said of him that a bee settled upon his lips while in his cradle. Sophocles, Alcibiades, and Pericles, are as famous for their physical beauty as for their intellectual gifts.

There is no doubt that beauty of person in a man has its advantages. He is admired, and gains a ready footing in society. He is secure for a time of attention and respect; but he must be able to hold his own in fair conflict with other men; and if he fail, and is convicted of being foolish and unsatisfactory, he will be driven out of the field. Wilkes, one of the ugliest of men, said that he only wanted half an hour's talk with a pretty woman to be equal to the handsomest man in Europe. Popular notions on the subject of beauty are for the most part conventional. Among black people the devil is white; while among white people he is black. Custom reconciles us to everything. The inhabitants of Berama in Columbia are so afflicted with goitre that it has come to be regarded as a mark of beauty. When the late Robert Stephenson and a party of Englishmen were passing through Columbia, the cry ran through a village, "Come, see the ugly strangers —they have got no gotos!"

Form is not everything in the beauty of women. It is even possible that gifts of person may prove a disadvantage, by discouraging that attention to the mind and morals on which those less favored by nature have mainly to depend in life. The beautiful may win hearts by personal attractions, but if they cannot retain them by attractions of heart and intellect, they will prove but mere empty caskets. The soul of beauty consists in expression. Mere beauty of features may please the eye, though it does not move the heart. The common order of beauty is youth and health; the highest is grace and sweetness of expression. Lord Bacon said that "there is no excellent beauty without some strangeness in the proportion." Indeed the power of beauty is often felt in some strange variation from uniformity.

Descartes most admired women who squinted.* We cannot tell what it is that makes men fall in love with women, or women with men. It is expression far more than beauty.

But mere beauty is not enough for men and women who unite themselves in marriage. The honeymoon lasts but for a month, and there must be something more solid and reasonable than beauty to bind a pair permanently in blissful union. When kisses and blisses are over, the couple must necessarily descend to the conditions of ordinary life. The man must do his honest day's work, and the woman must make her home clean, cosy, and comfortable. The flame of love must not be allowed to die out on the hearthstone. There is such a thing as clever housekeeping, as there is of clever handicraft or headcraft. The wife must study the one as the husband the other. It is said that comfort is the household god in England—that the English worship comfort. Perhaps this comes from the raw and changeable weather, which drives people within doors. But comfort does not mean merely warmth, good furniture, and good living. It means cleanliness, pure air, order, frugality —in a word, house-thrift and domestic government. Comfort is the soil on which the human being grows; it lies, indeed, at the root of many virtues; and many of the discomforts and distractions which follow the union of those who once loved each other, arise from the neglect of these important conditions.

No doubt men do make mistakes, and so do women. Both draw about an equal number of blanks and prizes.

* Not long since, in Paris, shortly after the operation for curing *Strabismus* had been invented, a lover who squinted had himself forthwith cured, believing that it would render him more acceptable to his mistress; but on presenting himself to her, to his intense mortification she utterly renounced him. The aspect under which she had originally loved and accepted him was gone; and the marriage was actually broken off.—Roussell, *Systeme Physique et Morale de la Femme*, p. 131.

Men of the greatest genius have their seedy side, and this is precisely the side with which wives are most familiar. The world sees the intellect, the achievements, of the great man; but knows next to nothing of his temper, his weaknesses, or his foibles. The wife sees the man and the man only—not the sage, the statesmen, the artist, the author. What is his fame in the outer world to her? Is not the home her world, where her life and happiness centre? The great man is usually absorbed by his pursuit—living in the past or battling in the present; perhaps he can with difficulty bring himself to take an interest in the things which constitute the daily happiness of his wife. It may be that she will not brook a divided affection, and begrudges the time devoted to others as time stolen from her. In such a case, a too exacting wife will often lay the foundations for a life of unhappiness and regret. Mrs. Grote remarks of Ary Scheffer's wife, that unfortunately for herself as well as for him, she joined a disposition impatient of rivalry in any form, whether of man or woman, friend or relation—nay, even of Scheffer's passionate pursuit of his art. "These circumstances," she says, "led to somewhat painful results. Poor Madame Scheffer fell into the deplorable error, of which many otherwise estimable women have been the victims, *viz.* of requiring that her husband should not only love *her* above all things, but should love nobody else." *

The imagination is almost as unsafe a guide as mere instinct in selecting a partner for life. The poet "sees

* In a note to the above passage Mrs. Grote adds: "Madame Scheffer only needed a better-regulated understanding to have rendered her lot, and her home, each a happy one. For want of self-discipline, and the discernment to estimate justly the amount of attention which she might expect from a man so rich in friends admirers, and disciples,—for want of this, I regret to say, Madame Scheffer sometimes embittered their common existence by her exigence, and by her too exalted cravings for the monopoly of her distinguished husband's time and thoughts."—Mrs. Grote, *Life of Ary Scheffer*, p. 91.

