BOOKS AND READING.

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AZARIAS

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—BY—

BROTHER AZARIAS
OF THE BROTHERS OF THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS

SEVENTH EDITION
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TO THE MEMORY

OF THE RIGHT REVEREND

MONSIGNOR JAS. A. CORCORAN, D. D.,

These Pages

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BY THE AUTHOR.

MEMOIR

OF

BROTHER AZARIAS, F. S. C.

Brother Azarias, (Patrick Francis Mullany) who died at the Hotel Champlain, near Plattsburg, on August 20th, 1893, was a native of Ireland. His parents emigrated to the United States when he was a child, and his boyhood was passed at their home in Deerfield, N. Y., not far from the residence of Horatio Seymour, with whom, as boy and man, he maintained the most kindly relations. It was at the District school that young Mullany's schooling began. There, however, he did not long remain. His parents desired that he should enjoy the advantage of a more thorough course of studies, and of a sound religious and moral education, and therefore sent him to the Academy of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, in Utica. Studious and gentle, the youth was a favorite with his fellows and teachers, and earned the affection and good will of Brother Justin, then his teacher, and now Provincial of the Brothers of the Christian Schools.

The serious character of the youth, his love of learn-

ing, the high ideal he entertained of the calling of a teacher, are sufficiently proved by the sacrifices he made at the early age of fifteen; for at that age he joined the disciples of the great de la Salle. That a man of talent should adopt a profession which promises a comfortable livelihood, leisure, social advantages, the delights of an intellectual home, position, and, it may be, even wealth, is not surprising. But how many youths of fifteen become teachers wholly from a love of others? This Patrick Francis Mullany did. Entering the Brotherhood of the Christian Schools, he vowed himself to poverty, to obedience to his superiors, and to a chaste community life; and thus deliberately denied himself all the pleasures and ambitions in the pursuit of which men ordinarily place their happiness. The completeness of the sacrifice a Christian Brother makes will impress itself on those unacquainted with the rule of de la Salle, when they consider that, with everything else men cherish, one gives up the family name. At the age of fifteen, then, Patrick Francis Mullany became Brother Azarias. That his youthful ideal of the teacher's calling never altered, that his sense of the duty of a teacher never diminished, that his love of youth and his desire to aid youth to be knowing and strong never weakened, is proved by the fact that, after thirty years of sacrifice, he was devoted to his community, proud of it, happy in it, and thankful to the good God who had inspired him to give up everything material for the sake of the education of the young.

Pursuing his studies in the Novitiate of the Christian Brothers, Brother Azarias soon became a useful member of the community, At the age of eighteen he was permitted to teach, and during the ten following years he held professorships in several of the more important institutions maintained by the Christian Brothers. To the study of English literature he devoted himself especially, though he did not fail to enlarge his acquaintance with the classics, and to pursue the study of modern languages. If his responsibilities were increased, so were his opportunities also, when, in 1875, he was appointed President of Rock Hill College, Maryland. This office he administered so satisfactorily, that he retained it during ten years, and then he was compelled to give up his charge by failing health.

A journey through Europe somewhat improved his health, but the eight latter years of his life were years of suffering. Ill-health, however, did not interrupt his studies, which were continued abroad as well as at home; nor did ill-health put an end to his career as a teacher. During the six years immediately preceding his death, he held the Professorship of English Literature in the "De La Salle Institute," New York City.

At an early age Brother Azarias developed a talent for writing, and this talent he cultivated assiduously during his whole life. Considering his duties as a

teacher, the slight encouragement he received for many years, and his frail health since 1885, both the quantity and the quality of his literary work testify to his patience, his perseverance, and his sense of duty; for all his work was done with the aim of instructing, of educating, of elevating those around him. Having read much, thought much, and stored much intellectual wealth, he was impelled to distribute what he had acquired. Loving truth, he longed to lead others to love it. Knowing from experience the refining influence of good literature, he desired to excite many to cultivate it, not selfishly, but for the advantage of society. Aware of the injurious effects of loose thinking, of bad logic, and of an imperfect acquaintance with history, he sought to correct common errors and to induce men and women to recognize that study and inquiry should precede judgment. Convinced that only by familiarity with the thoughts of the greatest thinkers and artists can the intellectual elevation of American society be assured, he tried to acquaint many with the thought and the art of the greatest writers of our own time, and of the past.

Had one no personal relations with Brother Azarias, the motive that inspired him in his literary work would have been apparent to a reader of any one of his essays or books. He wrote nothing hastily. His purpose was always clear. Merely to please the ear or to excite the imagination, he would not have written a line. He had

a lesson to teach, instruction to give; and it is to the teacher that we owe the agreeable and serviceable books and essays which he published during the twenty years of his career as a writer. His volumes on "Old English Thought," the "Philosophy of Literature," "Aristotle and the Christian Schools," "Phases of Thought and Criticism," have been read with profit by many, with pleasure by all who appreciate style, and, notwithstanding criticism, more or less judicious, will be always quoted by writers who deal seriously with English Literature.

Brother Azarias, having knowledge of men, wrote according to this knowledge; and thus appealed, and will appeal, to men, according to their knowledge. Having no common knowledge, he will not appeal to common men. Indeed, such was not his aim. Believing in a God, a Christ, a Divine law, a Providence, and a future life, he appealed to the select; not to the select few, but to the select majority, who, perhaps more silently than they should, accept the great truths of natural and and of revealed religion. A staunch Catholic, Brother Azarias was a Catholic from conviction, as his life proved. Catholicity it was that led him to be and to remain a Christian Brother. With his talents and acquirements, he might have been the President of a so-called University, a legislator, a Minister at a Foreign court. Men of less knowledge and of less ability have held such places.

Thirty years of study, and ten years of rule as President of Rock Hill College, had made Brother Azarias a prudent man, slow in speech. And yet he was an agreeable talker among his friends. Always modest, a good listener, considerate of others, his conversation pleased because of his kindliness and thoughtfulness. He had no harsh word to say of any man. Ideas, opinions, expressions, he criticised, but persons not at all. Criticisms on his own work he read, accepted, or rejected, but never answered. Against his critics he had no personal feeling. He was conscious of his own honesty. That his views could not be gainsaid, occasionally, he would not maintain. As his only aim was to be right, he was ever open to correction. For him, to violate the truth would be criminal; still he did not assume infallibility, but only honest good will.

Brother Azarias had one gift that his writings did not disclose,—a genial sense of humor. Why he concealed this charming quality, I do not know. Perhaps it was through modesty ; or, perhaps again, he feared lest a display of humor might seem undignified in a teacher, and especially in a religious. Whatever the reason, it is notable that his happy sense of humor was known only to his friends.

As a man, Brother Azarias was of a lovable, genial character ; not only guileless, but generous, hearty, and affectionate. Always simple and unaffected, he made friends everywhere. In gaining them he used no arts.

He was blessed with a soft and gentle voice, and this made a lasting impression on many who met him but once. Among educated men of all religions he had friends, who frequently showed him marks of esteem and regard. He was grateful for all kindnesses, and prompt in showing his gratitude.

Though Brother Azarias treated of many subjects in his written works, he disclosed only so much of himself as a writer may disclose without being personal. Perhaps we shall have, some day, a life of him written by some one who can control his correspondence. Judiciously used, this will tell us more than we have thus far learned of one of our most competent and zealous American educators. By education, and in heart and soul, Brother Azarias was an American. American life, American thought, American education, American progress,—for these he worked from the beginning to the end; and though with no narrow spirit, yet, as a citizen of the Empire State, and as a resident, during the best years of his life, of the City of New York, it was to New York State and to our Imperial City that he looked, more than all, for the advancement of our beloved country in the way of culture, of taste, of principle, and of truth. His father, I have heard, was a "republican" in politics; but Brother Azarias was a true son of liberty, knowing no party, and hoping only for the freedom and the welfare of all our citizens, whatever their race or religion. All honest men he respected. Good principles

he supported. Of bad principles he was the foe.

A talented, capable, right-minded educator is a valuable servant of the State. The death of such an educator is a serious loss to the State; and therefore Brother Azarias will be mourned by all good citizens. The Regents of our University, before whose convocations he has more than once spoken thoughtfully, will miss him. The members of the Concord and Farmington schools of philosophy, among whom he counted several warm friends, will miss him. The "Catholic Summer School," of which he was one of the founders, and in whose behalf he labored so earnestly, will miss him. And yet, in his works, he will live; winning esteem and affection from many who never saw him in the flesh. His fellow-Catholics have an advantage and a satisfaction that many outside of their faith may not have. To the Catholic, Brother Azarias is alive, not in his books only, but with a real living life. Catholics may commune with him, living; love him, living. From them he is separated, but only for a short time. The hope of meeting one's beloved teacher, to-morrow or the next day, brings joy to the dutiful pupil. And what greater consolation can be vouchsafed to a friend than the assurance that,—to-morrow or the next day,—he will be again in the company of the friend that regretfully he parted from!

JOHN A. MOONEY.

PREFACE.

The substance of the present Lecture was read before the Cathedral Library Reading Circle of New York City, at the request of its Director, the Rev. Joseph H. McMahon. At the same request it is now given to the public in book form. The author has not attempted within the limits of a single paper to cover the whole scope of the subject; but the few general rules and principles which he has laid down may be extended, in their application, to any number of subjects. The Lecture is reprinted, with a few points somewhat more developed, from the pages of the *Catholic World.*

In this Third Edition the author has made revisions and additions with a view of rendering the little book less unworthy of the cordial reception it met with. He has sought to answer a few more questions on books and reading. If he has dwelt at some length upon Wordsworth and Browning, it is in order to diminish the difficulty readers find in grasping the meaning and importance of these poets.

DE LA SALLE INSTITUTE, NEW YORK,
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BOOKS AND READING.

I.

I NEED not dwell upon the advantages that are to be derived from a familiar acquaintance with books. If you have made a few choice authors your bosom friends, with whom you seek refuge in hours of anxiety or trouble, who speak to you words of comfort when you are weighed down by sorrow or annoyance, who are a solace and a recreation, cheering you up and reminding you of the better and higher things of life, no words of mine can help you to hold those tried and true friends in greater estimation than that in which you now hold them. And if, on the other hand, books were to you no better occupation than walking or riding, a mere pastime like base-ball or lawn-tennis, then I fear you could not understand any words of praise that I might bestow upon them, and the eulogies of great men, which I might quote for you, would be to you meaningless phrases. Suffice it to say that, after the grace of God flowing to us through the channels of prayer and the

sacraments, I know no greater solace to the soul than the soothing words of a good book. Indeed, is not the good book itself a visible grace? How often has not God spoken to men through the words of the printed or the written page? Thus did He speak to St. Augustine through the random reading of a passage in the New Testament; thus did He speak to St. Ignatius through the almost enforced perusal of the Lives of the Saints; thus has He spoken, and does He still speak, to millions the world over through the loving-tender words of that low, sweet voice of humanity, *The Imitation of Christ.* And so I will take it for granted that you all prize books, and accordingly will endeavor to read you a leaf out of my experience, and such experience of others as occurs to me, as to the best manner of using them, with the hope that out of it all you may be enabled to glean a few practical hints.

II.

We are told that "to the making of books there is no end;" but there is a limit to every man's reading capacity. We all of us must make up our minds that we cannot read everything; that the longest life, most rigidly economized, can compass but an infinitesimal portion of this world's knowledge; that if, in order to keep our intellect from starving, we would store up some available provision therefor, we must confine ourselves to a selection of subjects, small in number and limited

in range. In making this selection we should consult both our present mental acquirements and our daily occupations.

It is evident that the class of reading suitable for a scholar of trained mental habits is not the class of reading that will interest the desultory reader, who has picked up his knowledge here and there, and has never disciplined his mind into habits of severe thought. The scholar is in position to appreciate the great classics of his own or other languages. He can understand why Shakspere is so esteemed; he can appreciate the noble grandeur of Milton; he is prepared to be thrilled by the classic prose of an Edmund Burke or a Cardinal Newman, because he has learned, in the language of Ruskin, "how to form conceptions of proper range or grasp, and proper dignity, or worthiness."* To the desultory reader these authors are dry and uninteresting; he may praise them because it is the fashion to commend them, but he is apt to take more pleasure in the last sensational report of his daily paper, or in the last penny dreadful that has been issued. Only that which takes momentary hold upon his imagination can fix his attention. He may have attained the years of manhood, but so far as reading is concerned his mind is still the mind of the child who reads his book only till he has found out the meaning of the pictures it contains. Well and aptly hath it been said: "Desultory reading is indeed

* *The Eagle's Nest*, lect. 1, § 8.

very mischievous, by fostering habits of loose, discontinuous thought, by turning the memory into a common sewer for rubbish of all sorts to float through, and by relaxing the power of attention, which of all our faculties most needs care, and is most improved by it. But a well-regulated course of study will no more weaken the mind than hard exercise will weaken the body; nor will a strong understanding be weighed down by its knowledge, any more than an oak is by its leaves, or than Samson was by his locks." * Therefore we may broadly say, that according to the various stages of one's mental development will one require different grades of reading. No general list of books will cover every individual case. What is one man's meat may be another man's poison. Let each one ask himself, in taking up a book, what special benefit he expects to derive from its perusal.

Say to yourself: "Why do I take up this book? Is it simply that I may pass the time, or be amused, or rest my weary, over-wrought brain?" Be it so. Rest and amusement are legitimate objects, even as the theatre and the opera are legitimate. Amuse yourself with your book. Is the book abounding in wit or humor? All the better. Only see to it that the wit instils no poison, that it leaves no sting, that you do not rise from its play of shafts with bitterness in your thoughts or callousness in your heart. See to it that the humor be

* *Guesses at Truth*, p. 156.

genuine and kindly, and calculated to broaden and deepen your sympathies with your fellow-man. See to it that after having read the book you can look with greater charity upon human frailty, speak more kindly of your neighbor, and hold his shortcomings in greater tolerance:

> "For, although the distance be
> Great twixt wise and witless words,
> Still, 'tis from two different chords
> Springs the sweetest harmony." *

Such is the sympathizing humor of Hood; such the innocent charm of the *Pickwick Papers;* such the harmless laughter created by that most genial of humorists, Artemus Ward, who always respected whatever man holds sacred in life, and whom God favored with the grace of the sacraments of the Church on his death-bed; such the happy thoughts of the present editor of *Punch*, Mr. Burnand, who has also been blessed with the grace of conversion to the Catholic Faith. In these and such like books you sought amusement, and beneath their genial rays you found moral and intellectual growth.

Again, you say to yourself: "Is it instruction and self-improvement that I am seeking? Then must I read with greater care. I must verify facts; I must consult the authorities quoted; I must compare the other versions of the same event; in all my studies I must have in view to get at the solid basis of truth underlying the

* Calderon: *La Cena de Balthasar*, Sc. I., transl. by D. F. MacCarthy.

statements." Here you have undertaken more serious work. Much depends upon the nature of the work, and much upon the manner in which you propose to carry it out. If you would succeed, your subject must be such as not to lead you beyond your depth. Suppose you would study the history of some epoch or some decisive event in any of the great civilized nations of Europe. Let me here remark that the best way to study the whole history of any people is first to master a single epoch, to which you can afterwards lead up all other epochs and events. Select the epoch and the country for which you have most leaning. Procure some outline history of the period. This will give you a bird's-eye view of your subject. In the course of your reading make out a list of the historical authors who have dealt with the period fully and in detail. Prepare also a list of the biographies of the great men who figured in the making of the epoch; any good cyclopædia will supply you with the standard works on both topics. Then consult with some well-informed friend as to the comparative merits of these works; choose those the most reliable, and read them with care. Read such of the lighter literature of the day as attempts to reconstruct the period you are studying. Tabulate for frequent reference names of persons and places, dates and events. Afterwards take up the leading literary characters that grace the epoch, and go through such of their works as you may relish, especially such as throw light upon the spirit and tone

of their time. In Macaulay's celebrated third chapter you have an instance of how all kinds of printed matter can be made to give forth the spirit that lurks beneath the cold type.* You have now become familiar with your epoch, you are at home in it, you need no further incentive to study other periods, you are naturally led on to the study of men and of events preceding and following. And let me add that one such course of study, thoroughly and conscientiously made according to your lights and your ability, will be in itself a great stride in your education and of far more worth to you than any amount of general and desultory reading.†

But in all your historical readings hold fast by leading dates and keep your maps before you. Remember that history without chronology and geography is not history; it is merely a romance of the land of Nowhere. The elements of all history are person, place, and time, and these three are correlative. A man's actions are not altogether determined by his environment, but they receive tone and color therefrom. Place him elsewhere, and the outcome of his career will be in many respects different. Let him live at another time, imbibing the spirit of another age, and he will act in another manner. From a practical study and application of this principle, writers of history acquire what I would call the historical

* *History of England*, pp. 178-275.

† I am glad to state that this, in all its details, is the method followed by the Director of the Reading Circle of the Cathedral, New York. See Appendix.

instinct, by which they are enabled to determine, when confronted with a variety of versions concerning a person or an event, which version is most in conformity with the times, the place, and the known character of the person discussed. It is this historical instinct, acquired by life-long, patient toil, that makes our own John Gilmary Shea so familiar with the Catholic records of America. It is this historical instinct that enabled Niebuhr, with but the faintest shadow of a clue to guide him, to go back of the myth and lay hands on the solid fact, and hold it up to us divested of the poetic fancies in which it was wrapped, and thus "teach us far more about the Romans than they ever knew about themselves." * It is this historical instinct that leads the historian, groping in the dark, to the sentence, the phrase, the word that throws a flood of light upon the persons or events he would portray. It becomes for him a second sight. But while you may not attain this degree of perfection, still, by following at a distance, you may learn how to handle authorities, how to appreciate events at their true worth, and how to give facts their real significance. In like manner may you by careful study make any one author your own, and hold him as a centre around which to group his contemporaries, and a criterion by which to judge others working on the same lines of thought.

* Hare: *Guesses at Truth*, p. 160.

III.

But there are authors and authors, and I would not have you make any author your bosom friend who were not worthy of your confidence. He should be a man with a purpose, a man who speaks out because he cannot remain silent, a man who has a mission to sing or say to us noble things that have hitherto remained unsaid, or that have been only partly uttered, till he grasps their whole meaning and gives them their full-rounded expression. And that expression should make for good. This is the good book whereof Milton speaketh: "A good book is the precious life-blood of a master-spirit, embalmed and treasured up on purpose to a life beyond life." * The definition is not overstated. Men write their years, their life-blood, their very souls into their master-pieces. You receive their ideas through the rhythm of well-polished sentences, and you see nothing of the patient toil and drudgery that those sentences conceal.

We may lay it down as a general rule that the smoother the polish and the more rhythmic the sentence, the more severe has been the study back of it all. Name not Shakspere as an exception. With the different editions of *Hamlet*—both quarto and folio—before me, each varying in the text, and with Montaigne's *Essais* and Holinshed's *Chronicle*, from each of which he drew largely, I find traces of great painstaking in the production of that wonderful master-piece. The burning

* Prose writings: *Areopagitica*, p. 104.

eloquence of Demosthenes that would set Greece aflame smelled of the lamp. What is there in all literature more polished than the magnificent sixth book of Virgil's *Æneid?* One would think that he had painted the infernal regions with colors drawn exclusively from his own imagination. Not so, however. Virgil was only repeating in every detail the traditions of Roman mythology and the teachings of those who went before him. There are whole lines from his great predecessor, Ennius; there are passages that are almost literal translations from some of Plato's sublimest sentences. Upon the foundation thus constructed does Dante build up that noble cathedral of Catholic song, that sublimest poem ever inspired by religion and patriotism — the *Divina Commedia*. It were a long story to detail to you the infinite pains, the life-long labor, wrought into that mystic work. Edmund Burke revises the proof-sheets of his *Reflections on the Revolution in France* twelve times before he is satisfied with its polish. Gibbon strikes the right keynote of his great history only after he has written and re-written his first chapter seven times. We are told that George Eliot read and consulted no less than one thousand volumes while writing *Daniel Deronda*. And yet, who would think, when reading that bright and laughing letter of the young artist from Rome, or tracing the evolution of the character of Gwendoline, that the writer had looked beyond the blank sheet on which she recorded her impressions? A few years ago Cardi-

nal Newman wrote an essay on Inspiration. He was at once attacked. In this manner does the Cardinal rebuke his opponent's over-haste: "'Tis a pity he did not take more than a short month for reading, pondering, writing, and printing. Had he not been in a hurry to publish, he would have made a better article. I took above a twelvemonth for mine. Thus I account for some of the professor's unnecessary remarks." * Could anything be more scathing? I sometimes wonder to what extent the professor has taken the lesson to heart. Here is one of our most graceful and polished writers, his venerable years enshrined in a halo of reverence, taking over a twelvemonth to write a short magazine article upon a subject that has occupied his life-thoughts. Think of the patient thought and research. And when we are reading any great masterpiece, and we begin to find it wearisome, let us not give it up; rather let us brace ourselves anew to the task with the reflection of the years of drudgery the master gave to the gathering together of the materials of this great work, and then the unlimited patience with which he toiled at those materials, transmuting them in his mind till they came forth polished and stamped with his personality, and made current coin for all time. The effort will endear the book to us all the more, and imprint it on our memory all the better.

* What is of Obligation for a Catholic to believe concerning the Inspiration of the Canonical Scriptures, p. 7.

IV.

SHOULD you ask me how to read, I can do little more than repeat rules that I have learned elsewhere, many of which you already know. Bacon seems to me to have summed up all the rules for reading in his own terse style. "Read not," he says, "to contradict and confute, nor to believe and take for granted, nor to find talk and discourse, but to weigh and consider. Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested: that is, some books are to be read only in parts; others to be read, but not curiously;* and some few to be read wholly, and with diligence and attention."† This says everything. I am only putting into other words the counsel of the great sage when I repeat to you:

I. Read with attention. Attention is the fundamental condition of all reading, of all study, of all work properly done. What is its nature? It is a concentration of the mind upon an object of thought to the exclusion of all others. It is a habit, and, like all habits, to be acquired only by practice. One may live in a state of habitual distraction as well as in a state of habitual attentiveness. The habit of perfect attention—the habit that we all of us should seek to acquire as best befitting social beings who cannot shirk the claims and requirements of social life—is the attention that can, without strain or effort, break off from one subject, pass on to another, and

* That is, *attentively.*

† *Essays*—"Of Studies."

resume at once the thread of one's readings or thoughts. How may such an attention be acquired? Where the reading-matter is congenial to the reader there is no difficulty; the attention becomes naturally and unconsciously absorbed in the subject. But where one is unaccustomed to reading, or where the reading-matter has no special interest, it is with an effort that one learns to control one's attention. I conceive a reader may in the following manner acquire this control:

(1) Set aside daily, according to leisure or occupation, a given portion of time for reading. The daily recurrence to a subject at precisely the same hour may be irksome, but it soon creates a habit which finally becomes a pleasure.

(2) Keep up the practice of using that time for the one purpose and nothing else. This induces the habit all the sooner, and renders it all the more profitable. The principle of recurrence pervades nature. The seasons make their rounds within their appointed times. Thegrasses spring up, and ripen, and decay, and in their pre-ordained seasons become renewed. It is the rhythmic recurrence of sound that makes poetry cling so easily to the memory. It is the rhythmic recurrence of a primary note that gives tone to the melody. It is the rhythmic recurrence of wave-vibration—for such is light—that tints the flower, and reveals the beauties of earth, and air, and starry sky. See the waterfall glint in the sun's rays, there also is rhythmic wave-motion. In a recurrence of good or bad actions is the soul made beautiful or ugly,

for virtue and vice are habits. And so it is in the daily recurrence of attention concentrated upon thoughtful reading that intellectual labor is rendered fruitful.

(3) Focus the attention during the time of reading in such manner that the mind becomes wholly occupied with the reading matter. Better is a daily reading of half an hour made with sustained attention than a reading of two hours made in an indolent, half-dreamy fashion.

(4) Read with method. Absence of method in one's reading is a source of great distraction. Give yourself the habit while reading of making a mental catalogue of your impressions. Distinguish between the statements that are doubtful, and probable, and certain; between those that are of opinion, and credence, and presumption. You will find this practice of great aid in sustaining attention.

(5) When, in spite of all these precautions, you begin to find your thoughts wandering away from the page upon which your eyes are set, leave the book aside for the time being, and take up the reading of another subject that is more likely to fix your attention. We are told that Mr. Gladstone—that grand old man of such great physical endurance, and such wonderful intellectual activity—is wont to keep three distinct volumes on three distinct subjects open before him, and when he finds attention beginning to flag in the reading of one, he immediately turns to another. The practice is admirable for the trained intellect. The change brings rest to the

mind and keeps it from growing wearied. Men who are constant brain-workers generally keep before them a favorite volume, in which they from time to time refresh their minds when fatigued, or when they find the train of thought they would pursue exhausted. I have known men to find mental stimulation in the study of a Greek or Sanskrit verb; others, again, are wont to discipline their minds into activity by going over a theorem in geometry or calculus. Mere revery or listlessness is a hopeless scattering of brain-force. It were well for us all to understand that mental inaction is not resting; it is rusting. It is a corrosion of the faculties, and renders them less efficient for future action. In this respect, the law of intellectual, is different from that of physical, repose. Our soul is spirit, and must needs be active; and a wholesome, moderate, well-directed activity best satisfies the laws of our being. Brain-work has never injured anybody. It is excitement, or taking trouble to heart, or disregarding the primary hygienic conditions of our physical nature, that breaks down the health, and we are too prone to attribute it to mental exertion.* In the natural course of things every great author and great thinker should live to a ripe old age: witness the length of days to which have lived, or are still living,

* Since writing the above I find the same view maintained as regards insanity. Mr. W. H. Burnham writes: "Griesinger, the great German alienist, says that purely intellectual over-pressure seldom leads to insanity, but among the most frequent causes is over-strain of the emotions." (*Scribner's Magazine*, March, 1889., p. 314.)

Kant and Ranke and Dœllinger; Gladstone and Manning and Newman; Brownson and Bancroft and President Woolsey and Dr. McCosh. These men have all known what intense brain-work means.

II. Another rule is to take notes while reading. The very fact of reading with pen or pencil in hand stimulates thought. Remember that reading is useful only in proportion as it aids our intellectual development; it aids intellectual development only in proportion as it supplies food for reflection; and that portion of one's reading alone avails which the mind has been enabled to assimilate to itself, and make its own by meditation. Now, note-taking with running comments is a great means of making clear to one's self how much one does or does not know about the subject-matter of one's reading. Hence its value. But note-taking may be overestimated, and it actually becomes so when it is reduced to a mere mechanical copying and cataloguing of extracts, without any effort to make these extracts the seeds from which to cultivate native thoughts.

III. Consult your dictionary. Do not give yourself the habit of passing over words of whose scope and meaning you are ignorant. Such habit begets a slovenly mode of thinking. The ablest writers and thinkers can but ill dispense with their dictionary. It is a friend that steads them in many a mental perplexity. All assimilation of thought is a process of translation. Every intellect has a certain limited vocabulary of words in which it thinks,

and it fully grasps an idea only when it has translated that idea into its own familiar forms of expression. If a great aim of reading be mental growth, and if mental growth depend upon accuracy of conception, then it is of primary importance to know, beyond mere guess-work, the precise meaning of the words one reads.

IV. Read with a purpose. Lay out for yourself a definite object, and let all your reading converge upon that object until your purpose is attained. This is the only reading that will be remembered. Books perused in an aimless manner are soon forgotten; indeed, are seldom remembered. The mind becomes a mere passive instrument, receiving one set of impressions, which are in a little while obliterated by another set no less temporary. Now this is an abuse. Reason, imagination, all the faculties of man's intellect, were given him that he might exercise them and develop them to the full compass of their activity. He who lets them lie dormant is in the position of him who buried the one talent that he had been entrusted with. Dante very justly places all such, though living without blame and without praise, in the first circle of hell.* Madam Mohl, that oddest of little women, who for so many years ruled over all that was distinguished socially or politically in Paris, in her impatience of gossiping women once asked: "Why don't they talk about interesting things? Why don't they use their brains? . . . Everybody but a born idiot has brains

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But there are works which to be properly appreciated cannot be partially read. They are all works of art—whether of prosaic art, as the novel, or of poetic art, as the epic or lyric or dramatic poem. Such works must be read as a complete whole. As well may you mutilate a picture or a statue or a musical sonata as skip portions of a great poem or a standard novel. Every work of art is one—breathing one ideal, speaking one thought. You cannot reduce the thought to fragments; you cannot break up the ideal. This is a primary law of criticism, and every reader should take it to heart.

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You complain of the impossibility of remembering all you read. That comes of your reading over-hastily or of your reading aimlessly. When you read with a purpose, and take notes, and make running comments, and mark passages or chapters which you re-read, your memory will be retentive of all essential points.*

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IV.

SHOULD you ask me how to read, I can do little more than repeat rules that I have learned elsewhere, many of which you already know. Bacon seems to me to have summed up all the rules for reading in his own terse style. "Read not," he says, "to contradict and confute, nor to believe and take for granted, nor to find talk and discourse, but to weigh and consider. Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested: that is, some books are to be read only in parts; others to be read, but not curiously;* and some few to be read wholly, and with diligence and attention."† This says everything. I am only putting into other words the counsel of the great sage when I repeat to you:

I. Read with attention. Attention is the fundamental condition of all reading, of all study, of all work properly done. What is its nature? It is a concentration of the mind upon an object of thought to the exclusion of all others. It is a habit, and, like all habits, to be acquired only by practice. One may live in a state of habitual distraction as well as in a state of habitual attentiveness. The habit of perfect attention—the habit that we all of us should seek to acquire as best befitting social beings who cannot shirk the claims and requirements of social life—is the attention that can, without strain or effort, break off from one subject, pass on to another, and

* That is, *attentively.*

† *Essays*—"Of Studies."

resume at once the thread of one's readings or thoughts. How may such an attention be acquired? Where the reading-matter is congenial to the reader there is no difficulty; the attention becomes naturally and unconsciously absorbed in the subject. But where one is unaccustomed to reading, or where the reading-matter has no special interest, it is with an effort that one learns to control one's attention. I conceive a reader may in the following manner acquire this control:

(1) Set aside daily, according to leisure or occupation, a given portion of time for reading. The daily recurrence to a subject at precisely the same hour may be irksome, but it soon creates a habit which finally becomes a pleasure.

(2) Keep up the practice of using that time for the one purpose and nothing else. This induces the habit all the sooner, and renders it all the more profitable. The principle of recurrence pervades nature. The seasons make their rounds within their appointed times. Thegrasses spring up, and ripen, and decay, and in their pre-ordained seasons become renewed. It is the rhythmic recurrence of sound that makes poetry cling so easily to the memory. It is the rhythmic recurrence of a primary note that gives tone to the melody. It is the rhythmic recurrence of wave-vibration—for such is light—that tints the flower, and reveals the beauties of earth, and air, and starry sky. See the waterfall glint in the sun's rays, there also is rhythmic wave-motion. In a recurrence of good or bad actions is the soul made beautiful or ugly,

for virtue and vice are habits. And so it is in the daily recurrence of attention concentrated upon thoughtful reading that intellectual labor is rendered fruitful.

(3) Focus the attention during the time of reading in such manner that the mind becomes wholly occupied with the reading matter. Better is a daily reading of half an hour made with sustained attention than a reading of two hours made in an indolent, half-dreamy fashion.

(4) Read with method. Absence of method in one's reading is a source of great distraction. Give yourself the habit while reading of making a mental catalogue of your impressions. Distinguish between the statements that are doubtful, and probable, and certain; between those that are of opinion, and credence, and presumption. You will find this practice of great aid in sustaining attention.

(5) When, in spite of all these precautions, you begin to find your thoughts wandering away from the page upon which your eyes are set, leave the book aside for the time being, and take up the reading of another subject that is more likely to fix your attention. We are told that Mr. Gladstone—that grand old man of such great physical endurance, and such wonderful intellectual activity—is wont to keep three distinct volumes on three distinct subjects open before him, and when he finds attention beginning to flag in the reading of one, he immediately turns to another. The practice is admirable for the trained intellect. The change brings rest to the

mind and keeps it from growing wearied. Men who are constant brain-workers generally keep before them a favorite volume, in which they from time to time refresh their minds when fatigued, or when they find the train of thought they would pursue exhausted. I have known men to find mental stimulation in the study of a Greek or Sanskrit verb; others, again, are wont to discipline their minds into activity by going over a theorem in geometry or calculus. Mere revery or listlessness is a hopeless scattering of brain-force. It were well for us all to understand that mental inaction is not resting; it is rusting. It is a corrosion of the faculties, and renders them less efficient for future action. In this respect, the law of intellectual, is different from that of physical, repose. Our soul is spirit, and must needs be active; and a wholesome, moderate, well-directed activity best satisfies the laws of our being. Brain-work has never injured anybody. It is excitement, or taking trouble to heart, or disregarding the primary hygienic conditions of our physical nature, that breaks down the health, and we are too prone to attribute it to mental exertion.* In the natural course of things every great author and great thinker should live to a ripe old age: witness the length of days to which have lived, or are still living,

* Since writing the above I find the same view maintained as regards insanity. Mr. W. H. Burnham writes: "Griesinger, the great German alienist, says that purely intellectual over-pressure seldom leads to insanity, but among the most frequent causes is over-strain of the emotions." (*Scribner's Magazine*, March, 1889., p. 314.)

