



clothes. . . . If certain ermines or furs be placed in a certain position, we style them a judge ; and so an apt conjunction of lawn and black satin we entitle a bishop." In *Sartor Resartus* Carlyle let himself go. It was willful, uncouth, amorphous, titanic. There was something monstrous in the combination—the hot heart of the Scot married to the transcendental dream of Germany. It was not English, said the reviewers ; it was not sense ; it was disfigured by obscurity and "mysticism." Nevertheless even the thin-witted and the dry-witted had to acknowledge the powerful beauty of many chapters and passages, rich with humor, eloquence, poetry, deep-hearted tenderness, or passionate scorn.

Carlyle was a voracious reader, and the plunder of whole literatures is strewn over his pages. He flung about the resources of the language with a giant's strength, and made new words at every turn. The concreteness and the swarming fertility of his mind are evidenced by his enormous vocabulary, computed greatly to exceed Shakspeare's, or any other single writer's in the English tongue. His style lacks the crowning grace of simplicity and repose. It astonishes, but it also fatigues.

Carlyle's influence has consisted more in his attitude than in any special truth which he has preached. It has been the influence of a moralist, of a practical rather than a speculative philosopher. "The end of man," he wrote, "is an action, not a thought." He has not been able to persuade the time that it is going wrong, but his criticisms have been wholesomely corrective of its self-conceit. In a democratic age he has insisted upon the undemocratic virtues of obedience, silence, and reverence. *Ehrfurcht*, reverence—the text of his address to the students of Edinburgh University in 1866—is the last word of his philosophy.

In 1830 Alfred Tennyson (1809–1892), a young graduate of Cambridge, published a thin duodecimo of 154 pages entitled *Poems, Chiefly Lyrical*. The pieces in this little volume,

such as the *Sleeping Beauty*, *Ode to Memory*, and *Recollections of the Arabian Nights*, were full of color, fragrance, melody; but they had a dream-like character, and were without definite theme, resembling an artist's studies, or exercises in music—a few touches of the brush, a few sweet chords, but no *aria*. A number of them—*Claribel*, *Lilian*, *Adeline*, *Isabel*, *Mariana*, *Madeline*—were sketches of women; not character portraits, like Browning's *Men and Women*, but impressions of temperament, of delicately differentiated types of feminine beauty. In *Mariana*, expanded from a hint of the forsaken maid in Shakspeare's *Measure for Measure*, "Mariana at the moated grange," the poet showed an art then peculiar, but since grown familiar, of heightening the central feeling by landscape accessories. The level waste, the stagnant sluices, the neglected garden, the wind in the single poplar, re-enforce, by their monotonous sympathy, the loneliness, the hopeless waiting and weariness of life in the one human figure of the poem. In *Mariana*, the *Ode to Memory*, and the *Dying Swan*, it was the fens of Cambridge and of his native Lincolnshire that furnished Tennyson's scenery.

Stretched wide and wild, the waste enormous marsh,
Where from the frequent bridge,
Like emblems of infinity,
The trenched waters run from sky to sky.

A second collection, published in 1833, exhibited a greater scope and variety, but was still in his earlier manner. The studies of feminine types were continued in *Margaret*, *Fatima*, *Eleanore*, *Mariana in the South*, and *A Dream of Fair Women*, suggested by Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women*. In the *Lady of Shalott* the poet first touched the Arthurian legends. The subject is the same as that of *Elaine*, in the *Idylls of the King*, but the treatment is shadowy, and even allegorical. In *Enone* and the *Lotus Eaters* he handled Homeric subjects, but in a romantic fashion which contrasts

