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By THE EDITOR.

JAMES LEATHAM



...BY NEAR MAC DONALD, I frets with gladness
...this is *For ever* this which you saw we
must "get back on to our Socialism." In
the end, it alone matters."

Taken in conjunction with recent events
and pronouncements, is this the preliminary
and informal announcement of a change of

Cultural Writings

The Past.

The Government of which you were the head denationalised the town and works of Gretna, getting very poor prices for what was a sacrifice both of principle and of property. Your Government has increased the expenditure on aircraft, and built unnecessary cruisers in fulfilment of the Admiralty's programme. The English sailor who broke the sea-power of Spain and of France did it with the odds always against them; but the British admirals of to-day appear to feel uneasy if they do not outnumber the enemy in ships, guns, and men alike.

Your Government that was the policy
Your Government
was a promise sol



1916-2016

e the railways, although
as far back as 1918.
he mines, though there
half of the Coalition

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OMNIBUS NEW GATEWAY VOLUME 1
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Cultural

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Robert Burns, Scotland's Man by James Leatham.

I have presumed to imagine that I have something to say of Robert Burns, partly because I have approached certain great life-problems in a spirit somewhat similar to that in which he approached them, but mainly because I have a whole-hearted admiration for his work, and do not feel called upon to apologise for him, either as man or author, as most of his biographers and critics have seen fit to do.

Burns was a Jacobin and a Jacobite. He was in sympathy with the principles of that great upheaval the First French Revolution, and although as a Government official he was not supposed to have any political opinions, he on more than one occasion declared in favour of great and far-reaching changes. In fact he was

brought to book for his openly-expressed republican sympathies, more particularly when they took form in the gift of a brass cannonade to the French Republic, and to keep his employment he had to pass through the Valley of Humiliation and make more or less profession of loyalty to the ignoble House of Hanover, whose members he, in common with most people of liberal sentiment despised for good reason.

His Politics.

On the social or economic side, the life of a rural community represented life as a whole to him, and we can see from the poem of 'The Twa Dogs' that he by no means regarded the ordinary system of landlord and tenant as an ideally perfect or even moderately satisfactory arrangement. He scathingly depicted the idle, enervating life of the landlord class. He made his

gentleman dog Caesar launch out against the mischievous pursuits of absentee landlords ' 'mang groves o'myrtle' abroad, and the sting of the diatribe has not lost its point today; for with our facilities for rapid travel, and the denationalising of Scottish landlords, who spend most of their time and their tenants' money in London and abroad, the evil of absenteeism is even greater now than it was in Burns's day. In the speech of Caesar 'poor tenant bodies, scant o' cash,' were represented as having to 'thole a factor's snash,' and, needless to say, the system being what it is, factors are the same race today as they were then.

His Jacobitism as such probably did not mean very much. It would be partly a poet's sentiment for an exiled and unfortunate house, identified during long centuries with the history of the nation, and whose members possessed a charm of

personality of which the first three Georges appear from all accounts to have been singularly destitute. For the rest, Burns's Jacobitism would be the symbol of his attachment to all that was best in the old world and of his protest against much that was sordid in the world about him. His leaning would be towards aristocracy, not as an aristocracy of birth, but as an aristocracy of breeding, of feeling, and of culture. His friends were lairds and noblemen rather than men engaged in commercial pursuits. The latter he probably found out of sympathy with him, and their interests and their outlook upon life would be repugnant to him. Would wish to increase the number of men of liberal feeling and refined sentiment, and to do this he would be of the opinion that great social changes required to be carried out. His millennium,

When man to men the warld o'er

Should brithers be for a' that.

was not surely to be secured by mere preaching and teaching, but by actual legislative changes. His present to a friend of Delolme's book on 'The Constitution' showed that he was a student of politics as well as a maker of verse. He admired the fine manners, the open-mindedness, and the good taste of his aristocratic friends, and he wished to give 'the poor o'erlaboured wight' the leisure and the education which could alone render brotherhood possible between him and the 'birkie ca'd a lord.'