Kant and Ranke and Dœllinger; Gladstone and Manning and Newman; Brownson and Bancroft and President Woolsey and Dr. McCosh. These men have all known what intense brain-work means.

II. Another rule is to take notes while reading. The very fact of reading with pen or pencil in hand stimulates thought. Remember that reading is useful only in proportion as it aids our intellectual development; it aids intellectual development only in proportion as it supplies food for reflection; and that portion of one's reading alone avails which the mind has been enabled to assimilate to itself, and make its own by meditation. Now, note-taking with running comments is a great means of making clear to one's self how much one does or does not know about the subject-matter of one's reading. Hence its value. But note-taking may be overestimated, and it actually becomes so when it is reduced to a mere mechanical copying and cataloguing of extracts, without any effort to make these extracts the seeds from which to cultivate native thoughts.

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A memory equally strong upon every subject is rare. I have met only one instance approaching such a memory in all my experience. It is that of a great churchman, who stands foremost as a theologian, a canonist, a scholar, and a critic. He is familiar with several of the oriental languages; he speaks or reads nearly all the modern European tongues; his memory for facts and names and figures is marvelous. I have known him, in published articles, to quote chapter and page of authorities without consulting his books; I have heard him recite from Italian poets for hours at a time and even give the variations of different editions that he may not have looked into for years. This venerable prelate is the pride and glory of the Catholic Church in America.* But this is an exceptional instance of wonderful memory. For the large majority of us memory is simply confirmed experience in regard to topics with which we have grown familiar. According as our mind becomes active on any subject will our memory grasp the facts and ideas, and even the remote incidents, connected with the subject. Cardinal Newman says truly: "In real fact memory, as a talent, is not one indivisible faculty, but a power of retaining and recalling the past in this or that department of our experience, not in any whatever. Two memories which are both specially retentive may also be incommensurate. . . . . There are a hundred memories, as there are a hundred virtues."* And in this connection I would lay down a rule not given in your hand-books of reading.

times sixty. Read such a book through once in order to get a general view of the aim and the method of its author. Read it a second time more carefully, in order deliberately to weigh the value of its parts. Read the more valuable parts a third time, with meditation and reflection, that you may digest and assimilate what nutriment is there. Intellectually man is ruminant, and he gets little permanent benefit from literary browsing unless he thus afterwards chews the cud." ("Books that have made Me," from the *Forum*, p. 90.)

* I need scarcely remark that the venerable prelate here alluded to was Monsignor Corcoran, whose loss we now deplore.

V. Learn the art of forgetting. It is a great blessing and a rare art, that of knowing what to forget. It is an art not to be applied indiscriminately. There are many things in books—even in books not professedly bad—that are to be ignored, just as there are many occurrences in daily life that remain unmentioned. It is by a strong exercise of will-power that reason learns to overlook, or to reject from memory and imagination—from imagination, at all events—a certain objectionable sentence or paragraph in a book, or certain scenes and incidents that are neither beautiful, nor edifying, nor entertaining, nor instructive. Frequently the nobler passages so fill the mind that they leave no room for these accidentally unworthy ones. You stand before the Cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris. You admire its vast proportions, its wonderful construction, its mysterious, overawing impression of prayerfulness. There recurs to your mind the magnificent chapter of Victor

* *Grammar of Assent*, sixth London edition, pp. 340, 341.

Hugo's novel—*Notre Dame de Paris*—translating its manifold beauties into words only little less expressive than its carved stones. Before its grandeur, the vision of physical grotesqueness and moral monstrosity, which the great word-artist would associate with it, drops out and fades away, with as much ease as the remembrance of the toads and slimy things that find sustenance in the moisture dripping at the base of its walls. You enter, and the sublimity of the structure is forgotten in a view sublimer still. It is that of a sea of upturned faces filling its vast structure, many of whom you recognize as leaders in the social, literary, and political world, hanging spell-bound on the utterances of a white-robed Dominican, * as from yonder historic pulpit he announces to them in irresistible eloquence the great truths of Christian doctrine. You leave, the echo of his thrilling words ringing in your ears. The impression remains, never to be effaced. Beneath the magic touch of such impressions the soul expands. Whatever is good and holy and pure and noble, in word or work, is the legitimate object of man's intellectual energies. This is the secret of the elevating influence of all true art. And here is where Victor Hugo fails. He mistakes bathos for sublimity. In the trail of his genius has followed a school of writers who wallow in filth, admire ugliness, sympathize with depravity, and love horrors. And their readers? Their intelligence has strayed from the true ideal—the ideal that lives—to a standard ever descending and to the cultivation of a taste that revels in the realism of Zola, whose beastliness had grown so revolting that his own disciples and admirers, in self-respect, were compelled to enter public protest against one of his latest books.

* I had the great pleasure of hearing Père Monsabré in several of his Lenten sermons, in 1887, under the circumstances here described.

This art of forgetting is not as difficult as you would suppose. Boys of good sense, who are indiscriminate readers and great devourers of books, practise it unconsciously. But as reason develops it takes a strong act of the will to render the brain impervious to certain classes of impressions. Hypnotism has proven how an external agent is capable of lulling certain nerve-centres of volition into torpor, and of causing the mind to become concentrated upon a single idea to the exclusion of all others, no matter how forcibly they may be pressed upon the attention, and to look at it in the manner the agent desires. Now, that which an external agent can so effectively do, the will, in its own way, can be trained to achieve. The mind's eye may be rendered blind to all else than the subject-matter it is surveying. Biography is filled with the blunders committed by great thinkers —such as St. Thomas Aquinas and Newton—when in this state of total absorption with some predominant thought. Consider the great will-power Mr. James Anthony Froude has brought to bear upon the distortion

of history. Note the facility with which he ignores the virtues of Mary Stuart; see the perfections he finds in Queen Elizabeth; and there is that "great blot of blood and grease on the history of England," * Henry VIII.; Mr. Froude can't perceive it; it is to his mind an unsullied page, and Henry VIII. a humane ruler and a profound statesman. In like spirit can Mr. Froude read a quotation until it begins to tell against his preconceived notion, drop out words that damage the view he would hold, garble sentences to suit his purposes, and play such pranks with quotation-marks as to make him the laughing-stock of all conscientious historians. That which Froude can achieve so well, simply that he may present an historical epoch in a novel light, we should be able to accomplish in another direction with the higher aim of keeping out of our soul intellectual and moral poison. This leads us to another rule.

VI. Be honest in your readings. Cultivate honesty of judgment, honesty of opinion, honesty of expression, so that you may be able to form an honest estimate of books. A book is commended as a classic, and you are unable to perceive its worth. This inability may arise from two causes: either you are not adequately educated up to the point of being able to appreciate such a book, or you have grown beyond the need or use of the book. If the book is beyond your grasp, do not attempt to read it; put it aside, and in the meantime read up other

* Dickens: *Child's History of England.*

matters in which you will find greater pleasure. But do not lose sight of the book. After a year or two try it again, and if you have been reading to some purpose your intellect will have expanded to the comprehension of the book that had been formerly beyond your reach. We all of us will find profit in educating ourselves up to a full appreciation of the great world-authors.

Then there are books that one outgrows. Every mind, acting in its normal state, passes through a process of development. What delights the child may be insipid to the man. The books of our youth are always pleasant memories to us, but we have no desire to spend our manhood hours upon them. Other books and other subjects, more befitting our riper years, absorb our attention. So it is with the different stages of a people's existence. Every age has its own peculiar wants and its own standards of excellence. Thus it not infrequently happens that books which were a revelation to our fathers have become mere commonplaces to us. This may arise from the fact that the thought which was novel when first presented to the previous generation has filtered through the various strata of society till it has become common property; we have grown familiar with it; it no longer excites the enthusiasm it did upon its first appearance. The book has done its work. Our age has another set of wants, calling for another set of thoughts, and we prize more highly the book supplying food for our own aspirations.

Such I take to be the position of Ruskin. He was the prophet of beauty of design in furniture and architecture. He taught those of his generation how to weave beauty about the home—whether it be a cottage or a palace—and the things in every-day use. He showed them how health and cheerfulness might be promoted by drawing the curtain aside in the dim or darkened room and letting in a ray of sunshine. He called their attention to the beauty of the passing cloud, and the blue sky, and the green fields, and the way-side flower. He awakened in them the almost dormant sense of beauty. And his lesson has been well learned. The present generation knows the value of observation, and is trained to take in at a glance whatever it perceives to be striking or beautiful. His books, so cleverly written, so intensely earnest, were a revelation to his day and generation, but they no longer evoke the enthusiasm that greeted their first appearance. Not that we cannot still find much to learn from Ruskin. He has nurtured his own mind upon high thought, and he would have all other minds equally nurtured. He holds up noble ideals of life. He would see men and women harboring elevating thoughts, pure of heart, honest in their convictions, unselfish in their pursuits, each extending a helping hand, each living for the highest and best. And these are lessons for all ages. He hates shams with the honest soul of Dr. Johnson; he scorns the worship of getting-on to the exclusion of the free exercise of the higher faculties with the unfettered soul of Epictetus; he loves the Gothic past, and he finds little in our modern world to love outside of Turner's pictures and Walter Scott's novels. All else in modern life is censurable. He quarrels with our railroads, and our smoking manufactories, and our modern methods of money-getting. Pages of his books are as charming as ever grew under the driving pen, but his digressions are more than his subjects. He lacks ballast. There is in him too much of what he himself has graphically described as "the wild writhing, and wrestling, and longing for the moon, and tilting at windmills, and agony of eyes, and torturing of fingers, and general spinning out of one's soul into fiddlestrings."*

So it is with Carlyle. He insistently taught the lesson that the world is moving, that time and tide wait for no man, that what has been done cannot be undone, that the great secret of living is to be up and doing—doing something—doing well whatever one puts hand to; and that other lesson in his great prose poem, *The French Revolution*, that neither class nor creed is privileged against the pursuit of a Nemesis, for deeds ill-done, goods ill-got, and responsibilities ill-discharged. These are lessons that cannot be too often repeated, but they were spoken rather loud-mouthedly, and with them were mingled large drafts of cant. He sought to compel the world's admiration for mere brute force in its triumphs over right and justice. He was out of joint

* *The Queen of the Air*, p. 170.

with his time, and because men refused to take his rantings seriously, he raved and indulged in nick-names worthy of Billingsgate in its most unsavory day. However tonic may have been his jeremiads in his own day and generation, they have now lost their power. And so Carlyle may step down and out. Our age is hard-pressed with other questions seeking a solution. We also have our prophets, if we would only recognize them; and if we do not make the mistake of stoning them we may profitably listen to their lessons.

VII. Be honest in your researches. Read both sides of every human question under proper guidance. Individual judgments are misleading, and it is only by comparison of various opinions that you can get at the real state of the case. It is the duty of the historian to go back of a statement to the author first making the statement, and inquire into the spirit by which he is animated. But this duty the historian does not always discharge. And yet, what is of more importance than to know if it is a friend or an enemy of the person or the people who is relating the story? Under no circumstances is the censure of an enemy to be accepted unchallenged and unsifted. Don't be afraid of the truth. It may tell against your favorite author, or favorite principle, or favorite hobby. But facts are of more worth than misplaced admiration or misconceived theory. Let in the light. What we want is the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Keep clear of whitewashing

books. Whitewash is not lasting; it scales off and reveals the deformities beneath. It were better from the beginning that we know men as they lived, events as they happened, opinions as they were held. We Catholics fear no truth, have no apology to make for any truth, have no hesitancy in accepting all proven truth. Our Holy Father, in throwing open the Vatican Library to historical research, has clearly defined the spirit in which history should be written: "The first law of history," says His Holiness, "is to dread uttering falsehood; the next, not to fear stating the truth; lastly, that the historian's writings should be open to no suspicion of partiality or of animosity." *

When you find a history, whether of Church or of state, with its chief personages stalking over the page possessing neither spot nor blemish of character, making no blunder in conduct or policy, perfect in all things, you may set that history down as misleading. No man is infallible. The life of every man is strewn with the wrecks of his mistakes. The wise man blunders, and from his blunders learns the larger experience and the more prudent mode of action; the holy man blunders, and out of his blunders builds unto himself a citadel of sanctity that becomes his protection against temptation. The book that would reveal to us a soul passing through all the stages of its existence from the first dawnings of reason, and making of its failures and failings and short-

* Letter to Cards. de Luca, Pitra, and Hergenrœther, Aug. 18, 1883.

comings stepping-stones to higher and better things, would be a priceless boon. But is it not still an unwritten book?—

So also, in a study of the clashings of the various schools and systems of philosophy, may you find some scintillations suggestive of trains of useful thought. But there is one subject which I would urge upon you with all the earnestness of my soul to hold in reverence. It is the most precious inheritance that you possess. It is more to you than broad acres and heaps of gold; more than knowledge and power; more than fame and human greatness; more than life itself. It is the heritage of your Catholic Faith, that has been nurtured in the blood of your forefathers, and handed down to you as a most sacred trust. It is too holy a thing to be trifled with. Put far away from you books calculated to undermine the groundwork of that precious heritage. Cherish it within your heart of hearts; guard it there with jealous care. Do I so exhort you because I think your faith cannot bear the light? Far from me be such a thought. It were but ill in keeping with the solemn words of the Father of the faithful. He says: "Nor must we pass by in silence, or reckon of little account, that fuller knowledge of our belief, and, as far as may be, that clearer understanding of the mysteries of the faith, which Augustine and other Fathers praised and labored to attain, and which the Vatican Synod itself decreed to be very fruitful." * During eighteen hun-

* Leo XIII., Encyclical *Æterni Patris.*

dred years and more sophistry in every guise has been attacking that faith, and it shines to-day with greater splendor than ever. There are popular books disseminating plausible objections that might vex and annoy you because you could not answer them satisfactorily. A sneer can sap the foundations of a great religious truth in the unwary mind. Any scoffer can raise objections that only a life-study could answer. It is the absence of such learning that the Psalmist finds good: "Because I have not known learning, I will enter into the powers of the Lord." * We do not hold our faith merely upon the evidence of reason, or as a matter of private opinion. It deals with truths and mysteries beyond the grasp of human reason. We hold it solely and simply on the authority of God speaking to us through His Church. We hold it because God gives us the grace so to hold it. It matters little to us whether certain parts of the Book of Daniel have been written by Daniel, or by Esdras, or by any other scribe or prophet. † Our faith is not grounded upon this or that passage of Scripture. It is based upon the infallible authority of God's Church, which is the pillar and ground of truth, and the depositary of revelation, and which alone has the key to what is or is not of inspiration in the Sacred Books. This is our stand-by. A recent novel has depicted the sad instance of an Anglican clergyman tortured by

* Psalms, lxx. 17.

† See, for instance, Abbé Vigouroux, *Cosmogonie Mosaïque.* Susanne: Caractère véridique de son Histoire, pp. 345–349.

doubt, and his faith crumbling away at the touch of a sceptical hand. It is the story of hundreds within the Church of England at the present moment. And it is so because they hold the most sacred truths of Christianity not with the certitude of faith, but with the probability of private opinion. * The light of faith penetrates far beyond the light of reason; having lost the grace of faith, those men can no longer retain their hold upon the truths of faith.

VIII. Seek to master the book you read. To every book there is a positive and a negative side. In order to get at the positive side place yourself in sympathy with the author. Read the book from that point of view from which he wrote it. Divest yourself, for the time being, of your own hobbies and your own standard of criticism. You thus stand out of your own light. Afterwards look to the negative side of the book. Note how far the author has gone over the ground of his subject-matter, and wherein he falls short in his treatment. There are times when what an author does not say is as expressive as that which he says. His omissions are an important clue to his frame of mind. They reveal his likes and dislikes, his aptitudes, his tastes and tendencies. Sometimes they reveal how far he falls short in grasping the full bearing of his subject; sometimes they point to his prudence in steering clear of

* See Cardinal Newman's *Grammar of Assent*, chap. vii., § 2, 5.

mooted questions barren in result; sometimes they prove him an artist of consummate skill, who knows what not to say as well as what to say. Then, again, the omission may be designed suppression. An example will best illustrate the point I would make. Take the first and last master-pieces of George Eliot. *Adam Bede* breaks upon the reader with all the freshness and truth of nature. Every element influencing character is expressed in the workings of the very souls of the rural, half-educated folk acting out their lives according to their conscience, their early training, and their personal character. Their beliefs are there, and their lives are colored by their beliefs. *Daniel Deronda* deals with human nature on lines diametrically opposite. All its men and women, except the fanatical Mordecai and the priggish Deronda, live and move without religious beliefs and religious comforts, the creatures of environment, acting not as they would but as they must. The ordinary reader throws the light of his own religious belief upon the characters as they pass before him, and takes it for granted that the author assumes throughout religious feeling and religious motive. But he is reckoning without the author. George Eliot cast off the shreds of Christianity that had hung about her when she first began to write, and in her later works suppressed all Christian influence as false and pernicious, substituting in the stead necessity and environment. Here is the fountain whence flows the poison permeating

this gifted writer's later works. It is by taking into account these various aspects of authors and books that one learns to master the book one reads.

IX. In your readings give one another mutual support and encouragement. Therefore read aloud in the family circle. After you have read a chapter, discuss freely the author, the style, the characters, the statements. This is a good old custom that was in greater vogue a hundred years ago, when books were scarce and education was not so generally diffused. You all remember how charmingly Goldsmith, in that most charming of classics, *The Vicar of Wakefield*—a work that contributed so largely towards the awakening of the genius of Goethe—describes the practice at tea-time in the family-circle of Dr. Primrose.* Little did Goldsmith think that he was therein painting a relic of Catholic England, which had passed into a family custom out of the convents and colleges and monasteries of mediæval days. The custom is improving in many directions, and worthy of being preserved. Another praiseworthy means of mutual help is that of organizing reading-circles among your friends. Let some competent person cut out your work for you; prepare your portion well, and when the circle meets, enter with all earnestness into the discussion of your subject. You will find this a source of great improvement.

X. Read perseveringly. Keep at your book or your

* Chapter v.

subject-matter till you shall have finished it. Do not yield to discouragement because you are not making the progress you had anticipated. I have known young men who were too sanguine in their expectations, and who, upon seeing the little headway they were making, would throw up their work. We, all of us, at times feel inclined so to act, and have ample opportunity to fight against this impulse. But fight we must, bravely and manfully. Were naught else to come of this steady reading habit than the mental discipline that follows, we would be the gainers. It would help us to a better grasp of our daily affairs. But the habit brings with it much more. Even should we have read but a single book in the course of the year, and above all, should we have made that book our own, we would be amply compensated. Intellectual progress is not to be measured by the number of pages, or the number of volumes one has read. A short passage may suffice to mark an epoch in one's intellectual growth. He who has let Wordsworth's nobly chiseled Ode to Duty in all the beauty of its classic severity sink into his soul, or who has read and re-read Cardinal Newman's eloquent sentences on the power and awful grandeur of the Mass, till their whole force has come home to him,* or who has imbibed the truth and beauty of George Eliot's magnificent tribute to Thomas à Kempis,† has opened up to him a new vision

* *Loss and Gain*, pp. 326–329.

† The Mill on the Floss, bk. iv., chap. iii.

of these subjects. His horizon is enlarged. His intellectual sight is strengthened. And such is the educational effect of every masterpiece when it has been diligently read.

XI. Lastly, remember that that is the best reading which tends to growth of character as well as to intellectual development. Every good book dealing with human life in its broader phases has that effect. But we Catholics read a certain class of books that are prepared especially for the culture of our spiritual sense. They remind us of our last end; they probe our consciences and lay open before us our failings, and frailties, and shortcomings; they reveal to us the goodness and mercy and sanctity of God, the life and passion and merits of our Redeemer, the beauty and holiness of the Church; they teach us how to prepare for the profitable reception of the sacraments; they place before us for our model and imitation the ideal Christian life. They rebuke our sins, they soothe our anxieties, they strengthen our resolves. With such friends we should become very intimate. And if I may be permitted to give advice upon a subject that belongs more especially to your spiritual director, I would say to you: Whatever you read by way of spiritual reading, be it little or much, read it slowly and reflectively. You are not under obligation, as in pursuing a course of study, to rush through a certain amount. Any passage that comes home to you, or stirs your feelings, or moves your will, dwell upon it until you

shall have absorbed all its sweetness. Cultivate not many, but a few, very few, spiritual books, which you will make it a point to read and read again year after year.*

V.

SHOULD you ask me what to read, I could not give you a definite answer. The choice will greatly depend on yourself. Lists of books, except for the pursuit of special lines of study, are valueless. You have before you the whole range of literature and thought, from *Alice in Wonderland*—a child's book which we none of us are too old to profit by—to that late beautiful creation of a mother's love and a woman's genius, *Little Lord Fauntleroy;* from the primers of science to the *Mécanique Céleste* of Laplace; from the fairy-tales of boyhood to the great thinkers; historians, poets, orators, philosophers, political economists—all place their wealth at your feet and ask you to make it your own. Before selecting draw the line between the literature of the hour, that is so much foam upon the current of time, flecking its surface for a moment and passing away into oblivion, and the literature which is a possession for all time, whose foundations are deeply laid in human nature, and whose structure withstands the storms of adversity and the

* The indispensable books in every Catholic collection are: 1. *The New Testament;* 2. *The Imitation of Christ;* 3. *Spiritual Combat;* 4. *Introduction to a Devout Life*, by St. Francis de Sales.

eddies of events. The literature of the hour we cannot ignore; it has its uses; but we may and ought to guard against wasting more time and energy upon it than is absolutely necessary.

The daily press is flooding us with sensation and distraction. It were the height of unwisdom in us to devote any but the most limited time to our morning paper. The monthly magazine and the quarterly review also claim our attention. The story is told of Madame de Staël, how she asked Fichte to give her within a short quarter of an hour an idea of his philosophy. The philosopher was horrified at the thought that anybody could in so few minutes take in the meaning of a system that had been for him a life-labor. Well, that which caused Fichte to shudder is now of every-day occurrence. The magazines and reviews come to us laden with articles on every conceivable topic, in which the learned of the world condense their life-studies; and within little more than a quarter of an hour we are enabled to become familiar with issues that it would take us years to master to the degree of our newly-acquired knowledge. Is this a boon? The knowledge so acquired cannot be rightly apprehended unless we have brought to it previous special training. It is simply a cramming of undigested facts. It is not culture. Culture implies severe mental discipline, continuous training, and methodical study of the best thought and most polished expression. Magazine articles can be of use when

judiciously selected and read with care. Do not attempt to read all. Choose those only that are in your line of reading. In these remarks I have in view the secular press. But we Catholics must not forget that there is also a religious press, and that it is an imperative duty upon us to support that press. Much good is done by every well-edited Catholic journal. Now, many of our Catholic weeklies are instructive, edifying, and improving. Their editorials serve as an antidote to correct the poisonous effects of the venom frequently instilled into the daily press. They determine our bearings as Catholics upon the issues of the day. They signal to us the dangers that beset us. This is in a higher degree true of our Catholic magazines. Those published amongst us are few, and are easily enumerated. There is the *Ave Maria*. Weekly does it place at the feet of Mary a bouquet of flowers, rare and choice, contributed by the most graceful Catholic writers. There is *The Catholic World*. Every month it comes upon our tables laden down with strong food for reflection and sweetmeats for amusement. You cannot pick up a number without finding amid its great variety something to suit every taste. There is the *American Catholic Quarterly Review*, edited by one of the most erudite among scholars, and treating every topic in the light of Catholic theology and Catholic philosophy from an elevated plane of view. It may interest you to know that cultured non-Catholics are among its most constant readers, regarding it as the

fullest and most authoritative expression of Catholic opinion in America.*

Memoirs and biographies and books of travel and manuals of popular science form the staple of our reading, and instructive and entertaining reading they make; but we must bear in mind that the ninety-nine hundredths of them are books of the hour, satisfying the wants of the hour and nothing more. They excite a momentary interest, and are then forgotten. Let them not monopolize all your spare time. The only biography in our language which has passed into the literature of all time is Boswell's *Life of Johnson.*† Autobiography

* Two other monthlies, worthy of mention, are *The Messenger of the Sacred Heart* and *Donohue's Magazine.*

† There is one biography which I would like to see in the hands of every Catholic young man. It is *Frederic Ozanam: His Life and his Works*, by the late Kathleen O'Meara. I can introduce it to you in no more fitting words than those I have used elsewhere:

"The second London edition, now before us, has been found worthy of a long and valuable introduction from the pen of Cardinal Manning to what his Eminence calls 'this deeply interesting narrative.' With great firmness of grasp the author handles the salient events of the day, and groups around Ozanam all the leading characters of that most interesting period of French history—interesting above all to the Catholic student—and follows her hero through the whirl and turmoil of Paris, and notes amid the seething of thought that was then going on in all active brains the self-possessed student through 'eighteen years of great intellectual and spiritual intensity' (Cardinal Manning's preface, p. 9), strong, energetic, earnest, carving his way to eminence, and inspiring youthful souls with his own chivalric impulses. Faithfully she traces his footsteps as, weak in body, he wanders through many lands in search of the health that was ebbing fast away from him; but, well or ill, always returning weighted down with erudition gathered from musty tomes hidden away in the recesses of dust-laden libraries; now picking up legends in Catholic Brittany; now culling flowers of sweetest poesy and song in the garden of St. Francis of Assisi; now imbibing inspiration in the land of the Cid; now following the slow and solemn tread of the great Dante, delving into that inexhaustible mine of high thought, the *Divina Commedia*—glad always and above all things when he could establish a branch of his dear Confraternity of St. Vincent de Paul. It is all told with an indescribable charm.

"Had Kathleen O'Meara left no other work from her pen than this biography, she would well deserve the gratitude of Catholics. If we were asked what book we would recommend to be placed in the hands of young men in order to quicken their sympathies in behalf of misery and suffering, and aid the good that is in them to bloom out and bear fruit, we should name without fear of demur or contradiction Kathleen O'Meara's *Frederic Ozanam.* It is a story of great talent utilized and bearing compound interest; an illustration of great opportunities created and seized upon and used to advantage; a revelation of sweet and charming domestic virtues. In Ozanam we behold the man of the world whose pulse beats in sympathy with all the literary, political, and social movements of the day; the ripe scholar, the unwearied student, and the beautiful, saintly soul. The book is strong enough to mark an epoch in the life of any thoughtful Catholic young man." *The Ave Maria*, March 6, 1889.

has been recently most disastrous to the writers thereof. Mark Pattison, who seems to have written in order to vent a personal spite; John Stuart Mill, Carlyle—all wrote themselves down over-estimated idols with feet of clay. The one exception is that admirable piece of soul-dissection, so outspoken with honesty written on every page; that revealing of a soul to which tens of thousands are bound up by ties of gratitude, love, and admiration—the *Apologia* of Cardinal Newman, a book which will henceforth rank with the *Confessions* of St. Augustine.

And here I would ask you to distinguish between the suggestive book, that sets you thinking, and after reading which you wish for more, and the book that leaves

nothing unsaid, and in a measure does all your thinking. I need scarcely tell you that the suggestive book makes the more profitable reading. It is invigorating; it is of the highest order of writing. All the world-authors—Plato, Aristotle, Dante, à Kempis, Shakspere, Goethe—are eminently suggestive. They exhaust no train of thought; they are content to designate the lines on which the reader should travel in order to attain the goal. Between lines you read a sense of power heldi n reserve. Their utterances, given out in distinct htough subdued tones, are the utterances of men holding in control both thought and expression. Hence the libraries of books that have been written, and that will continue to be written, upon each of these great writers without ever exhausting their infinite suggestiveness. The suggestive book may be large or small: A modern suggestive book should be confined within a small compass. Would that I could bring home to writers the ease with which this may be done! How much weariness of spirit the reading world would then be spared! The process is simple. Let the writer reject from his book whatever there is of padding, of negations, of repetitions of things that have been better said by others; let him eschew all grandiloquent description and what is called fine writing; let him confine himself to his subject, meeting difficulties and objections in the clear light of the predominant idea, condensing whole chapters into paragraphs, whole paragraphs into sentences,

whole sentences into single words and phrases. In this manner may books be written in keeping with the busy life men lead and the many claims that press upon them. In this manner would there be less waste of paper, less waste of ink, less waste of labor, less brain-waste; the millennium of the reading world would be at hand. The reading of strong and terse writing fires the soul and strengthens the intellect; the reading of emasculated books will make emasculated intellects.

VI.

I NEED scarcely tell you that the great bulk of novels of the day are of the lightest froth. It were intellectual suicide to spend one's time and waste one's energies unravelling improbable plots or watching puppets of the brain—mere wax-works—dance before one through page after page and volume after volume, leaving it difficult to determine which is deserving of most censure, the presumption of the writer in rushing into print, his bad taste, or the mongrel language in which he expresses himself. The British Museum recently made a rule to let out no novels to readers till after the expiration of five years. How many of the novels published in this year of grace will be read five years hence? Ask the Mudie or any other circulating library what is the duration of the popularity of books for which the presses, worked day and night, were unable to supply the demand. The popularity of the hour is no criterion of worth. *Ben Hur*

lay long months untouched upon the publishers' shelves before men awakened to its beauty and power; *Lorna Doone* was for years struggling into public recognition; and who that has read *Dion and the Sybils* will say that it has yet received a tithe of its full measure of justice? The popularity of the hour is most misleading. Among living authors the one that bids fairest to become a classic—I regret that I cannot unreservedly recommend him—is one who worked for years in poverty and obscurity before obtaining recognition; even at the present moment his readers are limited. His prose is as repellent to the casual reader as is the poetry of Robert Browning. But, like Browning, he is a keen analyzer of human motives; like Browning also he deals largely with the morbid in human life. Every novel of his is a soul-study, and almost every sentence is an epigram. I allude to George Meredith. A careful study of his *Diana of the Crossways*—the original of which, by the way, was the Hon. Mrs. Norton—will give you some insight into his great power and unrivaled merit.

But there is no dearth of novels that have passed the ordeal of time and are pronounced classic. Scott is still read, and will continue to be read as long as men will appreciate the spontaneous outpourings of a genius who writes with all the ease and joyousness with which the blackbird sings. There is about his novels the freshness of the morning dew. We Catholics will pardon him the misrepresentations of our monks and the caricatures of

our religious practices that disfigure some of his pages, for we know that he bore us no malice, and had he known better he would have done us more justice. The large majority of his books are wholesome reading.

But there is now coming into vogue a pernicious species of novel, all the more dangerous because of its insidiousness. It is not openly immoral. It is, as a rule, artistically written, and loudly praised by the critics in sympathy with its principles. It is the novel of Pessimism. Its spirit is anti-Christian. It represents men and women under the cold and barren influence of Agnosticism or Positivism—either system has the same ultimate result—with Agnostic or Positivist theories filtered through their lives and moulding their opinions and characters. Within its pages you look in vain for a Providence, immortality, spiritual existence. Its summary of all life is a natural development of the physical man or woman, happy in the airy fancies youth weaves; then a crisis which precipitates all illusions; afterwards hardened feelings, bitterness in speech, and either railings at all life or the resignation of despair, recklessly, hopelessly submitting to the Must-be. You cannot detect its subtle influence till it has left the iron in your soul, and the sweet prayers of your childhood have grown insipid, and the ritual and ceremonies of the Church have lost their attraction, and you no longer think of God and your future with the same concern. It is in steering clear of such novels that direction is especially necessary.

Though we have no single great national novel, either for America or for England, as Cervantes' *Don Quixote* is for the Spanish; as Manzoni's *I Promessi Sposi* is for the Italians; as Tolstoï's *Anna Karénina*, that great prose epic of Russian life in its good and its bad aspects, is for the Russians; still, in Dickens, in Hawthorne, in several of Bulwer Lytton's—*My Novel*, for instance, and nearly all his later ones—in the great modern master of novelists, him of the big heart and the generous sympathy, that great lay preacher and critic of manners, who has written such classic prose and given us such grand character-studies in *Vanity Fair* and *Pendennis* and *Henry Esmond* and *The Newcomes*—in all these and many others we can find amusement, instruction, and improvement. You may be interested to know that Thackeray was in strong sympathy with the Catholic Church. His bosom friend, William B. Reed, of Philadelphia, in a valuable little book, published anonymously and now very scarce, bears witness to the fact; and I quote his words all the more willingly, for the reason that when this essay of Mr. Reed's was republished in a series printed in New York, the interesting passage was omitted.* "Thackeray," says his friend, "was in one sense—not a technical one—a religious, or, rather, a devout, man, and I have sometimes fancied (start not, Protestant reader!) that he had a sentimental leaning to

* Bric-à-Brac Series: Anecdote Biographies of Thackeray and Dickens, edited by Richard Henry Stoddard.

the church of Christian antiquity. Certain it is, he never sneered at it or disparaged it. 'After all,' said he one night to him who writes these notes, driving through the streets of an American city, and passing a Roman Catholic cathedral, 'that is the only thing that can be called a church.'"* We will think none the less kindly of Thackeray for this good word. We will censure him all the more lightly for his want of appreciation of his Irish neighbors, and especially for his caricature in the Fotheringay of the beautiful and accomplished Miss O'Neill.† I know no better antidote against a craving for the trashy stuff that is now flooding the world than to make a thorough study of one or other of the great novelists. After one has become accustomed to fare on wholesome food one is not apt to feed on husks and swallow swill.