markedly with the style of his later pieces, *Ulysses* and *Tithonus*. These last have the true classic severity, and are among the noblest specimens of weighty and sonorous blank verse in modern poetry. In general, Tennyson's art is unclassical. It is rich, ornate, composite; not statuesque so much as picturesque. He is a great painter, and the critics complain that in passages calling for movement and action—a battle, a tournament, or the like—his figures stand still as in a tableau; and they contrast such passages unfavorably with scenes of the same kind in Scott, and with Browning's spirited ballad, *How we brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix*. In the *Palace of Art* these elaborate pictorial effects were combined with allegory; in the *Lotus Eaters*, with that expressive treatment of landscape noted in *Mariana*; the lotus land, "in which it seemed always afternoon," reflecting and promoting the enchanted indolence of the heroes. Two of the pieces in this 1833 volume, the *May Queen* and the *Miller's Daughter*, were Tennyson's first poems of the affections, and as ballads of simple rustic life they anticipated his more perfect idyls in blank verse, such as *Dora*, the *Brook*, *Edwin Morris*, and the *Gardener's Daughter*. The songs in the *Miller's Daughter* had a more spontaneous lyrical movement than any thing he had yet published, and foretokened the lovely songs which interlude the divisions of the *Princess*, the famous *Bugle Song*, the no-less famous *Cradle Song*, and the rest. In 1833 Tennyson's friend, Arthur Hallam, died, and the effect of this great sorrow upon the poet was to deepen and strengthen the character of his genius. It turned his mind in upon itself, and set it brooding over questions which his poetry had so far left untouched; the meaning of life and death, the uses of adversity, the future of the race, the immortality of the soul, and the dealings of God with mankind.

Thou madest Death: and, lo, thy foot
Is on the skull which thou hast made.

His elegy on Hallam, *In Memoriam*, was not published till 1850. He kept it by him all those years, adding section after section, gathering up into it whatever reflections crystallized about its central theme. It is his most intellectual and most individual work; a great song of sorrow and consolation. In 1842 he published a third collection of poems, among which were *Locksley Hall*, displaying a new strength of passion; *Ulysses*, suggested by a passage in Dante: pieces of a speculative cast, like the *Two Voices* and the *Vision of Sin*; the song *Break, Break, Break*, which precluded *In Memoriam*; and, lastly, some additional gropings toward the subject of the Arthurian romance, such as *Sir Galahad*, *Sir Launcelot and Queen Guinevere*, and *Morte d'Arthur*. The last was in blank verse, and, as afterward incorporated in the *Passing of Arthur*, forms one of the best passages in the *Idylls of the King*. The *Princess, a Medley*, published in 1849, represents the eclectic character of Tennyson's art; a mediæval tale with an admixture of modern sentiment, and with the very modern problem of woman's sphere for its theme. The first four *Idylls of the King*, 1859, with those since added, constitute, when taken together, an epic poem on the old story of King Arthur. Tennyson went to Malory's *Morte Darthur* for his material, but the outline of the first idyl, *Enid*, was taken from Lady Charlotte Guest's translation of the Welsh *Mabinogion*. In the idyl of *Guinevere* Tennyson's genius reached its high-water mark. The interview between Arthur and his fallen queen is marked by a moral sublimity and a tragic intensity which move the soul as nobly as any scene in modern literature. Here, at least, the art is pure and not "decorated;" the effect is produced by the simplest means, and all is just, natural, and grand. *Maud*—a love novel in verse—published in 1855, and considerably enlarged in 1856, had great sweetness and beauty, particularly in its lyrical portions, but it was uneven in execution, imperfect in design, and marred by lapses into mawk-

ishness and excess in language. Since 1860 Tennyson has added little of permanent value to his work. His dramatic experiments, like *Queen Mary*, are not, on the whole, successful, though it would be unjust to deny dramatic power to the poet who has written, upon one hand, *Guinevere* and the *Passing of Arthur*, and upon the other the homely dialectic monologue of the *Northern Farmer*.

When we tire of Tennyson's smooth perfection, of an art that is over exquisite, and a beauty that is well-nigh too beautiful, and crave a rougher touch, and a meaning that will not yield itself too readily, we turn to the thorny pages of his great contemporary, Robert Browning (1812-1889). Dr. Holmes says that Tennyson is white meat and Browning is dark meat. A masculine taste, it is inferred, is shown in a preference for the gamier flavor. Browning makes us think; his poems are puzzles, and furnish business for "Browning Societies." There are no Tennyson societies, because Tennyson is his own interpreter. Intellect in a poet may display itself quite as properly in the construction of his poem as in its content; we value a building for its architecture, and not entirely for the amount of timber in it. Browning's thought never wears so thin as Tennyson's sometimes does in his latest verse, where the trick of his style goes on of itself with nothing behind it. Tennyson, at his worst, is weak. Browning, when not at his best, is hoarse. Hoarseness, in itself, is no sign of strength. In Browning, however, the failure is in art, not in thought.

