fill him with repugnance.

As the guest of country gentlefolks and of University professors, he finds what to a thoughtful mind is infinitely sadder and more surprising than the popular demonstrations of London. Dropping his light ironic vein, M. Chevrillon writes with real eloquence on the extraordinary and most lamentable phase through which the majority of Englishmen and Englishwomen were at that time passing. Here are his impressions after attending a farewell service given to Volunteers in a cathedral town—

"The preacher having finished his peroration, buried his face in his hands, and the congregation

silently offered prayers for the Volunteers present who were afterwards to receive the communion. Then, subdued, full of suppressed emotion, the crowd passed out, the organ pouring forth a strain that seemed to express the dream of a people! During that service every one present had become more intensely English. Clearer, more imperious now seemed to each the destiny of their race. The worship, with its poetry and music, had just reached the level of conscience. Still stronger was faith in self, belief in the national, the normal type. I could better understand that proud toast of British officers in the Transvaal—Our men, our women, our swords, our religion! I realized how without scruple, in good faith, an injustice could be planned and accomplished, and how here there could be no pity for a small, heroic people."

We have also an interesting article on the "Apollo of the Music-Halls," in other words, Mr. Rudyard Kipling; also critical studies of Shelley and Burne-Jones, all well worth reading.

Several years late (1909) has come another and equalling absorbing book from the same fascinating pen. To M. Chevrillon, Ruskin must have proved a far more engrossing and sympathetic study than Mafeking or the Apollo of the Music-Halls. Ruskin, with Darwin and Spenser, M. Chevrillon tells us, is one of the best-known Victorians in France. He adds that, for his countrymen, the man himself and the genesis of the æsthete, moralist and social reformer, possess greater interest than his teaching. From this point of view M. Chevrillon's work is written, and English readers will find its

pages of staying interest. Ideas, he writes, exist only in individuals, are only by the intermediary of individuals rendered manifest and active. By studying Ruskin and the influences which developed and fructified his genius, Frenchmen will perhaps in some degree be able to unriddle that strange compound of personalities making up the English race.

The writer was well qualified for such a task, and the adaptability of the French language in hands so competent is here conspicuous. Ruskin's exquisite prose loses neither force, colour, nor, what Michelet considered more important that either—rhythm—in the numerous and highly characteristic citations here given. Take, for instance, the passage beginning, "Lichen and mosses—how of these?" or the wonderful description of Turner's *Slave Ship*—"It is a sunset on the Atlantic. . . ." Alike the tender grace of the first and the lurid power of the second are given without the loss of meaning or point. Indeed, something is gained by the breaking up of too long sentences and the occasional substitution of one word for two or three.

From Ruskin's theories of art the French critic passes to his *rôle* as moralist and social reformer. The following reflection is what we might expect: "It is under the latter head that Ruskin's apparent contradictions shock a Frenchman. Champion of poverty and wretchedness, he is at the same time the champion of authority. Whilst passionately denouncing social abuses, he nevertheless scoffs at democrats and their dreams of equality, and with even greater bitterness derides the Liberal conception of liberty. He attacks the rich, but would shut

out the people from power. He declares that society is founded upon theft and usury, and at the same time abhors revolutions. He can imagine no reform that does not emerge from existing social and political conditions." It is not only French admirers who see in Ruskin's beautifully expressed theories contradiction upon contradiction. Ruskin finds in the Venice and Florence of the thirteenth century models of life and society, and tells us that, with the Bible, Walter Scott and Roger's *Italy* formed the intellectual nutriment of his childhood.

But how strikingly do recorded facts bear out Schiller's dictum that the highest artistic development may exist side by side with the utmost moral depravity! Roger's poem—in other respects delightful—describes some of the most atrocious crimes that ever stained human annals. And what about Beatrice Cenci, a story of unspeakable horror, occurring during the apogee of Italian art? Could not the nineteenth-century England, of which Ruskin wrote so scathingly, show better "models of life and society" than republican Venice and Florence?

Despite such inconsistencies, such leanings to feudality and blindness to signs of the times, Ruskin and his work form a noble theme. Worthily has his French interpreter dealt with what was evidently a labour of love. *La Pensée de Ruskin* is a philosophic and psychological study of sterling literary merit.

II

Nothing is more characteristic of the two nations than the methods by which English and French writers strive to make them acquainted with each other. Mr. Hamerton, in his *French and English*, jots down the experience of twenty-five years' residence in France, illustrating each proposition by anecdotes and traits of character that have come immediately under his own observation. The late learned M. Boutmy (*Essai d'une Psychologie du Peuple Anglais*) sets to work systematically as a mathematician proving his thesis. From a few principles, laid down with admirable clearness, he traces the evolution of the English mind as shown in literature, art and social and political institutions. So true it is, as another French writer affirms of his country-people: "We reason more than we imagine, and what we best imagine is not the outer, but the inner world of thought" (M. Fouillée, *Psychologie du Peuple Français*).

Closely as M. Boutmy has kept to facts, wide and accurate as is his knowledge of our history, profound as is his admiration for England, her political systems and her people, this instinct of generalization occasionally leads him far astray. He trusts too much to reasoning, and too little to experience. Mr. Hamerton spoke of Frenchmen and Frenchwomen as he found them, and was seldom at fault; M. Boutmy, although not without knowledge of English people and their ways, cannot for a moment relinquish his theories, and theories, how-

ever sound, will not always accommodate themselves to facts.

The book is a model of style: crystal clear is every one of these short, telling sentences, similes often occur of rare felicity, illustrating more than one chain of arguments. "Taken as a whole," writes M. Boutmy, "English literature is certainly one of the richest and most admirable of any in Europe, and there cannot be two opinions as to the class of works in which it excels. The vocation of English literature is the delineation of individual will and of human activity." One chapter winds up with this charming and subtle figure: "A chemical law of recent discovery shows that given the presence of certain bodies, and the possibility of several combinations, that combination takes place which exhausts the greatest amount of heat. We may apply this formula to the English intellect, and affirm that the creative faculty with which it has most affinity is the faculty that develops, stimulates and renders efficacious the activity of the human race." The sovereign power of will, the imperative necessity of something to overcome, the irrepressible force of individuality—these features, according to M. Boutmy, characterize the chief glories of English literature, namely, the drama, in other words, Shakespeare and the nineteenth-century novel. On the difference between English and the French fiction, considered as works of art, also on English art itself, the reader will find much that is new and illuminating. The same may safely be averred of all that M. Boutmy has so carefully thought out upon our language, laws and system of government.

It is when he takes in hand the Englishman of to-day—the man in the street—that we are reminded rather of John Bull as he figures in French music-halls and penny dreadfuls than of the reality. With all his admiration for "the rich originality" of England and her sons, our author's method has led him into something worse than caricature. For instance, he describes the average Englishman as devoid of sympathy and pity, and naturally cruel and given to brutal sports. But to the honour of the country, be it said, here was promulgated the first law rendering punishable inhumanity to animals. The French Government, tardily enough, so far imitated us as to pass the Loi Gramont, a law that remains almost a dead letter. Visit a French country town on market-day, or, for the matter of that, Paris. Every day you will see acts of wanton cruelty to animals, for which in England the offender would be summarily haled to prison. Again, M. Boutmy charges the working classes here with addiction to brutal sports. But whilst the favourite pastimes of Englishmen of all ranks are football and cricket, there is hardly a town in Southern France without its bull-ring, men, women and children flocking thither on Sunday afternoons to witness and applaud scenes of indescribable barbarity.