Not but that among novels, as among poems, which have not yet received the sanction of time, we perceive many a gem bringing home to us many a beautiful lesson, and we may humbly and thankfully accept the gift. I find in several of our living writers purpose, style, and art of a high order. One of the most successful of them—Mr. W. D. Howells—once remarked to me that he could no more conceive a novel without a purpose than an arch without a key-stone. Various are the ways

* World Essays, p. 209.

† Thackeray himself received no better justice at the hands of Lord Beaconsfield. The spiteful character of St. Barbe in *Endymion* is far from being the genial and large-hearted Thackeray as known to his friends.

in which the goodness of that purpose may be shown: now it is to place before us an ideal of life in its diverse phases, now to caution us against some of the evils gnawing at the vitals of society, now to bring the past nearer, now to photograph glimpses of an order of things passing away forever, now to put us in presence of higher truths; and we have well-written and powerful novels illustrative of all these ways. To mention names were tedious.

I am not unmindful of the distinctively Catholic novel. It is of recent growth on English soil. That eminent churchman and scholar, Cardinal Wiseman, saw in the *Last Days of Pompeii* the model of an idea which, carried out, might prove most fruitful in bringing before the minds of the people a vivid picture of the Christian Church passing through the various stages of her struggles and her triumphs. His fertile brain accordingly projected a series of novels intended to rehabilitate the life of the primitive Christians, and, with his usual versatility, he turned aside from his oriental and scientific studies, and led the way in that delightful story of *Fabiola*, which continues to be read with unabated interest. Then followed *Callista*, a classic of finer fibre and more delicate structure, abounding in subtle traits of character, and penetrated with that keen sense of the beautiful in which the Grecian mind lived and moved. It is a book that grows upon one with every successive perusal. Other works of merit were modeled on these, and though the list is short, it is select.

Nor am I unmindful of a number of writers of the day professing the Catholic faith, whose pens, though not devoted to exclusively Catholic subjects, have produced, and still produce, good reading. Two of the most prominent—Lady Georgiana Fullerton and Kathleen O'Meara—have recently dropped out of the list, and have gone to their well-earned reward. So has the chivalric and generous John Boyle O'Reilly. Rosa Mulholland, Christian Reid, Mrs. Elisabeth Gilbert Martin, Mrs. Cashel-Hoey, Richard Malcolm Johnston, Marion Crawford—with some exceptions,—the Rev. John Talbot Smith, the outspoken editor of the *Catholic Review*, and those two honored pioneers of the Catholic novel in America, Mrs. Sadlier and Mrs. Hanson Dorsey, are among those that recur to memory.

Were we to enumerate the various Catholic authors who in our own day shine in different departments of literature--James Jeffrey Roche, poet and journalist, on whose shoulders the mantle of John Boyle O'Reilly has so worthily fallen; Charles Warren Stoddard, Maurice Francis Egan, who, whether polishing a sonnet, penning an editorial, or etching a scene from life, always pleases; Louise Imogen Guiney, Agnes Repplier, Eleanor C. Donnelly, Katherine Conway, Mrs. Mary E. Blake, Mrs. Margaret F. Sullivan, who wields so versatile a pen, whether as journalist, or critic, or eloquent pleader in behalf of Ireland—were we to name all, we could not find space within the covers of this essay.

VII.

Books of criticism are always read with interest, and are efficient aids in determining the works we shall read. They promote intellectual growth. They cultivate literary taste. They give us other aspects of the books under review than those we would be likely to take from our point of view. The *Appreciations* of Mr. Walter Pater, though not always clear, and somewhat wordily written, are pitched in a high key of criticism calculated to quicken thought; the *Views and Reviews* of Mr. W. E. Henley, short and crisp and suggestive, are truly models of good taste and sound literary judgment; the *Essays in Criticism* of Matthew Arnold contain estimates that are carefully made, and in matters purely literary that author's judgment is almost as delicate as that of his master Sainte-Beuve. The *Among my Books* of Mr. James Russell Lowell, though occasionally too long drawn out, display much good sense. In the writings of Whipple and Edmund Clarence Stedman, poet of elegant finish and most fair-minded, genial, and sympathetic of critics, and of George E. Woodberry, we find careful guides and stimulators to reflection. And when Aubrey de Vere, in his *Essays chiefly on Poetry*, discourses to us about his master Wordsworth, and initiates us into an appreciation of the grandeur and beauty and philosophic depths of that great poet's work, we feel as though a new world of thought had been laid open to us. Then, there is Richard Holt Hutton. Literary criticism seems to

have attained its high-water mark in his *Essays*. His theological opinions have no value for Catholics. They may satisfy men groping in the dark, unsettled in their creed and anxiously awaiting the light But his literary essays are greatly valuable for their thoughtfulness, breadth of view, and grasp of subject. In making his estimates he speaks with fine discrimination; his qualifications are apt and to the point; his judgment is evenly balanced; he defines with clearness, and as a rule his summing up is such as we can accept with confidence. He is sensitive to every turn of phrase and expression, and possesses the rare talent of knowing when a thought is fittingly clothed in words. Could it be otherwise with one who has made a life-study of the writings of Cardinal Newman as the standard of all excellence in form of expression?

But the reader who would rest content with learning what others may have to say about a book, without testing for himself by actual perusal how far he can follow them in their estimates—relish what they relish, or condemn what they condemn, or approve what they approve—would be only taking the shadow of knowledge for the substance. It is Novalis who likens such a reader to him who would satisfy his hunger with the perusal of a bill of fare.

Then there is an extensive literature of art criticism, which it behooves us not to ignore. Art idealizes life. It leaves impressions for good or ill that are ineffaceable.

"Once the verse-book laid on shelf,
The picture turned to wall, the music fled from ear—
Each beauty, born of each, grows clearer and more clear,
Mine henceforth, ever mine!"—*

So sang the poet of art-thought and art-impression.

Etchings and engravings by various admirable processes have brought the great masterpieces within reach of all, and it were not to our credit to neglect their study. Under the guidance of the charming volumes of Miss Eliza Allen Starr you find much to admire. Their full meaning will be unrolled before you. She has made art a life-study; and I may safely say that there is not a great painting in Europe of which she has not the key, and which she cannot describe in apt and clear-cut phrase. Then we Catholics must not forget that all great art is pre-eminently Catholic. Its traditions are Catholic. Its whole meaning is determined only by Catholic interpretation. It is for us to read and understand the full sense of the mediæval works of art. The subjects are Catholic, the masters were Catholic, their inspiration was Catholic; and it should be our pride and our glory to be familiar both with the subjects and with the great masters. Why not cherish what is peculiarly our own?—Why leave it to be distorted and misinterpreted at the hands of strangers to Catholic faith and Catholic traditions?

You find the leading magazines and reviews abounding in philosophical essays. Herbert Spencer and Professor Huxley and their numerous disciples and co-workers are very active in the field of speculation. It is not at all times easy to perceive wherein their theories err. It is not at all times wise to undertake to sift the truth from the error, except it be under safe guidance. But, where there is leisure and inclination, our Catholic young men and young women might profitably pursue a course of philosophic reading. The Stonyhurst series of philosophical text-books, starting with the Logic of Father Richard Clark, S.J., will be found profitable study to begin with. They impart the principles of scholastic philosophy in as correct English as we can look for. And that they are written by the Jesuit Fathers is in itself a vouchment for their orthodoxy. This series might be supplemented by Balmes' *Fundamental Philosophy*, which has been so well rendered into English by Mr. Henry F. Brownson, and by Father Harper's noble effort to modernize the great work of Saurez in his *Metaphysics of the School*. In Mivart's *Philosophical Catechism*, in his *Lessons from Nature*, in his great work *On Truth*, and its Supplement, *The Origin of Human Reason*, you will find the answer to many a burning question of the day. So also will you find in Lilly's recent work *On Right and Wrong*, a satisfactory refutation of Herbert Spencer's *Data of Ethics*. Then, Hettinger's *Natural Religion*, which has been recently so ably translated by Father Sebastian Bowden of the London Oratory, and Quatrefage's work on the unity of the human race, published in

* Robert Browning, *Fifine*, p. 400.

the International Scientific Series—one of the few redeeming books of that series from the Christian point of view—will give you the latest word of science upon problems that science will be a long time in solving. Balfour's *Philosophical Doubt* and Father Lambert's *Notes on Ingersoll* show how easily the opponents of Christian revelation may be run to cover. Stöckl's *History of Philosophy*, translated by Father Finlay, S.J., will give a fair account of various systems that have agitated the world.

Nor must I omit the *Grammar of Assent*. It is a work that ranks Cardinal Newman with the great thinkers of all time. It is another chapter contributed to the history of human thought. But it is not a book that will fit into any system. Newman was a disciple of no philosophic school. He allowed no man to do his thinking for him. He did his own thinking; and the book is the outcome of his own personal struggles. The ever-recurring problem to his mind was the reconciliation between reason and faith. How can the human reason give assent to a mystery, or a doctrine beyond its comprehension?—How can a chain of reasoning, every link of which is in itself a probability, lead to the certitude of faith?—These are the problems he attempts the solution of in his great work. You find the author groping after their solution in his *Oxford University Sermons*, in his *Development of Doctrine*, and in his *Essays on Miracles*. They are outlined in the *Apologia*.* But in the *Grammar*

* Part iii., pp. 68–73.

of Assent they are surveyed in all their bearings, and the workings of the intellect in its various modes of apprehending truth are explained with keen analytic power and a wonderful wealth of illustration. His genius penetrated depths that only the greatest intellects have had glimpses of. He never read Kant, but he had Kant's insight into the shortcomings of purely syllogistic reasoning. The key-note to his book may be found in these words: "I had a great dislike for paper logic. For myself, it was not logic that carried me on; as well might one say that the quicksilver in the barometer changes the weather. *It is the concrete being that reasons;* pass a number of years, and I find my mind in a new place; how? the whole man moves; *paper logic is but the record of it.*" * Therefore it was that this acute intellect found the syllogism fall short both of concrete issues and of first principles. To supply the deficiency is one of the chief objects of this book. Newman, be it remembered, never wrote for the sake of mere speculation. He wrote because there was a thought within him burning for utterance. His life was all earnestness, and his writings were an essential part of that life. The same earnestness of purpose enters into their composition. He knew that there were souls wrestling with the same problems that had for so many years occupied his mind, and he hastened to place before them the solution that had satisfied his reason. This is the meaning of a book which is

* *Apologia*, Part iv., p. 206.

still, in a measure, an enigma to a large portion of the reading world. And so viewed, this remarkable book stands forth an evidence of the noble charity that inspired its author in writing it as well as of the luminous genius that dictated it. Cardinal Manning, who did certainly sound the depths of Newman's great intellect, in estimating his influence, thus alluded to the book and the author: "But we cannot forget that we owe to him, among other debts, one singular achievement. No one who does not intend to be laughed at will henceforward say that the Catholic religion is fit only for weak intellects and unmanly brains. This superstition of pride is over. St. Thomas Aquinas is too far off and too little known to such talkers to make them hesitate. But the author of the *Grammar of Assent* may make them think twice before they expose themselves." * This is a tribute as deserving as it is delicate. Could human tongue speak higher compliment?

It is needless to enlarge upon the advantages to be derived from the study of philosophy. It has always had a fascination for the human mind. Men will never cease to be interested in questions that concern them as intimately as do those bearing upon their origin, their nature, their destiny, their relations with the outer world and with one another; questions underlying the foundation of all knowledge; questions dealing with the first principles of things; questions on the methods, the definitions, and

* Funeral Sermon, London *Tablet*, Aug. 23, 1890.

the scope of science, literature, and art. They all fall within the province of philosophy. Then, a course of philosophy thoroughly and seriously pursued is a great intellectual discipline. It imparts the habit of mental caution that is inestimable as an aid in sifting truth from error. It enables one to appreciate the supreme forms of literature. Goethe, Shakspere, Dante, Plato, even Tennyson in his *In Memoriam*, all dwell in that upper region of thought in which the great world-truths are harmonized in an atmosphere of poetry and philosophy. And thus it is that philosophy is the basis of all true culture. Without sound philosophical principles the human mind is ever building upon shifting sands. The principles are, one and all, unchangeable. Systems and methods may and do vary——

"Our little systems have their day;
They have their day and cease to be:
They are but broken lights of Thee,
And Thou, O Lord, art more than they—" *

but principles remain ever the same. They are the light or our reason.

* *In Memoriam.*

VIII.

POETRY is also a factor—and an important factor—of culture. It is formative both of individual and national character. Some of the noblest impulses and emotions of the age have found expression in poems that thrilled a whole nation. Such a poem was Hood's fierce and indignant *Song of the Shirt*, penned in deep sympathy with the poor, starving, underpaid, and overworked seamstress of London; such a poem was that heart-rending sob, *The Bridge of Sighs*, going out to every heart in earnest appeal to be more humane to erring unfortunate ones; such a poem was Elizabeth Barrett Browning's *Cry of the Children*, that powerful protest against the cruelty of child-labor in manufactories. Even so, generations ago, was Greece educated by Homer, and the Old English by the poems of *Beowulf* and *The Fight at Finnesburgh*. Nor has poetry in these days lost its formative influence over those who read it thoughtfully and sympathetically. Every one so reading will find in a favorite author an inexhaustible source of thought, amusement, and restfulness. He who has attuned his soul to the music of Adelaide Proctor, or of Longfellow, till his thoughts vibrate in unison with the clear, simple, and beautiful forms of expression that he has found in these authors, has an unfailing source of recreation and a healthful mental tonic. He who has soared higher, and peopled his imagination with the varied world, and garnered his memory with the suggestive sayings, of a Shakspere, has the wherewith to beguile many a weary hour and to nourish his soul with wholesome food for reflection. The noble grandeur of Milton's stately lines, the clear-cut sense of Pope's polished couplets, the delicate finish of Tennyson's verse, in which thought and expression are so harmoniously blended—these and many more appeal to the cultured mind for careful perusal, and all repay the pains taken to acquire insight into their diverse harmonies. Who does not feel the better that the resignation and trust in God so beautifully expressed in *Lead, kindly Light*, has, through that poem, sunk into his heart?—How many a soul has risen to higher and better things because it was haunted by a beautiful sentiment? Of the late General Gordon we are told that these lines from *Paracelsus* had sunk so deeply into his heart that they might be regarded as his motto:

——"I go to prove my soul!
I see my way as birds their trackless way.
I shall arrive! What time, what circuit first,
I ask not: but unless God send His hail
Of blinding fire-balls, sleet or stifling snow,
In good time, His good time, I shall arrive:
He guides me and the bird. In His good time!"

Nobly did the hero of Khartoum live and die in the resigned and humble spirit of these lines.

Mr. W. T. Stead, late editor of *The Pall Mall Gazette*, speaking of that powerful poem illustrating the despair and disappointment of a blasted life at the threshold of eternity, the *Extreme Unction* of James Russell Lowell,

says: "It made a deeper dint on my life than any other printed matter I ever read, before or since." Many might recount a similar experience.—Sir Philip Sidney tells us how his soldierly nature was wont to be moved, "more than with a trumpet," whenever he heard the ballad of *Chevy Chace*.* So has many a heart thrilled while reading the daring feats of the Irish Brigade in Davis's stirring ballad of *Fontenoy*. And who has not been moved at the story of that other Brigade—"noble six hundred,"—headed by the gallant and intrepid Nolan, in obedience to a blundering order, walking into the valley of death?†

Moreover, the Church has from the beginning made use of spiritual canticles to excite devotion and inculcate doctrine into the hearts of the faithful. The *Benedictus* of Zachary, the *Nunc Dimittis* of Simeon, the *Magnificat* of Mary ever Virgin, are recorded in the Gospel. Then we have the beautiful hymns of Hilary and Prudentius and Ambrose and Bernard and Aquinas, all consecrating times and seasons according to the spirit of the Church. And who has not felt the power of those two magnificent hymns, the *Stabat Mater* and the *Dies Iræ*?—England in her early Catholic days possessed an abundant harvest of Catholic poems in the mother-speech; especially was she

* *Defence of Poesy*; ed. A. S. Cook, p. 92.

† See the graphic sketch of that charge, and of the gallantry of Captain Nolan, in Kinglake's *History of the Crimean War*, vol. ii., pp. 548–592.

rich in canticles in honor of Mary Immaculate. Nay, the very springs in the valleys, the very flowers in the field, the very plays and amusements of children were called after Mary, and so great was devotion to the Blessed Mother of God that the whole island was known as Our Lady's Dowry.* You all remember Chaucer's two beautiful tributes to Our Blessed Lady, the one a translation from the French of Guillaume de Deguileville, and known as *The A B C of Queen Blanche*; the other, that magnificent translation from the *Purgatorio* of Dante which introduces *The Prioress' Tale*. The nineteenth century seems to have caught up some echoes of this devotion to Mary, and so Keble in his *Lyra Innocentium*, and Walter Scott in *The Lady of the Lake*, and Byron in *Don Juan*, and Edgar Allan Poe, and Wordsworth in his *Ecclesiastical Sonnets*,—all have paid beautiful tributes to her whom the last-named has so nobly called—

"Our tainted nature's solitary boast."

In Cardinal Newman's *Verses on Various Occasions*, and Father Faber's *Hymns*, and Aubrey de Vere's *May Carols*, we have the out-pourings of the modern Catholic heart to this Queen of Song. Thus it is that poetry from the beginning has been the handmaid of religion. It is no less the handmaid of patriotism.

* See Father Bridgett's admirable book, *Our Lady's Dowry*, *passim*. The Early English Text Society have gathered many of the poems in honor of the Blessed Virgin.

Who can calculate the extent to which Moore's *Melodies*, sung in the drawing-rooms of English society, aided O'Connell in his gigantic labor of securing Catholic Emancipation?—What Scotchman can read unmoved Burns's fiery lyrics, especially his *Bannockburn?* And note the frenzy that possesses French republicans at the singing or reciting of the *Marseillaise*. Again, when, in the midst of much tinsel and tawdry in *Lalla Rookh*, Moore is seized with the fire of patriotic inspiration, and he pens *The Fire-Worshippers*, in which the veil of disguise is most transparent—for what is Iran but Erin?—note how strong and vigorous his lines become; so much so that they deserve to be translated into the mother-speech of another oppressed people, and to become their consoler in the misery that overwhelmed them, and forthwith the Poles take home to their bosoms the great Irish bard.*

But returning to the individual influence of poetry, let me remark that its range is so wide, and its degrees are so varied, each, according to disposition and mental aptitude, will find somewhere in the poetic literature of the language a strain, a chord, that will awaken in his soul a responsive vibration; his soul will have grown to a more rounded completeness for having found music in that chord. You may say that you do not like poetry, or that you cannot read poetry. It is because you

* *Life of Archbishop MacHale*, by Mgr. Bernard O'Reilly, vol. ii., p. 634.

have not struck the right rhythmic note to which your æsthetic sense corresponds. You may find Tennyson too refined, or Browning too obscure, or Shelley too vague, or Milton too ponderous, or Shakespeare too difficult. Perhaps in the natural glow of Burns's lines—for instance his *Highland Mary*, or *To Mary in Heaven*, or *Lines on a Daisy*,—your soul will become enkindled; perhaps you will catch patriotic fire from the stirring verses of Davis, at the same time so full of vigor and tenderness; perhaps in Mangan or Gerald Griffin you will find the keynote to your temper and thought; perhaps the simple grace and polish of Goldsmith or Parnell will suit you better; perhaps the simple naturalness of Cowper will please you; perhaps the pathetic story of *Evangeline* will go home to your heart; perhaps in the luscious lines of that "idle singer of an empty day," William Morris, you will find what shall please you best; perhaps it is the clear-cut finish of Austin Dobson, or Edmund Gosse, or the Rossettis, or Edmund Clarence Stedman, that you prefer; perhaps you will find the simple and placid directness of Coventry Patmore to suit your taste, and you will admire his *Angel in the House* as ardently as did Ruskin; perhaps it is the rapid movement of Scott's *Lady of the Lake* that will stir you; perhaps the pleasant lines of Whittier's *Snow-Bound;* perhaps the noble heart-throbs of John Boyle O'Reilly; perhaps . . . but why continue? Somewhere the chord exists that will appeal to your nature and disposition with effect, and will evoke a correspond-

ing attunement. The vivid imagination that enables children to live in a world all their own, peopled with beings of their own creation; that imagination with which the little girl speaks to her dolls, and fancies them sick, or injured, or naughty; that imagination with which the little boy bestrides his wooden horse, or marshals his tin soldiers in battle array, or talks in terms of intimacy with the domestic animals,—that imagination is not extinct in the grown man or woman; it is only dormant. It may yet be awakened to construct noble ideals of life subservient to reason and experience. You say you do not like poetry; why, then, are you moved by the *Exile of Erin* of Thomas Campbell, or the *Home, Sweet Home* of John Howard Payne? Here it is heart speaking to heart.*

It is not always the great poets that will reach the inner feelings of your heart. Even eminent authors and thinkers have not invariably taken to the great poets. Shelley admired the spiritual beauty and the noble ideals in Spenser's poetry, and held in slight esteem Ariosto, whom Spenser only too closely followed in his *Faery Queene;* Byron was an ardent admirer and constant

*It is pleasant to record that the weary spirit of Payne, after roaming through many lands, found at last a haven and a resting-place in the Catholic Church upon his death bed in Tunis—and his bones have been brought home to his native soil, through the kindness and munificence of his old schoolmate, the late W. W. Corcoran of Washington.

reader of Ariosto, but could make nothing of Spenser. Nor could Byron appreciate Wordsworth, and yet Wordsworth's influence for good is traceable in the last two cantos of *Childe Harold.* Wordsworth held all his contemporaries—Coleridge excepted—in low estimation. Newman prized Crabbe in a special manner, even as did that other great master of prose, Edmund Burke, and regarded his *Tales of the Hall* with an abiding affection,* but never could bring himself to read Dante; and yet, in the tender and serenely classic and highly philosophical *Dream of Gerontius,* Newman has bequeathed to English literature a poem thoroughly Dantesque in its conception and in its underlying ideas. Still, Newman and Dante were kindred souls in many respects. Both were intensely active in early life, the one in the sphere of religion and the other in that of politics; both afterwards dwelt apart from the world and from their old life; both had no sympathy with what were considered the advanced views of their age; both were men of acute intellects, fond of speculation; both were profoundly philosophical. Who but Dante could realize, as Newman did, the separation of soul and body, and the thoughts that might belong to the soul as it steps across the threshold of eternity, still thinking in the grooves of time and space when time and space are no more?—Considered in this light, the *Dream of Gerontius* is a marvellous poem.

* See *Idea of a University* fifth edition, p. 150.

And so, while I would gladly see you familiarize yourselves with the highest and the best in literature, if your tastes lead you by preference to the lesser poets, by all means enjoy them. Indeed, I would recommend to those whose reading in the line of poetry has been limited, to begin with a poet of homely phrase and pleasant thought—some one

> "No singer vast of voice, yet one who leaves
> His native air the sweeter for his song." *

Later on, the poets requiring more concentrated attention and a certain amount of mental discipline for their appreciation, may claim your best thought to advantage.

Be this as it may, I cannot better explain the subject of poetry than by dwelling for a moment, in a manner however scant, upon the three poets that have best caught up and sung to us the message that this century now declining in her last decade would bequeath us. They are all three of them worthy of our attention. Could any remarks of mine lead you to a careful study and just appreciation of them, I would feel well repaid. In their highest and best flights you will find some of the noblest ideals of truth and loveliness ever conceived by human brain.

* William Watson, "On Longfellow's Death." *Wordsworth's Grave and other Poems.* London, p. 69.

IX.

1. WORDSWORTH'S influence upon the thought and character of this century has been strong, deep, and abiding. He it was who fired and moulded the poetic genius of Aubrey de Vere. The poet has left us a charming record of the manner in which he first fell under the influence of his great master from the reading of *Laodamia*. We will let him describe how the reading of that poem weaned him from his extravagant admiration for Byron. "Some strong, calm hand," he says, "seemed to have been laid on my head, and bound me to the spot till I had come to the end. As I read, a new world, hitherto unimagined, opened itself out, stretching far away into serene infinitudes. The region was one to me unknown, but the harmony of the picture attested its reality. Above and around were indeed

> An ampler ether, a diviner air,
> And fields invested with purpureal gleams;

and when I reached the line—

> Calm pleasures there abide—majestic pains,

I felt that no tenants less stately were fit to walk in so lordly a precinct. I had been translated into another planet of song—one with larger movements and a longer year. A wider conception of poetry had become mine, and the Byronian enthusiasm fell from me like a bond broken by being outgrown." *

* *Essays chiefly on Poetry*, vol. ii., pp. 289, 290.

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* *Essays chiefly on Poetry*, vol. ii., pp. 289, 290.

No less true is it—though not so generally known—that Wordsworth helped to mould the character of Thomas Davis. "The ideals he found in Wordsworth," says Justice O'Hagan, "especially the ideal of a pure and exalted love of country, took full possession of him."* His influence upon John Stuart Mill was no less marked. The first reading of Wordsworth's poems was an epoch in that philosopher's life. "What made his poems a medicine for my state of mind," he tells us. "was that they expressed not mere outward beauty, but states of feeling and of thought colored by feeling under the excitement of beauty. I needed to be made to feel that there was real permanent happiness in tranquil contemplation. Wordsworth taught me this, not only without turning away from, but with greatly increased interest in, the common feelings and the common destiny of human beings.'† Poetry influencing types of character as distinct as Aubrey de Vere, the poet, Thomas Davis, the patriot, and John Stewart Mill, the philosopher, must indeed contain an element of strength worthy of your serious consideration.

That influence was not cheaply purchased. Its foundations were laid in deep meditation and in life-long study. Wordsworth was a most careful composer. He spared no pains to get the fitting word or strike upon the proper phrase. Caroline Fox, commenting upon what was considered the verbosity of Browning, wrote: "Doth he know that Wordsworth will devote a fortnight or more to the discovery of a single word that is the one fit for his sonnet?"* His was the conscientious work of the conscientious teacher. He was wont to say: "Every great poet is a teacher; I wish to be considered as a teacher, or as nothing." From the first, he believed in his mission; through long and weary years, with but scant recognition, he labored at his mission, and finally his genius shone forth through the clouds of prejudice, and he triumphed in the achievement of that mission as a teacher. And what is the lesson he would convey in his noble lines?—

* *Contemporary Review*, Oct., 1890.

† *Autobiography*, p. 148.

We should bring to the reading of him a disposition to sit humbly and thoughtfully at his feet, and to receive his lesson in the spirit in which he gives it. And if I can point out to you what you may expect to find, and what not to find, in his poetry, I conceive that I will be making your task all the lighter. But withal, a serious task it is to measure the full length and breadth and height and depth of Wordsworth, and to feel at home in the trains of thought he would evolve. You will meet whole lines, sometimes whole poems, written in a bald and creeping style; you will hit upon the mention of a trivial incident, or the employment of a trivial phrase, apparently marring what you would otherwise call a beautitul conception; and it is out of such barren

* *Handbook to Browning's Works*, p. 11.

plains of expression that rise up some of the noblest passages in our literature.

Wordsworth invests the material universe with a new dignity by making it, in his own peculiar manner, the companion of man, a something to be communed with in its manifold aspects. He educates the human senses to a keener preception of vision and sound. Indeed, the poet may be said in a measure to have imparted thought to sense and speech to inert matter. He regarded Nature with a spiritual discernment, reading her meanings and her teachings as no other poet had read them. The careful study of his poetry in a spirit of sympathy is in itself an education. Mr. Walter Pater says very aptly: "The constant suggestion of an absolute duality between higher and lower moods, and the work done in them, stimulating one always to look below the surface, makes the reading of Wordsworth an excellent sort of training towards the things of art and poetry. It begets in those who, coming across him in youth, can bear him at all, a habit of reading between the lines, a faith in the effect of concentration and collectedness of mind in the right appreciation of poetry, an expectation of things, in this order, coming to one by means of a right discipline of the temper as well as of the intellect. He meets us with the promise that he has much, and something very peculiar, to give us, if we will follow a certain difficult way, and seems to have the secret of a special and privileged state of mind.

And those who have undergone his influence, and followed this difficult way, are like people who have passed through some initiation, a *disciplina arcani*, by submitting to which they become able constantly to distinguish in art, speech, feeling, manners, that which is organic, animated, expressive, from that which is only conventional, derivative, inexpressive." *

This estimate, deliberate as it is scholarly, will enable you to appreciate the force of Wordsworth's influence upon those who submit to his spell. He is the poet of Nature in a sense distinct from that in which we can apply the same epithet to any other poet. He is unwearied, as so many another poet has been unwearied, in describing every varying shade of expression in his favorite haunts. And these descriptions, unlike those of other poets, are not merely an exhaustive list of what the eye beholds; they are an embodiment of the sentiment that haunts the place he would describe; they express the outcome of a complex variety of impressions when the human spirit grows in sympathetic touch with the animating principle of Nature.

In lifting Nature up to the sphere of companionship with man, Wordsworth introduced a new element into modern poetry. He awakened in man consciousness of the expression of Nature, and imparted to him the sense of interpreting this expression. He initiated man into the moods in which he might best hear and best read

* *Appreciations*, p. 40.

this interpretation. He tells us that he himself learned to view Nature—not as in the hour of thoughtless youth with all its aching joys, and all its dizzy raptures,

"———but hearing oftentimes
The still, sad music of humanity,
Nor harsh nor grating, though of ample power
To chasten and subdue. And I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean, and the living air,
And in the blue sky, and in the mind of man;
A motion and a spirit, that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things." *

Let us not become alarmed at some expressions in this magnificent quotation. Wordsworth is no pantheist.† His are Christian feelings, and he thinks in a Christian spirit. The presence he recognizes in Nature is that Supreme Power whom he thus apostrophizes elsewhere:

"———O Power Supreme
Without Whose call this world would cease to breathe,
Who from the fountain of Thy grace dost fill
The veins that branch through every frame of life,
Making man what he is, creature divine,

* *Lines above Tintern Abbey.*

† See Aubrey de Vere's "Recollections of Wordsworth," *Essays*, vol. ii., p. 282.

In single or in social eminence,
Above the rest raised infinite ascents
When reason that enables him to be
Is not sequestered." *

"To that Personal God," says Aubrey de Vere, "he paid dutiful reverence in life and song. Had he lost his hold of Religion, he would have lost Nature also, for to him she would have been Nature no longer. As it was, in all her manifestations, whether in shape or in color, in movement or at rest, from the most awe-inspiring of her forms to the most fugitive of her smiles, he recognized divinely-appointed ministers parleying with man's spirit, the quickeners of its finest impulses. How much the human mind conferred upon Nature, and how much Nature conferred upon the human mind, he did not affect to determine; but to each its function came from God, and life below was one long, mystic colloquy between the twin-born powers, whispering together of immortality." † This is a poet's interpretation of the poet to whom he looked up with sympathy and reverence, every line of whose poetry he studied, and every phase of whose genius he explored.

But the Nature that Wordsworth deals with is Nature as ministering to man and influencing him, apart from all the artificial elements that enter into the moulding of his character and the imparting of false tastes and

* *The Prelude*, book x.

† *Essays*, vol. i., p. 105.

false standards of truth, beauty, and excellence. Therefore does he take human life in its lowliest spheres of action, and weave about it a halo of poetry—or rather, draw out and hold up in artistic form, for all time, the ideal belonging to all such life and action, and inherent in the simplest object of creation. This is indeed to bring our views of things nearer to the Divine vision of them. And so the poet deals by preference with the humblest peasant life rooted in the soil—the life that other poets have thought beneath their notice. Browning tells us that the artist "lifts his fellows, with their half-apprehensions, up to his own sphere, by intensifying the import of details, and rounding the universal meaning," * He grasps the type and leaves the individual; better still, he describes the individual in relation to the type. Beneath the accidents he perceives the substance. This in an especial manner has been Wordsworth's mode of procedure in dealing with human life. His poetic vision sees beneath the ordinary routine of every-day life a whole world of sensation and emotion hidden away from the prosaic observer:

> "Joy spreads, and sorrow spreads; and this whole vale,
> Home of untutored shepherds as it is,
> *Swarms with sensation, as with gleams of sunshine,*
> *Shadows and breezes, scents and sounds.*"

A suppressed glow of warmth, all the more forcible for its being held in check, pervades his lines. They

* *Essay on Shelley.*

thrill with the sensations he breathed into them. Beneath the unruffled routine of peasant life, he feels the peasant's pulse, and reads his every thought and interprets his every sigh. In this respect Wordsworth is not unlike Millet.