He chooses his subjects from abnormal character types, such as are presented, for example, in *Caliban upon Setebos*, the *Grammarian's Funeral*, *My Last Duchess* and *Mr. Sludge, the Medium*. These are all psychological studies, in which the poet gets into the inner consciousness of a monster, a pedant, a criminal, and a quack, and gives their point of view. They are dramatic soliloquies; but the poet's self-identification with each of his creations, in turn, remains

incomplete. His curious, analytic observation, his way of looking at the soul from outside, gives a doubleness to the monologues in his *Dramatic Lyrics*, 1845, *Men and Women*, 1855, *Dramatis Personæ*, 1864, and other collections of the kind. The words are the words of Caliban or Mr. Sludge; but the voice is the voice of Robert Browning. His first complete poem, *Paracelsus*, 1835, aimed to give the true inwardness of the career of the famous 16th century doctor, whose name became a synonym with charlatan. His second, *Sordello*, 1840, traced the struggles of an Italian poet who lived before Dante, and could not reconcile his life with his art. *Paracelsus* was hard, but *Sordello* was incomprehensible. Browning has denied that he was ever perversely crabbed or obscure. Every great artist must be allowed to say things in his own way, and obscurity has its artistic uses, as the Gothic builders knew. But there are two kinds of obscurity in literature. One is inseparable from the subtlety and difficulty of the thought or the compression and pregnant indirectness of the phrase. Instances of this occur in the clear deeps of Dante, Shakspeare, and Goethe. The other comes from a vice of style, a willfully enigmatic and unnatural way of expressing thought. Both kinds of obscurity exist in Browning. He was a deep and subtle thinker, but he was also a very eccentric writer; abrupt, harsh, disjointed. It has been well said that the reader of Browning learns a new dialect. But one need not grudge the labor that is rewarded with an intellectual pleasure so peculiar and so stimulating. The odd, grotesque impression made by his poetry arises, in part, from his desire to use the artistic values of ugliness, as well as of obscurity; to avoid the shallow prettiness that comes from blinking the disagreeable truth: not to leave the saltiness out of the sea. Whenever he emerges into clearness, as he does in hundreds of places, he is a poet of great qualities. There are a fire and a swing in his *Cavalier Tunes*, and in pieces like the *Glove* and the *Lost*

Leader; and humor in such ballads as the *Pied Piper of Hamelin* and the *Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister*, which appeal to the most conservative reader. He seldom deals directly in the pathetic, but now and then, as in *Evelyn Hope*, the *Last Ride Together*, or the *Incident of the French Camp*, a tenderness comes over the strong verse

as sheathes
A film the mother eagle's eye
When her bruised eaglet breathes.

Perhaps the most astonishing example of Browning's mental vigor is the huge composition, entitled *The Ring and the Book*, 1868; a narrative poem in twenty-one thousand lines in which the same story is repeated eleven times in eleven different ways. It is the story of a criminal trial which occurred at Rome about 1700, the trial of one Count Guido for the murder of his young wife. First the poet tells the tale himself; then he tells what one half the world said and what the other; then he gives the deposition of the dying girl, the testimony of witnesses, the speech made by the count in his own defense, the arguments of counsel, etc., and, finally, the judgment of the pope. So wonderful are Browning's resources in casuistry, and so cunningly does he ravel the intricate motives at play in this tragedy and lay bare the secrets of the heart, that the interest increases at each repetition of the tale. He studied the Middle Age carefully, not for its picturesque externals, its feudalisms, chivalries, and the like; but because he found it a rich quarry of spiritual monstrosities, strange outcroppings of fanaticism, superstition, and moral and mental distortion of all shapes. It furnished him especially with a great variety of ecclesiastical types, such as are painted in *Fra Lippo Lippi*, *The Heretic's Tragedy*, and *The Bishop Orders his Tomb in St. Praxed's Church*.

Browning's dramatic instinct always attracted him to the stage. His tragedy, *Strafford* (1837), was written for

Macready, and put on at Covent Garden Theater, but without pronounced success. He wrote many fine dramatic poems, like *Pippa Passes*, *Colombé's Birthday*, and *In a Balcony*; and at least two good acting plays, *Luria* and *A Blot in the Scutcheon*. The last named has recently been given to the American public, with Lawrence Barrett's careful and intelligent presentation of the leading role. The motive of the tragedy is somewhat strained and fantastic, but it is, notwithstanding, very effective on the stage. It gives one an unwonted thrill to listen to a play, by a contemporary English writer, which is really literature. One gets a faint idea of what it must have been to assist at the first night of *Hamlet*.

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APPENDIX.