Helen's beauty in a brow of Egypt." He attributes to the object of his passion the fascinations of an angel and the virtues of a goddess. But he very soon makes the discovery that she is but a woman after all, perhaps with less endowments than other women. Poets have been precipitate in marrying. Churchill married at seventeen, Shakespeare at eighteen, and Shelley at nineteen. Perhaps Keats truly expressed the young poet's view when, at the age of twenty-three, he wrote to a friend as follows: "I am certain I have not a right feeling towards women. At this moment I am striving to be just to them, but I cannot. Is it because they fall so far beneath my boyish imagination? When I was a schoolboy I thought a fair woman a pure goddess; my mind was a soft nest in which some one of them slept, though she knew it not. I have no right to expect more than their reality. I *thought* them ethereal, above men. I *find* them perhaps equal—great by comparison is very small." *

The poet lives in an imagined world of his own, very different from the actual world which he inhabits. The one is ideal and beautiful, the other is hard and practical. He conjures up and dismisses the former at will; the other is ever present with him, perhaps full of carking cares, troubles, and vulgar details of life. In the contemplation of his ideal woman, the poet may even unfit himself for forming a genuine attachment to a real one. He considers all that falls short of his standard unworthy of his regard. The loves of Dante for Beatrice, of Petrarch for Laura, and of Tasso for Leonora were, for the most part, ideal. Dante neglected his wife and children to dream of Beatrice; Petrarch would not suffer even his own daughter to live under his roof; and Tasso was long confined in a madhouse because of his unreturned love.

* Lord Houghton, *Life and Letters of John Keats* (edition 1867), pp. 148–149.

The love of Dante for Beatrice about six hundred years ago is still the theme of admiration and sympathy. It was the love without return, of a boy for a girl; yet the boy became a man of genius, and the theme of his love still fascinates the student of Italian poetry. The *Vita Nuova* has been regarded by some as the beginning of the modern sentimental romance. Yet it contains the clearest internal evidence of being the actual experience of a living soul and the faithful revelations of a human heart. If Dante was not born a lover at least love was the beginning of his life. "In that part of the book of my memory," he says, "anterior whereto is little that can be read, stands a rubric which says, *Incipit Vita Nuova*—here beginneth the New Life."

Dante, in his ninth year, meets Beatrice, a girl of eight, and falls in love with her at once and forever. The early age at which the passion began has lead some to think that the whole story is but an allegory—a poet's dream. But that Beatrice lived and breathed, no one can doubt who reads Dante's tender and impassioned descriptions: he descends to minute details and individual traits, such as would never have occurred in his description of an imaginary being. Dante never declared his love for Beatrice; and in the end, she married another. Beatrice died in her twenty-fourth year. The shock of her death affected Dante so deeply that his best friends could scarcely recognize him. The light of his life had fled, and he was left in despair. From this time forward his love for the lost Beatrice became the pervading idea of his life. Though death had rapt her away from his bodily vision, he followed her spirit into heaven, and saw the whole universe through her eyes. The memory of his love inspired the poet in his great work, *The Divine Comedy*, which has been called the "Deification of Beatrice."

Such was Dante's ideal life. His common life was of the earth earthly. His celestial Venus was a saint; his terrestial Venus was but a woman. Had he married Beatrice, we should have no *Vita Nuova*, no *Divina Comedi*. But death etherealized her, and his love became spiritual and ideal. Dante was a man as well as a poet. Only a year after the death of Beatrice, he married a noble lady of the Donati family, by whom he had a family of seven children. But he addressed no sonnets to her. Indeed, he was not very happy in her society, and when he was exiled she did not accompany him, but remained with her friends at Florence.

Though love has been the inspirer of poetry in all ages, being the passion round which romantic ideas revolve, yet few men marry their first loves. It is not of the enjoyment of love, but of love denied, love blighted, love despised, that we owe the poetic wailings alike of Dante, Petrarch, and Tasso. As with the birds in spring, desire inspires their song; with possession, they become mute. Byron says of Petrarch:—

> "Think you, if Laura had been Petrarch's wife,
> He would have written sonnets all his life?"