The genius of Millet consists wholly in his power of idealizing simple peasant life upon the canvas. And so we find his peasant men and women, with their plain faces and their homely work-a-day clothes, now sowing the seed, now reaping the harvest, now attending to their ordinary indoor and outdoor duties, represented with great naturalness, but also with great dignity. You stand before his masterpiece, *The Angelus*. There you behold nature in her simple and unadorned aspect: the field stretching far, far away into the horizon, the sky into which the clouds are slowly gathering, the spire of the village church in the distance, the wheelbarrow, the fork stuck in the ground, the man, his hat in both hands and his head slightly bent, something peculiarly sturdy and manlike in his attitude, the woman with hands clasped and eyes bent down—both at the sound of the Angelus bell from the distant spire wrapped in prayer, forgetful of each other and of all around them, forgetful of the toil and the heat of the day. That prayerful attitude of those simple peasants idealizes the whole scene. It is no longer the brown earth that is reflected in the sun-burnt features. It is souls. The spiritual world mingles with the material world;

heaven becomes blended with earth, and God's presence is felt.

Even so it is with Wordsworth. In his *We are Seven*, in his sublime *Ode on Immortality*, in his *Michael*, in whole books of *The Excursion*, you perceive beneath the simple narrative a linking of the spiritual with the material, sometimes a nearing of earth to heaven—the whole universe a shell bespeaking communion with its native sea of God's Immensity and Omnipotence; or, putting the image in Wordsworth's own magnificent language:—

——"I have seen
A curious child who dwelt upon a tract
Of inland ground, applying to his ear
The convolutions of a smooth-lipped shell;
To which, in silence hushed, his very soul
Listened intensely; and his countenance soon
Brightened with joy; for from within were heard
Murmurings, whereby the monitor expressed
Mysterious union with its native sea.
Even such a shell the universe itself
Is to the ear of Faith; and there are times,
I doubt not, when to you it doth impart
Authentic tidings of invisible things;
Of ebb and flow, and ever-during power;
And central peace, subsisting at the heart
Of endless agitation." *

As Millet carries the spectator from outward appearances to something beyond, so does Wordsworth bear his reader along the majestic flow of his verse, till the

* *The Excursion*, book iv.

reader has entered into sympathy, not only with the humble cottagers, but with the domestic animals that share their cares, and the scenes in which they live. He has shown how dignity and human tenderness are to be found among the squalid poor:—

——"There I heard,
From mouths of men obscure and lowly, truths
Replete with honor; sounds in unison
With loftiest promises of good and fair." *——

He has shown how human impulse and human passion, tears and laughter, commingle with the caring of sheep and the cultivation of the soil. He has shown how meekness and humility, and simple ways and the steady pursuit of duty, are the roads to true greatness. He has shown how strength is not passion, or impulse, or waywardness—

"Meekness is the cherished bent
Of all the truly great and all the innocent—" †

but rather that it lies in the subduing, and controlling, and directing of these things.

We are now in position to understand how difficult it is for one in full sympathy with the poetry of Wordsworth to continue to admire Byron. The methods, the point of view, the temper of soul of each can be brought together only to be contrasted. You follow Byron upon his pilgrimage through Southern Europe. You are at once impressed with the magnificent swing of his

* *Prelude*, book xiii. † *Works*, p. 729.

lines, the ease and vigor with which he grasps and interprets a splendid scene or a great work of art, the vividness and directness of his descriptions, the power with which he gives out the impressions that he receives. You are compelled to respect his faculty of observation and his accuracy of description. But his soul vibrates only to the great, the tragic, the magnificent in nature and art. Rome, Venice, Waterloo; the haunts or homes of men whom he holds in admiration, such as Dante, Rousseau, Voltaire; gigantic structures, such as St. Peter's and the Coliseum; grand or sublime scenery, such as the Alps, the ocean, Lake Leman; the scenes of a tragic story, such as Chillon, or the Palace of the Doges: these are the themes to which

"He struck his harp, and nations heard entranced." *

All Europe fell for awhile under the spell of his genius. Even at this hour, you cannot read his finer descriptive passages without feeling your soul thrill. But he was lacking besides in many of all those qualities that go to make up true greatness. He had no steadiness of purpose; he had no moral consistency. His philosophy was the musings of a misanthrope. He had the morbidness of Leopardi, without the literary polish or the intellectual consistency of the great poet of Pessimism. Those staying qualities that come of severe study and calm meditation were not his; and therefore, in spite of his great natural endowments, and the fitful lights that

* Pollock, *Course of Time.*

flash through his lurid genius, he has ceased to be an influencing power in literature. He is the poet of wild unrest. On the other hand, Wordsworth is the poet of the simple, the lowly, the commonplace, and the spiritual in Nature and in human life. His ideals are those of repose, cheerfulness, and contentment.

Wordsworth, though a High-Church Tory, abounding in strong anti-Catholic prejudices, was not aggressive towards the Church in his poetry. Several of his *Ecclesiastical Sonnets* are very Catholic. There is a pathos in the tenderness with which he alludes to the old abbeys. Feeling that he recorded their fall "untouched by due regret," he finally exclaims:

"Once ye were holy, ye are holy still;
Your spirit freely let me drink, and live!"

Catholicity will always be at home wherever there is genuine poetical inspiration. Aubrey de Vere, giving his personal recollections of the poet, says: "Wordsworth was . . . in his prose mind, strongly anti-Roman Catholic, largely on political grounds; but that it was otherwise as regards his mind poetic is obvious from many passages in his Christian poetry, especially those which refer to the monastic system and the Schoolmen, and his sonnet on the Blessed Virgin. . . . He used to say that the idea of one who was both Virgin and Mother had sunk so deep into the heart of humanity, that there it must ever remain fixed." *

* *Essays*, vol. ii., p. 283.

X.

2. THE first thing that strikes you when entering upon a study of Browning is that there are two clearly defined camps into which students of literature are divided regarding him. The one will tell you that he is little more than a literary mountebank, tricky in expression and misleading in idea; that, read him as you may, back or forth, you cannot fathom him; that after spending time and trouble upon him, you have your labor for your pains. The other camp is equally decided that Browning is the only poet of the period worth studying; that he is at the very least the peer of Shakspere; that there are hidden treasures buried beneath his rugged verses, if you will only labor patiently enough and examine carefully enough the matter and form of his poems. Now, without going into either extreme, let us deliberately investigate the merits of this energetic and voluminous writer. As the result of my own reading, I must say that Browning stands out pre-eminently a great poet. This we may acknowledge without being blind to his shortcomings and his defects. The mastering of him is no slight labor, but it is a labor that well repays. However, it is a study that I would not recommend to children in years, or to children in mind. His subject-matter is frequently such as not every one can look full in the face. It deals with nearly every phase of the morbid and the abnormal in human nature. But in his treatment of such subject-matter the poet is never sentimental, and never attempts

to carry the reader's sympathies along with crime or falsehood. In his mode of handling the most delicate themes there is a robustness that is invigorating. Not that the reader can always accept his artistic interpretations of scenes, incidents, or events. So, too, does his form of expression sound rugged and harsh to the ear, and not unfrequently is it long-drawn-out. But the rhythm is complex, and the sense is involved, and this it is that renders it so difficult to decipher his poems. Nor can we quarrel with the poet or his work on that account. If the artistic conditions under which he constructs his poems are novel and do not fit into our present standards of criticism, it remains for us—it is the part of all wise criticism—to sit humbly at the poet's feet and enlarge our standards. A few years ago the music of Wagner was only discord to ears attuned to the music of Mozart and Beethoven; surely, no one will deny today that Wagner has enlarged the possibilities of musical expression. Even so is it with Browning. He has added a new form to poetical expression, in which the very pauses in his thinking, the very checks to the train of his ideas, find their place. It behooves us, then, to study his methods.

We shall begin with the estimate taken of his intellectual workings by no less an admirer than Mr. A. C. Swinburne, as one leading us to a better knowledge of his mode of thinking and composing: "If there is any great quality," says this master of English rhythm, "more per-

ceptible than another in Mr. Browning's intellect, it is his decisive and incisive faculty of thought, his sureness and intensity of perception, his rapid and trenchant resolution of aim. . . . He never thinks but at full speed; and the rate of his thought is to that of another man's as the speed of a railway to that of a wagon, or the speed of a telegraph to that of a railway. It is hopeless to enjoy the charm or apprehend the gist of his writings except with a mind thoroughly alert, an attention awake at all points, a spirit open and ready to be kindled by the contact of the writer's. To do justice to any book which deserves any other sort of justice than that of the fire or the waste-paper basket, it is necessary to read it in a fit frame of mind; and the proper mood in which to study for the first time a book of Mr. Browning's is the freshest, clearest, most active mood of the mind in its brightest and keenest hours of work." * The aptness of these remarks is soon made apparent.

The mental alertness here recommended by Mr. Swinburne is called for from the manner in which Browning constructs his poems. The narration is not consecutive. The various parts have an appearance of being thrown together without design. Mr. Hutton has characterized this state as "mere abruptness and hurry, the rapid, sketchy accumulation of a writer of notes from his mental note-book, tumbling one after another in a bewildering crowd." † That is the first impression after a first

* *George Chapman:* A Critical Essay. 1875. † *Essays*, ii., p. 173.

glance. You perceive the fitness of the various parts only after you have surveyed the whole poem. For instance, you must get well into the third book of *Sordello* before you can grasp the meaning of the first book. Again, through all he says there run two, sometimes three, currents of thought, and the poet sets one up against the other. He is not only asserting his own position, he is also anticipating the remarks and objections of his imaginary listener. Sometimes the remarks are repeated; more frequently is the reader left to infer them from the sudden digression of the poet. But it is this process of double thinking that gives the clue to Browning's meaning. And it is the effort to follow the various clashing trains of thought that renders the reading of his magnificent monologues such a strain. We will not call it obscurity. It is a new method of presenting thought, and Browning chooses to reveal character through its intellectual processes.

A source of great disappointment in reading Browning arises from the fact that we seek in his writings something else besides what Browning intends to put into them. We bring to the reading of him preconceived notions culled from our acquaintance with Shakspere, or Milton, or some other great poet. But Browning is not repeating what the great authors have so grandly said. He has his own methods; he takes his own views of life; he utilizes his own experiences of nature, and he gives them all forth after his own peculiar

fashion. He has nought to do with the beaten tracks. He is not repeating. What others have well expressed he leaves alone. He has his own message to deliver to his age.

And we may set it down that that message—the undercurrent of all that he sings—is one of cheerfulness, steady hopefulness, and consistent soundness of mind. He is a believer in perfection, and in perfection beyond the grave. He loves beauty and truth, and all art as the expression of beauty and truth. He is a wonderful searcher of hearts and interpreter of motives, and in scathing, unmincing language he reveals the hidden folds of souls. Read that sublime poem called *Easter Day*. Note the force and beauty and graphic distinctness with which the poet shows how the soul realizes the vanity of existence without the possession of the Highest Good and Supreme Love. Not the good things of this earthly life—not artistic work—not scientific pursuits—not mere earthly love—can satiate the soul; these are only shadows of the reality belonging to the Beatific Vision.

But it is not easy to disentangle what is of Browning's own conviction from what is in keeping with the character into whose mouth he puts the words. Thus, Mrs. Orr tells us that the character of Don Juan in *Fifine at the Fair* is a standing puzzle to Bro ning's readers, "because that which he condemns in it, and that which he does not, are not to be distinguished." * It will

* *Handbook to Browning*, fifth edition, p. 150.

help us in this instance to make the puzzle less intricate, if we bear in mind that Don Juan is an artist beyond the necessity of working for his art, with all the instincts of the Bohemian, loose in thought as he is loose in morals, yet just such a character as would be most likely to mingle with low and vile theories of life some of the sublimest ideas concerning the art of which he is passionately fond. In nearly all Browning's wonderful monologues is to be found this commingling of the high and the low, the true and the false, in such a manner that it takes thought and study to separate them. Amid patent sophistry, and an apparent trifling with his subject, there jets forth a flame of scorching truth that burns itself into the brain. Take *Bishop Blougram's Apology*. Bishop Blougram, as we know, represents Cardinal Wiseman, and Mrs. Orr tells us that "Cardinal Wiseman himself reviewed the poem, not disapprovingly, in a Catholic publication of the time." * You must not for a moment imagine that the explanation here given of the Bishop's faith and of his ecclesiastical position is the one approving itself to Cardinal Wiseman's own conviction. It is an explanation not to be taken seriously even in the poet's intentions. It is simply a meeting with flippancy and shallow pretence on their own ground.

> "For Blougram, he believed, say, half he spoke,
> The other portion, as he shaped it thus
> For argumentatory purposes,
> He felt his foe was foolish to dispute.

* *Browning Handbook*, p. 172.

The Cardinal, however, resented the liberty taken with him as an impertinence. See *The Rambler*, Jan., 1856.

Some arbitrary accidental thoughts
That crossed his mind, amusing because new,
He chose to represent as fixtures there." *

And yet, in the midst of this trifling with his subject, you come across some wholesome truths clearly expressed. In reply, for instance, to the request to purify his faith and purge it of all so-called modern "excrescences," such as belief in the liquefaction of the blood of St. Januarius in Naples, the Bishop says:

"Clearing off one excrescence to see two,
There's ever a next in size, now grown as big,
That meets the knife: I cut and cut again!
First cut the Liquefaction, what comes last
But Fichte's clever cut at God himself?
Experimentalize on sacred things!
I trust nor hand nor eye nor heart nor brain
To stop betimes: they all get drunk alike." †

Destroy belief in miracles—in the power of God—and you destroy belief in God Himself. I need not tell you that the poet here alludes to an expression attributed to Fichte: "Gentlemen, in to-morrow's lecture we will create God."

Again, take *The Statue and the Bust.* The poet here seems to prefer activity to inaction, even when the end in sight is a bad one:

"Let a man contend to the uttermost
For his life's set prize, be it what it will."

* *Bishop Blougram's Apology*, p. 114.
† Ibid., p. 108.

But suddenly, in the last stanza, he turns the tables upon the complacently virtuous, with "the unlit lamp and the ungirt loin," who are content to avoid evil without making great effort to do good:

"You of virtue (we issue join),
How strive you? *De te fabula.*"

And thus does he turn an essentially immoral act into a moral sermon.

Another feature of Browning adding to our difficulty in understanding him, is that his themes are many of them foreign, and deal with obscure points of history. The humanity underlying these themes,—the love and the hate, the anger and the jealousy, the ambition and the cunning,—is indeed of the stamp that makes the whole world kin. He takes it for granted that his readers have travelled; that they are equally at home in Florence and Venice, in Paris and Geneva and Rome; that the picture-galleries of Europe are so many books in which they are well-read; that they are acquainted with the sayings and doings of prominent contemporaries; that they possess an intimate knowledge of history, and that they are familiar with the technique of music. Therefore does he claim a large share of culture in its broadest sense as a preliminary to the right understanding of his most characteristic poems. We are told that he wrote the *Pied Piper of Hamelin* for Macready's young son William; we regret that he has not done more such work with children in his mind's eye.

But as Browning is a teacher and an interpreter of life rather than an idle singer of an empty day, it behooves us to know definitely the lessons he would inculcate. To begin with, life is for him a stern reality, a matter of will, and pain, and suffering,—the good of it and the ill of it both essential to enable the soul to reach the goal of perfection. And so the poet exhorts us to welcome the pain, to persist in the strife:

> "Then, welcome each rebuff
> That turns earth's smoothness rough,
> Each sting that bids nor sit nor stand, but go!
> Be our joys three-parts pain!
> Strive, and hold cheap the strain;
> Learn, nor account the pang; dare, never grudge the throe."*

He is an optimist. He finds a place for every sin, a solace for every misery. Gazing on the wretched suicides in the Morgue at Paris, he says:

> "I thought, and think, their sins atoned."

And in the concluding stanza of the same poem the poet thus expresses the hope that what is seemingly beyond repair shall be finally mended;

> "It's wiser being good than bad;
> It's safer being meek than fierce:
> It's fitter being sane than mad.
> My own hope is, a sun will pierce
> The thickest cloud earth ever stretched;
> That after Last returns the First,

* *Rabbi Ben Ezra.*

> Though a wide compass round be fetched;
> That what began best, can't end worst,
> Nor what God blessed once, prove accurst."*

Far from being properly fixed, the value of restraint and self-discipline is almost ignored in Browning's theory of life. His ideal of living is will-power carried into action. True, he would make of the evil in one's life an experience out of which one might rise to good. And so may one within clearly defined limits. But to go farther, as the poet seems to do, and make wrong-doing the essential out of which right-doing may come, were as false in art as it is false in morality. Under no circumstances is the doing of evil to be urged that good may follow. Perfection, with Browning, is not the soul's spiritual growth in holiness and conformity to the will of God. It is rather a taking hold of the goods and the ills of life indifferently as they present themselves, and utilizing them to the best advantage. Without evil there would be no growth of character; therefore does he call evil blessed.† Life, ideal life, he defines clearly enough to mean

> "——learning to abhor
> The false and love the true, truth treasured snatch by snatch."‡

But what is the false, what the true? False and true, instead of being contradictory, are in his philosophy supplementary one to the other. Hence in another

* *Apparent Failure.* † *Bishop Blougram's Apology.*
‡ *Fifine, p.* 421.

place he represents the dying soul as beholding evil merged in good:

"Over the ball of it,
Peering and prying,
How I see all of it,
Life there, outlying!
Roughness and smoothness,
Shine and defilement,
Grace and uncouthness;
One reconcilement.
* * * * *
"All's lend-and-borrow;
Good, see, wants evil,
Joy demands sorrow,
Angel weds devil!" *

The doctrine of Browning regarding pain is not to be identified with the pessimism or agnosticism that would sacrifice human nature to the general good without hope of personal advantage or belief in a personal God. Browning believes in a personal and a loving God. He can conceive no other:

"In youth I looked to these very skies,
And probing their immensities,
I found God there, His visible power;
Yet felt in my heart, amid all its sense
Of the power, an equal evidence
That His love, there too, was the nobler dower,
For the loving worm within its clod
Were diviner than a loveless god
Amid his worlds." †

* *Pisgah-Sights*, I. † *Christmas Eve.*

Browning had no patience with the agnosticism of the day. To the last, he retained his belief in certain saving truths of Christianity and in a Divine revelation. The Divintity of Christ is the great solution to all man's world-problems:

"I say, the acknowledgment of God in Christ
Accepted by thy reason, *solves for thee*
All questions in the earth and out of it,
And has so far advanced thee to be wise.
Wouldst thou unprove this to re-prove the proved?—
In life's mere minute, with power to use that proof,
Leave knowledge and revert to how it sprung?
Thou hast it; use it and forthwith, or die!" *

That is, he would have men employ the short span of their lives, "life's mere minute," in living out the saving truths of Christianity rather than speculating upon them. And again, in *Ferishtah's Fancies*, a poem of his old age, written in 1883, he represents the imaginary Persian sage as counselling the disciple who in his blind zeal had cursed, kicked, and cuffed one who said:—

"God once on earth assumed a human shape,"

rather with all humility to hold in awe the great truth he does not understand—

"Fitlier thou saidst, '*I stand appalled before*
Conception unattainable by me,
Who need it most.'" †

* *A Death in the Desert.*
† *Ferishtah's Fancies*, v. *The Sun.*

Is there not here a covert rebuke to those of the present day who scorn the saving doctrine ?—

But the Christianity which Browning championed was too broad in its scope and too indefinite in its dogma to satisfy a sincere Christian soul:

> "One trims the bark 'twixt shoal and shelf,
> And sees, each side, the good effects of it,
> A value for religion's self,
> A carelessness about the sects of it.
> Let me enjoy my conviction,
> Nor watch my neighbor's faith with fretfulness,
> Still spying there some dereliction
> Of truth, perversity, forgetfulness.' *

This is a vague creed. It is the creed of indifferentism. It is not the steady, unwavering belief in definite dogmas revealed by God, and exactly defined by Him in the teachings of His visible Church. And so, whilst Browning in his own way holds by some truths of Christian revelation, he cannot in any sense or under any circumstances be set up as an expounder of Christian doctrine. At least, we Catholics prefer receiving the teachings of Christianity from our Little Catechism, from the decrees of the Councils, and the decisions of the Popes. Therein may we find the fulness of God's revelation to men so far as is needful for men's souls. Therein might Browning have received light regarding

* *Christmas Eve.*

many a problem upon which he has left enigmatic utterances. *

And yet Browning seemed to take an especial pleasure in dealing with Catholic ecclesiastical subjects: now it is monks, now it is bishops, now it is legates, now it is popes. But his treatment of these subjects is in the main void of sympathy. For a man so bold, so outspoken, and so apparently above human respect, it is astonishing to notice the persistence with which he ignores what is good, and what makes for good, in our Catholic faith, and misrepresents our ritual and ceremonies, our history, our popes and cardinals, our bishops and priests and monks. In *Christmas Eve* he describes the solemn hush, the awe and reverence accompanying the consecration of the host like one of the initiated. Elsewhere in the same poem he takes care to tell us what he thinks of it all. Cunning and worldliness and deep-laid selfishness are to his mind the leading traits of our churchmen. Mediæval Catholicity in the poems of Browning is far from being the garden of virtue Kenelm Digby has so glowingly described. The sanctifying influence of the sacraments is beyond his power of realizing. This is all the more astonishing when we remember that Browning spent the best and happiest portion of his life in Catholic Italy. "Italy,"

* See in *The Month* for February, 1890, a valuable article from the pen of the Reverend John Rickaby, S. J., on Browning as a religious teacher.

said he, "was my university." Except Pompilia in *The Ring and the Book*, of all his elaborately drawn characters he has scarcely left one in which the spirit of Catholicity has had a wholesome influence. He never learned to appreciate the earnestness and sincerity of this people's faith; except in the case mentioned, and perhaps in the beautiful character of Pippa, he has given but little evidence that he realized how to every Catholic his faith is as much a living presence as the material world. He simply presents those types of Catholics that constitute the stock-in-trade of Protestant fiction. That a man of his intelligence and natural inquisitiveness could have lived his days without ever noticing the flowers of Catholic piety that must have bloomed in every village in Italy, is another instance of the power of prejudice to blindfold the acutest, so that, having eyes they see not. Cardinal Newman told us long ago, as a deliberate opinion learned from his own experience, "that no conceivable absurdities can surpass the absurdities which are firmly believed of Catholics by sensible, kind-hearted, well-intentioned Protestants." *

There are noble exceptions to this imperviousness. Francesca, who has given us the pathetic *Story of Ida*, lived in the same town and breathed the same atmosphere with Browning. Her womanly, sympathetic soul learned to appreciate the inner Catholic spirit that she perceived. She found the beautiful wayside flowers of

* *Present Position of Catholics in England, p.* 41.

peasant poetry in Catholic Tuscany, so instinct with fervid Catholic devotion, possessed of a fascination that she could not resist, and she gathered a charming bouquet, fresh with the morning dews of piety, and large-hearted, noble-thinking John Ruskin tied them together with a beautiful ribbon of praise and commendation, and we inhale their fragrance and find it refreshing. And passing from the pages of this simple poesy, which reveals to us genuine Catholic Italian life, and which is so redolent of earth and sky, back to Browning's interpretations of Italian sentiment—to his records of crime and sinister motive and rampant passion — is like shutting out the light and air of heaven, and working amid the sickening odors of the dissecting room. The Puritanism of Browning's nature entered into his art and made it as cold and crotchety and narrow in sentiment as the religion of Puritanism itself. His subjects are largely drawn from the Italian chronicles of the seventeenth century. I fear that Browning's friend Stendhal did him but a doubtful service in putting within his reach, and directing his attention to,these revolting tales of crime.

No doubt the poet's aptitudes for interpreting certain phases of life were better than for picturing certain other phases. He had to consult his limitations. We dare say Browning could interpret the soul-workings of a Fra Lippo Lippi far better than those of a Fra Angelico, or the grovellings of a sensual and jealous Spanish friar more accurately than the aspirations of a Philip

Neri; or he could concentrate the bad side of the Renaissance spirit—"its worldliness, inconsistency, pride, hypocrisy, ignorance of itself, love of art, of luxury, and of good Latin," to borrow Ruskin's words *—in his poem *The Bishop orders his Tomb*, more powerfully than he could the good spirit of that period as illustrated in the words and acts of a Carlo Borromeo. But while we accept his work at its full value, it is proper that we enter protest against his interpretations being taken as the correct measure of Catholic life and Catholic faith. It is proper that, while we may admire his soul-studies—whether he depicts the disintegration of a sordid soul made dizzy by success, as in *A Soul's Tragedy*, or whether he shows the budding forth of a soul into life and light, raised up beyond the ambitions of place and power at the first touch of true love, as in *Colombe's Birthday*—we should refuse to accept his spiritual and religious teaching, wherever they in the least diverge from what we as Catholics believe to be true in faith and morals.

But in spite of all Browning's shortcomings—and his shortcomings are numerous as regards both matter and form—he is still a great poet, the full measure of whose greatness the present age has not yet taken. He is truly many-sided in his themes. He can be tender, and delicate, and pathetic. He can be humorous and tragical; he can be lyrical with a melody deep and subtle and controlling measures from the simple to the intricate; he

* *Modern Painters*, vol. iv., p. 379.

can tell a story with a life and energy that specially fit into his verse—witness *The Good News from Ghent*, and *Hervé Riel;*—he can build up a philosophical thought in his rugged verse. He is the poet of intense passion in its varied moods, from fierce hate to love in all its kinds and in all its degrees. In that lyric tragedy, suggested by a picture of Maclise's, *In a Gondola*, the dying victim is so absorbed in his guilty love that even the pain of his death-wound is numbed. In *Evelyn Hope*, one of Browning's most tender and pathetic lyrics, all time is annihilated in the heart of the lover as he sits by his child-love, whom—

> "God's Hand beckoned unawares,—
> And the sweet white brow is all of her;"

and in the intensity of his feelings he claims her as his in the future—

> "You will wake, and remember, and understand."

In *The Laboratory*, note the joy with which the jealous woman in her frenzy gloats over the poison that is being prepared for her rival. You can hear the hiss of hate in her voice and feel its scorching in her breath. Was ever passion so concentrated into words? Every expression in these poems is a passionate spark; every line is a flame.

Browning is unique as a master of the monologue. Take, for instance, one of the most perfect poems he has written, *Karshish, the Arab Physician*. Karshish, "the picker-up of learning's crumbs," writes to a brother

physician, "Abib, all-sagacious in our art," an account of his meeting with Lazarus, who had been raised from the dead. He pretends to treat the miracle in an off-hand manner, as something every physician can explain—

> "'Tis but a case of mania—sub-induced
> By epilepsy, at the turning-point
> Of trance prolonged unduly some three days."

Even in such glib words would our own un-Christian medical experts decide upon the nature and cause of an approved miracle at Lourdes. Indeed, Karshish simply mentions the event to fill up his letter, and as part of other seemingly far more important news. But in order to make his report of the case complete—

> ——"(in writing to a leech
> 'Tis well to keep back nothing of a case)"——

he tells how Lazarus regards Jesus as none other than God Himself:

> "This man so cured regards the curer, then,
> As—God forgive me! who but God Himself,
> Creator and sustainer of the world,
> That came and dwelt in flesh on it awhile!"—

And then, after repeating other sayings of Lazarus, he grows impatient and assumes indifference to him and his sayings as those of a madman!

> ——"But why all this of what he saith?
> Why write of trivial matters, things of price
> Calling at every moment for remark?"

And at once he turns to acquaint him of a species of plant that he noticed:—

> "I noticed on the margin of a pool
> Blue-flowering borage, the Aleppo sort,
> Aboundeth, very nitrous. *It is strange!*"

The last words show that, his seeming indifference notwithstanding, the story of Lazarus still haunts him, and after another apology for its prolixity—

> "Once more thy pardon and farewell,"

the whole force and truth and sublimity of the Incarnation flashes forth in a postscript:

> "The very God! think, Abib; dost thou think?
> So, the All-Great, were the All-Loving too——
> So, through the thunder comes a human voice
> Saying, 'O heart I made, a heart beats here!
> Face, my hands fashioned, see it in myself!
> Thou hast no power nor may'st conceive of mine,
> But love I gave thee, with myself to love,
> And thou must love me who have died for thee!'
> The madman saith He said so: it is strange."

The power of imagination that created that poem, with all its depth and subtlety of thought, is of a superior order. And a greater feat still—the master-piece of Browning's life—is the *Ring and the Book*. The poet comes across the verbal process of a domestic tragedy that happened several hundred years ago. An Italian nobleman murders his young wife and her parents under peculiar circumstances, and suffers the death-penalty. The poet breathes a spirit into the document and resuscitates the life of the period. He gives the very throbbings of the popular pulse under the consternation caused

by the red-handed act. You have two versions of the ordinary people and their comments upon the motives that led to it, upon the morning after it had been perpetrated—one favoring the husband and one the wife; you have a third version showing

"What the superior social section thinks,
In person of some men of quality;"

you have the special pleadings pro and con in the courts; you have the cool and cynical version of the murderer, confident in the prestige of his noble name—biting, sarcastic, thoroughly wicked; you have the pathetic story of Pompilia before her death, the child-wife and mother—parting with her two-weeks old babe—so tender and pure—so docile in her obedience to parents and husband—so strong to resist temptation—so resigned to God's will in her sufferings and her tragic death;—altogether, you have ten different versions of the same event according to the various points of view and the degrees of interest different persons or classes of persons take in it—

——"Learn one lesson hence,
Of many which whatever lives should teach,
The lesson that our human speech is nought
Our human testimony false, our fame
And human estimation words and wind."

It is a lesson that Browning has been inculcating from *Sordello* to *Fifine;* namely, that words frequently fall short of the full expression of truth, and that the fullest expression is to be found in the representation of art:

——"It is the glory and good of Art,
That Art remains the one way possible
Of speaking truth, to mouths like mine, at least. . . .
But Art,—wherein man nowise speaks to men,
Only to mankind,—Art may tell a truth
Obliquely, do the thing shall breed the thought,
Nor wrong the thought missing the mediate word.
So may you paint your picture, twice show truth
Beyond mere imagery on the wall,—
So note by note bring music from your mind
Deeper than ever the Andante dived,——
So write a book shall mean beyond the facts
Suffice the eye and save the soul beside." *

Such is the kind of book Browning has been striving to give us all along—

——"A book shall mean beyond the facts
Suffice the eye and save the soul beside,"——

and it is for us to get at the meaning beyond the facts and learn the greater truth. Furthermore, it is because of this deeper meaning, and of the poet's many-sided manner of regarding truth, that he seems so lavish of phrase and clause, each throwing light on different aspects of the proposition he would state, and employs involved sentences with parenthetical side-glances and elaborate digressions. The reading of such sentences is wearisome work, but when the sentences are grasped in all their bearings you find that no line, or clause, or phrase can be spared. Having done his utmost—

* *The Ring and the Book*, book, xii., 838–63.

and he tells us that he did his utmost—in the art to which his life was a devotion, he may well say: "Nor do I apprehend any more charges of being wilfully obscure, unconscientiously careless, or perversely harsh."* In the long list of his writings, from *Pauline* with its immaturities to *Asolando*, in which the poet for the last time runs his fingers along the various chords of his lyre, and strikes clearly and accurately the diverse notes at his command, there is much—however unwilfully so—that is obscure and unsatisfactory to the ordinary reader; nay, with his friend, biographer, and admirer we may add, that "of all his faults, the worst is that jugglery, that inferior legerdemain, with the elements of the beautiful in verse;" † but after making due allowance for his shortcomings, we can still find much in his poetry that is intensely earnest and suggestive, much that is new, fresh, broadening, and formative. ‡ Browning is one of the great forces in English literature.

Turn we now to an opposite pole from Browning in method of thinking and in form of expression.

* *Selections from Browning.* Dedicatory Letters to Tennyson, 1872.

† William Sharp, *Life of Browning*, p. 205.

‡ Cardinal Wiseman thus concludes his review of Browning's *Men and Women:* "For ourselves, we thank Mr. Browning, sceptical and reckless as he is, for a rare treat in these thoughtful and able volumes....Though much of their matter is extremely offensive to Catholics, yet beneath the surface there is an undercurrent of thought that is by no means inconsistent with our religion." *The Rambler.*, Jan., 1856, p. 71.

XI.