Further, M. Boutmy entertains the notion that of all created beings Englishmen are the least sociable. Now, nothing more strikes a resident in provincial France than the lack there of sociability as we understand the word. A hundred and one things bring neighbours together in our English village—cricket matches, flower-shows, garden-parties, to say nothing of the intercourse of both sexes and all grades

brought about by Council Schools, County and Parish Councils, Guardianships of the Poor, and so on. Nothing of the kind exists in France—a point insisted upon by Mr. Hamerton and other well-known writers on French life. Here is another misapprehension. Even in our day, M. Boutmy wrote, many of our labouring classes imagine the Sovereign to be all-powerful—in fact, Government means to them the authority of Queen or King. But the Council School, the halfpenny newspaper, the village reading-room, last, but not least, the rural vote, have long changed all this; our author would be astonished, for instance, at the number of newspapers and excellent periodicals supplied to English villages of a few hundred souls. The money spent thereon would make the hairs of a well-to-do French peasant farmer stand on end.

Despite these and many other errors inseparable from the plan of such a work, M. Boutmy's volume is as much to be commended to English readers as to his own countrypeople. And fortunately the Manche is no longer regarded as a barrier not to be overcome by our neighbours on the other side. Every year sees an increased number of French visitors to our shores. Many, let us hope all, will soon convince themselves that the average Englishman is neither a tyrant in his own home, nor a misanthrope when he has crossed the threshold; in fine, that the originality and force of character this writer so warmly admires are allied with graces he unfortunately failed to discern.

From the same publishing house a few years since appeared almost simultaneously two works equally interesting to English readers. In his *Le Colosse*

aux pieds d'argile (*The Monster with Clay Feet*), a certain M. Jean de la Poullaine painted England as a country wholly decadent and despicable, a civilization fast falling into disrepute and decay. The philosophic author of *Les Principes d'une Sociologie objective* takes an antipodean view. Judicially and learnedly M. Coste surveys the social evolution of humanity from the beginning down to our own time, without any hesitation placing England in the foremost rank. This writer divides social development into five stages, the fifth, embodying the highest as yet found practicable, perhaps as yet conceivable. England, and England alone, has reached that stage, whilst some other States, notably France and Germany, are slowly following in the same direction. Briefly summarized, M. Coste's generalizations may be said to amount to this, the characteristics of English civilization are individualism and a total absence of caste. The last-mentioned and dominant feature of primitive societies is unknown in England, whilst in France it is not so. "It is impossible to deny," sadly writes our author, "that *l'esprit de classe* ('caste') is still a survival in France, at any rate it exists in a latent condition, ready at any moment to be called forth by popular passion. A hundred years after the great Revolution, instead of individualizing, we classify, we are constantly arranging bodies of men instead of individuals. The Panama and Dreyfus agitations afford instances in point. Incrimination has been collective. We may apply the same observation to economic questions. Instead of discussions between masters and men, we find capital and labour at

warfare, socialism and property opposed to each other. Whilst this survival of caste is witnessed among us, we cannot say that we have attained the fifth stage."

In matters speculative, artistic and literary he rightly awards the palm to his own country. "Ideologically," he writes, "I am inclined to place France in the front rank. Her intellectual initiative, her artistic taste, her aspirations—if somewhat Utopian—would seem to warrant such an award; sociologically, I have no hesitation in declaring England superior."

The work is full of interesting suggestion, and need not frighten the non-philosophical reader by its title. M. Coste finds in Carlyle's hero-worship an exaggeration of individual action in any race or age. The force of individualism tells collectively on progress. "The amelioration of society," he writes, "is due, less to the intervention of exceptional characters than to the continuous, unwearied co-operation of upright and energetic men" (and, we presume, women?) "who conscientiously do their work, personalities remaining lost in the crowd."

From class hatreds to international antagonisms is but a step, and, as we should only expect, M. Coste is a warm advocate of cosmopolitan intercourse.

III

Not the least instructive portion of the voluminous literature devoted to the South African war was that contributed by foreigners, soldiers of fortune throwing in their lot with the Boers. M. de la

Marche, author of *Un Voluntaire chez les Boers*, entertains a warm affection for his second Fatherland, thus he styles the Transvaal, and in a lyrical dedication declares himself ready again if necessary to risk life and limb on its behalf. The first experience of the enthusiast was anything but alluring. His narrative, brief, comprehensive and to the point, is one unbroken story of mortification and disappointment. Our artillery officer reached Pretoria on March 25, 1900, and the shores of France just five months later, evidently as delighted to return as he had been to embark.

To the quick, excitable French nature the Boer deliberation and slowness seemed maddening. At Pretoria, writes M. de la Marche, the general business of everybody seemed to wait. Folks seemed to do nothing but wait.

"The day after my arrival I learned, not without astonishment, the line of conduct pursued by the Transvaal Government towards strangers in my position. A volunteer had to show his papers, take the oath of allegiance and sign certain formularies. He then got tickets entitling him to an outfit, saddle and bridle, horse and gun, but no orders whatever! He was free to join any *commando* he pleased, and received not a farthing of pay!"

Still more disconcerting than the last fact was the coldness with which volunteers were received. Whilst grateful for sympathy, the Boers had found these heterogeneous legionaries embarrassing in the extreme, and at a council of war held at Kronstadt it was finally decided to place all foreigners under the command of Villebois-Mareuil, a choice, as our

author writes, that filled every Frenchman's heart with joy. In the highest spirits he set out with some of his countrymen to join the French general's force. At Kronstadt a curious experience awaits him—

"Every day, train after train passed through the town, crowded with Boers, horses and oxen, all turning their backs on the front. Here is the explanation of a fact, *bizarre* to say the least of it. The Boers do not like to remain long absent from their farms. When matters seem at a standstill they clamour for a short leave of absence. Their generals humour them in this in order to prevent defections. Thus it came about that during the two or three days we spent at Kronstadt at least a thousand Boers passed through the town on their way home. Such a method of warfare seems incomprehensible to Europeans, but we must take men as they are, and the matter goes far to explain the strange dragging on of this war."

Full of spirits and hopefulness when he quitted Kronstadt, M. de la Marche returned thither a few days later greatly dejected. Villebois-Mareuil had met with his death, and the volunteers' first week of campaign had proved wholly disastrous, the little band undergoing all kinds of hardships without encountering either British or Boer!

The following occurrence, as narrated by our author, is worth citing, since it shows the difficulties that these foreign legions gave to the Boer authorities—

"Whilst we were at Kronstadt a mutiny broke out among our company. A score or so of the men wanted to separate from us, choosing their own

leaders. President Steyn gave orders for the arrest of the mutineers; nine on making their submission, however, were retained; the rest lay down their arms with the exception of an Arab, who betook himself with his accoutrements to the Austrian camp. Next day, by the President's orders, he was put under arrest."