The Perfervid Scot.

But apart altogether from the Social-Democracy of Burns, he is on the purely human side the best type of Scotsman I know. We hear and have long heard much

about 'the canny Scot.' Far be it from me to pretend that 'there ain't no sich a person.' What I claim is, however, that the headlong, fiery, warm-hearted, tender, generous, romantic Scot is the best type; and Robert Burns stands as the embodiment of much that is best in this class. The canny Scot—slow, under-engined, with imperfect sympathies and no vision—is the type from which Scotland suffers most.

Why has Scotland so few Great Poets?

We do well to make the most of our great poet; for of the very greatest we have but the one; and considering that we have so many of the elements of poetry in us and about us, this seems not a little strange. England has produced many great poets; yet the average Englishman is rather stolid, while his surroundings, tame and domestic as Byron rightly called them,

would appear to give but the minimum of poetic stimulus. Here is a problem. If 'Caledonia, stern and wild,' be meet nurse for poetic children, how is it that against the great galaxy of English poets of the very first order we have only the name of Burns to advance.

The Celtic element in literature is said to count for much. In poetry especially it is held by so good a judge as Matthew Arnold to supply the salt of imagination. And since, in addition to fit surroundings, the Scottish people derive so much of their national temperament from a Celtic source, it seems strange that of the very best poetry we should produce so little. Can it be possible that poetry has been discouraged in Scotland? Hag-ridden by a sour theology, harassed by the desire to make and to save money, spending our lives in the struggle with poor land and a

harsh climate, is it possible that we have cold-shouldered the making of verse as a vain and futile expenditure of time and talent, fit only for feckless cranks who can neither fish, farm, nor sell a shop? I dislike giving an answer to the question, because I dread the possible character of the answer, But I am tolerably certain, for instance, that had Gilbert Burns been asked as to the value of his great brother's work during the lifetime of Robert, canny Gilbert would have preferred that Robert should succeed less as a poet and more as a farmer. With all respect to the useful calling of the farmer, I say: How unspeakably grateful we should be that Burns gave the rein to his genius and refused to give his whole soul to barley, oats, and bestial!

We are told that he worked hard—on the farm of Mossgiel at any rate—and I think

that is very likely true. He would be conscious of owning a divided allegiance between farming and verse-making, and, proud and sensible as he was, he would doubtless work with feverish zeal, as if to make up for the circumstance that the better part of his thoughts strayed from agriculture to literature. 'The Vision' shows that Burns himself had misgivings at times about his verse-making, and it is well for Scotland and literature that the artist mastered the husband and father, that prudential cares were forgotten, and that Burns could not, even if he would, give up the courtship of the Muse for the service of the main chance.

The Apologists.

I have no wish unduly to glorify the profession of letters. It takes all sorts of people to make a world; and I am sure that many of the people who cultivate literature

and make verse especially would be much better employed at the making of good honest boots, for the excellent reason that they have obviously no vocation for writing. The work of Burns has encouraged so many writers of doggerel Scottish verse, many of them feckless creatures, full of absurd notions as to the importance of their 'work,' that the word poet has come to be associated with crankiness or weak-mindedness; and sensible men, if they confess to the making of rhymes at all, do so with a certain shyness, as if they were confessing to a vice or a failing. Robert Burns, I strongly hold, suffers to some extent by this widely-diffused feeling regarding poets. Even in the height of the enthusiasm at a Burns celebration, observations of an apologetic character will be made by the orators in speaking of the career and genius of the poet. I have noticed, moreover, that many clergymen

and almost all moral precisians, refuse to identify themselves with the Burns cult, and one is profoundly disappointed to find so fine a man and so good a poet as Dr. George MacDonald lamenting over the backslidings of our national poet in a mere popular lecture.