I SHALL not dilate at length upon Tennyson. He has no peer among the world-singers of the day. He is deservedly popular. He has made his art the earnest study of a long life. From the feeble poetic touch of *Oriana* (1830) to the firm artistic grasp of *Rizpah* (1880) the distance in degree of merit far outnumbers the distance in years. But the delicacy and strength and finish in Tennyson's later work came to him after intense labor carried on without intermission for nigh half a century. It is not spontaneous. No poet has been more reserved about himself than has Tennyson. Still, in the comparative study of the various editions of no poet's works can you more clearly trace the development of the poet's mind and the growth in his firmness of artistic touch. You have all grown familiar with his beautiful thoughts, his noble ideals of life, his rare delicacy of expression, his exquisite taste, his conservatism in imagery, in propriety of conduct, and in the use of words. Unlike Browning frequently, and Goethe at times, he carries very few enigmas on his sleeve for the reading world to puzzle over. Unlike Wordsworth, he is reticent about self and very sparing in words. Minds open to his impressions and yield to his influence more easily than to the impressions and the influence of Wordsworth or Browning. Unfortunately, the Tennyson that is known to many readers is a traditional Tennyson, the measure of whose genius is determined by a few of his early

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poems of exquisite finish, such as *Locksley Hall*, or *The May-Queen*. Such pieces as these are but the blossomings of a rich and ripe fruitage. The Tennyson that I would have you know is a poet of thought as well as a poet of sentiment.

We will not quarrel with his dramatic poems. They are not without great intrinsic merit. True it is, the author places King Edward the Confessor, Queen Mary, and Becket in a false historical light, in which he shows himself as narrow a bigot as Browning. True also is it that the poet's work is to create characters, and not to reproduce history. And no doubt, Tennyson believes that if he chooses to make Edward inane, and Mary hysterical, and Becket at times maudlin, he is acting within his rights as a poet and taking liberties with history that Shakspere and Walter Scott did not disdain.* Moreover, has he not the accumulated prejudices and distortions of history for three centuries to sustain his action? None the less has he transmitted in the amber of his lines false notions of Catholic historical personages that thousands of heedless readers will accept as true history. In this sense he does us an injustice, and beautified injustice is not and cannot be the measure of literary or artistic merit. Read the *Becket* of Aubrey de Vere by the side of that of Tennyson, and you will

* See *Amy Robsart and the Earl of Leicester:* A Critical Inquiry. By George Adlard, London, 1870. See also *Scribner's Magazine*, December, 1890.

see how a great poet can be historically correct, and at the same time create a noble character.

We will stop at *Maud* only long enough to say that it is a splendid study of a morbid hysterical character; not as Mr. Richard Holt Hutton would have it, a caricature or "an exposure of hysterics," * but the genuine hysterical mood with its screeching falsetto notes ringing through extremes of joy and extremes of sadness, till the hero recovers the equilibrium of his maddened brain.

> "'Tis time, O passionate heart and morbid eye,
> That old hysterical mock-disease should die."

In these lines have we the key to the whole poem. The language is not the language of a well-balanced mind—and as such it must needs be imperfect, irregular, and at times unrhythmic.

Nor will we do more than touch upon another poem that has been greatly misunderstood, and scarcely appreciated at its full value; I mean *The Princess*. It is an exquisite contribution, in playful mock-heroic style, to the vexed and ever-growing problem of woman's place in the modern world. She certainly holds the right place in Tennyson's own heart. And we all of us must feel indebted to the poet, and we must greatly cherish the poem in which we find so beautifully interpreted our deepest thoughts regarding that being whom every man

* *Essays Theological and Literary*, vol. ii., p. 308.

tenderly cherishes in his heart of hearts—the fond mother:—

——"One
Not learned, save in gracious household ways,
Not perfect, nay, but full of tender wants;
No angel, but a dearer being all dipt
In angel instincts, breathing paradise,
Interpreter between the gods and men,
Who looked all native to her place, and yet
On tiptoe seemed to touch upon a sphere
Too gross to tread, and all male minds perforce
Swayed to her from their orbits as they moved,
And girdled her with music. Happy he
With such a mother! Faith in womankind
Beats with his blood, and trust in all things high
Comes easy to him, and, though he trip and fall,
He shall not blind his soul with clay." *

Assuredly, our literature is all the richer for so noble a passage. But we must not tarry.

There is, however, one caution that I would give you in reading Tennyson. It is that you do not mistake the exquisite simplicity of his language for poverty of expression or barrenness of thought. Language is for him the graceful drapery every fold of which all the more distinctly reveals the body of thought which it clothes. The words are so simple, and the rhythm is so musical, you are easily beguiled into the illusion that upon a first reading you have grasped the whole meaning of the

* *The Princess.*

poem. Not so, however. All great art leaves unsaid more than it expresses, and its influence is in proportion to its power of suggesting or evoking the unsaid things. It may be that occasionally, in his desire for artistic finish, the poet stops short of the word or the line that would remove a certain vagueness which readers of culture feel after the study of some of his philosophical poems. Even the genius of a Goethe—infinitely suggestive though he be, and great word-master that he was—does not always satisfy the student of his deeper poems. We must also bear in mind that the poetical treatment is distinct from the philosophical treatment of a subject. Especially is it to be remembered when reading *In Memoriam.* This is one of the most representative poems of our age. Its sentiments, its gropings, its aspirations, its questionings, all find a voice in language as simple and delicate as ever clothed profound thought. The poem is not simply the utterings of a soul bewailing a dear departed friend; it is much more for those who would fathom its whole meaning; it is the cry of a soul weighed down with the problems of the day, and in the presence of death wrestling with the doubts and philosophical shadows that hover over the mystery of the grave—struggling and groping and passing from the darkness of scepticism into the light of Christian revelation.

In like manner, the *Idylls of the King*, as they now stand completed in their unity of plan and grandeur of design,

are more than mere transcripts from Mallory's *Morte d'Arthur*. From out of this romance, and from the Chronicle of Geoffrey of Monmouth, and from the *Mabinogion* as translated by Lady Guest,* the poet had taken the old material and therewith erected unto himself an altogether new temple of song, having a new meaning and significance—

> "New-old and shadowing sense at war with soul,
> Rather than that gray king, whose name, a ghost,
> Streams like a cloud, man-shaped, from mountain-peak,
> And cleaves to Cairn and Cromlech still." †

The poem shadows forth the soul's moral struggles through all stages of life, from that of unsuspecting youth to that of experienced old age.

And here I would dwell a moment upon the central poem containing the central thought of the *Idylls*. Though the poet has breathed a modern spirit into his poem, still he could not if he would separate the subject from its Catholic groundwork. He has therefore retained the Holy Grail as the central idea of the structure, even as it was the central point of the older Arthurian cycle of romances. ‡

* Professor Rhuys of Oxford is now completing a new edition of the *Mabinogion*, giving the full text in the original Welsh, and in the accompanying translation supplying the numerous passages omitted by Lady Guest:

† *Idylls of the King*: Dedication to the Queen.

‡ I have explained the meaning of the Holy Grail in *Philosophy of Literature*, sixth edition, pp. 90–96.

The *Idylls* deal with Catholic times and are rooted in Catholic customs. Comments upon them are numerous enough. But why cannot they be made without casting slurs upon our religion? Why cannot mediæval times be alluded to without identifying them with superstition? Superstition there was then and superstition there is still. Here is an author who, speaking in 1878 of the allegorical and mystical thread running through the *Idylls*, among many good and beautiful things to which we can subscribe, says of the Holy Grail: "It shows us how our poor fallen humanity—inwardly conscious of its own partial degradation and failure, and yet in its sin-born blindness feeling after higher things with but feeble and uncertain touch—seeks, indeed, to still the cravings of its soul with Religion; but lowers and degrades that sacred form by confounding her with the fantastic shape of her counterfeit sister, Superstition. . . . In this aspect the poem cuts at the root of all those countless undisciplined and extravagant growths borne by the fair tree of Religion when suffered to run wild." And amongst these growths so cut at the author instances "the whole system of monasticism." * Now, does this author know the whole meaning of the Holy Grail? Does he know that in the original intention of the first poet who gave it a place in legend and story, it is an emblem of the Holy Eucharist and an allegory prefiguring spiritual perfection? Is it superstition for Galahad

* Henry Elsdale, *Studies in the Idylls*, pp. 58, 59.

and Percivale to break with their present life and seek the higher spiritual perfection? We fear there are more things in the Holy Grail than are dreamt of in Mr. Elsdale's philosophy.

Again, in an admirable and suggestive book recently issued on the poetry of Tennyson, I find the beautiful Catholic meaning of the poem ignored and a wholly foreign meaning imposed upon it. "*The Holy Grail*," says the author, "shows us the strife between superstition, which is a sensual religion, and true faith, which is spiritual. . . . Out of the mystical twilight which envelops the action this truth emerges: that those knights who thought of the Grail only as an external wonder, a miracle which they fain would see because others had seen it, 'followed wandering fires;' while those to whom it became a symbol of inward purity and grace, like Galahad and Percivale, and even the dull, honest, simple-minded Bors and the sin-tormented Launcelot, finally attained unto the vision." * This is decidedly an un-Catholic interpretation. It is an interpretation that the poem will not bear and that the poet would not sanction. It is not superstition that concealed the vision from Launcelot in the hall; it is Launcelot's sin—

> "His honor rooted in dishonor stood,
> And faith unfaithful kept him falsely true" †——

It is not simply because the Grail was "a symbol of

* Henry Van Dyke: *The Poetry of Tennyson*, p. 184.
† Elaine.

purity and grace" to Galahad and Percivale that these noble knights had the vision of it, it is because purity and grace dwelt in their unsullied hearts and innocent lives. The light of God's grace descends upon these men of prowess and courtly demeanor, and the fire of God's love becomes enkindled in their souls, and forthwith those amongst them who are pure of heart, and those amongst them who are repentant at heart, leave the gayeties of joust and tournament, and the excitements of knightly adventure, and kingly approval, and lady's smile, to follow the superior spiritual life typified in the quest of the Holy Grail. Nothing can hold them back. Not the cynical sneers of a Modred; not the practical common-sense reasoning of an Arthur. They lose themselves that they may save their souls. Whither the Spirit of God directs them, thither flee they, heedless of obstacles. They get shrived of their sins; by prayer and fasting and humiliation and the annihilation of self and incessant struggle with half-maddening passions, as in the case of Launcelot, they prepare themselves to comprehend and to live that spiritual life which they had hitherto neglected. This is the meaning I read in that magnificent poem. And when I go back to the poem as it exists in earlier forms than those from which Tennyson drew, I find this meaning confirmed. "The Voice instructs Joseph of Arimathea as follows: 'Place a cloth upon the greensward. Let thy people seat themselves around. When they shall

be ready to eat, tell thy son Joseph to take the vase and to make therewith a circuit three times. Forthwith those who are pure of heart shall be replenished with all possible sweets. . . . But from the moment that they yield them to the wicked sin of luxury they shall lose the grace whence come to them so many delights.'. . . The repast finished, Joseph replaced the Graal as it had been before."* Surely, it were worth men's while to know whereof they write before putting pen to paper. And here we must part with Tennyson, leaving his lyric sweetness, his studies in the real—witness *The Northern Farmer*—his genuine humor, his deep scorn, and many other aspects of his poetic greatness untouched.

Wordsworth—Tennyson—Browning:—all three gave a long and laborious life to their art and to the maturing of their ideas; all three built upon a philosophical foundation; all three made the poetic art subservient to spiritual life; all three tower above their contemporaries as the highest and best representatives of English poetry. But each supplements the other two. Wordsworth and Tennyson have the roots of their sympathies deeply planted in English soil; Browning is cosmopolitan. Wordsworth deals with the humble and the commonplace, teaches us how to make a companion of the material universe, and in his treatment of persons and

* Paulin Paris, *Les Romans de la Table Ronde*, t. i., Le Saint-Graal, p. 198.

things possesses, in the words of his friend and admirer, "the original gift of spreading the tone, the atmosphere, and with it the depth and height of the ideal world around forms, incidents, and situations of which, for the common view, custom had bedimmed all the lustre, had dried up the sparkle and the dew-drops."* Tennyson, with exquisite art, interprets the comforts and customs and proprieties of respectable English life, and the decorous and the fitting in the present order of things. Poverty and distress and humble living do not inspire him as they do Wordsworth; he has no social theories with which to revolutionize the world like Shelley; no private grievance to air before the public, like Byron; the present order suits him. To be a member of the Establishment in religion with rather Broad-Church views, an English gentleman, respectable in society and conservative in politics,—this is his ideal of life. Browning has naught to do with the external frame-work of society. His business is with souls—souls happy in their innocence and ignorance of the world, as the beautiful soul of Pippa; souls disintegrating; souls petrifying in inaction; souls restless and running to ruin and wreck; souls blooming into life and action beneath the rays of true love; sordid souls defending their sordidness; callous souls steeped in sin and crime; souls chafing under their entanglements and yet unable to clear themselves from the meshes—remember that

* Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, p. 206.

plaintive cry of the great painter when he finds his inspiration passing beyond recall under the evil influence of an unworthy wife:

> "But all the play, the insight, and the stretch
> Out of me, out of me" *—

souls distorted and souls beautiful; souls strong and souls weak; souls loving their sins and souls loathing them—souls, souls, always souls; for, says Browning, "little else is worth study." †

Poetry in its highest and most enduring form is not a matter of mere receptivity of impression, the mere submission of the soul to the luxury of musical sound and bright imagery. The *Paradise* of Dante is not so mastered. Nor can you upon a single reading, or a single witnessing of a play of Shakspere's, fathom the meaning of that play. If Shakspere or Dante possessed no other thought than that which a mere surface gleaning could gather, they could never have become the great influencing agencies in literature that they now are. Their meaning runs deeper than a Mother-Goose story or a modern novel. Every great poet can say with Browning: "I never pretended to offer such literature as should be a substitute for a cigar or a game at dominoes to an idle man." ‡ I heard Mr. Henry Morley tell a class in London, that it was only after thirty-five read-

* *Andrea del Sarto.* † *Sordello,* Dedication.
‡ Sharp's *Life of Browning,* p. 180.

ings of *Julius Cæsar*, the central thought of that masterpiece dawned upon him. Think you that his pains were not well repaid by this insight into the underlying principle that gave life and meaning to every line in that play? —Henceforth, to him and to those who heard his interpretation, every additional reading brings with it new light and a deeper source of pleasure. But just here a serious reflection occurs: If one of our most widely read English scholars found it such a task to penetrate to the life-giving principle of what is not by any means the most complex of Shakspere's dramatic pieces, how can we pretend to an understanding of that wonderful master of the human heart upon one or two hasty readings?—And from this reflection let us take home to ourselves the lesson that it behooves us to bring to poetry in its highest forms our closest attention and our best thoughts if we would learn the whole message it would impart.

XII.

It is only within the present century that English-speaking Catholics have begun to build up a distinctively Catholic literature.—During the past two centuries our English and Irish missionaries found it difficult to live. The hardships and privations they endured were most exhausting. And yet their pens were not idle. Their people needed plain and solid instruction, and they met the want. They placed in their hands the

Rheims-Douay version of the Sacred Scriptures. Bishop Challoner wrote his *Catholic Christian Instructed;* Bishop Hay was led into the Church by the reading of an anonymous pamphlet, *Papists Represented and Misrepresented*, and afterwards put out those beautiful works of doctrine, *The Pious Christian*, *The Devout Christian*, *The Sincere Christian;* Bishop Hornihold explained the Commandments and Sacraments; Dr. Husenbeth wrote on the Creed; Bishop Milner wrote his admirable *End of Controversy;* Alban Butler left us that great monument of erudition and repository of learning, his *Lives of the Saints*. Bishop Walmesley was a man of vast scientific attainments, and was one of the mathematicians employed to regulate the calendar preparatory to the adoption of the New Style in 1752.* This was the nature of the work done by our clergy in the eighteenth century It was not brilliant, but it was solid, useful, and necessary work. These men did not cultivate style. They were obliged to study abroad, and after spending years on the Continent, they returned to England with foreign accents ringing in their ears and foreign idioms slipping into their writings.

English classical literature, since the days of Spenser and Shakspere, has been Protestant. The authors who have helped to build up our language; the authors from

* See Allibone's *Dictionary of Authors* for a list of his religious and scientific books in Latin, French, and English. Several of his MSS. were burned in the anti-Catholic riots of 1780.

whom we cull those expressions that have become part and parcel of our daily thinking; the authors to whose pages we refer for the allusions in which the writings of the day abound, are, with few exceptions, in spirit and tone Protestant. And yet it is a surprise and a happiness to know that outside the domain of history, which has been shamefully perverted by the Burnets, the Robertsons, the Gibbons, the Humes, the Macaulays, and the Froudes, a Catholic can take home to himself a goodly portion of this literature, without having his Catholic instincts wounded or his moral sense blunted. I have strayed into many fields of literature, and culled flowers in many languages, and I can bear witness that, whilst there are certain works in other languages which I appreciate more highly than works of the same grade in our own tongue, still, taking the literature of various countries as a whole, there is none of less objectionable character and of more elevating tone than is English literature, in its grand roll of authors from Widsith, the old English gleeman of the fourth century, down to the present laureate. But for this boon we are not to thank the Protestantism of England. It is rather due to the fact that the roots of English literature struck deep in Catholic soil, and the conservative character of the English people kept up the Catholic spirit and the Catholic traditions long after the very name of Catholic had become offensive. That Catholic spirit still lingers in the cloistered aisles and corridors of Oxford. It hovers

over the vacant tomb of Edward the Confessor within the hallowed walls of Westminster Abbey. It speaks in tower and pillared dome throughout the land, "of which every arch has its scroll teaching Catholic wisdom, and every window represents some canonized saint." * It breathes through the Catholic prayers still preserved in *The Book of Common Prayer*. It has become transfused into some of the noblest passages in *Paradise Lost;* the Arianism and the Protestantism are Milton's own; but his magnificent lines clothe many a sentiment of tenderness and sublimity culled from the pages of Cædmon, St. Avitus, Andreini, the Catholic mediæval miracle plays, and *Lucifer*, the Catholic drama of Vondel, the great Catholic and national poet of Holland. † It lurks in the *Pilgrim's Progress*, as much of it as John Bunyan chose to spell out of the prose translation of the original *Pilgrim's Progress, Le Pèlerinage de l'Homme* of the Cistercian monk Guillaume de Deguilleville.‡ It is our Catholic heritage of thought and sentiment that has inspired the

* Kenelm Digby: *Mores Catholici*, vol. i., p. 22.

† Francis Junius introduced Milton to Cædmon; Roger Williams, of Rhode Island, taught him the language of Vondel. See Looten: *Étude littéraire sur le poète néerlandais Vondel*. Bruxelles, 1889.

‡ Not *The Wandering Knight* of Jean de Carthenay, as has been recently asserted; not even, perhaps, the complete copy of the *Pilgrimage of the Lyf of the Manhode*, which I have before me; but an abridgment of it, which, Mr. Wright tells us, was copied and circulated in MS. in the seventeenth century (*Pilgrimage of the Lyf of the Manhode*, preface, p. x.). John Lydgate made a poetical translation of the original poem in 1426. There are two copies of his translation in the British Museum, the best of which is in the Cottonian Collection (Vitellius, c. xiii., fol. 2–308).

sublimest passages in our Wordsworths and Tennysons, our Longfellows and Lowells. And whatever Shakspere may have been in practice, the whole spirit of his immortal plays is Catholic. Even Carlyle regards him as the flowering of mediæval Catholicism. * "Indeed," says Digby, "a book might be composed on the latent Catholicism of many natives of this country, where everything solid and valuable is, after all, either a remnant or a revival of Catholic thinking or institution." †

VIII.

1. All honor, then, to those who at many and great sacrifices, and actuated by the pure love of God and their religion, have sought to wrest back for us a portion of our Catholic heritage in English literature. There are names connected with Catholic literature in America that we should ever hold in honor and benediction. Such is the name of Orestes A. Brownson. ‡ Do we realize all the greatness covered by that name? America has produced no more powerful intellect than Brownson's. There was no problem, social, political, religious, or philosophical, that he did not grapple with and find an answer for. After trying creed upon creed to find out

* *French Revolution*, b. i., ch. i.

† *Mores Catholici*, vol. i., p. 25. Mr. P. O'Shea has made American Catholics his debtors by the publication of this magnificent work, hitherto so long out of print, hard to procure, and expensive. It is a great Catholic classic. The more it is read, the better it will be appreciated.

‡ Died, April 17, 1876, æt. 73.

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1. All honor, then, to those who at many and great sacrifices, and actuated by the pure love of God and their religion, have sought to wrest back for us a portion of our Catholic heritage in English literature. There are names connected with Catholic literature in America that we should ever hold in honor and benediction. Such is the name of Orestes A. Brownson. ‡ Do we realize all the greatness covered by that name? America has produced no more powerful intellect than Brownson's. There was no problem, social, political, religious, or philosophical, that he did not grapple with and find an answer for. After trying creed upon creed to find out

* *French Revolution*, b. i., ch. i.

† *Mores Catholici*, vol. i., p. 25. Mr. P. O'Shea has made American Catholics his debtors by the publication of this magnificent work, hitherto so long out of print, hard to procure, and expensive. It is a great Catholic classic. The more it is read, the better it will be appreciated.

‡ Died, April 17, 1876, æt. 73.

the hollowness of each, the aspirations of his strong and generous nature and the invincible logic of his acute intellect led him into the Church, in the strength and maturity of his manhood. Forthwith he consecrated his pen to the vindication of that Church and the defense of her doctrines against all comers. Mediæval knight never bore lance with greater singleness of purpose, or with more bravery and determination, in the cause of his lady-love, than did Brownson wield his pen in behalf of the Church. To his dying breath he was faithful to his vow. He viewed, and taught others to view, the doctrines of the Church from an elevated plane, from which they were apprehended as a whole and all their grandeur and beauty revealed to advantage. Men might differ with him in politics—his political opinions were odious to many among his readers, and yet his political principles, in the main, were sound and fully vindicated by subsequent events; men might differ with him in criticism—in spite of his elevated artistic ideal, some there were who regarded his literary canons as narrow and inadequate; men might differ with him in philosophy—his language smacked too much of Gioberti* to please the intellect trained on exclusively Cartesian or Scholastic lines; he may have been mistaken in matters of theology—in unguarded moments, in the heat of controversy, he may sometimes have expressed himself

* Brownson was a warm admirer but in no sense a disciple of Gioberti; he reached his philosophical conclusions independently of the Italian philosopher.

in language that a better trained theologian would not employ, or would modify considerably; but he was still great; there remained in his politics, in his philosophy, in his theological discussions, in his literary and art criticism, enough to instruct, elevate, inspire, and compel admiration. * The very ring of his sentences was a trumpet-blast to us of the rising generation. He taught us how to take our stand upon his own high plane of thought, and thence survey the beautiful harmony of our creed with all that is good and noble in the natural world. He brought home, not to us alone, but to the cultured

* Brownson himself, in his old age, with all the candor and humility of a great and noble soul, recognized his own shortcomings in the following generous sentences: "I have always regretted that circumstances not under my control seemed to compel me to appear as a Catholic reviewer on the morrow of my reception into the Church, while almost totally ignorant of Catholic theology, and still more ignorant of Catholic life and usages; and I have often admired in later years the wondrous charity of the Catholic bishops and clergy in overlooking the crudeness and inexperience, if not the overweening confidence, of the neophyte, and in giving a generous support to his *Review*, notwithstanding the manifest inaptness of its editor. It is true, I studied hard day and night for several years, under an able master, to supply my deficiency; and, also, that I published very little which was not previously examined and revised by one of the ablest and soundest theologians I have ever personally known; but it was a great drawback upon the usefulness of the *Review*, that its editor and principal writer had not had leisure previously to make his course of theology and to place himself *en rapport* with the Catholic community, and that he had in every successive number to write up to the very limits of his knowledge, if not sometimes beyond them. I had always to write as an apprentice, never as a master. I have not made much progress in the knowledge of theology, and still less of spiritual life; I have also forgot much of what I had acquired; but I have learned this much—not to venture beyond my depth, and not to broach questions which I have not mastered, or, at least, think I have mastered. If I could have done so in the beginning, I should have spared myself and my friends many mortifications."—*Brownson's Works*, vol. xix., p. 587.

intellect throughout the Christian world—for he had admirers in all parts and among all creeds—the great truths of natural and revealed religion with a grasp, a force, and an energy of expression worthy of an Aquinas. We were led to hold up our heads and to be proud of the faith that could inspire such sublime thoughts and control such a noble nature. His great intellect was only equalled by his profound humility. Once his bishop told him that in consequence of some objectionable tenets in his *Review* he would be obliged to censure him publicly. The old man's reply was: "Bishop, you may condemn and burn my books if you will, but by the grace of God I shall die a Catholic." * And a docile, pious, believing child of the Church he died. We of America owe Brownson a debt of gratitude that our children's children can but ill requite.

2. When Brownson was already a leader among men there was wont to sit at his feet a youth whom he looked kindly upon, and who afterwards, growing into manhood, threw aside the shackles of prejudice and error, and entering the Church, became a freeman with the freedom that truth alone gives. † To speak of books or of reading and not to mention the name of Father Hecker ‡ were an

* I received this incident from the lips of the Most Rev., the late Archbishop Bayley.

† He says of his conversion: "It was one of the happiest moments of our life when we discovered for the first time that it was not required of us either to abandon our reason or drown it in a false excitement of feeling to be a religious man. That to become Catholic, so far from being contrary to reason, was a supreme act of reason."—*Aspirations of the Soul*, p. 286.

‡ Died, Dec. 22, 1888, æt. 69.

unpardonable oversight. He was a man of generous impulse and noble aspirations, who thought better of the world than the world has deserved. His thirst for souls was insatiable. Having learned how good it was to live within the pale of the Church, he would bring all men to share his peace and his joy. He loved American youths with the eager, hungering love of a father who saw his children in danger of drowning and would save them at any cost. He felt the pulse of the American youth, divined his yearnings, laid bare to him his better aspirations, and showed him where every beat of his heart and every question of his soul would find satisfactory response. You could not be in his presence for five minutes without feeling your soul set aflame with the same pure and noble fervor that was ever urging him on to make for the best. He was in an especial manner the apostle of Christian culture. He loved good books; he encouraged others to read good books; he inspired many to write good books; he freely disseminated good books. The Catholic Publication Society is a standing testimony to his zeal and energy in the cause of good Catholic reading. It was under his fostering hand that *The Catholic World* grew up and flourished. His own writings abound in that strong common sense so dear to the American mind. Who can number the souls that, weary and parched in traversing the arid sands of philosophic speculation, have stopped and drunk of the pure crystal waters of clear, good sense flowing from his

refreshing volumes, and, strengthened, have resumed their journey with a new-founded hope that has cheered them on to a home and a resting-place in the Church of God? He has passed from amongst us, but his spirit still lives in devoted disciples of his, who are carrying on his work as he would have it carried on, in the spirit of charity for man, zeal for souls, and an abiding trust in the practical good sense of the American people.

3. And there has recently fallen another whose life was an apostolate sacrificed for the Catholic press. He fell in the breach; fell fighting till summoned by the death-knell; fell with aspirations unrealized, plans and projects unachieved; fell in the noon-day of his life, feeling that while he had done something he had left much more undone. Only the friends that knew him intimately and were favored with an insight into his noble aspirations and the high ideal he always placed before himself, are in position to weigh and measure the solid worth of Commendatore Patrick Valentine Hickey. * He also was one of the chosen few who labored in the interest of Catholic literature and Catholic journalism with a singleness of purpose and in a spirit of self-denial and self-devotedness truly heroic. Moderate in his views, unbending in his principles, charitable in his judgments, he was a ripe scholar, versed in theology, a clever writer, a fair-minded and honorable opponent in controversy. He might have been imposed on at times; at times he might

* Died, Feb. 21, 888, æt. 43.

have seriously blundered; he was not more than man; but he never knowingly did injustice to his fellow-man. Rarely was his paper sullied with personal abuse. He always bore the respect and esteem of the non-Catholic press. Be his memory cherished amongst us as the Bayard of Catholic journalism.

Let us not forget or ignore such merit and such devotedness. Let us love the literature for which such noble souls sacrificed themselves. Let us cultivate it, each according to his capacity; let us patronize it, each according to his means.

IX.

On the eve of sending out this lecture in its permanent form another great luminary in the world of Catholic letters passed from earth. The Right Reverend Monsignor James A. Corcoran died.* His loss is irreparable. Among the American priesthood he towered peerless. His learning was prodigious. He was a lifelong student, ever absorbing knowledge. He was deeply read in oriental literature; he was equally at home in the sacred and profane literatures of nearly every nation in mediæval and modern Europe; he was unrivaled as a Latinist and wrote the Latin language with classic grace and purity of expression; his knowledge of books and authors extended to the smallest details and the most obscure writers; he was possessed of rare critical acumen; his erudition was profound, but he

* Died, July 16, 1889, æt. 69.

never permitted it to conceal from him the real worth of an opinion. Authorities had in his judgment the weight of their intrinsic merit, and neither more nor less. He had rare tact in brushing aside as so many cobwebs traditional opinions and traditional quotations, and going straight to the heart of his subject, weighing and measuring it in the light of his trained intellect. In all matters of human knowledge he considered facts and principles above mere assertions, how respectable soever might be the authority from whom they proceeded. He was intolerant of all dogmatism, be it the dogmatism of the theologian who would have men more orthodox than the Church, or be it the dogmatism of the scientist who would obtrude his crude fancies as proven propositions.

My acquaintance with Mgr. Corcoran began at the time that he assumed the editorship of *The American Catholic Quarterly Review*. The acquaintance soon ripened into friendship, and to the hour of his death that friendship grew more cordial and more steadfast. He honored me with an amount of confidence, and treated with a degree of deference the judgments and opinions that I had formed in my own line of study and thought, which I can account for only by his great humility, but which have been to me, and which shall continue to be an incentive so to labor as to render myself less unworthy of the abiding trust of such an eminent scholar. Indeed, when one has learned to distinguish the would-be friend

from the real friend, one may well rank the friendship of James A. Corcoran among the blessings for which one should daily thank God. He has passed away, but like a sweet perfume his memory remains to cheer and to refresh.

Looking into the clear crystalline depths of his beautiful soul, methinks I behold it in all its greatness. Methinks I can still see the honest indignation with which that soul would be stirred by the very shadow of sham or pretence. He had an abiding hatred for dishonesty, be its form what it may. He could but ill disguise his loathing of him with the two faces, or of him of the fawning ways, or of the cowardly character devoid of the courage of his convictions. I read therein the perfect manhood scorning all pettiness and subterfuge and strong and fearless in right-doing. I read the charming simplicity of the character without wrinkle and without guile,—just, upright, straightforward, charitable. I read the profound humility that led him all through life to shun honors, seek retirement, and find happiness in doing God's will in the most lowly occupations. I read that wisdom from above which made clear to him that in the service of God even the least position is ennobling. I read the simple faith that accepted every jot and tittle of the teachings of the Church with all the docility of the artless child. And the love the child bears the mother only partially measures the love he bore the Church and all things pertaining to the Church—the language of her ritual, her ceremonies, her devotions, her practices, her

doctrines. He loved them all with a tenderness and a reverence that were touching. This love led him to resent any insult offered to her teachings and her practices with all the energy of his great soul. It wounded his sensitive nature far more than could any personal grievance. In controversy he was a hard hitter, but he never forgot the courtesy due to an opponent; he could not be provoked by personalities the most bitter and malicious into an uncharitable expression. I have named but a tithe of the many virtues that I read in that beautiful soul.

Years were pressing upon him, and ill-health was compassing him round, but the joyousness of his spirits rose above his sufferings and infirmities, and his heart grew young with advancing age. He was the most genial of companions even as he was the staunchest of friends; he had a keen sense of the ludicrous, and I now see the quiet humor dimple his amiable face as he told a good story, or listened to a clever joke, even when made at his own expense. There was no moroseness in his nature; there was no gall in his disposition. Broad in his views, large-hearted in his charity, modest as he was learned, he was among the brightest ornaments of the American priesthood, always a pillar and mainstay of the American hierarchy.

As editor of a quarterly which directed and influenced the readings of many, Monsignor Corcoran is entitled to a distinguished place in any discourse treating of books.

He was a firm believer in the apostolate of the press. He loved the good book and recommended it to those under his personal guidance and influence. But the modern books that met with his commendation were few and far between. He preferred to go back to the old masters in literature, the tried ones who had been weighed and had not been found wanting. These were the favorites with whom he loved to commune. His acquaintance with Italian literature was especially intimate. Even in Rome he was regarded as one of the greatest Dante scholars living. He saw in the avocation of the bookseller great opportunities for doing good, and he once remarked to him who pens these lines, that if he were not a priest he would follow that calling, and would devote all his energy to the propagation of good reading. Though an elegant and forcible writer, he has left little from his pen that will live in literature; his name will pass down the corridors of time, a wholesome tradition of great learning and solid piety. When shall we look upon his like again?—

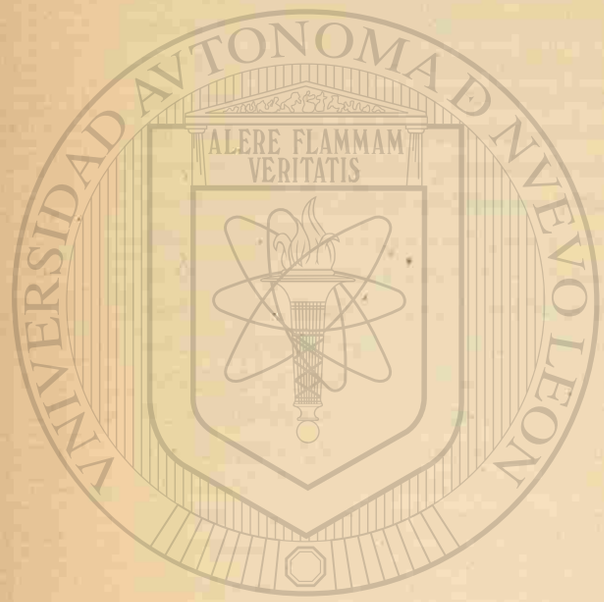
X.