Petrarch was another of the blighted lovers whose songs have become immortal. He first saw Laura de Sade in the Church of St. Clair at Avignon, when a violent passion suddenly seized him. He wrote sonnets and songs in her praise, which circulated over Europe, and contributed to rendered this hopeless attachment one of the most celebrated in literary history. Petrarch wandered from place to place from court to court, sometimes secluding himself at Vaucluse, but often returning to Avignon, to catch another sight of Laura walking in the gardens beneath the rock on which stands the old pontifical palace, where Petrarch used to stand on the look-out. We have no distinct account of how Laura's husband regarded Petrarch's homage to his wife, but Campbell surmises that it did not add to her happiness, for he was in the habit of scolding her un-

til she wept; and as he married again seven months after her death, it is probable that he did not greatly lament her loss. It has, indeed, been surmised by some that Laura was an imaginary person, but there can be no reasonable doubt of her actual existence. She died of the plague in her fortieth year, passing away, as described by Petrarch, like a lamp which is gradually extinguished for want of nourishment. When the poet heard of her death, he felt as if he had lost the only object that attached him to life. Yet Petrarch survived her loss more than twenty years, continuing to think of her and write about her as he had done in his youth—still indulging in the luxury of woe.

Tasso was powerfully influenced by the writings of Petrarch, which thrilled through the heart of young Italy. Tasso's first passion was for a young lady of Mantua, to whom he addressed many sonnets after the manner of Petrarch, styling her his Laura. But the young lady having married another, the heart of the susceptible poet became inspired by a new and still more hopeless passion for the Princess Eleonora, sister of the Duke of Ferrara. To her he addressed many of his amatory verses, and even declared his love, but without avail. It is not believed that the Princess favored his pretensions; but giving the reins to his imagination, he depicted in glowing and even in prurient terms the favors he had received from her. These verses, abstracted from his papers by an enemy, were shown to the Duke, who caused the poet to be apprehended and shut up in the Convent of St. Francis at Ferrara. He escaped from the convent, and wandered footsore over Italy. But he could not leave altogether the place where his heart was, and after the lapse of about a year, he returned to Ferrara. He applied to see the Duke and the Princess, but was refused. He became frantic, and denounced the house of Este and all its members. He was again arrested and confined in the hospital of St. Anna, where he was

treated as a madman. He lay there for the space of seven years, never ceasing to indulge in his hopeless but unconquerable love.

The poet Metastasio was content to entertain a platonic affection for the Signorina Bulgarini, better known as the Romanina, the greatest singer of her day. He lived under the same roof with her husband, and followed the pair up and down Italy, dedicating his time and energies to the muses and friendship. At the death of the Romanina, she bequeathed to Metastasio the whole of her property after the death of her husband; but the poet declined to take advantage of the Signora's will, and at once transferred the reversionary interest in the property to her husband. The poet Alfieri—whose appearance formed another important epoch in Italian history at a much later date—was, like Dante, an impassioned lover. It was to his loves, unhallowed though they were, that we owe most of his tragedies. As he himself says: "The desire of study and a certain effervescence of creative ideas always seized on me when I was in love."

Compared with the ardent love of the Italian poets, all others seem comparatively tame. Yet the same passion has inspired the poets of other countries, though their strains may be less undying. The fate of Camoens somewhat resembled that of Tasso. He fell in love at eighteen with a lady above his rank, at the court of Lisbon, and was banished to Santarem, where he began his *Lusiad*. He went abroad and distinguished himself as a soldier, still cherishing his hopeless love—the theme of many of his beautiful sonnets. After many years' wanderings, he returned to Portugal to find his mistress dead, and himself in misery. Cervantes wrote *Galatea* to win the affections of a lady with whom he was in love; and though he succeeded in winning her affections, he married another.

It was love that inspired Kisfaludy, the greatest lyric

poet of Hungary. Wieland was first impelled to mystic pietism by the passionate attachment he conceived for a girl whose hand he first kissed four years after he had fallen in love with her. She returned his love, and they vowed eternal fidelity. Eight years passed, and Wieland being still too poor to marry, Sophia gave her hand to Herr la Roche. But Wieland continued to love her as before. "It was an ideal," he said, "but a true enchantment in which I lived, and the Sophia that I loved so enthusiastically was the idea of perfection embodied in her form. Nothing is more certain than that, if destiny had not brought us together, I should never have been a poet." Wieland, afterwards married an active, firm, prudent, and tender wife, and the love, though less ideal, was more fruitful and probably more happy.