Should the failings of Burns not be touched upon at all, then? it may be asked. Is a man entitled to lead any kind of life he pleases so long as he is a great poet ? By no means. All that I am contending is that there has been vastly too much of moral lamentation over Burns. I for one desire that the judgment of Burns's work should be more impersonal, and that if we do hark back, as we cannot help occasionally doing, to the character of the poet we should display some little moral insight. Instead of condemning or affecting to pity and regret, I strongly hold that we should recognise

that in Burns's case it is necessary only to explain. It is possible to praise the beauty of the Psalms without mourning over the frequent, long-continued, serious backslidings of David ; and if that be possible in the case of the one poet it ought to be easy in the case of the other.*

**A clerical correspondent has pointed out that "probably no single part of the Book of Psalms owes its composition to David himself," and that "if so, your comparison between Burns and David has no weight at all." I have allowed the sentence to stand as originally written, partly because I think that David, the harpist and improvisator, is extremely likely to have had a hand in the Psalms, but chiefly because the point of my argument is that the very people who forgive David for the constructive murder of Bathsheba's husband refuse to forgive Burns, a greater poet, who has no such*

crime at his door.

When we see a fine picture, listen to a great symphony, or meet with a piece of good work of any kind, it ought to be possible to admire, to try to understand the thing, to get at the full meaning of its producer, and to explain that meaning with what gift of sympathetic and critical exposition we may possess—all this without wishing to pry into the character of the artist.

Practice and Precept.

Burns, it seems to me suffers largely from the prevalent acceptance of the theory that a man should not preach what he cannot practise—a most pernicious doctrine. Were such a view tenable it would mean that if a writer's or a preacher's practice were bad; it would be his duty to make his preaching or teaching conform to the wickedness of

his life. This would obviously make bad worse—narrowing down the standard of our aim to the measure of our achievement, Men have a higher and lower nature. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. Reason would lead them one way, but overmastering impulse drags them another. In their rational moods, however, they recognise and deplore the evil of their ways, and to forbid the drunkard to condense drunkenness, or the sensualist to depict the degrading influences of libertinism, is to refuse to accept the testimony of those who can speak with most authority and with deepest and truest feeling.

I cannot help thinking that many people seek to extenuate their lack of appreciation of Burns's work by falling foul of his character, and I can conceive of no more immoral moral perversity than that. For

how stands the case? Here we have a great man whose memory suffers at the hands of pharisaical detractors, not because of his foibles, but in reality because of his genius and his work for Scotland, for literature, and for humanity. Had Robert Burns been a common ploughman he and his failings would long since have been forgotten. But because Burns, while he had no more than the average vices of the men of his time, had in him a divine essence, both moral and intellectual, which caused him to make light of the ordinary prudential cares of mankind, and unselfishly give his time and thoughts and genius to the making of a great book 'for puir auld Scotland's sake,' his memory must with some people occupy a place in the pillory so long as his book is read.

Let it be recognised once for all that, to be the poet he was, Burns had to be just

precisely the man he was. He had the defects of his qualities, and those defects were not accidental, but inevitable. With his great, susceptible nervous organization, strong to feel rather than to resist, he was at the mercy of every gust of passion and every monition of the beautiful that touched him. The very imagination which enabled him to conceive and give shape to that tremendous company in Alloway Kirk, with its awful surroundings and paraphernalia—the piping Devil in the winnock-bunker, the dead in their open coffins holding lights in their cold hands, the murderer's bones in gibbet-irons, the span-tang, wee, unchristened bairns, the gasping thief, 'new cuttit frae the rape,' the tomahawks, the garter that had strangled a babe, the murder-crusted scimitars, the parricide's knife, with the blood and hair upon it, and all the details of the witches' dance—this very imagination caused him

to make a goddess of every other young and handsome woman he met, with consequences of which we have heard only too much.