In conclusion, let me add that a great responsibility rests on us in regard to our reading, and we cannot shirk that responsibility. Ours is the duty to develop and make perfect our whole nature; therefore must we look to our intellectual growth and progress. Books are the great means by which we are expected to achieve

this. They are the reflectors by which the light of God's truth is flashed into the mind. That light runs through all books; but self, and passion, and prejudice are so many absorbents, leaving but a few rays to glimmer through the darkness. Let us select those giving out the truth most clearly and convincingly; they will supply us with the needed light and warmth—so far as human agencies can supply us—to walk in the path of right and duty.

Let your readings be such as shall imbue you with exalted ideals of manhood and of womanhood. Eschew those authors who would destroy the roseate hues of the morning of life, and leave the soul to be consumed in the comtemplation of a parched and arid waste of human nature, from which all good has been extracted and upon which the dews of heaven no longer fall to freshen the flowers of virtue; for according to these men, there is neither virtue, nor a heaven, nor a God. It brings no good, and may work great injury to young people, to wade through the miry pages of a Zola, to learn from an Ibsen the disenchantments of life's most sacred relations, or to sicken over the stench proceeding from the ulcerous sores a Tolstoi has been probing and laying open to the public gaze. These men call themselves social physicians. But the respectable physician confines his lectures and experiments to the dissecting room, where they are understood and appreciated. It is only your quack who goes into the public shambles, and

under pretence of enlightening men, spreads the germs of disease among those who are attracted around the putrid corpse he would openly dissect. What else are those men?—They tell us with Ibsen that "all the spiritual well-springs of our life are poisoned, and our whole civic society rests upon a soil infected with the pestilence of lies." Not so, my friends. Faith, and Hope, and, greater than all, the Love of God and of our neighbor, are life-giving fountains of spiritual life still flowing in abundance. Christian manhood and Christian womanhood the world over draw healing waters from these Divine sources. The literature that brings therefrom strength and firm resolve to the soul to rise higher and higher into the more perfect life, is the wholesome literature which our young people should cultivate.



HOW TO READ DANTE.

I have been requested by the Reverend Director of the Cathedral Library Reading Circle to outline a course of reading on Dante. Dante is so many-sided it is difficult to outline a single course that will compass all phases of his genius; the tastes of the readers and the extent of their previous readings will go far towards determining the line of studies to be pursued.

It is refreshing and encouraging to see a Catholic Reading Circle take up the study of Dante. Such a circle, if in earnest, has already gone far beyond the stage of the frivolous and the amusing in its readings. It has entered the domain of serious study. All the well-known and recognized Dante societies in the United States have been organized and are flourishing under non-Catholic auspices. It is high time that a Catholic Dante society should be organized. Dante was Catholic in his life; he is Catholic in his teachings; in his broadest influence he is thoroughly Catholic. He is ours by every right and title. In his marvelous poem he has embodied Catholic philosophy and Catholic theology. There is no phase of Catholic thought that does not find expression in those sublime pages. Every soul with a conviction will thrill responsive to some one or other note in his sacred song.

I.

Volumes have been written to prove Dante a heretic teaching the esoteric doctrines of the Cathari, Paterini and Albigenses. Men have found in his very orthodoxy a cloak to conceal the heresy beneath. The praises he has for Mary ever Virgin, are translated into blasphemous laudation of the mother-church of the Albigenses. Volumes have been written to prove him a Mazzini of the thirteenth century, a hater of the priesthood, the Church, the Pope, and the Catholic religion. Volumes have been written to prove him the Luther of his day. Volumes have been written to make him the propagator of nearly every fanciful theory that could enter the brain of man. In the perusal of all such volumes the student of Dante is only following will-o'-the-wisps rushing rapidly to some quagmire, in which he becomes enmeshed.

That Dante should have interpreters representing so many phases of opinion, only proves how far above the reach of ordinary intelligence he sits in the serene region of thought and song, whither only a favored few can travel. His *Divina Commedia* is a work to be read with awe and wonder and admiration. It represents the most profound study and the most intense concentration of the highest form of human genius. The scientific precision that enters into its wording, the mathematical accuracy with which it is constructed, the marvelous grasp of subject by which the poet, in so many lines calculated beforehand, was enabled to condense

thoughts tender and thoughts severe, thoughts abstruse and thoughts of daily life, thoughts historical and thoughts political—all embodied in words having at least two meanings, a literal and a figurative—these are traits that confront us upon a superficial reading of the poem. Is it any wonder that men should find it so difficult to measure the vastness of Dante's genius?

II.

In studying Dante, one is studying the whole genius and spirit of the Middle Ages. In his great poem rightly interpreted, one has the key to these ages. It is the poet's mission to embalm in his verse the noblest and best aspirations of his day and generation. This Dante has done in a manner to challenge the admiration of all times, and to know the poet one must know the age in which the poet lived. Dante is a sealed book to any man not familiar with the history, the thought, and the politics of the thirteenth century. The student, before touching the writings of the great poet, should first familiarize himself with the history of his times. He should form unto himself a clear conception of the relations of Church and state, of the Holy Roman Empire, of the universities, of the literary and artistic growth and development of that period. The outline of Church history sketched by Darras or Alzog will be of service to him; Bryce's *Holy Roman Empire* he will find to be useful in throwing light upon a greatly misunderstood

subject. Cesare Cantù, in his *Histoire Universelle*, will clear up other points. Standard biographies of the great men of the time will also be found helpful. Remember the wonderful religious, artistic, and literary activity and fertility of the thirteenth century. It was a century of intellectual giants when Duns Scotus and Thomas Aquinas gave fixity to scholastic philosophy; when the universities with their teeming life were created and organized under the protection of the papacy; when the Miracle-Play and the Morality were enacted with all the solemn pomp and gorgeousness which the ingenuity of the Franciscan Friars could devise, and the devotion of the trade and craft guilds could furnish; when the Gothic cathedral rose in the great cities of France and Germany, a forest of stone embodying one of the sublimest conceptions of human genius; when national literatures began to make classic the language of the people; when song and story were crystallizing around the great truths of religion; when Vincent of Beauvais wrote his Encyclopædia, and Roger Bacon and Albert the Great placed physical science upon its true basis of experiment and observation; in a word, it was a century of noble aspiration and magnificent achievement. If you would form some conception of the intellectual life ofthat period, look through the volumes of the *Histoire Litteraire de la France*, which after more than sixty years' labor on the part of the immortal forty of the French Academy upon that one century, has not yet been

able to exhaust it. Note the whole library of volumes belonging to that period published in the *Patrologia* of Migne; afterwards take up the two bulky tomes of Echard and Quetif, giving a detailed list of the Dominican writers who distinguished themselves, turn to the five folios of Luke Wadding performing the same service for the Franciscan writers, and mark the enormous bulk of literature that emanated from these two orders alone. In the publications issued under the supervision of the Master of the Rolls, and by the early English Text Society in London; in the volumes of Muratori and Tiraboschi in Italy; in the volumes devoted by Flores and Masden to the literary history of the same period in Spain, you will get some slight inkling of the work done in that century, and you may then conceive all that teeming life and thought concentrated in the genius of Dante. That century is still our educator. St. Thomas molded for us, and indeed for all time, our philosophical and theological language; the Gothic cathedral is still the school of architects; Dante has for this age as wholesome a lesson as he had for his own.

III.

Having formed a clear conception of the historical background from which Dante looks out upon us, the student's next step is to familiarize himself with scholastic philosophy. This form of mediæval thought is intimately wrought into the *Divina Commedia*. It is the

groundwork on which figures what is highest and noblest in dogma and morals. Indeed the poem, from its first line to its last, embodies a complete treatise on morals. Nor is there a great truth of our holy religion that is not to be found embedded in the amber of its pages. "He anticipated the most pregnant developments of Catholic doctrine," says Mgr. Hettinger, "mastered its subtlest distinctions, and treated its hardest problems with almost faultless accuracy. Were all the libraries in the world destroyed, and the Holy Scriptures with them, the whole Catholic system of doctrine and morals might be almost reconstructed out of the *Divina Commedia.*" Therefore it is that Dante can be but ill understood by one not familiar with scholastic philosophy, especially with the *Summa* of St. Thomas Aquinas. Two eminent Jesuits, Fathers Cornoldi and Liberatore, have done much to show the intimate relations of Dante to the schoolmen; Father Cornoldi in his valuable edition of the text with notes, and Father Liberatore in the instructive monograph that he devoted to the poet. The eminent Dominican, Father Berthier, who is recognized as one of the greatest students of Dante living, is now issuing a sumptuous edition of the *Divina Commedia* in which nearly every line of the poem is traced back to a parallel passage in the writings of the Angelical Doctor.

Dante is not only a scholastic; he is also a mystic. There is a sense purely mystical and spiritual running

through his poem. His novitiate with the Franciscans was not misspent. He then learned how to commune with God in holy meditation; he then studied the different stages by which the soul ascends from the period of her conversion, through her state of purgation into the illuminative way, until she finally enters what masters of the spiritual life call the unitive state, where her will becomes one with the will of God in all things that can befall her in this life. And this whole course of spiritual life has been so clearly and beautifully traced through Dante's sublime poem as to merit for it the title of Divine. Therein, beneath the veil of allegory are portrayed the struggles of a soul snatched from the clutches of sin and passion and evil habit, through the trials and temptations of life, until she ascends to the fruition of union with the Divinity. Let us not think for a moment that Dante has in this delicate work blindly groped his own way; on the contrary, step by step he follows in the track marked out by St. Bonaventure, St. Bernard, and the Hugos of St. Victor's. Familiarity with spiritual life as based upon the writings of these great mystics will help us to appreciate this aspect of the *Divina Commedia.*

The poem of Dante is constructed according to the science of his day. Its whole machinery is based upon the Ptolemaic system of astronomy. How many there are who read the poem, for instance, oblivious of the fact that it is constructed upon an astronomical basis; that

every moment can be timed; that the days and hours spent in any of the three regions through which the vision bears him, may be accurately measured? And yet volumes have been written entirely upon this scientific aspect of the poem. Read, for instance, the painstaking observations of P. G. Antonelli, in Niccolo Tommaséo's three-volume edition, and you will conclude with the commentator that "Alleghiera has proved himself no less a geometrician than a poet." A most interesting study it is to trace the progress of the poet from that memorable Holy Thursday in 1301, when he enters the gloomy wood, all through the remainder of that week, and of Easter week, till on Low Sunday he ascends to the Empyrean. In the light of times and seasons you understand those outbursts of song drawn from the breviary, and much that would otherwise seem random proves to be intentional, and its full meaning becomes clear.

IV.

The poem of Dante was written under the influence of art in its highest ideals, and it in turn influenced art. Giotto and Brunelleschi, Ghiberti and Donatello, must ever be coupled with the name of Dante. Their masterpieces render more bright many a page in the *Divina Commedia*. Read that beautiful and touching passage in the *Paradiso* descriptive of St. Francis wedding poverty:

> "A dame to whom none openeth pleasure's gate,
> More than to death, was, 'gainst his father's will,
> His stripling choice; and he did make her his,
> Before the spiritual court, by nuptial bonds,
> And in his father's sight: from day to day,
> Then loved her more devoutly."

Afterwards study Giotto's frescos of the same subject in the church of St. Francis of Assisi, remembering that Giotto (1276-1336) was the friend of Dante, and that it is to him we are indebted for the portrait of the great poet which has been transmitted to us.

The student of Dante should have before him photographs or engravings of these and the other great allegorical frescos and paintings that have been preserved. There are the frescos of Simone Memmi, the friend of Petrarca, (1280–1344) in the Spanish chapel of Santa Maria Novella, Florence, interpreting the glories and triumphs of the Church militant over heresy. Note the important place occupied by St. Dominic and his disciples represented by keen-scenting greyhounds; note how those hounds chase the wolves; note above all how Benedict XI. accepts them to be the guardians and protectors of his flocks, and in the light reflected from those pictures read the following lines regarding the she-wolf that threatened to devour Dante:

* * * * * "This beast,
At whom thou criest, her way will suffer none
To pass, and no less hindrance makes than death,
So bad and so accursed in her kind,
That never sated is her ravenous will,
Still after food more craving than before.
To many an animal in wedlock vile
She fastens, and shall yet to many more,
Until that greyhound come, who shall destroy
Her with sharp pain. He will not life support
By earth nor its base metals, but by love,
Wisdom, and virtue, and his land shall be
The land 'twixt either Feltro."

Here we have a whole flood of light thrown upon what has hitherto been an obscure passage.[1]

Again, turn to Orcagna's frescos in the Campo Santo of Pisa. Orcagna (1325–1385) wrought out his Last Judgment and his Triumph of Death under the inspiration of Dante. The same is true of Pietro Lorenzetti's representation of the Fathers of the Desert. Before leaving Pisa, let us enter the church of St. Catherine; observe that splendid allegory of Traini, (civ. 13–14.) wherein St. Thomas Aquinas is represented as prostrating Averroës, and in the person of Averroës all error, by the bolt of truth.

[1] Father Berthier, O. P., follows Father Cornoldi, S. J., in regarding Benedict XI. as *il Veltro*. [Cfr. in connection with this passage Döllinger's Essay on "Dante as a Prophet," translated into English recently and issued as a portion of the volume, "Studies in European History."—J. H. M.]

When to these we add *La Disputà* of Rafaello and the sublime frescoings of Michelangelo—his Last Judgment and his wonderful allegory on the ceiling of the Sistine chapel—we possess a commentary upon the *Divina Commedia* that is more valuable than half the volumes that have been written. Charles Lamb tells us that Milton should be read within hearing of the deep and solemn tones of an organ. Dante should certainly be read within sight of these allegorical pictures that breathe his spirit, and are so many interpretations of his poem.

V.

The *Divina Commedia* palpitates with the politics of Dante's day. The poet spoke to his own age and his own Italy. He had a message for his times and for his country. His message was one of political regeneration as well as moral regeneration. We may not agree with his views; historical justice compels us to condemn the estimates he formed of many of his contemporaries; he was in some respects too fierce a partisan, and refused to see merit in an enemy or wrong in a friend, but we are in duty bound to become familiar with the personages of whom he speaks, and put ourselves at his point of view. All this implies an earnest study of contemporary events, and familiarity with the lives and politics of contemporary personages. Then shall we find that every epithet, every allusion, every

figurative expression applied to men, has a meaning that was understood and appreciated at its full value in Dante's day. He would be lost in the mazes of Dante's poem, who knew naught of the feuds between Guelf and Ghibelline, and which was which. Take the last five cantos of the *Purgatorio*. Mr. J. A. Symonds undertakes to analyze them, and finds them "archaic, mediæval, and obsolete," "so vast and to our taste so wearisome an allegory." We are not surprised. Mr. Symonds is too imbued with the spirit of the Renaissance—the spirit of cold form,—to understand and properly appreciate the earnest inspiration of the thirteenth century, still less the intense earnestness of Dante. The carefully-wrought allegory of these five cantos is insipid to Mr. Symonds because he missed their meaning. They embody Dante's doctrine upon the relations of the Papacy to the Holy Roman Empire. Both the Empire and the Papacy are of divine institution; both are the means by which, in the designs of Providence, the world is to be governed.

VI.

Here I would caution the student of Dante against another shoal that he is in danger of striking. It is not enough that he find a meaning for each allegorical expression in itself; the meaning must also harmonize with the other expressions, and be of one piece with them. It must throw additional light upon the sense of

the whole allegory. In the *Inferno* we find that Dante inflicts the same punishment upon treason to State that he does upon treason to Church. He places in the *Giudecca* those who were guilty of the murder of Cæsar with him who betrayed the Saviour.

> "That soul up there which has the greatest pain,"
> The master said, "is Judas Iscariot,
> With head inside he plies his legs without,—
> Of the two others who head downward are,
> The one who hangs from the black jowl is Brutus;
> See how he writhes himself and speaks no word,
> And the other who so stalwart seems, is Cassius."
>
> [*Inferno*, xxxiv. 60–67.]

This picture is in keeping with his conception of the union of Church and State making indeed two heads with but a single body.

Hence it is that Dante is to be studied with a careful eye to the exact word employed. The more literal the translation the more useful does it become for the student. Carlyle's prose version of the *Inferno*, and Butler's or Norton's prose version of the whole poem are indispensable. Of the translations in verse Longfellow's is the most literal, though it lacks at times grace and flexibility. His inversions are sometimes forced. Cary was thoroughly imbued with the spirit of Dante, and seldom missed the poet's meaning; but there is a Miltonic swell about his lines—I might say almost a Miltonic mannerism—that is not in accord with the scientific

precision of Dante's own style. Because of this precision no author suffers more by translation. Throughout the whole extent of his poem there is not a random word. He held every expression under complete control. Well might Dante himself say that "never for the sake of a rhyme had he said other than he meant to say." No literary monument has ever been so consistently realized. His is the masterly grasp of genius over words and forms of expression. As a model of style he ranks with his guide and master, Virgil. According as occasion requires, he is tender and pathetic, or harsh and severe, sweet, musical and elegant, or rude and strong, always suiting language to sense. He that would learn the mode of condensing great thoughts in words few and simple, should make a careful study of the *Divina Commedia*.

Nor is Dante to be overlooked as an educator. He who had wandered from university to university—who had been in Paris and sat at the feet of those who had themselves received the teachings of St. Thomas Aquinas from his own lips; who had probably been in Oxford and passed from hall to hall in School street,—with his observant eye must have noticed differences in educational methods, and held to the best. And so, from the pedagogical point of view, a complete educational method may be constructed out of his great poem.

VII.

The student would now like to know the books that will best serve as an introduction to the study of Dante. Here I shall confine myself to those that are most accessible. Macaulay's brilliant essay on Dante is deserving of mention. It was one of his first literary achievements, and was actually the first note of praise introducing Dante to modern English readers. The essay is fervid and replete with enthusiasm, but lacks historical accuracy and critical discrimination. Dean Church published an essay on our poet in the *Christian Remembrancer*, January, 1850, and republished it in a separate form in 1879, under the title *Dante*. This essay gave impulse to the study of the great Florentine. It is a model piece of criticism. It is only lacking in one thing to reach the level of Dante's greatness, and that is, possession of the fulness of Dante's faith. This lack leads the Dean to a misunderstanding of the attitude of Dante towards the Church. Otherwise it is one of the most scholarly, reverent, and sympathetic studies of Dante that we possess in English.

Mr. J. A. Symonds in *A Study of Dante*, has given us a pleasing introduction replete with suggestive thoughts and happy remarks. But he leaves much to be desired. He attempts to present us only with the artistic side of the poem. Its philosophical depth is beyond his reach; he sometimes misses its allegorical meaning; he

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is lacking in sympathy with the poet and his epoch; the poet's allegory he calls "frost-bitten;" his theology he calls "a rigid methodistical theology." Now, the man who so talks knows not whereof he speaks. He is at sea without chart or compass or rudder to guide his ship. He is certainly not a trustworthy guide. Miss Susan E. Blow of St. Louis has written another volume bearing the same title, *A Study of Dante*, which the student will find helpful in interpreting the moral sense of the poem. Miss Blow has many beautiful thoughts concerning Dante and his religion, and though not a Catholic herself, she has led many a wandering soul by the hand to that home of safety and rest, the Catholic Church. Another lady who is more Catholic still, and who has written about Dante in a more helpful spirit, is Maria Francesca Rossetti. Her *Shadow of Dante* is a charming volume well calculated to lead one to the substance. You will find some quickening thoughts in Carlyle's lectures on the poet in his *Heroes and Hero-worship*. More lengthily drawn out, with much that is clever, and some fine-spun threads of thought, and an occasional misapprehension, is James Russell Lowell's essay on Dante, which is to be found in his *Among my Books*.

The work which Catholic students should make their handbook is *Dante's Divina Commedia*, by the late Monsignor Hettinger. This volume has been elegantly done into English and edited by Father Sebastian Bow-

den of the Brompton Oratory. And though liberties have been taken with the German text, and portions omitted that had better be retained, still the book is invaluable for the Catholic reader who could not master it in the original. Cardinal Manning wrote to Father Bowden upon the completion of his task: "You have conferred a true benefit upon us by publishing Dr. Hettinger's work on Dante. It will be not only a signal help to readers of the *Divina Commedia*, but it will, I hope, awaken Catholics to a sense of the not inculpable neglect of the greatest of poets, who by every title of genius, and by the intensity of his whole heart and soul, is the master-poet of the Catholic faith." This is deserving commendation of Father Bowden, and censure of our Catholic writers. We are grateful in having within reach so safe a guide as Mgr. Hettinger's book. It is scholarly, and a model of scientific criticism. The only book approaching it in merit is Ozanam's *Dante et la Philosophie Chrétienne*, an English version of which was prepared several years ago, but still remains in manuscript for want of a publisher. *

There are various biographies of Dante in English, but there is only one that I can recommend with any degree of safety. Even that one is not all that it

* [NOTE.—This version, made by Madame Lucia D. Pychowska, is now (Dec. 1893) publishing in serial form in *The Seminary* of New York, and will later be issued in book form by the Cathedral Library Association.—J. H. M.]

should be to be truly worthy of the man. It is Count Cesare Balbo's *Life of Dante*, which has been translated into English by Mrs. Bunbury. Scartazzini, who is chary of his praise for any but a German, and who has himself written a most exhaustive biography of the poet, pronounces Balbo's work "hitherto the best of this kind," and considers its success "great and well-deserved." Scartazzini's *Dante Handbook* as translated and supplemented by Professor Thomas Davidson, is a valuable aid to the student, no matter how advanced his studies may be.

VIII.

Taking for granted that the student has prepared himself by a course of preliminary reading to enter upon the study of Dante, it may be asked how shall he best and most profitably go about his work? To this I would reply, presuming that the Circle is reading the poet in English:

1. Take up some good translation. Longfellow's will be found the most satisfactory as a handbook.

2. Let there be at least one member in the class who is familiar with the Italian, and let that member have the original text with which to compare the translation, and by which to give the exact literal rendering where there is question of making the interpretation of the allegorical expression. I would recommend Bianchi's text, the eighth edition of 1885, as clear, simple, and

handy. It is the outcome of a lifetime of reading and study. The notes in it will be found most helpful.

3. Keep in view the meaning of each canto in itself and in relation to the whole.

4. Where the passage is obscure, refer to one or other of the literal translations already mentioned. Even these should be compared with the text.

5. Seek to explain Dante by his other writings. Have by you especially the translations of his letters, the *Vita Nuova*, the *Convito*, the *De Monarchia*.

6. Remember that in every translation the music of the original is lost; therefore, that one of the chief poetical attractions having disappeared, the reading of the poet must needs be dry and wearisome. Even in the original, Dante no more than our own Browning, never intended that his poem should be a substitute for a game of cards or an after-dinner smoke. He wrote with a serious purpose, and he is to be read in a serious and a studious spirit.

IX.

Let us take a random glance of a few English versions of Dante. Here is a bran-new translation of a large portion of the *Purgatorio*, which Mr. Walter Pater commends as breathing the atmosphere of Dante. The translation is from the pen of Mr. Charles Launcelot Shadwell. Mr. Shadwell makes the experiment of rendering the *terza rima* of Dante into the stanza employed

by Andrew Marvell in his Horatian *Ode to Cromwell.* Both metres he considers not unlike. He finds in both a common principle of structure; their capacity is, in his view, about equal; that capacity, be it remembered, consisting of the number of syllables contained in a line —as though the capacity of languages as distinct as the English and Italian could be measured by syllables!— and furthermore Marvell, like Dante, introduces "images and ideas which belong to learning and science." Here is an anomaly in literary criticism. Think of Marvell airing his pedantry in an ode on a popular subject, compared to Dante inditing a grave and all-embracing poem that includes both heaven and earth, the plainest truths with the sublimest doctrines ever reached by the human reason. Starting out with a theory so fundamentally erroneous, the translator must needs land in disaster. But we may best judge of his work by some specimens. Let us take the opening lines of the ***Purgatorio.***

To traverse fairer waters the bark of my genius now hoists sail, leaving behind her so cruel a sea:
And I shall sing of this second realm wherein the human spirit is cleansed, and becomes worthy to mount to heaven.

Per correr miglior acqua alza-le vele omai la navicella del mio ingegno, che lascia dietro a sè mar sì crudele:
E canteró di quel secondo regno, ove l'umano spirito si purga, e di salire al Ciel diventa degno.

Now here is Mr. Shadwell's rendering of this simple introduction:

O'er fairer flood, with sail on high,
My *fancy's* bark her way doth ply
That cruel sea *unkind*
Forever left behind.
With that next realm my song begins
Where human souls are purged *from sins,*
And, *all their guilt forgiven,*
Grow fit to mount to heaven.

This is a feeble translation. The word *fancy* does not express the great creative mind of Dante. When the poet called the sea *cruel,* he called it more than *unkind.* Unkind is superfluous. There is no mention in the text about leaving that sea *forever.* Only sin can stain a soul; and Dante leaves as much to be inferred. Note the wordiness and the tautology introduced into the next line—

And, *all their guilt forgiven.*

It is an interpolation of the translator. If Mr. Walter Pater finds this translation Dantesque in any sense, it is to be feared that his idea of Dante is anything but adequate.

Turn we now to another version of the same passage. Mr. John Augustine Wilstach about five years ago issued a rhymed translation, "governed by the conviction," he modestly tells us, "that only thus can one hope to approximate a reproduction of the effect created

by the original; that the form is so inseparable from the soul of the work as to compel the translator to accept all the risks involved in the effort to represent it." Now let us note the flavor of Mr. Wilstach's translation:

"And now o'er better waves directs its helm
The light bark of my genius, glad to sail
Far from a sea where horrors such prevail.
Shall sing my *grateful notes* that second realm
Wherein itself the human soul doth purge,
And then its flight to heaven *doth worthily urge.*"

These lines are written with spirit and freedom. There is little lost in the translation beyond the terseness of the original. The substitution of the *helm* for the *sail* does not weaken the figure. The same is true of the rendering of the words *mar si crudele*, by "a sea where horrors such prevail." The terseness is lost, but the effect remains. Even the introduction of the word *grateful notes* makes pleasant reading. It is only in the last line that there is a falling off. Dante knew his theology too well to represent a soul in purgatory urging its flight to heaven. The soul may yearn for heaven, but it is in a state completely resigned to the will of God, and would not leave its place of suffering till it had become worthy of admission to the Divine Presence.

Now, let us read Cary's version in blank verse:

"O'er better waves to speed her *rapid* course
The light bark of my genius lifts the sail,
Well pleased to leave so cruel sea behind;
And of that second region will I sing,
In which the human spirit *from sinful blot*
Is purged, and for ascent to heaven prepares."

Here we have a nearer approach to the original text. The word *rapid* weakens the first verse; the words *from sinful blot* are, as has been seen already, needless, still the passage reads smoothly. Let us see how Longfellow translates the passage:

"To run o'er better waters hoists its sail
The little vessel of my genius now,
That leaves behind itself a sea so cruel;
And of that second kingdom will I sing
Wherein the human spirit *doth purge itself,*
And to ascend to heaven becometh worthy."

This is very literal; it is almost stiffly literal. The inversions are too numerous. In neglecting the theological sense, the translator makes a grave blunder. Apparently the words *si purga* might be rendered "doth purge itself." But no; the one thing that the soul is unable to accomplish in purgatory is the purgation or cleansing of itself. It *is purged;* but not by its own merits or its own efforts: only by the assistance of the faithful on earth and the saints in heaven.

The results here obtained from a random specimen will hold good throughout the translations we have been

considering.* Another thought occurs. If in the introductory lines these eminent scholars so easily go astray from lack of theological knowledge, how must they not err in those abstruse passages that are almost literal translations of a Bernard and an Aquinas? If this is done in the green wood, what must it not be in the dry wood?

* [NOTE.—On a scrap of paper Brother Azarias had written the subjoined passage as a further illustration of the weakness of Shadwell's translation.—J. H. M.]

Now is the hour when desire returns to those at sea, and the heart becomes tender what day they said good-bye to fond friends;

The hour that pricks the new-bound prilgrim with love, if he hears the vestry-bell from afar tolling the knell of the dying day.

The hour was come that on the sea
Softens the heart *with memory*,
The day on voyage sped
Farewell to friends was said;

Then, if he hear the distant bell,
That seems the dying day to knell,
Its sound hath power to move
The new-bound pilgrim's love.

The unity of design is broken in this version. You do not see what the poet is aiming at. He is at once reduced to the level of a second-rate versifier. Dante's sweet thoughts preparatory to the sweeter song that is to enrapture him, are all lost in this version.

X.

A relish for Dante and an appreciation of the beauty and grandeur of his noble poem form the high-water mark of culture. The human intellect has no more sublime truths to feed upon than those growing out of the underlying conceptions of the *Divina Commedia*. Language conveys no sweeter notes than those that Dante sings betimes. Words never reached the heart of a subject more readily than did his words. Human conception was never more clearly unrolled; human genius never soared into sublimer regions; human vision never saw more distinctly; human expression never portrayed the spiritual and the invisible in firmer lines. Well and aptly has the poem been called divine. Its influence is far-reaching. Dante has become an educator of Italy as Homer had become an educator of Greece. He has molded Italian literature, Italian thought, and Italian politics. Revolutionists have pored over his words, and have fancied that these words spoke to them in the accents of revolt. Men of law and order have made his pages their own, and have imbibed from them a deep and an abiding love of Italy in keeping with the fundamental principles of right and justice. Popes have honored his memory, and established chairs for the expounding of his poem. Pius IX. in 1857, placed a laurel wreath upon his bust. Leo XIII. has an unbounded admiration for the poet, and is said to know the *Divina Commedia* by heart. Last year, His Holiness,

in a Brief, commended the poem. Would that his enthusiasm were to overflow and fill the heart of every Catholic student!

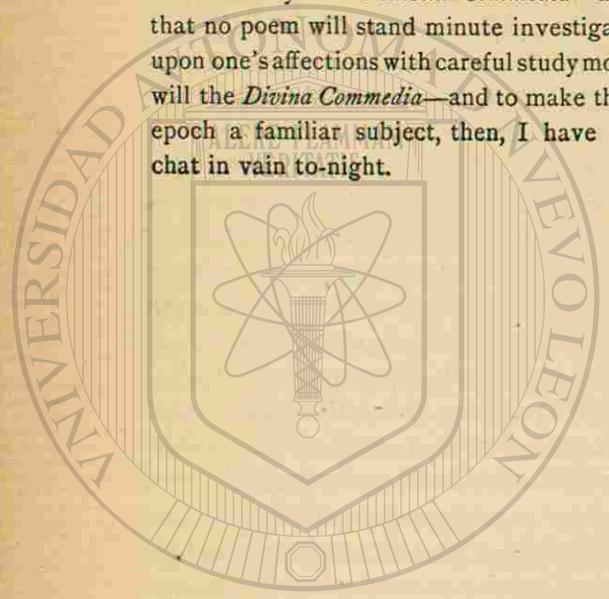
It is not to be forgotten that from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century the *Divina Commedia* was all but a sealed book to the generations that lived and read and wrote. It was so in Italy, as well as in France, Germany, and England. Only with the dawn of the present century did men awaken to the true grandeur of the cathedral of song that had been erected on the basis of philosophical truth and divine faith. We are told that over two hundred editions of Dante have appeared in this century. (Ferrazzi: *Manuale Dantesco* t. v., p. 700.) French criticism has been especially slow to understand the genius of Dante, for the reason that French criticism has not yet shaken off the thraldom of Voltaire's spirit. Now, Voltaire regarded the *Divina Commedia* as a bizarre work, sparkling indeed with natural beauties, but in which the author only occasionally rises above the bad taste of his time and of his subject; a work which will be hardly read, and which will therefore continue to be praised.[1] Chateaubriand rises no higher in his conception of the poem; indeed, he only repeats Voltaire. He speaks of "the bad taste of the author," and calls the poem a bizarre production—*une production bizarre*. He inspires the reader of his *Génie*

[1] Sa reputation s'affirmira toujours parce qu'on ne le lit guère. Dictionnaire Philosophique. Art. *Dante.*

du Christianisme with greater esteem and more enthusiasm for Milton than for Dante. Chateaubriand never understood the great Italian. Lamartine never understood him. He regarded him solely as "a personal and local poet." Lamennais never understood him. The introduction Lamennais placed before his translation of the *Purgatorio* is lamentable reading to the Catholic heart, and unworthy of the structure it would grace. Even Sainte-Beuve never understood Dante. He failed to grasp the intenseness of the spirit and genius that inspired the *Divina Commedia*. Consult the *Encyclopœdie Catholique* and you will find the Voltarian epithet *bizarre*. The first French critic strong enough and learned enough and broad enough to raise himself above Voltaire's estimate into a clear conception of Dante's greatness was Frederic Ozanam. That Dante now finds not merely admirers, but appreciative readers throughout Christendom, is an encouraging sign of the elevation of good taste and serious scholarship.