At Brandfort our author had an interview with General Delarey and his brother—

"Two thoroughly Boer types were these men with untrimmed hair and beards, bronzed complexion, intelligent, a slightly mistrustful expression, eyes looking you frankly in the face, and drest so simply as to suggest poverty, no indication whatever of military rank. Conversation proved difficult, our two hosts only speaking Dutch, my compatriot Didier translating my French into English, and a Boer interpreter putting his English into Dutch. The General, as I feared was the case, appeared to set little store by his new command, that is to say, of the foreign legions. When I mentioned the matter of artillery, he merely replied, with a smile, "I have no cannon." This note of disillusion runs throughout the entire narrative. Now it is a field cornet "who receives the French volunteers very coldly." Now it is General F. Botha who, on being appealed to for forage, coolly replies—

"At a farm half-a-mile off you will be able to obtain hay at a shilling the truss." The night being pitch dark and the said farm in consequence as good as non-existent. Upon another occasion, M. de la Marche presents himself at the head-quarters of

Commandant Blignant, a Boer of French extraction. "But he was in a surly humour, and would hardly answer my questions." Nor were the burghers and country folks generally ready to jump into the arms of their would-be deliverers. Food and drink were freely offered to them, but the loan of a waggon with horses or oxen was grudgingly accorded. To the infinite satisfaction of our Frenchman he was at last granted an opportunity, as he hoped, of "driving the English into a corner." The motley crew of volunteers—French, Russians, Germans, Portuguese, Greeks, and how many more?—took part in the engagement of Taba N'cho, or Thobas-Berg, losing several men and having a large number severely wounded. Then followed the retreat to Pretoria, now our author as a narrator being at his best. The greatest difficulty occurred through the wandering propensities of the horses. Let loose to pasture at nightfall, they would stray miles from the bivouac before dawn. "Here," writes M. de la Marche, "our Russian volunteer, Padilewski, was of the greatest service. Thanks to his Siberian experiences, he was accustomed to wild horses and vast plains." Arrived at Pretoria, after experiences which considerably damped our author's ardour, he encountered the same lukewarmness on the part of the Boers. "Twenty officials were charged to look after the volunteers, but on arriving we found their offices closed, myself and my companions being thus thrown entirely on our own resources." After a time he succeeded in obtaining an interview with the heads of the remount department.

"These gentlemen," he writes, "on hearing of my

request for remounts, looked at me with some surprise, saying, 'There is not a horse to be had in the town.'

"'Then, gentlemen, what are we to do?' I asked. 'We cannot follow the army on foot.'

"'That is your own look-out,' was the answer."

Finding himself and his companions thus hopelessly at a loss, on the entrance of Lord Roberts, M. de la Marche constituted himself a prisoner, with the intention of getting back to France by hook or by crook as expeditiously as possible.

His reception by our officers is thus described—

"They received me courteously, and with mingled surprise and curiosity. They seemed at a loss to account for my conduct in taking up arms on behalf of the Boers, and one or two put the question point-blank—had I been handsomely paid for my services? The gratuitousness of my services astonished them no less than my motive."

Impatient at delays, the Frenchman and his three fellow-prisoners decided upon escape. An amusing account is given of the visit of an English officer and his subordinate, their object being to inspect the premises.

"Finding that we were all French, this officer entered into conversation with us, speaking our language fluently and without accent. I confess that I was in no humour for a chat just then, for, were our secreted arms discovered, it would have been a case of St. Helena or Ceylon. Providence watched over us. The sergeant having peeped into the granary and seen nothing but dust and lumber, came down, to my great joy, saying, 'Nothing here, sir!'

whereupon, with an 'All right,' and military salute the officer took his departure."

The fugitives, in trying to get through the English lines, were discovered, but, more fortunate than many of their fellow-volunteers, were forthwith sent back to France.

One story—that the most instructive of the book—may fitly terminate our notice: "Not to be forgotten is this speech of the Russian military attaché to my countryman Jean Carrère: '*The best friend your country and mine have ever had is Chamberlain.*'" The italics are my own.

XII

POSTSCRIPT

[I venture to add, by way of a postscript, the following pages contributed in French by request of M. Gaston Bordat, editor of *la Revue pour les Français*, the chief object of which is literary internationalization, the fruitful, interesting and hitherto neglected study of nation by nation. My French having passed muster on the other side of the Channel, perhaps needs no apology on this.]

LA FRANCE VUE DU DEHORS

(*Revue pour les Français*, Oct. 25 and Nov. 25, 1909.)

LA FRANCE VUE DE L'ANGLETERRE

I

Rien assurément n'est plus renversant, plus paradoxal, plus tragi-comique, que les rapports anglo-français pendant le dernier siècle et même aujourd'hui.

Voilà deux pays séparés seulement par soixante minutes de bateau, deux peuples qui peuvent se guetter de leur fenêtre—avec un télescope les habitants de Boulogne voient leurs voisins de Douvres à la promenade—, deux races à l'apogée de la civilisation, restés absolument étrangers l'un à l'autre, Absolument, dis-je? A peu près, en tout cas. Tandis qu'il y a toujours eu des relations amicales entre les mondes littéraires, artistiques et savants, "the man in the street," c'est-à-dire les peuples, aux côtés opposés de la Manche, se sont perpétuellement ignorés. Ou plutôt, Jacques Bonhomme et John Bull, vis-à-vis l'un de l'autre, n'ont été que des caricatures et des mythes, langues, mœurs, idéals demeurant totalement incompris.

Cette ignorance ne se bornait pas au peuple. Ecoutez les poètes et les romanciers. Notre Thomson dont les idylles soulageaient les dernières heures

de Madame Roland, Thomson, l'homme le plus inoffensif au monde, en même temps le plus paresseux, l'oisif à qui manquait l'énergie de cueillir une pêche ou un abricot, qui les suçait sur tige, Thomson est devenu presque emporté en qualifiant "Insulting Gaul, Presumptuous France" (la Gaule insolente, la France altière). Seul le nom de la France lui donnait un peu de force, une plume virile !

Shelley glorifiait la Révolution, mais dans ses charmantes notes de voyage on trouve cette phrase :

"Il n'y a rien à voir en France."

Un bel esprit, contemporain du délicieux poète, Thomas Love Peacock, a caractérisé le peuple français en termes dignes de Thersite. Pour lui, le Français était un Olla Podrida monstrueux, un mélange des qualités les plus odieuses. Même de nos jours, nos meilleurs écrivains ont suivi ces exemples. Tennyson, grand poète et en même temps grand chauvin s'y est signalé. Sa jolie fantaisie, *La Princesse*, se termine avec un éloge exagéré de la toute puissante, toute estimable, toute vertueuse Angleterre et une comparaison très humiliante pour sa voisine. La Grande Bretagne ! voilà un modèle social, politique, moral, la solidité même, tandis que la France est "une plume pour chaque vent qui souffle,"[1] le pays d'emportements, d'instabilités, de cataclysmes.

Et nos romanciers ! leur fallait-il "the villain of the piece," un type dépravé ? c'était en France qu'on le cherchait. Notre bien aimé Dickens par exemple, avec sa *Mademoiselle Henriette*, la femme de chambre de *Bleak-House*. Cette fille se croyant

[1] Shakespeare.

insultée, ôtait bas et souliers, traversait pieds nus prairies et bois trempés par la pluie : vengeance peu française. Plutôt Henriette aurait donné à son insulteur une forte gifle ou se serait servie de ses ongles.

Les jolies héroïnes françaises de nos romans sont également fictives.

Lisez *A Daughter of Heth*, de William Black. La jeune orpheline dite française, jetée dans un milieu écossais, très austère, peu sympathique, se laisse appeler "Coquette!" "Coquette" a été son nom depuis son enfance. Est-ce que jamais une jeune Française bien élevée aurait accepté un tel sobriquet? Et Meredith encore. L'héroïne de *Beauchamp's Career* possède au moins un nom convenable. Ici commence et se termine sa qualité nationale. La Renée, de Meredith, aristocrate, censée bien élevée, se conduit précisément comme une Américaine émancipée. Cette demoiselle de dix-sept ans n'a aucune réserve, pas la moindre petite idée du bienséant. Sans arrière-pensée, elle arrange des rendez-vous avec un jeune officier anglais. En tête à tête avec lui, elle fait des excursions en gondole à Venise, elle lui permet même de se déclarer et l'accepte sans en souffler mot à son père. La fille d'un honnête savetier ne se laisserait jamais conduire d'une telle façon.