Burns, then, had to be the man he was; and as the consequences of his acts have now lost all significance regarded in the light of an injury to any man or woman, let us remember his intrigues only as an interesting feature in the psychology of a great man, and be glad and thankful for the genius that represents a gain to literature that has no serious alloy or offset. The old lusts are dead. The jealous resentment of Jean Armour at the incontinence of her husband probably did not long survive the injuries inflicted: and having met some of the men and women who live today as the descendants of the poet's illicit loves—douce, kindly, clever folk all of them—I experience great

difficulty in taking seriously the irregularity of their great ancestor. Burns may not have been 'good' in the sacrosanct sense, but he was good for something, whereas of many of those that are 'good' it may fairly be said that they are good for nothing.

Scotland's Man.

The claim I have to advance on behalf of Robert Burns is, not alone that he is Scotland's greatest poet, but that he is Scotland's greatest man. Not only her biggest man in sheer natural intellectual power, but her greatest man as regards the influence he has exercised and the purity and singleness of the motives by which he was actuated in his work. The only names fit to be mentioned in the same breath with his are those of Wallace and Bruce on the one hand and that of Walter Scott on the other. It is not necessary to decry one of

our national heroes in order to extol another. To distinguish and appraise is not to decry. But I know of no way in which one can reason save by analogy and contrast, and in the present case the analogy and the contrast have to be between individuals.

In comparison with Wallace, Bruce, and Scott, then, the transcendent greatness of Burns at once emerges. Wallace initiated and led a momentous national rebellion; but he was moved to his great work primarily by resentment. He was a strong man, a brave man, and a good general; but the motive of his action on behalf of Scotland was less evidently love of Scotland and Scotsmen than hatred of English and the English. Bruce, again, actually fought against his fellow-countrymen until he was taunted by the English with sitting down at table to eat

with the blood of his brethren on his hands; and in the last resort there were a crown and a kingdom to be won as the price of successful revolt. Bruce was brave, sagacious, magnanimous—by birth and character a king among men; but it is impossible to deny that in his work for Scotland he was largely moved by self-interest. As for Sir Walter Scott, kindly, honest, good-natured, quixotically honourable as he was, one is bound to confess that through all his literary work he was mightily concerned about the money reward of it, and that much of his slipshod from pure haste of production, begotten largely of this desire to make money. In this connection one remembers that he turned from the making of poetry to the making of prose because the success of Byron made the sale of 'Marmions' and 'Ladies of the Lake' less profitable. Burns, on the other hand, was the consummate

literary artist, having the delights of literary creation as almost his only reward. Scott was an artist indeed—an artist almost in spite of himself—but certainly a literary adventurer, concerned more than enough about his mansion, his planting, and his interests as a territorial nabob. All of these three great Scotsmen, moreover, began their work with the social advantages in their favour, as Burns did not.

Burns's work was not only purely disinterested, but was done with a combination of conditions against him. He was imperfectly schooled. He was born into the peasant class, with its limited interests, and grinding hardening toil. He lived in an artificial century, when the accepted rules and conventions of verse-making almost forbade the selection of natural themes and put fetters upon

natural forms of poetic expression. Yet Burns is nevertheless, in the bulk of his work, one of the most natural of poets, and again and again showed his strong good taste by refusing to alter his lines to please conventional critics. These he described as 'cut-throat bandits on the path of fame,' and when we read of some of the alterations they suggested, we assent, with disgust or laughter, to the truth of the characterisation.

His whole life was spent in a struggle with unfriendly Fortune. Father and sons struggled long at Mount Oliphant and Lochlea, and the former died bankrupt. Robert and his brother struggled unsuccessfully together at Mossgiel, and the struggle was continued by them not very successfully apart. The poet might well have sent the muses packing; but to the last he refused to be persuaded of the

necessity of giving his best thoughts to the making of money. The sole pecuniary results of the writings of a lifetime were £900. Yet while working as a gauger, at a salary of £70 a-year, he refused to write for the 'poetical department' of a London newspaper, although the editor offered him £52 a-year as salary, and although he could have done the work in his spare time. He would woo the muse, he would wait upon her, he would produce rapidly when the fit was upon him; but he would not cudgel the muse. He would not undertake to write so much a week whether the mood was upon him or not. At another time his friend Thomson, for whose collection of Scottish song some of Burns's best lyrics were written, sent him a fee of £5. The poet warmly indicated that he had better not repeat the remittance, saying that his work was either worth more or worth nothing at all. His behaviour in this respect

forms a striking commentary on that of the swarm of hack writers, now more than ever numerous, who, without any excuse of necessity (which Burns might well have pled), drain out the dregs and skim off the scum of their brains for 'cold, unfeeling ore,' as Burns called it.