I would add one more remark. If I have succeeded in impressing you with a sense of the intense force of Dante's genius and the numerous difficulties that are to be overcome in order to appreciate his masterpiece; if, furthermore, I have taught you to become impatient of any man or woman who, upon a superficial reading of an imperfect translation of the great Florentine, will tell you there is nothing in him but obscure names and scholastic hair-splittings; and if, finally, I have nerved

a single person now listening to me, to undertake a careful study of the *Divina Commedia*—and let me add that no poem will stand minute investigation and grow upon one's affections with careful study more rapidly than will the *Divina Commedia*—and to make the poem and its epoch a familiar subject, then, I have not given this chat in vain to-night.



THE MOTIVE OF GEORGE ELIOT'S NOVELS.

BY BROTHER AZARIAS.

It is a matter comparatively easy of accomplishment to create a taste for reading. But to direct that taste in the right channels is a task delicate as it is difficult. What shall we read? What shall we not read? These are questions that can only be answered individually, and the answers are determined by environment, temperament, actual state of intellectual development and personal character. What were food to one mind may be poison to another. What were pleasant to one palate may be disagreeable to another. Now, in these days of promiscuous and desultory reading, there are few who do not read novels. Generally, each has his own favorite author. There are still to be found men possessing the heart and spirit of youth, who enjoy the Leather-stocking series of Cooper with all the relish of their boyhood fancy. There are others who with Ruskin never outgrow their love for the Waverley Novels. Others again never weary of finding pity in their hearts for Little Nell, and Paul Dombey, and Little Dorritt, and so many other pet characters in Dickens. And there are others still who find nothing in modern fiction to compare with Colonel Newcome and Major Pendennis

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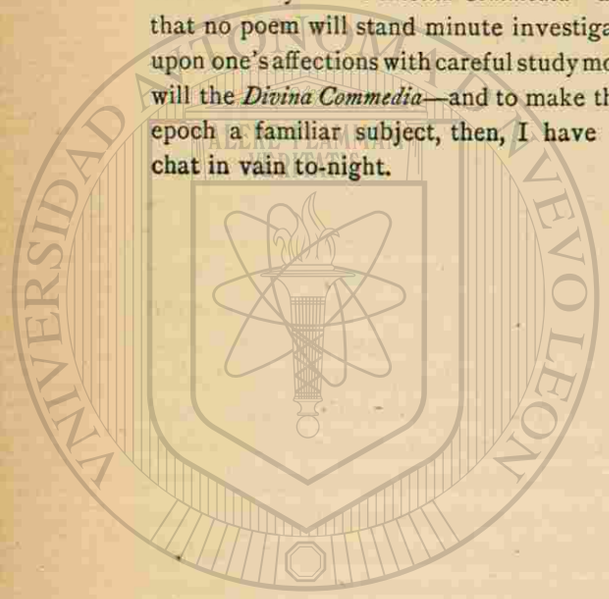

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and the other truly human creations of Thackeray. So also are there those who find a charm in George Eliot. Now as George Eliot is an author the whole of whose meaning and purpose it is difficult to understand, a few words upon her writings may not be amiss.

To begin with: There is much to admire in the novels of George Eliot. Her characters are many of them real, genuine beings of flesh and blood, and have become part of the literature of the English-speaking world. The Poysers and Adam Bede, and Dinah Morris, and Maggie Tulliver and her brother Tom, and Bob Jakin, and the aunts and uncles in the Tulliver family, and Silas Marner, and Dorothea and Casaubon, so grave in pretention, so silly in achievement, and poor Gwendolen and scoundrelly Grandcourt and enthusiastic Mordecai Cohen, and so many others, all take rank among our mental furniture, and their very sayings have become part of our thinking. No modern author has left us more epigrams to be remembered and repeated than has George Eliot. She is evidently a close observer of men and things. She has the creative imagination of genius. And though her portraits are drawn many of them from the life, still to such a degree has she recast them in the crucible of her own mind, and so deeply has she impressed upon them the stamp of her own creation, that she can afterwards tell us that none of her characters are purely personal or drawn immediately from portraits of her acquaintances.

But when we have spoken thus much in praise of George Eliot, we have exhausted our stock of commendation. Much remains to be said against her novels both as works of art and in regard to their moral tendency. Her most perfect piece of art as a pure creation of unconscious genius is Adam Bede. It is a book into which the author threw all that was bright and beautiful together with all that was tragic and terrible in her remembrance of the provincial life amid which her early years were rooted. She has here presented human nature pure and simple as Shakespeare might have presented it. She has held the mirror up to nature and sketched the ways and workings, the thoughts and aspirations of a provincial English community as it lived sixty years ago. It is a book abounding in humor and pathos and tragic power. The Mill on the Floss is in parts very beautiful, and in parts shows a wide range of sympathy, but as a work of art it has not the finish of Adam Bede. We seek in vain for a hint, an influence or a motive to prepare us for the catastrophe with which it terminates. Still it ranks with Adam Bede among her artistic works. These volumes, with the *Scenes of Clerical Life*, belong to the period when she reproduced her reminiscences without some ulterior object. In the books written thereafter you perceive that the author is growing more conscious and begins to feel the responsibility of a self-imposed mission. As her thoughts grew more subtle and her opinions more

scientific, her sentences became more complex. Henceforth novel after novel reveals more clearly this mission and degenerates accordingly as a work of art. Even in *Romola*, the historical romance is made subservient to a complicated character-study. And what is the mission that weighed down and burdened her genius?

George Eliot wrote with a purely anti-Christian purpose. She threw off the shackles of the Calvinism in which she had been brought up, and not knowing any better form of Christianity, concluded that she could find more truth in Positivism. She therefore adopted the tenets of Comte. Humanity is her only religion. But while formally casting off Christian belief, she still retains in her expression the forms of Christian dogmas. She speaks of religion and of religious life in a sense far different from that which is our accepted meaning. When Daniel Deronda declares to Gwendolen: "The refuge you are needing from personal trouble is the higher, the religious life, which holds an enthusiasm for something more than our own appetites and vanities,"—from the point of view of George Eliot, religious life means a far different thing from its meaning when regarded from the Christian's point of view. Religious life here means loyalty, not to God and conscience enlightened by God, but to humanity and the hereditary experience of altruism. She was a woman endowed with an intensely religious nature; but she was also as impulsive and passionate as her own Maggie Tulliver,

and she easily yielded to the un-Christian influences with which she had come in contact. And so, though we happen upon her with Newman's writings in her hands, still we do not find any trace of their impression. The poison of irreligion had penetrated her soul, and her thoughts ran in other grooves. In one of her letters she envies a friend who enjoyed the privilege of hearing the late Cardinal Newman preach at Birmingham, and expresses a desire to go and hear him. Had she done so, had she fallen under the spell of this great genius that enthralled so many noble intellects, what might not have been the result, and how different might not the verdict of criticism be upon her later works!

George Eliot read Newman because she read everything; she placed herself abreast of the world in what the world chooses to call "advanced thought," and she looked upon herself as the medium through which "advanced thought" should filter into the popular intelligence. The science that Darwin was discovering and that Herbert Spencer, and Huxley, and Tyndall, and Clifford were planning and propagating, she was attempting to weave into popular thought and make the motive-power of personal action and the main-spring of personal responsibility. A select circle of readers who had also abandoned the chart of Christian truth and were sailing upon the sea of speculation without compass and without rudder, read with avidity every novel she wrote, not as a work of art, but as a criticism

of life and a guide by which to sail through life's rocks and shoals. This circle regarded her as a species of seer possessing the secret of the application of the new science to life in all its phases, and beneath the printed page it sought the hidden meaning. She spared neither study, nor thought, nor health, nor pains to satisfy her friends and admirers. She avowedly eschewed Christianity as a formative influence from her later novels, beginning with *Silas Marner*. Writing of that book, she said: "It sets—or is intended to set—in a strong light the remedial influences of pure, natural human relations." She ignored the remedial influence of the supernatural order. For her there was no world of grace. Virtue and vice were simply the outcome of temperament and environment. The good or the bad in a man was the inheritance he derived from his ancestors like the cast of his features or his physical stature. Man was what heredity and his surroundings made him —a creature of necessity—working out the behests of nature whether he will or no to a life of misery or happiness. No free will, no God, no soul, no supernatural life. "The will of God," she tells us in the Spanish Gypsy, "is the same thing as the will of other men, compelling us to work and avoid what they have seen to be harmful to social existence." These are the postulates upon which George Eliot wrote her later novels. These constitute their underlying principles.

So far as she built upon these principles was she

building upon a foundation of sand. Hence her partial failure. Fortunately for literature, her art has more force than her science. She never could, as did George Sand, make her genius wholly subservient to the full requirements of her speculations. She is not infrequently lifted above speculation, above prejudice, above pet theories, into the purely human atmosphere of the life she depicts. There do her characters invariably reap as they have sown. There we perceive no confounding of right with wrong; there are not infrequently present a deep religious sense and a high spiritual ideal. There do we find souls struggling towards the light and attaining calm and peace only after making sacrifices that sunder their very heart-strings. Law and custom and tradition are respected. "If the past does not bind us," says Maggie to Stephen Guest in a memorable scene, "where can duty lie? We should have no law but the inclination of the moment." But it is important that we do not mistake the motives. This self renunciation is not the Christian's. The language is indeed the language of Christianity from the beginning, but the underlying meaning is far different. George Eliot does not look beyond this life for reward or punishment. The only law she recognizes is that which humanity imposes. That which her conscience tells her to be right, has no other sanction than what the experiences of the past recall to her as a promotive of the greater good of the greater number. So insidi-

ously is the doctrine inculcated, that its full import es capes thousands.

But let us not be deceived. There is here only the semblance of a new gospel. The men and women who make sacrifices and renounce self and seek the higher spiritual life, do so through other than the altruistic motives George Eliot would inculcate. Positivism is merely a cold and lifeless aping of Catholicity. When Comte's greatest and most brilliant disciple experienced the craving for real spiritual food, he sought it in the Catholic Church, and the noble soul of Littré was replenished at the fountain of life. Nor has Darwinism any principle of spiritual growth. Any theory of living based upon it is sure to fail. Indeed, whatever assumes to do without God cannot but fail. Men may pretend to get along without Him, but He is none the less present. In the refrain of innocent and light-hearted Pippa,

> "God's in His heaven—
> All's right with the world."

In Him we live, move and are; without Him we are nothing.

Standing outside the life she depicts, when discussing religion and morals which are lived and acted out on the old Christian lines, George Eliot must needs make every novel a life-problem to be solved according to the factors her own new science has introduced. In *Middlemarch*, for instance, she undertakes to show us a Saint Theresa, born out of her due time, with noble and generous aspirations, yearning to take a hand in some great work, on the lookout for some hero to worship, only to find illusions of life pass from under her touch, and her idols vanish, and her aspirations end in her becoming the wife of Will Ladislaw. "Many Theresas have been born," says the author, "who found for themselves no epic life wherein there was a constant unfolding of far resonant action; perhaps only a life of mistakes, the offspring of a certain spiritual grandeur ill-matched with the measures of opportunity." This is altogether an outside aspect of things. It is to be feared that George Eliot never grasped the first conception of a Saint Theresa; that she never learned the a-b-c of true spiritual life, and that her whole scheme of spiritual growth and development is based upon false assumption. In the Catholic Church a Saint Theresa can always find her true place.

Regarding her works as so many life-problems we conclude that her solutions are true or false—and some are correct and some are erroneous—not on account of the Positivist elements that she has introduced into them as factors, but rather on account of the fact that her characters work out and live through their careers with more or less probability on the Christian basis of society and in obedience to Christian principles and a Christian criterion of conduct. But the factors that George Eliot introduced were of a scientific nature, and while these interested certain readers of her day and generation,

they have ceased to absorb the attention of readers of the present time. Scientific issues are now merged in social questions, and unlike Madame Dudevant, George Eliot had never proper grasp of the great social questions. Critics look upon her *Felix Holt* as a comparative failure. She has ceased to be regarded as the Cassandra of "advanced thought." Indeed, they are satisfied that the search is not worth the candle. And so Geoge Eliot is gradually sinking in critical estimation to her due proportions as a literary artist and a contributor to the permanent in literature. What these proportions will ultimately become we can better tell in another decade. Then the literature of views and of scientific distortions—the literature based upon mere temporary opinions—may be wholly separated from the literature that reflects human nature as it is. And the literature that embodies human nature in proper artistic form is the only literature that will live as long as human nature itself.

George Eliot, then, is to be recommended to young people with great reserve, and to be read with extreme caution. If hundreds who have read her works have arisen from their perusal unharmed, it is because they only skimmed the surface and were unconscious of the poison beneath, or they projected into the souls of her characters the Christian motives and principles that formed part of their own existence. But, let it not be forgotten that George Eliot, who translated Renan's

Life of Jesus, was a bitter enemy of Christianity, and with all the intensity of her soul and all the power of her great genius she strove to undermine the Christian principles in the hearts and minds of her incautious readers. Her *Daniel Deronda*, for instance, is not simply a contribution to the solution of the Jewish problem now facing Europe; it is also an effort to raise up the Jew at the expense of the Christian. Gwendolen is a spoiled child of society, her better nature overlaid with many layers of selfishness; Grandcourt is a polished English gentleman, observant indeed of the proprieties, but one of the most cold-blooded and intensely egotistic characters ever conceived; to both of these in contrast with the spiritual natures of Deronda, and Mirah, and Mordecai, the author seems to point the finger of scorn and say: "See what mortals these Christians be!" Both types are real, but they do not exhaust the whole range, whether of Christian or of Jewish character. The tables might be turned. Though a powerful book, *Daniel Deronda* is to this extent a dangerous book. The ghost of David Hume flits across its pages.

KATHLEEN O'MEARA.

I.

"Kathleen O'Meara has gone to her reward." In these words did a Parisian friend announce to us the death of this gifted writer. Great indeed must that reward be when measured by the blameless life and ardent devotion to religion and truth that endeared her to all who knew her. Though living in the world, Kathleen O'Meara was not of the world. The Comte de Richemont, an intimate friend of the family, who knew her well and admired her every quality of head and heart, writes us, and it is with his permission that we quote the words: "She was above all, unworldly.... She loved the visible light, but another light was present and mingled its rays therewith.... She gathered flowers as she passed along, and enjoyed them; but she was careful not to yield to the temptation of seating herself amongst them, as though they were the shade beneath which to find repose." She looked above and beyond things of earth for the guiding star of her actions. It was only in conversation with her that one soon learned how intensely religious was her nature. Still, her piety was without ostentation. Her ideals of living and doing were of the highest character, and could have been drawn only from

the inspirations that came of long and fervent prayer, frequent meditation upon the saints and heroes of the Church, and, above all, of intimate communion with Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament.

On the occasion of her visit to Rome in 1887, an American prelate asked her what her pen was then engaged upon, and she playfully replied: "Writing novels for the good of my soul." So it was with everything she did; she always sought her own spiritual advancement. The great desire of her life seemed to be that in all things she should do God's behest. She envied religious persons the obedience that always made known to them the divine will. In striving to obey that will, she dreaded to put from her any work that came to her hand unsought. Hence the variety of subjects upon which her pen was employed. Whether that fertile pen evoked shadowy beings of fiction, or limned the features of a modern saint, or recorded the varying shades of Parisian society, her motives were always the best; she ever kept uppermost the glory of God and the honor of the Church.

One who knew her intimately writes: "She had a keen sense to resent any insult to God; it touched her like a personal wrong." The sympathy that went up to God, was also extended to her neighbor. The same loving pen writes: "She opened her heart wide to every form of pain and sorrow." No surprise is it that Cardinal Manning should write to her bereaved sister:

"I had hoped for many years of that bright and holy life, which has taught so many the true way of charity to God and His poor." We all had hoped as much. Better is it as it is. Kathleen O'Meara has gone to her reward!

II.

We will not here enter into a detailed account of her writings. They are known wherever the English language is read. She began writing about 1867 over the pen name of Grace Ramsay. Her literary labors were not at first crowned with the success that followed her later efforts. The remembrance of her early struggles and failures made her ever ready to extend to beginners on the same course the sympathy and the helping-hand that are then so frequently needed and so rarely given. Throughout her novels—"Mabel Stanhope," "Iza's Story," "Diane Coryval," "The Old House in Picardy," "Narka,"—there dwells a wholesome spirit. There is always a truth to be illustrated or a lesson to be given, but it is done in the same unobtrusive manner that characterized her every act.

We take up "Narka," for instance. It is a story of Russian life. Of its origin she thus writes to a friend: "I once knew intimately in Paris two Polish refugees, and their wrongs kindled a flame in my heart which burned itself out in 'Narka.'" The Nihilist plottings on which the story turns remind us of William Black's "Sunrise." But whilst William Black, with the magic

wand of his descriptive power, throws a glamour over the doings of the Nihilists, and weaves a halo of goodness around the sweet, strong nature of his heroine, Kathleen O'Meara, in a terser and by far a more truthful manner makes the presence of Narka light up and reveal the unscrupulous character of other actors in that dread association. And after William Black has pictured scenes and incidents in the vividness of his own peculiar coloring, he leaves the problem of human suffering where it was—as great, as helpless, and as hopeless a mystery as ever. Not so Kathleen O'Meara. She grapples with the problem and attempts a solution. It is the solution of Christian charity. Narka's father and brother have been the victims of the petty tyrannies perpetrated throughout the provinces of Russia in the name of the Czar. She is in favor of revolution.

"'If you ever make a revolution in Russia,' said Marguerite, 'let it be a revolution of love, not of hate.'

"Narka laughed. 'And burst our chains by kissing them!'

"'There is nothing that love might not do if people would only believe in it,' said Marguerite; 'if only they would let it rule the world instead of hatred. If they would let it have its way, like the blessed sunshine, it would turn this world into a paradise.'" *

It is the soul of Kathleen O'Meara that speaks in these

* "Narka," Vol I., p. 50. The story first appeared in a serial in Harper's Magazine.

words of Marguerite. She afterwards shapes the life of this same Marguerite upon the conviction uttered, and pictures her wielding untold influence in the lowest quarters of Paris as a Sister of Charity, even as did her prototype, Sister Rosalie. And when Sister Marguerite takes the larger views of life and poverty and suffering, it is the soul of the author that is going out to God's poor.

"'I wish I could think the poor were grateful to you!' said Narka.

"'Who says they are not grateful?' demanded Marguerite, quickly.

"'It seems to me everybody says it; it is the constant complaint of all the good people who work for the poor that they get no return.'

"'What nonsense! I wonder what sort of return they expect? If they gave love, the poor would give them love back; but they only give alms, and I don't suppose they expect the poor to give them back alms.'" *

Again it is the soul of Kathleen O'Meara that pleads through Sister Marguerite for the poor dinnerless laborer that is driven to revolt by the pangs of hunger. "It is hunger that sends the *ouvrier* down into the street. He is not wicked; he is a good fellow if you give him bread enough; but he goes mad on an empty stomach, and that hunger-madness is the worst of all." †

* Ibid., Vol. II., p. 42.

† Ibid., Vol. II., p. 245. Cf. "Life of Frederic Ozanam," pp. 321-336.

So we might run through all her novels, and disentangle the large-hearted sympathy with poverty and suffering that is woven into them out of the writer's soul; but we must not tarry. She has achieved even greater success in other fields.

Her "Madame Mohl" [1] is a remarkable book, crisp and bright as the subject. There is not a dull page in the volume. It introduces us into that unique institution that has never been able to flourish elsewhere, the Parisian *salon*, and brings us in contact with men and women who are still in the flesh, and leaders of the social, literary, or political world. It paints for us in clearest colors a worldly woman, odd to the straining point of oddity, living for the world, her pulse throbbing to no higher motive than that of pleasing the world, yet deserted in her old age by the world; withal a good-hearted and true woman, exemplary as daughter, as wife, and as hostess. It unravels with skill the oddities, the likes and dislikes, the whole puzzle of this "short-skirted, witch-like woman," with her round blue eyes "wide open in a perpetual sparkle of curiosity," her whole bearing expressing "energy, vivacity, and happiness. And," adds the author, "what a charm there is in the mere sight of a happy human face amidst the suffering, discontented ones that meet us on all sides!" [2]

Here again it is the soul of Kathleen O'Meara that

[1] First published in the Atlantic Monthly.

[2] Madame Mohl: "Her Salon and her Friends," p. 182.

speaks. Her large-hearted charity loves to bask in the sunny side of all things.

A more delicate task still was her "Life of Thomas Grant," first Bishop of Southwark. It tells succinctly and well the story of the restoration of the Catholic hierarchy in England. In preparing it she had the advice of Cardinal Manning and the guidance of the venerable Archbishop Ullathorne. Those conversant with the stormy period through which Dr. Grant lived, the delicate nature of issues then raised, the unique character of that saintly but much ill-understood man, can best appreciate the prudence and tact with which Kathleen O'Meara handled the whole subject, and produced a biography that has won the admiration of competent judges.

But the work in which her genius for biography shows to best advantage is "Frederic Ozanam: His Life and Works." The second London edition, now before us, has been found worthy of a long and valuable introduction from the pen of Cardinal Manning, to what His Eminence calls "this deeply interesting narrative." With great firmness of grasp, the author handles the salient events of the day, and groups around Ozanam all the leading characters of that most interesting period of French history—interesting above all to the Catholic student,—and follows her hero through the whirl and turmoil of Paris, and notes amid the seething of thought that was then going on in all active brains the self-possessed student through "eighteen years of great in-

tellectual and spiritual intensity,"[1] strong, energetic, earnest, carving his way to eminence, and inspiring youthful souls with his own chivalric impulses. Faithfully she traces his footsteps as, weak in body, he wanders through many lands in search of the health that was ebbing fast away from him; but, well or ill, always returning weighted down with erudition gathered from musty tomes hidden away in the recesses of dust-laden libraries,—now picking up legends in Catholic Brittany; now culling flowers of sweetest poesy and song in the garden of St. Francis of Assisi; now imbibing inspiration in the land of the Cid; now following the slow and solemn tread of the great Dante, delving into that inexhaustible mine of high thought, the *Divina Commedia*, —glad always and above all things when he could establish a branch of his dear Confraternity of St. Vincent de Paul. It is all told with an indescribable charm.

It is noteworthy how well Miss O'Meara had mastered Ozanam's most philosophical writings and condensed them in a few pages. M. le Comte de Richemont throws a side-light upon the working of her mind in this regard. He writes: "Her mind was admirably endowed. We frequently discussed questions the most philosophical and abstract in connection with the work she would have on hand; she took them in at a glance and assimilated them with a rare facility." He further on notices the humility with which she would receive

[1] Cardinal Manning, Preface, p. 96.

information or the correction of any misconceptions.

Had Kathleen O'Meara left no other work from her pen than this biography she would well deserve the gratitude of Catholics. If we were asked what book we would recommend to be placed in the hands of young men in order to quicken their sympathies in behalf of misery and suffering, and aid the good that is in them to bloom out and bear fruit, we should name, without fear of demur or contradiction, Kathleen O'Meara's "Frederic Ozanam." It is a story of great talent utilized and bearing compound interest; an illustration of great opportunities created and seized upon and used to advantage; a revelation of sweet and charming domestic virtues. In Ozanam we behold the man of the world whose pulse beats in sympathy with all the literary, political, and social movements of the day; the ripe scholar, the unwearied student, and the beautiful, saintly soul. The book is strong enough to mark an epoch in the life of any thoughtful Catholic young man.[1]

We leave untouched many other works from the pen of Kathleen O'Meara, such as her charming sketches of Père Lacordaire, Sister Rosalie, and Madame Swetchine.[2] Last summer, while resting in Switzerland, she finished another of this series—a sketch of the Curé of Ars—which appeared in the "*Ave Maria.*" Other

[1] There is an American edition of this work published by the Catholic Publication Society Co.

[2] The first two of these, also sketches of Père Beson and Mgr. de Ségur, were written for the "Ave Maria."

literary plans and projects she had. Last year, while translating Armand Ravelet's beautiful "Life of Blessed de la Salle," she conceived so much love and admiration for a soul that achieved such great things amid sufferings and persecutions which ceased only with his last breath, that she proposed writing a popular life of the saint, and upon this she was working when she dropped her pen in death. The present writer looked forward to seeing a master-piece from her pen, and into this slight tribute to her worth he would weave the regret that her noble intention remained unachieved before she had gone to her reward.

III.

Born in 1839, Kathleen O'Meara was in her forty-ninth year when she died of pneumonia, November 10, 1888. Her passing away has left a void in the social world as well as in the world of letters. She was well known and highly esteemed by some of the most distinguished men and women in France and England. We have before us beautiful letters from a few of those friends; they are all couched in the same terms. They might all be summed up in the words of one who knew her well and intimately: "To the many who admired her she will ever be a gracious memory; but to those who knew her and loved her, a life-long regret."[1]

To the venerable Archbishop Ullathorne she looked

[1] L. M. W.—Mrs. Wheelwright, in the Boston Post, Nov. 27.

up with all the affection and esteem of a daughter for a father. To him she appealed in every sorrow and anxiety that might be hers. The writer remembers the glow of enthusiasm with which she spoke of this learned prelate when showing his picture, which held a place of honor in her room, as he himself did in her heart. In return the venerable Archbishop entertained for her the tenderest regard. Her letters were to him a source of delight. "There were no letters I received with more delight than your sister's. She was to me like one of my own dear spiritual children. All around me in this house there is but one feeling of regret for her." So writes this prelate to the bereaved sister of Kathleen O'Meara.

December 14, 1887, came to her the great sorrow of her life. Her mother died. How intensely devoted she was to that mother it were difficult to describe. "All her labors," writes an intimate friend already quoted, "all her successes, she referred after God, to her mother. How often, in the bosom of the family, when she returned from a walk, would she kneel by her mother and kiss her hand, as she used to do when a child." The depth of her affection may be measured by the following glimpse from her journal, with which, through the kindness of her sister, we have been favored:

"Many and many a time I reminded myself that the day would come when she would not be there to bless me, and I tried to picture my living on without her, but

it seemed impossible. She was so completely the life of my life that it seemed as if mine must come to an end with hers—as if my heart could never keep on beating when hers had stopped. She lay within my life as the heart lies within the body, and in going away she seems to have lacerated me as when the flesh or a limb is torn or cut out from the body. And yet I know that it is well with her, and I bid my heart rejoice for her and with her all the day long. We can praise God on broken hearts. The agony of our poor broken hearts makes no discord in His."

The silent, pent-up grief kept gnawing at her heart, and undermined her constitution. The writer remembers a conversation in which, speaking of the ease with which some persons forget the death of relatives, she expressed herself with great feeling upon her own cherished sorrow for her departed mother. "For my part," she said, "as time goes on I only feel more keenly the death of my dear mother, and I cannot imagine the time when I could look back upon it with cold indifference." Tears stood in her eyes, and her voice failed when she spoke these words. This is the love that is stronger than death. We are not surprised that her bereaved sister should write: "The last year of her life was a struggle to live after the loss of our mother; and at last her frame, weakened by grief, sank in a few days from pneumonia."

Her death was worthy of her life. The same sorrow-

ing pen has thus described it: "Her death was most beautiful. No agony, no sign to say all was over. She received Holy Communion and Extreme Unction. She was conscious almost to the last. She said to me two days before her death: 'God's will be done. He knows what is best, and if I am to be taken from you--' when she stopped, and I said as firmly as I could: 'Yes, darling, this will be best; you accept it, and I accept it."' It was in this resigned spirit that she passed out of the smoke and fumes of earthly fame into the white light of God's holiness. One can linger over such a death-bed, and feel one's faith grow all the stronger for it. Kathleen O'Meara has passed away, but the world is all the better for her having lived and labored. Kathleen O'Meara has gone to her reward!

MR. AUGUSTINE BIRRELL AND CRITICISM.

I.

Mr. Augustine Birrell is always lively, chatty, interesting, when he writes about books and authors. His two volumes of *Obiter Dicta* have had quite a run, and have delighted their readers. His latest work, *Res Judicatæ*, bids fair to be no less popular. His is a healthy mind with excellent digestive power, and a keen relish for wholesome literature. It is a scholarly and a trained mind. It is a broad mind. Mr. Birrell revels in the untrammelled, outspoken, bigoted and hard-hitting pages of eccentric George Borrow, and at the same time appreciates to the full the classic flow of Newman's graceful prose, the color and glow of it, the humor of it, the pathos of it, and the fascination that hovers over all the writings of the great Cardinal. Borrow, Mr. Birrell understands —he is a born Borrovian; he tells us 'men are born Borrovians, not made'—his falsehoods, inconsistencies, his brag, his naturalness; but while his sympathy with Newman is deep and reverent, he has missed the meaning of Newman's writings. They form part of Newman's life and are one and inseparable with it. It is asking much of the ordinary critic that he should grasp

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and analyze the soul that lurks beneath the printed page of every great book. The most expressive author only reveals faint glimmerings of the light that glows within him. Human nature is too complex, human action too involved, human thought too open to various influences from within and from without, to find complete expression in words however full, or in art however finished. Therefore the best criticism is likely to be narrow, rigid, and inadequate.

Mr. Birrell does not attempt the higher constructive criticism. He does not go deeper than the purely literary qualities of an author. He does not seek the central thought that gives meaning to the book; he is content to impart to you the flavor and bouquet of its style. Herein Mr. Birrell follows the method of nearly all modern English criticism, from that of Matthew Arnold down to the estimates of Mr. Walter Pater and Mr. W. E. Henley. That criticism is of the surface. It deals chiefly with style; occasionally it examines method. It tears from the context a specimen of wit or humor, or of polished construction. What are the chief aim and purport of the book, its underlying idea, its definite place in the literature of the subject, its relative value? —these are questions unasked and unanswered by modern English criticism. In consequence the reader of such criticism is in no better position to understand the book or the author. Take up one of Sainte-Beuve's critical essays. Many of them are ideals of criticism.

You are given not only a conception of an author's style and method, but you are initiated into the very mainspring of his action; those traits of character, those mental peculiarities, those historical incidents that colored the author's views, are all made to bear on the book under review; an anecdote is told, a comment is made, a gloss is supplied; your interest is awakened, and you read the book with additional pleasure and profit. Henceforth the author has a definite place in your mental furniture.

No author can be taken out of his mental environment. Even a Shakespeare and a Goethe have their local coloring. An author's very form of expression is ruled by his times. His very thoughts are influenced by his contemporaries. These are principles of criticism that underlie much of Sainte-Beuve's work. Taine attempted to apply them, but sadly failed. Mr. Augustine Birrell has no such pretension, and it were unfair to judge him by a standard at which he did not aim. Matthew Arnold endeavored to be an English Sainte-Beuve. He wrote poetry that is superior to Sainte-Beuve's finest verses; in criticism he fell far below his French model. Mr. Birrell tells us: "a perfectly safe critic Mr. Arnold hardly was. Even in this volume he fusses too much about the De Guérins. To some later judgments of his it would be unkind to refer." Mr. Arnold after the fashion of George Sand and Sainte-Beuve did fuss too much over the reliques of Maurice

de Guérin, a young man with more ambition than brain. His verses are without inspiration and scarcely clever. His prose fragments are poor stuff. George Sand praised them because she regarded their author as one of her circle. Sainte-Beuve spoke kindly of Maurice to please his friend Mr. Trebutien. Mr. Arnold was then a very young man, and caught up the echoes of these writers, and raved over the specimens that they commended. The *Journal* of Maurice de Guérin reveals a morbid soul wrestling with a diseased body. Not so the *Journal* of his sister Eugénie. While Maurice was in the toils of Lammenais' genius, a wren suffocating beneath an eagle's wing, Eugénie was thinking of him, dreaming of him, praying for him, living for him, and pouring out to him all the love of one of the most beautiful souls that have ever been unveiled to the gaze of humanity. Open the pages of her journal at random. The reading of almost any paragraph is refreshing. You are inhaling the cool air of a bright summer morning, and the flowers are blooming, and the trees are a-blossom, and the birds are singing, and the breeze from the upland, laden with the fragrance of flower and blossom, bathes your brow. Whether she descants upon the varying scenes of the nature she loves so well, or upon the last volume of Walter Scott that she has been reading, or upon the feast-day that she has been celebrating, or upon the beautiful religious sentiments that fill her whole being, or upon the home

and family affairs, you always read behind the page the same calm, delicate, noble soul, so forgetful of self, so devoted to others, so happy in doing good, so content within the narrow sphere of her daily life. Her whole anxiety is for her dear Maurice. From time to time a sob goes out from the page; unconsciously it thrills her fingers as she writes the loving words; and there is that single cry from her heart of hearts giving meaning to the whole volume: ''Tis your soul, Maurice, your soul that I love!' How can we find words to express the loving tenderness of this sister for her wayward brother?—Too much may have been said about Maurice de Guérin; one cannot be too enthusiastic over his sister Eugénie. Contrast her *Journal* with that of Marie Bashkirtseff. The latter even in its fragmentary, shape, with its more unsightly revelations covered over, is a mirror reflecting a soul selfish, ambitious, nervous, restless, and unsettled, dissatisfied with life, hungering and thirsting after the love, the honors, and the fame that this world is supposed to give—a soul devouring itself in its hysterical moods—a soul dying with its yearnings unsatisfied, its aspirations unfulfilled, and passing away enshrouded in the gloom of despondency and agnosticism. Eugénie also had her hours of weariness and discouragement; she had her ambitions; hers was the soul of an artist fluttering against the bars of limitations; she had her disappointments and heart-burnings; but see how calmly and beautifully she bore

with all, and contemplate the lovely garden of virtues that blossomed in her soul beneath the dews of heavenly grace.