Si chez des gens instruits, observateurs, fins, lesquels ont voyagé en France, on trouve tant de mécomptes et de préjugés, chez "the man in the street," l'appréciation du peuple français est facile à deviner. Le Français était donc toujours aussi petit que Napoléon et Thiers (on n'avait jamais entendu parler des athlètes Bretons et Cévenols), il était

toujours très léger, toujours il faut admettre, de bonne humeur, aussi fort brave. Mais sans solidité de caractère, une espèce de papillon. Quant à la femme française, elle reste toujours frivole, vaniteuse, occupée principalement de la toilette. Et quant aux mœurs françaises, n'en parlez pas, je vous en prie !

De l'autre côté du Détroit, mêmes bévues. Lisez les caricatures de mes compatriotes dans les romans Français, milady Dudley, de Balzac, avec son "my dee" pour "my dear" (mon cher), le grand romancier ne se donnant pas même la peine d'épeler correctement ce joli mot de quatre lettres ! Prenez la mégère anglo-saxonne de Victor Cherbuliez dans "Après fortune faîte," pour citer seulement deux exemples. En effet, Balzac, tout court, déclare :— "Les Anglais, je les déteste." Barbey d'Aurevilly, dans ses charmantes lettres à Trébutien, qui viennent d'être publiées, s'exprime en mêmes termes. Historiens, ainsi que romanciers, ne nous sont pas moins antipathiques. Henri Martin, Michelet et tant d'autres, tout en admirant "ce grand peuple," nous ont trouvés haïssables.

Pour les petits Français, ainsi qu'a observé M. Rambaud (*Histoire de la Civilisation Française*), ce ne sont pas les évêques français qui ont condamné Jeanne d'Arc, mais les "Goddams anglais." Cette légende se perpétue.

Il y a quelques années je regardais la mauvaise statue de l'héroïne devant l'église de Saint-Thomas d'Aquin, lisant cette devise :

BRULÉ PAR LES ANGLAIS

Deux braves campagnardes avec leurs mioches et leurs paniers, lisaient en même temps l'inscription mensongère. L'une disait bas à sa voisine :— "Voilà une Anglaise" et me tournait le dos avec un air rébarbatif.

J'ai pris la peine de m'adresser à ce sujet au Conseil municipal de Paris, afin de faire ôter une légende si peu historique et si préjudiciable à *l'Entente Cordiale*. On m'a répondu très poliment que l'affaire concernait le gouvernement.

Et l'année dernière une institutrice Française, venue ici, m'a raconté qu'à la veille de son départ pour Hastings son petit frère lui disait en pleurant amèrement :

"Ah ! ma pauvre sœur ! Ces méchants Anglais vous mettront à mort, comme ils ont fait avec Jeanne d'Arc."

Maintenant, je vais raconter quelques expériences personnelles, assez plaisantes !

Il y a environ trente ans, je passais très souvent une partie des vacances chez des amis en Bourgogne. Tellement affectueuses furent nos relations qu'on me regardait comme un membre de la famille : Une matinée, ma chère vieille hôtesse me pria de faire pour elle une petite commission. C'était d'aller commander du beurre chez une fermière à deux kilomètres de distance et une demi-heure de Dijon par chemin de fer.

"Vous n'êtes donc pas Alsacienne, mais Anglaise," me dit la bonne ménagère, après quelques paroles. "Eh bien, vous êtes la première Anglaise que j'aie vue de ma vie ! Les Anglais sont protes-

tants à ce que j'ai entendu dire. Dites-moi, vous autres protestants, croyez-vous en Dieu?"

Toutefois, quand on allait déguster du gibier ou quelque friandise chez mes hôtes, on invitait le curé, brave campagnard, qui ne faisait pas scrupule, comme a fait un de ses confrères en Bretagne, de serrer la main de l'hérétique.

"Dites-moi, Madame," disait-il naïvement. "A la mort de votre reine, qui succédera au trône d'Angleterre?"

Une autre fois un homme instruit me demandait:

"Il y a une loi, n'est-ce pas, défendant aux paysans anglais d'acquérir de terre?" Et un vieux monsieur que j'ai connu assez bien, croyait comme à l'Évangile qu'au marché de Smithfield à Londres tous les jours on pouvait voir des maris offrant leurs femmes avec une corde au cou à vendre à l'enchère. Et mon confrère, l'aimable et spirituel Max O'Rell m'a raconté qu'un jour une vieille châtelaine Bretonne lui demanda sérieusement:

"Dites-moi, Monsieur, vous qui connaissez l'Angleterre. Y a-t-il des chemins de fer dans ce pays-là?"

Dans ce village Bourguignon, dont je viens de parler, plusieurs familles du même nom avaient leurs campagnes. C'était un véritable *clan*, une tribu, pas d'autres étrangers n'étant admis au cercle que moi-même.

Dans les premiers jours, j'ai été regardée par ces parents de mes hôtes avec une curiosité un peu déconcertante. On me guettait, on me regardait, on m'écoutait à peu près comme si l'amie de la grand-mère eût été Japonaise ou Chinoise.

A quel astre néfaste tient cette ignorance mutuelle, ignorance si nuisible aux intérêts, non seulement des deux nations, mais au progrès du monde?

Catégoriquement, il faut d'abord accuser la mer!

"La Manche," dit amèrement Michelet, "est Anglaise," c'est-à-dire à l'idée du grand historien, qu'elle sévit plus rudement contre les côtes françaises que contre les nôtres. Nous autres insulaires ne pouvons pas comprendre ce qu'est un trajet de mer pour les continentaux. Et en effet une bourrasque entre Calais et Douvres n'est pas amusante. Mais c'est égal aux flegmatiques anglais. Jamais on ne s'arrête à cause de ce que nos marins appellent, "a jumpy sea," une mer qui saute.

Si les frontières excitent des jalousies, des inquiétudes, les vagues furibondes du Détroit n'opposent pas moins un obstacle aux cordialités anglo-françaises. J'ai eu l'honneur de connaître un Français fort distingué et dont le courage moral a triomphé des plus cruelles épreuves. Ses collègues ont voulu le fêter en Angleterre. Très gravement, il m'a expliqué son motif pour refuser.

"Je suis très sensible aux amitiés de vos compatriotes," me disait-il. "Je voudrais bien voir Londres, la plus grande métropole au monde, mais—" ici il secouait la tête: "je n'aime pas l'idée de traverser la mer!"

On ne peut pas lier les deux pays comme on a lié le Mont Saint-Michel à la Côte normande. Moi-même, adoratrice de la France—et de la Troisième République—je ne caresse pas l'idée d'un isthme, d'un pont ou d'un tunnel. Je voudrais toujours rester géographiquement insulaire. Historique-

ment, poétiquement, la Grande-Bretagne a tout à perdre par une annexion physique quelconque, matériellement rien à gagner.

Au moins, c'est mon idée.

Après la mer, reste la question de langues.

Pourquoi au commencement du xx^e^ siècle les deux peuples sont-ils aussi ignorants de leur langue mutuelle qu'au Moyen-Age, ou à peu près? Encore à citer Michelet :—" Combien de malheureux, dit-il, dans les affreuses guerres de Cent Ans, se sont massacrés parce qu'ils ne pouvaient pas crier grâce dans la langue de leurs adversaires! "

Depuis les Edouards et les Georges, venons aux régimes de Victoria et de notre bon Edouard VII, " King Teddie " ainsi qu'on l'appelle par bonhomie et par affection.

En 1876 le Congrès scientifique de la France se réunissait à Nantes où j'avais passé l'hiver chez madame Guépin, veuve du docteur bien connu. J'assistai à plusieurs séances, entre autres, à celle de la Section géographique. Un Anglais, l'amiral Ommaney, avait préparé une communication assez importante, mais il ignorait complètement le Français. Le président de la section qui de son côté ignorait l'anglais, invita à haute voix un traducteur volontaire de l'audience. Silence absolu. Très timidement alors, je me jetai sur la brèche, tant bien que mal, traduisant phrase par phrase l'étude du brave marin.