His Personality.

So much for Burns's motives, the difficulties he surmounted, the conditions of his inspiration. But what of his personality? Let his contemporaries speak. The Duchess of Gordon said he was the only man who 'carried her off her feet.' Ramsay of Ochtertyre wrote:— 'I have been in the company of many men of genius, but never witnessed such flashes of intellectual brightness as from him, the impulse of the moment, sparks of celestial fire.' Maria Riddell, who knew Burns well and who was a good judge, said: 'I hesitate

not to affirm—and in vindication of my opinion I appeal to all who had the advantage of personal acquaintance with him—that poetry was actually not his forte... none have ever outshone Burns in the charm, the sorcery I would almost call it, of fascinating conversation... The rapid lightnings of his eye were always the harbingers of some flash of genius... His voice alone could improve upon the magic of his eye.’ Sir Walter Scott's opinion is that he ‘never saw a man in company with his superiors in station or information more perfectly free from either the reality or the affectation of embarrassment. His address to females* was extremely deferential, with a turn either to the pathetic or the humorous which engaged their attention particularly.’ Burns's conversation, according to Lockhart, who had the report of auditors, ‘was the most remarkable thing about him.’

**Scott here does not mean cows, mares, or bitches, but women. He belonged to the generation which called a person a 'party,' and a man's wife his 'lady.'*

His Work.

I have spoken of his disinterestedness. I have allowed others to speak of the charm and power of his personality. Of his influence how shall I speak? I know of no patriot, no warrior, no statesman, no philanthropist, no scientific inventor of our nation who has done as much for Scotland as has the ploughman bard. 'Give me to make the songs of a nation, and let who will make its laws,' said Fletcher of Saltoun. Appealing alike to gentle and simple, to rich and poor, to men and women, to old and young, he has quickened the imagination of his countrymen, has

revealed and has deepened their humour, has cultivated their faculty of swift portraiture and dry, sly fun, has made us better known to each other as men, and better known to all the world as a nation. We see Nature through his eyes, for he has trained our perceptive faculties by revealing to us the workings of his own. We can never be so cruel to the mouse, the hare, or the birds since, like a modern musically articulate Francis of Assissi, he has taught us to consider them as sentient creatures, having loves and joys and hopes and fears and sorrows like ourselves. We could surely never be wantonly destructive with flowers after reading the exquisitely tender 'Address to a Daisy,' in which the poet coos and croons and melts over the 'wee, modest, crimson-tipped flower' like a mother over her hurt and suffering child. We can never be so bigoted or irreverent as we should have been had we not read the

profane and ludicrous prayer of Holy Willie. 'Auld Lang Syne' is our song of peace, 'Scots wha hae' is our song of war, and the former at least will be sung as long as any dialect of the Saxon tongue is understood.

His aphorisms have passed into the very warp and woof of common speech. The sybarite is reminded that

*Pleasures are like poppies spread,
You seize the flower, Its bloom is shed,
Or like the snow falls in the river,*

A moment white then melts for ever.