Evald, the Danish poet, was driven to poetry by disappointed affection. The young lady with whom he fell in love married another. This circumstance threw a shade of melancholy over his life, evoked his poetical genius, and produced a depth of feeling and pathos which first discovered itself in his great poem of *Balder's Död.* Novalis was so powerfully influenced by his affection for Sofia von K—— that it is said to have constituted the substance and essence of his whole life. She died on her fifteenth birthday, and the rest of Novalis's short life was spent in mourning her loss. "Life became for him," says Tieck, "a glorified life; and his whole being melted away as into a bright, conscious vision of a higher existence." "What made you a poet?" asked Dumas of Reboul, the baker of Nismes, author of that beautiful gem, *L'Ange et l'Enfant.* "It was sorrow," was the reply, "the loss of a beloved wife and child."

Goethe also was a lover, but in him love was a thing of the intellect rather than of the heart. Self-culture was the passion of his life. His intellect dominated over, if it did not even absorb, his other faculties. His experience of life was therefore incomplete; for love cannot be understood or described unless it has been really felt. Yet there are many beautiful delineations of the feeling in his *Autobiography,* and in various of his poems. Goethe, in his way, loved Gretchen, and Clärchen, and Frederica, and Lotte, and Lili, and Bettina, and others; but he feared marrying either of them,—it is surmised, because he feared losing his freedom. "He could paint," says Mr. Lewes, "no one better,—the exquisite devotion of woman to man; as witness those divine creatures, Gretchen and Clärchen —*that* he had experienced; but the reciprocal tenderness of man to woman, the generous, protecting, self-sacrificing feeling of the man, he had not felt, and could not express."

When Goethe had won the love of the simple girl Frederica, he threw her away like a sucked orange. All that he wanted was to make a charming idyll of her love, and his own desertion of her, to delight the world. But the abandoned Frederica was fearfully avenged by the proud, calculating, cold-hearted poet's subsequent marriage to Christiane Vulpius. After living with her for many years, he eventually married her, when she had become fat, ugly, and intemperate. A strange ending of the love experiences of the great author of *Dichtung und Wahrheit!* "When Goethe had no woman in his head," says Mr. Hayward, "he was like a dissector without a subject. He said of Balzac that each of his best novels seemed dug out of a suffering woman's heart. Balzac might have returned the compliment."

Perhaps it is well that we should not know too much of the personal history of great poets. They are often as weak as the weakest. Even Shakespeare himself seems from his Sonnets to have been lead into evil courses during his life in London. "We know," says Sir Henry Taylor,

"that he imputed the evil courses into which he was betrayed to the way of life forced upon him by the want of a competency:

> "'O, for my sake do thou with Fortune chide,
> The guilty goddess of my harmful deeds,
> That did not better for my life provide
> Than public means which public manners breeds.
> Thence comes it that my name receives a brand,
> And almost thence my nature is subdued,
> To that it works in, like the dyer's hand.'"*

Though France presents many illustrations of the influence of woman on the character and works of poets and literary men, we do not find such instances of absorbing love and devotion as in the case of the Italian and German poets. With the French, love is a sentiment rather than a passion,—a thing of the intellect rather than of the heart,—often delicate and refined, but without dominating influence over the life. The love of Abelard for Heloise began and ended in sentiment; they married but to separate; he to enter the Abbey of St. Denis as a monk, and she to enter the convent of Argenteuil as a nun. Down to a comparatively recent period, the French monarchs exercised a most deteriorating influence upon the relations of the sexes; and their bad example filtered down through all the grades of society. Men married to cover intrigues, and women married to be "free"; their only attachments seeming to be for other men's wives, or other women's husbands. In the reign of Louis XIV., mistresses replaced lovers; and amours became fashionable. Literature was saturated with unchastity; and vice was everywhere rampant. Unchaste women were idealized and idolized. *Manon Lescaut* was written by an abbé; there was no shame in such associations. Women were regarded merely as existing for men's pleasure, and treated accordingly, to their own degradation.

The great evil of the French literature of last century

* Sir Henry Taylor, *Notes on Life*, p. 170.

was that it brought into disrespect the character of woman. Society may recover from revolutions, and even be purified by them; but when the character of woman is degraded, society is poisoned at its core. It has been said that women are like bank-notes, which may be made to rise or fall in public estimation, and that literary men are the bankers. If this be true, the moral fall in France, towards the end of last century, must have been great. Diderot, Rousseau, and Voltaire merely represented their age. Diderot, the author of the *Essay on Merit and Virtue*, forsook an affectionate young wife, and wrote an obscene novel for the purpose of paying a mistress with the proceeds. Rousseau, after a long round of intrigues, took up with a low-bred girl, Therése de Vasseur, whom he eventually married. The author of *Emile* was not so good as his book; for he sent his children, almost as soon as born, to the Foundling Hospital!