Quarante ans plus tard, presqu'un demi-siècle s'est écoulé. A peu près reste la même ignorance.

Il y a quatre ans j'ai assisté à un banquet offert

à certains fonctionnaires Français. Le déjeuner terminé, le Président, *gentleman* instruit, ayant fait ses études à Oxford ou à Cambridge, a voulu inviter les messieurs à fumer. Il m'a prié de traduire les quatre mots nécessaires ! Bien entendu, ce membre d'une Université aurait pu prononcer un discours très correct dans la langue de Périclès ou de Cicéron. De français il n'en savait mot.

Je vous demande pourquoi bourrer les têtes de jeunes Français et Anglais de grec et de latin et leur laisser ignorer la langue des contemporains et de leurs plus proches voisins. Les professeurs, les cours n'ont jamais manqué. Une mauvaise volonté de la part des élèves, mauvaise volonté encouragée par les préjugés politiques et religieux s'opposèrent toujours au progrès.

Après la mer et la langue, venons à la littérature. Ici il y a beaucoup plus à dire.

Si on ne parle pas le français, la plupart des Anglais sont en état de le lire et malheureusement, le roman français, surtout le mauvais roman trouve toujours des traducteurs. Le tableau de la vie chez nos voisins, donné par les romanciers les plus en vogue, est-il fait pour inspirer du respect, de l'amitié, de la confiance ? Prenez trois livres répandus partout, écrits par des auteurs renommés : *La Terre*, de Zola, *L'Héritier*, de Maupassant, *Le Journal d'une femme de chambre*, par Octave Mirbeau.

Quoi d'étonnant qu'il y a cinq ans, lorsque parut un livre intitulé : *Les Français dans leur homes* (Home Life in France), plusieurs incrédules objectèrent à l'auteur :

"Les Français chez eux? Mais est-ce que les Français tiennent à un home, à une vie de famille?"

Des volumes et des ouvrages pareils, traduits ou non traduits, sont lus partout, on les compte par milliers. J'admire Zola, il a écrit de belles choses, il cherchait la vérité, mais après trente ans d'études sur le vif, moi aussi je connais un peu le paysan français. Avec joie j'ai lu la belle appréciation du propriétaire rural dans le grand ouvrage de M. Hanotaux.[1] Ainsi que lui je connais parmi les cultivateurs des hommes d'élite, des hommes dont le pays doit être bien fier. Mais selon Zola, et avant lui le grand Balzac, le paysan français n'a ni morale, ni sentiment, ni intelligence, il a seulement les qualités qui le rendent détestable, c'est-à-dire la dissimulation, la ruse.

Quant aux tableaux cités de la vie bourgeoise par Maupassant et Mirbeau, il n'y a qu'une réflexion à faire. Si effectivement ces auteurs ont dépeint les mœurs françaises, la France est condamnée. Aucune société ainsi tombée dans la fange ne pourrait se relever et prendre une suprématie sur les nations.

Les Français, donc, en se laissant ainsi décrier par eux-mêmes, ne peuvent pas se plaindre si les étrangers acceptent ces caricatures et là-dessus, puisent leurs jugements. Et ce ne sont pas seulement les romanciers, mais aussi les hommes poli-

[1] Dans le vieux village perdu où j'écris ces lignes, sur ce rocher calcaire où l'existence est si dure et la concurrence si pénible à soutenir contre l'essor des ralliés, j'ai parmi mes voisins, dix chefs de familles, fils de l'enseignement primaire, dont j'atteste l'esprit ouvert, la prudence avisée et la dignité civique relevée.

tiques qui sont ici coupables. Je cite la parole d'un Français (*The Westminster Gazette*, juin 1909), M. Henri Turot, au sujet de ce défaut national : " Malheureusement, dit-il, beaucoup de mes compatriotes se font un véritable plaisir de discréditer leur pays." M. Turot parlait des affaires purement politiques, de la marine, et d'autres questions de la sorte.

En revanche, pour nos voisins, les Anglais, sont souvent représentés en hypocrites, brutaux, peu aimables, les Anglaises, d'une humeur acerbe, et—les toutes jeunes filles excepté,—d'une laideur épouvantable. Et l'Angleterre, jusqu'aux dernières années, est censée un pays laid, brumeux, sans aucun intérêt pittoresque ou esthétique.

Je me rappelle un voyage, il y a vingt ans, de Dijon à Paris, fait avec une Française, paraît-il assez bien élevée. Nous causions de nos deux pays. Je remarquai que, tandis qu'en France on trouvait mes compatriotes partout, les siens étaient rares chez nous. Elle me répondit vivement. " Mais, pourquoi, madame, vous étonnez-vous? C'est que la France est le plus beau pays du monde et que l'Angleterre est très laide." Inutile de lui parler des lacs de Westmerland, des paysages ravissants de Devonshire, des montagnes de l'Écosse. Notre petit jardin d'île resterait toujours pour elle d'une laideur affreuse.

Comment détruire ces préjugés enracinés, ces mécomptes si nuisibles à une vraie entente, ces idées parfois risibles, parfois au plus haut degré malveillantes?

Mon regretté confrère et ami, ami aussi de la

France, M. Hamerton, n'espéra jamais voir une vraie amitié entre Anglais et Français. Esprit très judicieux, peu porté à l'enthousiasme, dans son livre fort intéressant, mais un peu froid, il dit : " Il faudra être satisfait si jamais nos deux nations (M. Hamerton avait épousé une Française et passait sa vie en France) arrivent au respect mutuel, sans plus demander."

Je ne suis pas de son avis. Comment pourrai-je partager un tel sentiment, comptant, ainsi que j'ai le bonheur de faire, autant d'amis Français, éprouvés et intimes, que d'amis Anglais. Le Français a un génie pour l'amitié. Des amis Français une fois gagnés, c'est, dans le langage de notre jolie rubrique de mariage, " pour les bons et les mauvais jours, pour les temps de santé et de maladie, pour la prospérité et l'adversité, jusqu'à la séparation finale."

Les Anglais sont fort remuants, changeant souvent leur domicile. Les Français sont très, même trop casaniers. Ainsi, il arrive que mes compatriotes se perdent de vue, la distance qui les sépare les rendant souvent oublieux. Nos amis Français ne nous oublient jamais.

A mon idée, il n'y a que trois moyens de perpétuer *l'Entente Cordiale*, si heureusement inauguré par notre bon, " King Teddie."

Déjà, en 1878, un esprit clairvoyant avait prédit cette bien heureuse révolution, et en effet, c'était une révolution, pas autre chose.

" Le prince de Galles, c'est l'Angleterre jeune, courageuse, altière, remplaçant l'Angleterre caduque, hésitante, morbide . . .; le brillant héritier du trône a encore d'autres idées en tête . . . et qui sont

toutes marquées au coin d'une grande méfiance à l'égard de la politique de M. Bismarck."[1] Et déjà la voie pour des démarches politiques est préparée. Ainsi que l'écrivit l'année dernière le sous-secrétaire au ministère de la Guerre, lord FitzMaurice, à une compatriote qui avait beaucoup étudié la France, surtout la France rurale : "vous autres écrivains, avez plus fait pour l'Entente Cordiale que les hommes politiques, parce que vous avez préparé le terrain."

Quand en 1876, M. Hamerton faisait lire, par George Eliot et le philosophe Lewes, les épreuves de son volume intitulé : *Français de nos jours* (Modern Frenchmen), ce dernier observait :—"Fort intéressant, mon cher, mais où diable allez-vous trouver un public?"