The man who would be independent remembers that 'the rank is but the guinea-stamp—the man's the gowd an' a' that.' The dullest hoyden is taken by storm with the audacious statement regarding Nature that

*Her 'prentice han' she tried on man,
And then she made the lasses o.*

It matters not that Burns was not the first to formulate the conception. The author of 'Cupid's Whirligig' (1630) has it that 'man was made when Nature was but an apprentice, but woman when she was a skilfull mistress of her arte.' Burns has made the conceit his own, has cast it in an unforgettable form of words, and it is highly probable that he never saw 'Cupid's Whirligig.' The despised lover takes heart of grace from the lesson of 'Duncan Gray.' The henpecked husband reconsiders his position at the reading of 'My Spouse, Nancy.' Those who would be prone to flunkeyism are admonished that

*A king can mak' a belted knight,
A marquis, duke, an' a' that;
But an honest man's aboon his might.*

The litigious and quarrelsome receive the
homely counsel:

*Then let us not like snarling tykes,
In wrangling be dividit,
Till slap come in an unco loon
And wi' a rung decide it.*

In his alternating qualities of vituperative power and delicate, melting tenderness, Burns reminds one of a great steam hammer, equal alike to the crushing of tons of rock or to the cracking of a nut without touching the kernel. A man of all moods, he has the few swift strokes, plain yet perfect, for almost every occasion.

*The best laid schemes of mice and men
Gang aft agley.
Man's inhumanity to man
Makes countless thousands mourn.*

*O wad some power the giftie gie us
To see oursels as ithers see us.*

*The heart aye's the pairt aye
That maks us richt or wrang,*

*Human bodies are sic fools,
For a' their colleges and schools,
That when nae real ills perplex 'em
They mak' enow themselves to vex 'em.*

*It's hardly in a body's power
To keep at times frae bein' sour
To see how things are shar't;
How best o' chiel's are whiles in want,
While coofs on countless thousands rant,
And kenna how to ware't.*

His Proverbial Philosophy.

His proverbial philosophy is in extent and aptness second only to that of Shakespeare, and what it loses in didactic splendour it gains in homely portableness as compared with the aphorisms of the English poet. If it be the function of the poet to give a local habitation and a name to the vague and fleeting fancies of ordinary mortals, surely no poet has fulfilled that function to a larger number of his fellow-men than Robert Burns has done. Where shall we find shorter expression given to the truth that there is discipline and wisdom. in trial and trouble than in the lines ?

*Then let us cheerfu' acquiesce,
Nor make our scanty pleasure less
By pining at our state;
And even should misfortune come,
I here who sit hae met wi' some,
An's thaakfu' for them yet.
They gie the wit o' age to youth,*

*They lat us ken oorself;
They mak' us see the naked truth,
The real guid an' ill.
Though losses and crosses
Be lessons right severe,
There's wit there ye'll get there
Ye'll find nae other where.*

And where shall we find resignation with the reverses of fortune more aptly enjoined than in the same poem?—

*Mair speirna, nor fearna,
Auld age ne'er mind a feg;
The last o't, the warst o't,
Is only but to beg.
To lie in barns at e'en,
When banes are crazed and bluid is thin,
Is doubtless great distress!
Yet then content could mak' us blest,
E'en then sometimes we'd snatch a taste
Of truest happiness.*

*The honest heart that's free frae a'
Intended fraud or guile,
However fortune kick the ba',
Has aye some cause to smile.
And mind still yell find still
A comfort this nae sma'.
Nae mair, then, we'll care, then,
Nae farther can we fa'.*

To the commonest sentiment he gives the glamour of classic expression, intensifying the joy of those that rejoice and deepening the despondency of those that sorrow by the verbal reflex of his own feeling. The love-sick swain has the pleasant pain of his malady increased when he reads the song of 'Menie' .

*Again rejoicing Nature sees
Her robe assume its vernal hues.
Her heavy locks wave in the breeze,
All freshly steeped in morning dews.*

*And man I still on Menie dote,
And bear the scorn that's in her e'e?
For it's jet, jet black, and it's like a hawk,
And it winna lat a body be.*

*In vain to me the cowslips blew,
In vain to me the violets spring;
In vain to me, in glen or shave,
The mavis and the lintwhite sing.*

*The merry ploughboy cheers his team,
Wi' joy the tentie seedsman stalks;
But life to me's a weary dream,
A dream of ane that never wauks.*

*The wanton coot the water skims,
Amang the reeds the ducklings cry,
The stately swan majestic swims,
And everything is blest but I.*