II.

So much concerning Matthew Arnold and the De Guérins. From what has been already said it may be inferred that criticism has its moods and its theories, and not infrequently is it led by fads. It were a delicate and a difficult task to discount all the prejudices that influence a critic in forming an estimate. Allowance is to be made for degrees of culture and the prejudices of race, religion, politics, literary taste, that are likely to color an opinion. These are among the Idols against which Bacon warns us. Mr. Birrell recognizes all this and tells us, "Most critics are such savages—or if they are not savages, they are full of fantasies, and capable at any moment of calling *Tom Jones* dull, or Sydney Smith a bore." Of course, neither Mr. Arnold nor Mr. Birrell is capable of such a blunder. Charles Lamb had a critical instinct that rarely if ever erred in matters purely literary. To a knowledge of history, or philosophy, or science, he had no pretension. This fact remembered we can accept Mr. Birrell's verdict: "The most striking note of Lamb's literary criticism is its veracity. He is perhaps never mistaken. His judgments are apt to be somewhat too colored with his own idiosyncrasy to be what the judicious persons of the

period call final and classical, but when did he ever go utterly wrong either in praise or in dispraise? When did he like a book which was not a good book? When did either the glamour of antiquity or the glare of novelty lead him astray? How free he was from that silly chatter about books now so abundant! When did he ever pronounce wiredrawn twaddle or sickly fancies, simply reeking of their impending dissolution, to be enduring and noble workmanship?" In this verdict are included many useful hints as to what constitutes true criticism.

Be it remembered that the book which may be comparatively harmless for a cultured class of readers, who are familiar enough with the substance and look rather to the form, may work great injury among half-educated people who possess little or no discrimination, and who accept all printed matter in sober earnestness. This latter class have no intellectual perspective. They are not prepared to allow for time, place, and circumstance. They take a distorted view of things. The important is cast into the background, and the trivial assumes gigantic proportions. Here are elements not to be ignored in true criticism. The Vicomte de Vogüé in a review of Zola's recent novel of the Franco-Prussian war —*La Débâcle*—alluding to the demoralizing effects of such a book among the French soldiers on account of the total absence of an ideal, and the wholly depressing character of the book, makes this distinction: "Everybody knows," says this admirer of Tolstoï, "that there are

two modes of reading, which have nothing in common. For us, dilettanti, reading is only a search after success in art; we say: 'This detail is exact and to the point; that other is cleverly imagined; the whole is capitally done.' For the simple everything printed has the force of the catechism and the almanac; it is a categorical imperative." All constitutions cannot thrive on the same kind of food. Food impregnated with deadly poison or the germs of disease can scarcely be wholesome for any constitution. What is true of the nutrition of the body is equally applicable to the nutrition of the soul. In a healthy personality mind-culture is not made a thing apart from soul culture.

Evident as these principles seem, it is strange how differently they are applied. Here is Aubrey de Vere finding in Spenser's *Faërie Queene* the most perfect ideal in poetry and philosophy; while about ten years ago Mr. Thomas Arnold in *The Dublin Review*, condemned the work as unfit to be placed in students' hands on account of its sensuous descriptions, and the anti-Catholic prejudices with which the poem is saturated. Which is right? Each is right from his point of view. In Spenser there were two distinct personalities: one was the servile courtier subscribing heartily to all of Queen Elizabeth's whims and fancies, hating what she hated and approving what she approved; the other was the inspired poet with a clear vision of eternal truth and noble ideals steeped in heavenly beauty.

It is in commenting upon contemporary books and authors that the critic is in greatest danger of being misled. Public demand is no criterion of merit. Books of a high literary character; books appealing chiefly to readers of thought, must needs be limited in their circulation. Any printed matter that touches the popular fancy or caters to depraved tastes, is sure to have a wide circle of readers. Now, the critic, as well as the ordinary reader, may be carried away by that element giving the book its temporary popularity, and may in consequence praise it far beyond its deserts. Living in the same intellectual atmosphere with the author, thinking more or less under the same dominant set of opinions, it is not an easy task for the critic to dissociate himself from time and season, and distinguish between the perishable and imperishable ingredients that enter into the composition of the book under review. We have heard Mr. Birrell tell us that it would be unkind to refer to some later judgments of Matthew Arnold's. We have the same authority assuring us that "Sainte-Beuve was certainly happier snuffing the 'parfums du passé' than when ranging among the celebrities of his own day." If this be true of the French luminary and his revolving planet, how much more applicable is it not to the critical stars of lesser magnitude? How misleading may not the puffings of a mutual admiration society of authors become? Or mayhap it is a coterie of critics who have combined to write down a certain au-

thor, damning his noblest efforts with faint praise. Temporary injury may be done the author, but the spite and the malice aforethought that dictated such criticism ultimately become unmasked; the genuine literary work survives the little jealousies, and shines all the brighter for having passed through the crucible. The severe attacks made upon Keats have not dimmed the lustre of his genius. Jeffreys prophesied that Wordsworth's *Excursion* would never do. Somehow *The Excursion* is doing nicely, and the genius of Wordsworth is looming up with the progress of time in more magnificent proportions, Jeffreys' prediction to the contrary notwithstanding. There was no gall in Jeffreys' pen as there was in that of Gifford or Lockhart. It was intellectual purblindness that prevented him from seeing the real greatness of Wordsworth. Sometimes a coterie indulges in the practise known as log-rolling; that is, it endeavors to create a favorable opinion for the writings of a friend. The recent quarrel between Mr. Churton Collins and Mr. Edmund Gosse revealed a great deal of log-rolling in England. You can seldom be sure of critical judgments of a book in the British monthlies and quarterlies. Their unanimity may be the result of concerted action on the part of a few friends who are manufacturing opinion in favor of the author. Tennyson at first sprung into notoriety by means of the log-rolling process; but in this case the friends who wrote him up showed their discernment of

true poetic work. His genius was too great and too well balanced to be spoiled by praise. He continued to delve and study and practice, always profiting by the censures of a Coleridge, and even of a crusty, fusty Christopher North, until he rose to his more recent giant-like dimensions.

III.

Speaking of log-rolling, is a reminder that there are shoals from which our Catholic critics have not always steered clear. A Catholic author writes a mediocre book, be it of fiction, or poetry, or history, or biography, or travel—or perhaps it is a spiritual or doctrinal treatise—and our Catholic papers as a rule feel obliged to encourage the book. Are they justified in doing so? Let us see. The secular press leaves the mediocre Catholic author out in the cold. It ignores his book. From the secular press he need expect no recognition. If his own pounce upon him for rushing into print, his is a sad plight. Of course, he may deserve to be beaten with rods, especially if, as sometimes happens, his inferior book blocks the way for something really worthy of the subject. Hitherto, since Shakespeare's time, the amount of Catholic literature produced in the English language has been limited in scope and quantity. Now, any book from a Catholic pen, containing wholesome thoughts, be it ever so mediocre, is beneficial. It is good to spread such a book. So have

thought our Catholic critics, and accordingly they have dealt lightly with the harmless book. But as Catholic literature increases in variety and extent, our critics can become more discriminating. It is not necessary to establish two weights and two measures of criticism for our Catholic authors. Recommendation is one thing, laudation is quite another thing. Catholic reviewers must plead guilty to the impeachment of having been in the past too laudatory of inferior literary work.

The varying fortunes of some Catholic books would make an interesting chapter in the history of English literature. Catholics have been not infrequently apathetic towards Catholic books of merit, even while their non-Catholic neighbors showed full appreciation of them. It was not a Catholic publisher who first issued an American edition of Cardinal Wiseman's great work on the *Connection Between Science and Religion;* that book was first printed in this country by the faculty of Andover College for the benefit of the students. The most searching study of *Hamlet* ever made on this continent was made by the Catholic poet, George H. Miles. The criticism first appeared in two consecutive numbers of the *Southern Review* when it was under the editorship of the late Albert Taylor Bledsoe. There is a noble piece of Shakespearian criticism buried out of sight simply because it is not better known. The other works of the same author are no less neglected. Nor is he alone. It took a Ruskin to discover the merits of *The*

Angel of the House, by Coventry Patmore; how many Catholic readers appreciate the poem? Catholics—reading Catholics with no slight pretensions to culture—have been known to question whether Aubrey de Vere was really a poet or only a pretentious verse-maker. The reply made to such was: Ask Longfellow, ask the critics of the London *Athenæum* the measure of Aubrey de Vere's greatness as a poet. The sanction of *The Dublin Review* had no weight with these people, but a non-Catholic approval quieted their doubts. So the story runs. We are the last to appreciate our own. Take up the old catalogues of books published by Richardson of Derby, Dolman of London, and Dunigan of New York, and note the number of Catholic books well worth preserving, which died out of sight with the break-up of these houses. Remembering the past, it must be admitted that in the cultivation of a taste for Catholic literature, and in the patronage of Catholic books, there is room for improvement. It is, if you will, an encouraging sign to see Kenelm Digby's monumental work, *Mores Catholici*, published and bought. But let us not forget that half a century before the chivalric and enterprising Mr. P. O'Shea issued his noble edition, an edition was printed and bought and read in Cincinnati. Still, it is something that in our eagerness to be informed concerning the latest literary fads and fashions, from Esoteric Buddhism to the studies of human morbidness of a Mallock or a Thomas

Hardy, we do not let slip from our grasp all that is best and noblest among our Catholic authors. It is well that they have not all passed into oblivion.

Our range and scope of Catholic literature are now sufficiently large for our critics to recommend nothing but the best. Our magazines and reviews should be up to the top notch of excellence. If, after a fair trial, any among them cannot reach that position—if there is no definite reason for their existence—then, why should mercy be shown them? They only block the way for something better. The namby-pamby and the goody-goody have no place in modern thought. Our journals are not under obligation to make their pages receptacles of school-boy essays and school-girl romancings. The waste-paper basket is the proper place for such articles. Young writers, be they young in years or be they young in the use of the pen, should put in a long and severe apprenticeship before appearing in print. What Pierre Loti has recently said of the higher forms of literary art applies here with equal force: "I do not claim," he says, "that in constructing any work in any manner whatever, a writer can always achieve a real success, even if he is possessed of the keenest sensibility."

A PEEP INTO TENNYSON'S WORK-SHOP.

Alfred Tennyson has passed from earth. His gropings to lift the veil concealing the life beyond the grave are over. He sees the whole meaning of life. In the words of a brother poet who dropped away a little earlier he can now say:

"Over the ball of it,
Peering and prying,
How I see all of it,
Life there outlying."

And now comes home to him the larger thought that he himself so exquisitely wrote, that with God rests a man's past and future. His life-work is measured in a scale of divine making not of human construction:

"We pass; the path that each man trod
Is dim, or will be dim, with weeds:
What fame is left for human deeds
In endless age? It rests with God."

Now that poets are chanting his name and critics are commenting upon his genius and influence, it were pleasant and profitable to enter his literary workshop and take note of the manner in which he struck out the beautiful thoughts that filled his poet-soul. It has been our

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privilege, thanks to the kindness of a dear friend, to study the manuscript of Tennyson's poem, called *The Daisy*, and to note the changes, and even the very efforts made by the poet before happening upon the best form of thought. Tennyson was pre-eminently a word-artist. If he so excelled, it has been the result of much study and great painstaking.

No poet could be more painstaking than Tennyson. Every idea was evolved slowly. Note the evolution of *Maud* from the stanzas published in 1855, to the version printed in 1856; thence to the edition of 1859, when the poem appeared in two parts, and the final edition when it appeared in its present form. Note the changes, the striking out of whole pages of matter that represented long and weary hours of work. Here are lines that stood in the original proof of *Maud*, descriptive of the heroine's brother:

"But his essences *made the Morning* sick,
And barbarous opulence, jewel-thick,
Flashed on his *obstinate-fingered* hands."

The phrase "the Morning" is too general. It is only the air that becomes tainted by the perfumes that exhale from this rich and vulgar brother of Maud. So he replaces these words by the expression, "turned the live air." Again, "obstinate-fingered" is an awkward epithet. The poet places a diamond in the brother's breast, and changes the line so that all three read as follows:

"But his essences turn'd the live air sick,
And barbarous opulence, jewel-thick,
Sunned itself on his breast and his hands."

This is the final reading. Professor Shepherd has traced many interesting variations in the poem as it was evolved from the poet's brain. *

The Daisy was written at Edinburgh in 1852 or 1853. It alludes to a trip that the poet and his wife had made in Europe. Their child Hallam, who was born August 11, 1852, was evidently alluded to in these lines:

"So dear a life your arms enfold,
Whose crying is a cry for gold."

The argument of the poem is this: The poet finds himself in Edinburgh

"When ill and weary, alone and cold,"

with no other companion than a book lent him by his wife. Opening the book, he finds in it a daisy 'crushed to hard and dry,' which he had plucked when ascending the Splügen and given to his wife, because it reminded them both of their native England. The sight of it recalls their tour through the sunny South, and he rehearses in musical lines of rare form the principal scenes through which he passed with his wife. And so he concludes the poem:

"Perchance, to lull the throbs of pain,
Perchance, to charm a vacant brain;
Perchance, to dream, you still beside me,
My fancy fled to the South again."

* North American Review, vol. 138, 1884. Art., "Genesis of Tennyson's *Maud*," by Richard Herne Shepherd.

The metre of this poem is worthy of careful study. It runs as follows:

⏑ – ⏑ – ⏑ – ⏑ – (a)
⏑ – ⏑ – ⏑ – ⏑ – (a)
⏑ – ⏑ – ⏑ – ⏑ – ⏑ – (b)
⏑ – ⏑ – ⏑ – ⏑ – ⏑ – (a)

Of this metre Edmund Clarence Stedman writes: "A winsome, novel stanzaic form, possibly of the Laureate's own invention, is to be found in *The Daisy* and in the Horatian lines to his friend Maurice."*

We shall here take note of various readings.

1. The line that reads

'Now pacing mute by ocean's rim,'

in the MS. was written

'Now pacing mute by ocean's *brim*.'

The improvement is seen at a glance.

2. Both the MS. and the first edition have this line in the ninth stanza:

'Oft we saw the glisten
'Of ice, far off on a mountain head.'

Here the three words, *oft—of—off*—in such close proximity offend the ear. In later editions the line reads:

'Of ice, far up on a mountain head.'

3. Now we come to the construction of the most interesting stanza in the poem. It is the tenth. The author made no less than seven attempts before he satisfied himself that he had struck the correct form in which to clothe the scene he would paint. He is describing the Doges' Hall in Genoa. He began:

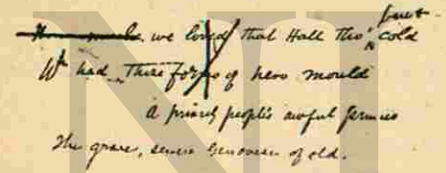
* Victorian Poets, p. 174.

(*a*) That Doges' Hall tho' bare and cold
Had shapes of men of hero mould—

This not suiting him, he crossed it out and started once more:

(*b*) How much we loved that Hall tho' cold
Which had those forms of hero mould,
A princely people's awful princes
The grave, severe Genovese of old.

He is unsatisfied with the first two lines. He crosses out the words 'how much,' and inserts the words 'bare and' before the word 'cold.' It looks thus in the MS.:



(*c*) The author makes another attempt:

Well pleased that Hall tho' white and cold
Such forms were these of noble mould.

(*a*) This not satisfying him he changes the first and second lines as follows:

We loved that Hall tho' white and cold
Those niched forms of noble mould.

(*e*) The poet still finds something wanting in the second line, and makes another change:

Such shapes were there of noble mould.

He now writes out the whole stanza in lead-pencil in the shape that best pleases him·

We loved that Hall tho' white and cold
Such shapes were there of noble mould,
A princely people's awful princes,
The grave, severe Genovese of old.

(*f*) He makes a final correction, which is a blending of (*a*) and (*e*). This must have been done in proof.

We loved that hall tho' white and cold
Those niched shapes of noble mould,
A princely people's awful princes,
The grave, severe Genovese of old.

Only in the seventh attempt does the poet strike the last form of expression. Here is a rare instance of the poet struggling to fit his conception to appropriate words. In noting the efforts, the changes, the reconstructions, we are, so to speak, silent witnesses in the poet's workshop of the processes by which a thought is evolved and moulded.

4. In the eleventh stanza, the first verse reads:

'At Florence too what *happy* hours.'

and the fourth:

'Or walks in Boboli's *ducal* bowers.'

Here the author changed *happy* to '*golden*,' and '*ducal*' to '*hanging*,' but upon second thought restored the word '*ducal*.'

5. The fourteenth stanza was inserted after the poem had been written. The first verse was originally penned:

And *grave and* stern (so rare the smiles
Of sunlight) looked the Lombard piles.

This was improved in the form now printed:

And stern and sad (so rare the smiles
Of sunlight) looked the Lombard piles.

6. The last two lines of the next stanza were penned as follows:

The height, the gloom, the space, the glory!
The marble mount, *with* a hundred spires!

Those lines now read as then corrected:

The height, the space, the gloom, the glory!
A mount of marble, a hundred spires!

This is a great improvement.

7. The third line of the eighteenth stanza was written:

Shower and storm and blast
Had *swoll'n* the lake beyond *its* limit.

This was changed to the present construction:

Had blown the lake beyond his limit.

The word *beyond* is crossed out in the MS. and replaced.

8. Now we come to the study of another interesting stanza. In its first form it reads as follows:

Like ballad-burthen music, kept,
As on the Larians crept
To fair Bellagio's happy gardens,
And sweet Varenna, *in which* we slept.

(*a*) The third line is crossed out, and over it is written this:

And paused at happy quays, and left us

(*b*) Here *and* is changed to *or*.

(*c*) The fourth line is made to read:

In sweet Varenna, *whereat* we slept.

(*d*) Again the last two lines are changed as follows:

" *With pauses made in* happy *haven*
To fair Varenna, whereat we slept.

(*e*) Finally, the poet erases the image of the boat's stoppages, and brings in the more picturesque and historic allusion to the castle of Queen Theodolind:

"To that fair port below the castle
Of Queen Theodolind, where we slept.

9. The third line in the twenty-second stanza read:

But ere we *touched* the highest summit

The word *touched* is changed to *reached*. The word *touching* occurs in the previous stanza. The last line of this stanza stands:

'I plucked a daisy *and* gave it you,'

but in the first edition it reads:

'I plucked a daisy, I gave it you.'

10. In the second last stanza the poet wrote:

The bitter east, a misty summer,

but changed *a* into *the:*

The bitter east, the misty summer.

PANEGYRIC

OF

BROTHER AZARIAS.

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PANEGYRIC

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"I am Azarias, the son of the great Ananias."
—*Tobias v., 18.*

THE parting of friends is always sad. This parting, so glorious for our friend, is especially sad for us, who in the keenness of our sorrow, and in the bright light that in his going he hath left behind, have found that he was indeed to us an Angel of God: "Azarias, the help of God, son of the great Ananias, the grace of God."

At this time we all realize that silence would best express our sincerest feelings, for words seem only a discord in the sweet music that his passing hath brought into our hearts and minds. But since custom demands that one who has spent his years in public service should not be consigned to the grave without at least an attempt being made at expressing, however imperfectly, the sense of loss experienced by those who throughout his life he has benefited, we shall try to set before you some slight sketch of our dear departed friend as we knew him personally, as we knew him in his relations to others, and especially as we all knew him in his work for the glory of Holy Mother Church.

The text that I have dared to borrow from Holy

Writ seems to me to express what we all feel concerning the life of Brother Azarias; for the vigor of his mature intellect and the sanctity of his life rendered him beautiful; his unquestioning faith made him a true child of Israel; and certainly in speech and in the written word he has led us into the country of the Medes, walking through all the ways thereof, benefiting dwellers therein, as well as those who yielded themselves up to his guidance.

In the sorrow of our parting, when the activity of his human life has ceased, and when our hearts and minds endeavor to fill the void that his going has left in our lives, we can best realize his worth, the need for him each individual soul amongst us had, and his value to that Church of God upon earth of which he was so able a defender, and whose doctrines he so luminously expounded.

In the beauty of his life, as we whose souls have been knit to his soul know it, we see indeed that he was an Angel of God, sent to us to be "Azarias, the help of God." The lesson of his life I conceive to be illustrated plainly in that name which was his by a curious coincidence. Because, certainly, to one who was familiar with that life in its personal, social, and public relations, to one who was familiar with his works, to one who knew him in the printed page that will form his best monument, helpfulness—the helpfulness that springs from charity, the gift of the grace of God freely co-operated with, was the striking characteristic of him whose sudden and sad taking off we humanly deplore.

It was in his character of helper of the feeble that first I knew him. I feel that it is under the same characteristic of helpfulness that you all have known him; and, when known, the beauty of a perfectly rounded character, instinct with the vital energy that comes from the charity of God, has drawn you to an abiding love of one who, perhaps, in the obscurity of his religious life you knew not personally. The testimony furnished by the condolences that have been received by his bereaved family and community tells us that indeed many souls throughout the world whom he knew not personally have been helped by him, and have been drawn to him as a concrete embodiment of the love of God, displaying itself in the highest intellectual pursuits.

As a man, Brother Azarias commanded not only respect, but love. As a man, it was not his mind that appealed most to those who had the good fortune to be in the circle of his personal friends, but it was the purity, the sincerity of his sympathetic love. In these days, when we all must feel that the prophecy of St. Paul is unhappily being realized, and that men are without affection, it is wonderful to study in his life the power of true human love and of divine sympathy over the minds and hearts of others. Whatever his gifts, the casual observer would not discern them. It was

only in the sweet communion of souls that one who spoke with him felt the sweetness of his character, the broadness of his sympathy, and the sturdiness of the faith that gave him true charity.

As a teacher, his pupils felt the impress of his personality. Timid, retiring, diffident in ordinary life, when placed upon the platform he was transfigured before his audience, and held them by the magnetic power of his intellectual ability. Gifted with a mind singularly clear, sagacious, and penetrating, a mind richly stored with resources acquired by arduous labors, painstaking study, and wide, original research, he brought to the solution of any problem or the elucidation of any question, an abundance of information, a wealth of erudition, a perspicacity of argument, and a perspicuity of expression that at once claimed attention and demanded acquiescence. The power of a teacher is best felt, not indeed by those whose minds are capable of thinking with him, but by those whose minds bow in unconscious and instinctive submission to the seal of intellectual authority. That authority Azarias exercised equally over the youngest child whom he instructed in the class-room, and the oldest mind that listened in wonder to the clear stream of precious and eloquent language that poured from his lips. The strongest power that we know is the power of soul over soul. When one is present to us, the impress of his personal appearance, the beauty of his voice, the fire of his

eye, the expression of his features, all are concomitant circumstances increasing his power. Remove his personality, and you then have the true test of his abiding power. The man, therefore, who commanded the admiration of those who had never seen nor heard him, and who knew him only through the imperfect written word, has the best testimony we can seek of this great power. That admiration has been recorded in every line of criticism written concerning Azarias's work. That admiration has been recorded in the outspoken words of those who, in answer to the promptings of a sincere heart, have expressed their deep appreciation of his worth and their recognition of his great intellectual gifts. Often, indeed, God gives intellectual power with the express vocation that, like the silent forces of nature, it be used without being recognized in the world. The life of a teacher is one of the noblest lives with which the earth is blessed. It is a life that reflects the very life of God Himself, because to a teacher God leaves the development of the intellect that He Himself has fashioned, and for which He has made fixed laws. To human instruments God gives the moulding of character, the development of intellectual power, and the educing of the life that, as His own image, He has stamped upon the human soul. The teacher's duty it is, and his privilege, to bring forth into full light the intellectual image of God impressed upon the great faculties of the soul. The teacher's privilege it is to bring into

active operation all the latent powers of the mind, and the teacher who, in the obscurity of the class-room, not content with developing the intellectual man, develops, also, man in his perfection—physical, moral, intellectual, and spiritual,—that man, probably more than any other excepting the parent and the priest of God, has the vocation of reproducing in the world, as far as may be, the creative act of God Omnipotent Himself. Therefore Azarias might have lived and exercised as a member of his Order, the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, the high vocation of a teacher; he might have been instrumental in bringing many souls to God, and he would therefore have justly claimed the reward of shining as a star in Heaven. But God had singled him out not only for that high vocation, but for a public manifestation of his power and ability; and *this* man, who went down to his grave working; *this* man, who unselfishly gave of the best that was in him, in order that others might profit by his labors, and might share, in the highest charity, the gifts wherewith God had endowed him—*this* man was not only the humble teacher of the class-room, but also a teacher who, publicly, was called to the defense, the ornamentation, the exposition of the teachings of a Church that he was proud to claim as his Mother. I remember that once our dear departed friend spoke to me of a criticism of his most beautiful work, "The Philosophy of Literature," made by a man of the highest literary ability,

but unblest with the gift of the Catholic faith. After a long and enthusiastic tribute to the depth of thought, the widespread research, the sound philosophy, the beauty of style, and the wonderful facility and clearness of expression of the book, the reviewer closed his article with an apostrophe to this magnificent thinker, inviting him to leave the sterile bosom of the Church of Rome, and to seek in the brightness of the intellectual light of this century the warmth and the knowledge and the influence that his talents deserved. I remember the beautiful smile that illuminated the countenance of our deceased friend, as he told me of this expression of a human intellect that had not known the light of faith, and consequently had missed the secret of the power of the author who commanded his respect. To leave the bosom of that "sterile" Mother, the Church of Rome! His life was pledged to the service of that fruitful Mother, of whom he was proud. His every thought was to advance her interests. Every act of his mind as a student and writer was in the direction of explaining to others her philosophy and the soundness of her teaching. From her he nourished the divine spark of inspiration; in her ranks he felt sure of the truths he enunciated, and by her teaching he was enabled to make clear to others the solution of the problems that in the darkness they could not solve. And an invitation from such a source to leave that Mother was to him only an incentive to redouble his works,

to increase his labors, to spend the little remnant of his strength in order that he might bring others to know, as he knew, the beauty of her truth, the harmony of her teachings, the completeness of her dogma. So that, as I conceive, to one who reads the works that he has left behind, from every page and from every sentence there will stand out an expression of the truth of what I say, that he was "Azarias, a help of God," and that the help of God, received by him through the grace of God, he destined for the assistance of his fellow-men, both within and without that Church from which he drew the inspiration of his genius.

No writer of the present day, in America at least, has, to my mind, been more in touch with the thought that dominates the century, not only in this country, but in every intellectual centre of the civilized world. He had, as I conceive, two missions in his writing. One was to help those whom he knew were in earnest in the search for the light of truth; the other was to clear away the misrepresentations that, springing, as he conceived it, from misinformation, served to tarnish the lustre and the beauty of the Light of the world. In all his books he has steadily kept these two purposes in view. And those who knew him, especially those who knew him in the intimacy of personal friendship, will testify that all his intellectual activity made him sympathize—not only with the sympathy that came from his religion, but with the deep sympathy that

came also from his sincere humanity—with the struggles of those earnest minds with whom he was in communion throughout the entire world.

Read what he has written, especially about this latest movement, the Neo-Christian Movement in France; he was there—he knew these men intimately,—he realized their sincerity, and, in the broadness of his charity, he sought the solution for their difficulties, found it, and expressed it for those that cared to read.

His last work was an endeavor to set before the Catholic world the true status of the Catholic Church with regard to education; an endeavor to clear away the clouds that prejudice, misrepresentation, oftentimes calumny, had heaped upon our Mother, whom we regard as the true enlightener of the world. Those who had the privilege, at the last session of the Catholic Summer School, of listening to his wonderful lectures on "Christian Education"; to follow with him the development of the Christian school, and to see limned by his master-hand the picture of the rise and the development of the Christian school and its influence on the world, will ever be thankful for that privilege, and will go out into the world and endeavor to scatter broadcast the seeds of truth that he communicated to them. Such was the purpose of his life. God called him before the work was completed, according to his idea. But, thanks be to the same God, he has left it so nearly complete that the humblest one amongst us can

take it up, and, as we are now doing in the historical world, change completely the tenor of criticism, challenge the statements that hitherto we have accepted, in our ignorance, as truth, and endeavor by patient research to set before the world the Church as she was and is as an Educator.

His life, therefore, has been rounded out and completed according to God's own plan. There is nothing missing that we could desire in it; he has cleared the way; he has pointed out and traced the lines that are to be followed. It remains only for us to take up the torch that he willingly resigned, and in the brightness of its light, cherishing always its sacred flame, to follow his guidance, and in the intellectual world about us to complete the reformation that he indeed began.

His death, as his life, was edifying. Fortunately for him, being a public man and a religious teacher, his personal life is safe from the feeble words of a panegyrist. He rests with his God; he went sweetly and with resignation. His last hours were only a repetition of the many years of his life—charity, love for God, love for his neighbor, forgiveness of any who had ever done him wrong unconsciously, (for he did not believe it possible that any would wrong him consciously) and a beseeching of grace and light and strength for those who rejoiced in his acquaintance. We who were associated with him so closely will feel that we indeed have sustained an irreparable, personal loss; but as he went

willingly, we, too, must bear willingly the sad trial that has come upon us. His family will, of course, miss him most; but they yielded him up years ago as a holocaust to the Lord, and never have they desired to draw back in their offering. His fellow-trustees of the Catholic Summer School of America, who learned to lean upon him and to love him, will feel that in their new work they have suffered a severe blow, from which, perhaps, they will never fully recover. The members of the Community to which he belonged, by their presence here to-day from so many distant quarters, give testimony of a loss which they alone can feel and know. The presence in such large numbers of the reverend clergy from different dioceses of this country, the number of sympathetic despatches and letters from cardinal, archbishops, priests, and laymen, Catholics and non-Catholics, received by his bereaved family and Community, all tell of the universal esteem in which he was held, and all tell us, too, of the great loss that the Church, as well as private individuals, has suffered. However, his life for the last ten years was only a living death. To those who knew him, he taught a lesson of resignation—a lesson of resignation in his practical, personal life that he has striven to teach in all his works, and especially which he loved to find in the written words of those for whom he had such a sincere admiration and sympathy; and we would not be true to our friendship to him, we would not be true to the re-

ligion that we shared in common, were a single regret to mar the completeness of the sacrifice he cheerfully made.

His works indeed shall follow him. Prepared by a fervent Retreat on the eve of his last labor, sustained and encouraged in his noticeably feeble health by the deep interest shown in his lectures and the cordial praise of grateful hearts and minds for his unselfish labors in the cause of truth, he went out of the world. This gathering at this season of the year is the best testimony to his worth. It remains for us only to cherish the example of his beautiful life, and to pray that, speedily purged from all dross of earthly stain, he may soon rejoice in the beatific vision of eternal life.

I have not alluded at all to his private, personal life. I have said nothing of the simple, sincere, childlike piety that we knew of, that especially his Superiors knew of; but I cannot close without saying at one of the books that best pictured his own heart was a panegyric of the Queen of Heaven. He was a knight, a true and chivalrous knight of the Blessed Mother; her image was always about him; her chaplet was always in his hand; her praises were always on his lips. Even in his purely critical writings he has known how to bring to her garland after garland of beautiful flowers, culled in the gardens of the world's literature; in her honor he has gleaned many a sheaf from fields cultivated by Catholic genius. To her kind care we commit him now; to

his Mother we commit her son and knight. To her gentle power, to the sweet intercession that she will make before the throne of the Master whom he strove to serve, we may entrust, in all sincerity and in all security, the eternal destiny of our dear friend, conscious that through her God will bless him, and that the works that will follow him will be sufficient to bring him to the glory of Heaven, for which he sought.

The remains were taken, at the close of the ceremonies, to Syracuse, where additional obsequies were celebrated in the Church of St. Mary, Star of the Sea, of which Father Mullany is pastor. They were afterwards conveyed to St. Agnes' Cemetery, and buried in the grave in which the remains of the father and mother of the deceased Brother are interred.