Aujourd'hui, à chaque instant paraît quelque livre, soit sur la France, soit sur la littérature française, soit sur les Français. Romanciers, voyageurs, critiques ne s'occupent d'autre chose et il faut croire qu'ils trouvent des lecteurs! Il serait curieux de constater combien de ces livres ont paru depuis la visite de M. Loubet à la cour de Saint-James, en 1905. Tant bien que mal, Anglais et Américains cherchent à interpréter la France pour leurs compatriotes.

En même temps, ce qu'on peut appeler le snobisme patriotique a été en évidence. Le roi est toujours imité! Il y a eu des visites internationales de médecins, de municipalités, de députés, de savants, à n'en plus finir, une réciprocité

[1] *Mémorial diplomatique*, cité par M. Hanotaux. La France contemporaine, vol. iv, p. 313.

d'efforts bienveillants. Et cependant, il reste tant à faire ! Nous sommes loin, bien loin encore du respect mutuel auquel se bornaient les espérances de M. Hamerton. Restent encore mille préjugés à déraciner. A quoi bon donner des institutrices et des instituteurs français à nos enfants si en même temps on les laisse taquiner, même mépriser leurs maîtres et maîtresses, et seulement parce qu'ils ne sont pas Anglais !

Que sert la connaissance de notre langue aux petits Français—raisonneurs dès le berceau—s'ils ne cessent de nous regarder comme les bourreaux de Jeanne d'Arc ! Et pour ne pas me trop aventurer sur une route tellement épineuse, je veux seulement observer qu'à l'avenir, ce ne sont pas des complications politiques que nous avons surtout à redouter, mais plutôt des complications religieuses. Voilà l'écueil contre lequel *l'Entente cordiale* pourrait un jour se briser ! Les Français catholiques, amis de la paix et de l'Angleterre, rendraient un service inestimable aux intérêts internationaux en conseillant à leurs co-religionnaires réfugiés en pays protestant, de modérer leur zèle de prosélites. Ayant, sans être invités, accepté notre hospitalité, on aurait cru que le bon sens, sinon la gratitude, leur enseignerait une grande réserve et une grande discrétion à cet égard. Mais pas du tout. A l'occasion du Congrès eucharistique, l'année dernière, un conflit des plus pénibles a été seulement prévenu par l'action directe du Gouvernement et même, dit-on, du roi. Jamais dans notre histoire, la loi civile n'a céde au cléricalisme ! Que les religieux et les religieuses français n'en abusent pas plus que les nôtres ! Encore quel-

ques imprudences de la sorte, leur position en Angleterre serait intenable.[1]

Plus agréable à contempler est le progrès des idées françaises chez nous. Toute œuvre importante, d'histoire, de biographie, de critique est de suite traduite en anglais. On commence même, mouvement assez tardif, à lire les poétes français contemporains, et à comprendre que l'époque poétique sur l'autre côté de la Manche ne s'est pas terminée avec la vie de Victor Hugo. Aujourd'hui nous avons toute une littérature consacrée aux poètes français.

Même, ainsi au moins prétend M. Emile Faguet,[2] les beaux vers de Auguste Augellier sont plus goûtés ici que par ses compatriotes. Citons aussi "*The Oxford Book of French Poetry*," recueil publié sous les auspices de l'Université d'Oxford, puis le volume que vient d'annoncer la maison Constable, à Londres. "A Century of French poets." (Un siècle de poésie française.)

Si la prose française est difficile à comprendre, encore plus difficile est la poésie. Pour les esprits fins et subtils, que de délices, que de nouveautés, que d'émotions, ici à leurs portes ! *Carcassonne*, *Les deux Gendarmes*, *Les trois Hussards*, de Nadaud. *Bon gîte*, de Déroulède. *La Flûte*, de J. Richepin. *Le Ciel*, de Barbey d'Aurévilly, et tant d'autres petits chefs-d'œuvre, voilà un régal !

[1] Il y a cinq ans, cette femme distinguée et bonne catholique, M^me^ Th. Bentzon, visitait une amie Anglaise à Hastings. En se promenant ensemble, elle voyaient dans le jardin d'un couvent (de religieuses françaises expulsées) une grande statue de la Vierge, placée sur une hauteur soi-disant et visible de tout point, enfin placée pour être vue. "Que de mauvais goût et que d'erreur !" dit-elle.

[2] *Revue des Deux Mondes*, 15 juin courant.

Pour finir, quelques réflexions générales. Je suis loin de partager les vues exprimées par M. Colquhoun dans le numéro de mars 1908 de cette Revue. L'idéal bourgeois, écrit-il, est étroit à un degré qui affaiblit tout le courant de la vie nationale.

Mais si la civilisation est quelque chose de plus qu'une activité matérielle égoïste, la France tient et tiendra toujours la suprématie des nations. Elle reste l'axe sur lequel tourne le mouvement universel de l'intelligence, le développement le plus étendu de la pensée.

Dans son admirable livre *Anticipations*, M. Wells caractérise cette suprématie par une comparaison des plus simples et des plus pratiques.

"Jetons, dit-il, un coup d'œil sur l'étalage d'une librairie de chemin de fer en France et comparons-le avec la même chose en Angleterre. Au premier, nous trouvons des livres de science, d'érudition, de philosophie, de critique, d'histoire, chaque département de la littérature richement représenté; au second, on ne trouve qu'un amas de romans et de journaux populaires illustrés." C'est la même chose partout. Vous y demanderez vainement, par exemple, un volume de Spencer, de Darwin, de Huxley.

"La pensée, chez nos jeunes gens, est étouffée en Angleterre, me disait dernièrement un savant de Cambridge." Le football, le bridge, le golf, le jeu, et les petites feuilles frivoles, *Tit Bits*, *Answers*, etc., et les romans à sensation remplacent la lecture sérieuse."

Certes, la pensée n'est pas étouffée en France. Le grand mouvement des esprits n'y est pas em-

pêché par les mauvais romans et le "sport." Tandis que nous nous préoccupions avec l'idée d'une invasion prussienne, la France s'occupait de l'atlas stellaire, la mappemonde de quatre millions d'astres! Je fais allusion au Congrès astronomique qui, il y a deux mois, tenait ses séances à Paris.

"Mon cher British Snob, écrivait Thackeray en 1866 (The book of Snobs), croyez-vous pour un seul instant que le Français soit votre égal? Vous savez fort bien que vous ne le croyez pas. C'est nous autres qui sommes la bonne bouche du monde (The first chop of Society). C'est constant, il n'y a pas à discuter. C'est un axiome."

Mais aujourd'hui John Bull, le snob aussi bien que "the man in the street," sans aller jusqu'à Paris est en état de modifier ces vues.

Prenez, par exemple, la superbe "Wallace Collection," si magnifiquement installée au centre de Londres et ouverte gratuitement tous les jours, le dimanche compris. Voilà une leçon pour les snobs si délicieusement, mais si cyniquement immortalisés par l'auteur de *La Foire aux Vanités*. Tout un musée d'objets d'art français, tableaux, tapisseries, reliures, céramique, mobilier, bijouterie, émaux, émanant des ateliers d'Outre-Manche, rien de banal, de goût exagéré, d'inachevé, chaque objet un véritable chef-d'œuvre, le tout ensemble affirmant ce que c'est que le génie français.

Dans un second article, j'exposerai les griefs anglais contre les Français et la France même, selon notre roi Edouard VII : "notre plus proche voisine et chère amie."

II

Afin de caractériser les principaux griefs britanniques contre le France et les Français, nous allons commencer par les moins sérieux, qui sont en même temps les plus vexatoires.