Voltaire, who never married, was almost as general and as fickle a lover as Goethe. He became enamored first of one and then of another person—Mademoiselle de Noyer, Madame de Villars, Madame Rupelmonde, and Madame de Châtelet. "What human pen," says Carlyle, "can describe the troubles this unfortunate philosopher had with his women? A gadding, feather-brained, capricious, old-coquettish, embittered, and embittering set of wantons, from the earliest to the last!" The last, if we mistake not, was Madame de Châtelet, with whom Voltaire lived under the same roof as her husband. Voltaire and Madame made a show of studying Leibnitz and Newton together, Voltaire teaching her English and Italian. After living together in seclusion and study for more than six years, Madame de Châtelet died unexpectedly, when Voltaire was thrown into a paroxysm of grief.

The number of English poet-bachelors has been considerable. Cowley, Otway, Prior, Congreve, Gay, Swift, Pope,

Collins, Shenstone, Gray, and Goldsmith, died unmarried. Cowley was in love but once, and had not confidence enough to declare his affection. Swift's intrigues with Varina, Stella, and Vanessa, are surrounded with mystery. He was capable of loving ardently, though cruelly. After evoking the affections of these warm-hearted women, he shrank from them by turns, as if in horror; and he died at last "in a rage," to use his own words, "like a poisoned rat in a hole." * The loves of Pope, on the other hand, are of a somewhat ludicrous character, arising from his distortion, † his diminutiveness, and his conceit. His first passion —and it was a sham one—was for a certain Lady M——, whom he addressed in a series of pert and affected epistles, which afterwards found their way into print, and were much laughed at. His second passion, which may have been a real one, was for no less a person than the celebrated Lady Mary Wortley Montague, one of the most beautiful and brilliant women in Europe. His declaration of love to her was received with irrepressible laughter. After that, Pope hated her with a hatred more cordial than his love had been, and slandered her with all the polished point and bitterness of which he was so great a master.

Far more interesting and humane were the loves of Cowper the poet. At an early period of his life, he had

* It has been surmised that Stella (Esther Johnson) was Sir William Temple's daughter, and that Swift (who discovered the secret) was his son, consequently her half-brother. "If he was," says Sir W. R. Wilde, "it certainly would account for many hitherto inexplicable portions of his conduct relative to Stella and Vanessa."—*Closing Years of Dean Swift's Life*, p. 112. The more probable cause, however, of his morbid eccentricity of conduct was, that Swift was more or less insane during the greater part of his life; and that he knew it.

† A question arose during a literary conversation, about the meaning of a passage in *Horace*. A bystander observed: "Might it not be explained by a mark of interrogation."—"And what is your idea, sir, of a mark of interrogation?" asked Pope. The gentleman looked down upon the satirist, and said: "It is a little crooked thing, sir, that asks questions!"

given his heart to his cousin Theodora, the daughter of his uncle, Ashley Cowper, by whom his love was returned. But shortly after, the young poet, then a law clerk, was visited by the first attack of the malady to which he was during the rest of his life more or less subject. Their marriage was accordingly forbidden, and both remained single for life. Cowper's dissappointment found relief in verse. As Dryden has said: "Love makes every man a poet—at least a rhymer." It was while living at Huntingdon, seeking relief for his malady in change of scene that he first became acquainted with Mrs. Unwin and her husband, as well as with their son and daughter; and in course of time, Cowper formed one of a charming family group. Of Mrs. Unwin he wrote at the beginning of their acquaintance: "That woman is a blessing to me, and I never see her without being the better for her company." Mr. Unwin was shortly after killed by an accident, and Cowper became domesticated with the family. They removed to Olney; and there Mrs. Unwin encouraged him to write, for the purpose of diverting his mind from gloomy thoughts. Indeed it is to her and Lady Austen that we owe the principal part of his works. For twenty years, Mrs. Unwin waited upon him with the most tender assiduity, neither of them entertaining the slightest notion of matrimony. It was, to use his own words, a union of hearts without a flaw between. Mrs. Unwin's health was the first to give way. She was attacked by paralysis, and Cowper was "shocked in every nerve." He became her nurse, by turns with others. In one of the intervals of his watching he composed the tender and beautiful verses, "To Mary." Slowly she glided into the silent land. Cowper never recovered from the blow, and died three years after the death of the dear and gentle Mrs. Unwin.

It is not known that Goldsmith ever was in love. With his thriftless but simple nature it was better that he should.