L'axiome réglant la vie anglaise "Time is money" (Le temps c'est l'argent) n'est pas généralement accepté en France. Dans le pays par excellence des jolies pendules, personne n'y semble faire la moindre attention. On pourrait croire qu'en France la moyenne de la vie humaine est celle qu'ambitionnait Mme de Sévigné, c'est-à-dire, une centaine d'années. Ce qu'on perd de temps dans vingt-quatre heures est incroyable !

Le spirituel et bien regretté M. Edmond Demolins a pu ainsi écrire au sujet de la compagnie des omnibus à Paris : "Elle n'a organisé qu'une chose de bien : l'attente." (A-t-on intérêt à s'emparer du pouvoir ?)

Dans l'administration des chemins de fer, c'est la même chose.

Pendant quinze ans, j'avais l'habitude, après avoir séjourné chez des amis Bourguignons, de retourner à Paris par le rapide de l'après-midi. Maintes fois il m'est arrivé de rester une grande heure dans la gare de Lyon. Pas de facteur, pas moyen d'avoir ses affaires, pas d'inspecteur de douane, pas de voiture !

Une fois, comme je m'étais résignée à passer la nuit dans une salle d'attente, un pauvre chiffonnier m'approcha avec sa hotte sur le dos :

— Mais Madame, me dit-il, je pourrai parfaitement porter vos affaires en ville.

— Je ne serai que trop heureuse d'accepter votre offre obligeante, mon brave Monsieur, lui répondis-je, mais comment traverserai-je Paris d'un bout à l'autre à pied.

Depuis quelques années, il y a eu certaines améliorations, mais le fait reste. Entre Paris et Marseille, il n'y a qu'une seule ligne de chemin de fer, tandis qu'entre Manchester et Londres, les hommes d'affaires et les touristes ont le choix de *six routes* appartenant à plusieurs compagnies, l'une mieux organisée que l'autre. En France, le P.-L.-M. tyrannise le public comme un régime autocratique !

De même pour d'autres lignes.

Il y a cinq ans, j'ai pris le rapide du courrier de Boulogne à Amiens. Je demandais un billet de rapide pour Rouen. Je suis arrivée à quatre heures de l'aprés-midi et entre ces deux grandes villes industrielles, jusqu'à minuit, il n'y avait *qu'un seul train et aussi un omnibus !* Il m'a fallu partir à cinq heures pour n'arriver qu'à dix.

Quelle perte de temps *aussi* par manque de surveillance. Avec toute une armée de fonctionnaires, que les touristes sont découragés en France ! Ils sont portés à croire qu'on ne voudrait pas les voir. Voilà assez récente expérience :

Je voyageais, en 1906, d'Amiens à Meudon. Arrivée à la gare Saint-Lazare, j'ai, tout naturellement, pris mon billet pour cette destination, mais, en voulant faire enregistrer mon bagage, il y eût bataille d'une demi-heure entre le porteur et l'employé, le premier insistant que j'étais en règle, le

dernier que je ne pouvais pas avoir de billet d'enregistrement pour Meudon. Pas de surveillance, pas de contrôle. Enfin les deux hommes paraissant prêts a se battre, un deuxième porteur intervient, m'informant qu'il aurait fallu prendre un billet pour Meudon-Bellevue. Mais je me demande un peu pourquoi au guichet ne m'avait-on pas demandé : " Pour Meudon, Meudon-Fleurie ou Meudon-Bellevue ? "

Le Français, toujours facile, toujours résigné aux petits inconvénients en voyage, ne comprend pas ce qu'est cette " organisation de l'attente " aux Anglais toujours pressés. Ayant sucé avec le lait maternel cet axiome : " Time is money," le temps c'est l'argent, l'exactitude, la ponctualité, pour nous, ce sont des devoirs, des obligations strictes.

Voilà encore un grief.

Ici mes lecteurs français peut-être vont sourire, car, pour eux, c'est une bagatelle, mais, pour nous autres, c'est sérieux.

Depuis trente ans, j'entretiens une correspondance assez considérable avec des amis habitant la France. Les maisons de commerce et les gens d'affaires exceptés, jamais on ne vous donne son adresse. Ainsi comme on ne peut pas porter cinquante rues et cinquante numéros de maisons dans la tête, toutes les fois qu'on écrit à Paris ou à Marseille, il faut consulter son livre d'adresses ; encore une perte de temps et de bonne humeur. Ici, afin de faciliter la correspondance, les adresses se trouvent non seulement sur les feuilles et cartes-postales, mais encore sur les enveloppes.

Chaque médaille cependant a deux côtés. Rien

en France ne nous rappelle cette énergie dévorante des États-Unis si bien décrite par Mr. Henry James (The American Scene) et par M. Foster Fraser (America at Work).

C'était au génie français d'inventer le joli mot : *flâner*. Où ailleurs est-ce qu'on peut si délicieusement flâner, vivre sans regarder la pendule, comme si la vie moyenne était d'une centaine d'années.

. . . . . .

Passons maintenant aux critiques plus sérieuses des institutions et des mœurs françaises.

Dans ses jolis livres, Pierre de Coulevain oppose l'hospitalité anglaise à la réserve du caractère français.

"Si," dit le spirituel auteur de l'*Ile inconnue*, "Madame la France allait ouvrir ses portes aux étrangers, elle se croirait sous l'obligation d'ouvrir son cœur aussi, dont elle tient la clé plus jalousement qu'on ne suppose."

Sur ce terrain je marche, ainsi que Agag, très délicatement. Grâce aux circonstances tout à fait exceptionnelles j'ai joui d'une hospitalité en France, large, inoubliable, sans bornes. Et maintenant que ma santé ne me permet plus de voyager comme autrefois, que de regrets j'éprouve à ne plus pouvoir accepter les invitations nombreuses reçues par la poste ! Partout, chez les riches ainsi que chez les peu fortunés, chez les catholiques ainsi que chez les protestants, chez les chers annexés de Lorraine ainsi que chez nos parents, les braves Normands, où est-ce que je n'ai pas trouvé l'accueil affectueux, le "au revoir" réitéré ?

Mais mes expériences à part, Pierre de Coulevain est dans le vrai. En général, l'hospitalité accordée aux Français ici est loin d'être réciproque chez eux. Chez nous, les étrangers munis de lettres reçoivent un accueil peu cérémonieux, sans doute, même bien un peu gauche, mais venant tout droit du cœur; pour le lunch ou le dîner des enfants, pour le thé, le dîner du soir, il y a toujours un couvert mis à l'intention de l'hôte. En France, rien de cela! Une visite de cérémonie, une invitation encore plus cérémonieuse,—le plus souvent un repas offert au restaurant, voilà tout ce que rapporte une introduction à Paris ou ailleurs.

Il y a quatre ans, une délégation du Conseil municipal de Paris est venue à Londres, invitée par le County Council. Chaque invité était reçu par une famille anglaise, personne n'est descendu dans un hôtel.

L'année suivante, une délégation londonienne a retourné cette visite. Mais, au lieu d'être reçus chez des familles, en amis, un luxueux hôtel était mis à le disposition des membres, la réception officielle était magnifique; de la vie domestique, des intérieurs parisiens, ils ne voyaient rien.

Ce n'est pas seulement envers les étrangers, mais entre eux, qu'on trouve une absence d'hospitalité tout à fait incompréhensible aux Anglais. Je me rappelle un après-midi chez M. Hamerton, près d'Autun, il y a vingt ans. Mon compatriote habitait la France, sa femme était française et ses enfants ont été élevés en France.

C'était un dimanche et une visite est annoncée. Un voisin, gentilhomme Bourguignon, sa

femme et sa fille, sont venus passer une demi-heure.

Sitôt partis, mon hôte observait :

" Pour nous autres, Anglais, le manque de sociabilité entre voisins, en France, est stupéfiant. Par exemple, les familles, dans ces alentours, se voient fort rarement, échangeant seulement de loin en loin quelque visite cérémonieuse."

La vie sociale, gaie, variée, de notre vie de province est inconnue.

A mon avis et j'ai l'appui d'un homme d'une grande autorité, le regretté fondateur de l'École des Roches, ce n'est pas, ainsi qu'affirme Mme Pierre de Coulevain, la réserve innée du caractère national qui suffit pour explication. Ce manque universel, traditionnel, de l'hospitalité en France est plutôt dû à l'obsession de l'épargne, à la nostalgie de l'économie, à l'horreur des dépenses. Écoutez M. Edmond Demolins—(" A-t-on intérêt à s'emparer du pouvoir? ").—" L'Anglo-Saxon est la machine la plus perfectionnée qui ait jamais existé pour gagner de l'argent et pour le dépenser." Et selon son raisonnement le Français est la machine la plus perfectionnée pour le garder. " Il faudrait développer en France," ajoute-t-il, " le type également apte à gagner de l'argent largement et aussi largement à le dépenser." Nos amis Français ont quelquefois attribué le vie généreuse des Anglais, la sociabilité large et ininterrompue, même des ménages les plus modestes à l'ennui, au spleen légendaire du caractère britannique. Les Anglais laissés à eux-mêmes, dit-on, n'ont aucune ressource. Il faut bien chercher des commensaux, des hôtes, afin de se distraire !

Mais est-ce que c'est un poète Français qui a écrit "La joie entraînante de la vie?" (The wild joys of living) (Browning, *Saul*). Est-ce que c'est un romancier Français qui a fait sourire les habitants du globe entier? Et notre grand poète Browning, avec son optimisme, Dickens, le Shakespeare de l'Angleterre moderne, avec sa belle humeur, saine et pure, est-ce qu'ils ne sont pas de vrais John Bulls, ces types-là? —pas les fantômes de nos critiques malicieusement spirituelles?

Non, l'hospitalité anglaise vient de la main toujours ouverte et du cœur toujours ouvert aussi. Et le contraire que nous voyons en France—je ne parle pas des hospitalités magnifiques officielles—c'est M. Hanotaux qui l'explique. L'origine est admirable, désintéressée, c'est que chaque Français vit non pas pour lui-même, mais pour ses enfants, plutôt, pour *son* enfant et ses descendants. Enfin pour l'avenir matériel des générations à venir. Voilà une abnégation que l'Anglais ne comprend pas, ne comprendra jamais.

Un de nos grands hommes de loi, qui est maintenant "at the top of the tree," au sommet de sa profession, disait l'autre jour à un interviewer :

"Ma fortune était une bonne instruction, un trousseau de dimanche (a good suit of clothes), pas d'autre chose."

Cette inquiétude pour l'avenir des enfants qui naîtront peut-être vers la fin du xx^e^ siècle, explique une autre chose aussi tout à fait incompréhensible aux Anglais, c'est-à-dire l'horreur, l'épouvante d'une nombreuse famille. Pour nous autres, c'est l'enfant unique qu'on trouve à plaindre, un petit être sans

frères sans sœurs, condamné à une existence triste, isolée, anormale. "J'avais une enfance solitaire et sans gaieté," écrivit la reine Victoria. "Que j'enviais les petites filles jouant avec leurs frères et leurs sœurs dans les jardins de Kensington!"

Rien n'égaye autant John Bull qu'une *nursery* bien peuplée. Est-ce qu'il se tourmente en songeant à l'avenir des petits à naître vers l'an 2000? Point du tout. S'il ne peut pas doter ses quatre ou cinq filles et donner une aisance à sa demi-douzaine de beaux garçons, les premières se marieront sans dot, ou elles prendront un état, leurs frères commenceront leur carrière avec une bonne instruction et des habits de dimanche, probablement iront-ils aux colonies y fondant des familles, y cultivant le jardin immense de l'Empire Britannique.

En 1897, j'assistai à un mariage en Champagne, la mariée était fille d'un garde de chasse, le mari, un instituteur, tous les deux, bien entendu, ayant un petit bien, et sans doute étant des enfants uniques.

Le lendemain, je suis allée voir la mère, la trouvant en pleurs et gémissante.

— Ah, ma fille, ma chère Adèle, sanglotait-elle: Comment vivrais-je sans toi?

— Chère madame, disais-je tout naïvement, ne pleurez pas. Songez donc, vous serez grand'mère, quelle joie pour vous d'être entourée de jolis petits bambins.

— Que le bon Dieu m'en garde, interrompait-elle avec humeur. Un enfant, peut-être, je ne dirai pas non, mais un tas d'enfants, mon Dieu, quelle horreur!

Enfin, à chaque nation appartiennent ses vertus ex-

agérées et ses faiblesses, à l'Anglais les habitudes de dépense, l'indifférence aux intérêts tout pécuniaires de ses descendants à naître en 2000 ou 3000 ans d'ici—aux Français l'hypnotisme de l'épargne, le désintêressement, la prévoyance immesurable pour sa race, prévoyance qui selon les statisticiens, menacent de la faire graduellement disparaître. Que voulez-vous? Rien ne changera les deux types.

Et c'est justement la divergence, l'opposé qui sont, au moins pour nous "adorables."

Pourquoi est-ce que tout ce qui est français nous intéresse, tandis que tout ce qui est allemand—excepté Wagner—nous laisse froids? Parce que ces derniers nous ressemblent un peu et que les premiers restent et resteront toujours nos antipodes.

Dans les amitiés internationales ainsi que dans l'amour, ce n'est que le contraste, ce je ne sais quoi d'imprévu, qui charme.

Je veux seulement mentionner sans chapitrer là-dessus, deux institutions aussi incompréhensibles pour nous que l'hypnotisme de l'épargne et l'horreur d'une famille nombreuse.

La première, c'est la police des mœurs, autrement dite, les lois accordant une immunité aux vices et aux jeunesses déréglées. Ce code, on ne le comprend pas, on ne le comprendra jamais ici.

Une autre institution non moins inacceptable aux penseurs insulaires, c'est la nourrice, *the wet nurse*. La Française se vante d'être avant toute chose, mère, et cent ans après les fulminations de Rousseau, en dépit des lois protégeant les bébés des nourrices, en dépit de romans et de pièces de théâtre populaires comme *Donatienne* et *Les Remplaçantes*,

aujourd'hui, il faut même à la petite bourgeoise devenue mère sa grosse paysanne avec rubans flottants : riches ou peu fortunées, toutes les mères françaises relèguent le premier de leurs devoirs aux mercenaires.

Enfin, autres pays, autres mœurs, autres préjugés.

Jusqu'à la fin du monde pour certains anglais, le français restera vaniteux, léger, sans fonds; pour certains de leurs voisins, l'anglais restera hypocrite, victime de *spleen*, un excentrique; ainsi que disait Thackeray, ce sont des axiomes, il n'y a pas à discuter. Néanmoins, ne désespérons pas tôt ou tard de voir se réaliser le noble vœu de Mirabeau :

" S'il y a un beau plan dans l'univers," écrivait-il à Julie Dauvers du donjon de Vincennes en 1780, " c'est celui d'associer la grandeur française à la grandeur anglaise."

Tout dernièrement est advenu un bel augure. D'un bout de la Grande-Bretagne à l'autre on a acclamé Blériot, digne et heureux émule des frères Montgolfier. Jamais John Bull n'a plus cordialement serré la main de Jacques Bonhomme, pas la moindre petitesse, pas une arrière-pensée jalouse dans cette étreinte. C'était une félicitation universelle, un tribut national au génie incomparable de la " Gaule insultante," de " la France présomptueuse," du poète qui suçait les pêches et les abricots sur tige !

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