*The shepherd steeks his faulding slap,
And owre the moorland whistles shrill;
Wi wild, unequal, wandering step,
I meet him on the dewy hill.*

*And when the lark, 'tween light and dark,
Blithe waukens by the daisy's side,
And mounts and sings on fluttering wings,
A was-worn ghaist I hameward glide.*

*Come, Winter, with thine angry howl,
And raging bend the naked tree;
Thy gloom will soothe my cheerless soul,
When Nature all is sad like me!*

*And maun I still on Menie dote,
And bear the scorn that's in her e'e?
For it's jet, jet black, and it's like a hawk,
And it winna lat a body be.*

In 'My Nannie's awa' we have not only the same passionate feeling, the same concentration of meaning, the same characteristic of a picture in almost every line, but we have the same ending in which the mood of the lover is identified with the mood of Nature;

Come, Autumn sae pensive in yellow and grey.

And soothe me wi' tidings o' Nature's decay;

The dark, dreary, Winter and wild-driving maw

Alane can delight me, now Nannies awa.

But Burns can teach us scolding invective u well. The angry prophecy of the Auld Brig as to the fate of the New is weaker er than certain other passages of invective in Burns; but it is more quotable in a mixed

gathering, and it is, as Carlyle says, a veritable Poussin-picture of a deluge. Says the Auld Brig to the New: -

*Conceited gawk! Puffed up wi' windy
pride!*

*This mony a year I've stood the good and
tide;*

*And though wi' crazy eild I'm sair forfairn,
I'll be a brig when ye're a shapeless cairn!*

*As yet ye little ken about the matter,
But twa-three winters will inform ye better.*

*When heavy, dark, continued, a'-day rains,
Wi' deepening deluges o'erflow the plains;
When from the hills where spring the
brawling Coil,*

*Or stately Lugar's mossy fountains boil,
Or where the Greenock winds his moorland
course,*

*Or haunted Garpal draws his feeble source
Aroused by blustering winds and spotting
thowes,*

*In mony a torrent down his snaw-broo
rowes;
While crashing ice, borne on the roaring
spate,
Sweep dams, and mills, and brigs a' to the
gate;
And from Glenbuck down to the Ratton
Key,
Auld Ayr is just one lengthened tumbling
sea,—*

Then, says the Auld Brig, in a transport of mingled fury and glee at the prospect it has conjured up for the New Brig;

*Then down ye'll hurl, deil nor ye never
rise!
And dash the gumlie jaups up to the
pouring skies.*

The man who wants a better mouthful

than 'gumlie jaups' would surely be a tremendous person to fall out with.

But Burns sometimes gains his point and produces the desired effect with a comparatively light touch. When I think of the leap of the fiddles and the swish of the dancers in a ballroom I immediately remember the lines in 'Mary Morison'—

*Yestreen when to the trembling string
The dance gaed through the lighted ha'.*

That is the whole scene. In the fine stanzas describing the ball held at Brussels on the Eve of Waterloo, Byron never once comes near the sudden effect of these two lines.

The Magnificent 'Success' of Burns's Life.

In Burns we have the best type of Scotsman, and we have that type at its best. He is interested in religion and

politics because he recognises that, for weal or woe, religion and politics are big and serious things. He is a heretic in both because he holds great and generous conceptions as to man's destiny, both here and hereafter. Despite the Calvinism of his time, he 'trusts the universal plan will all protect.' Conversant with history, he feels that the progress of the past is an earnest of still greater progress in the future. But, having some conception of the insignificance of the individual in the great sum of things, his sense of proportion saves him alike from exaggerated conceit and from exaggerated seriousness. His mental balance is preserved by his strong sense of humour, which is by no means an unfailing characteristic of poets.

On most of the great questions, the problems for all time, he has something to say, and so far as those questions can be

adequately discussed in verse, his pronouncements upon them still hold the field. In short, if there be anything that Scotland as Scotland has to say to the world on the common concerns of life, Burns is so far her man to say it.

This is the age of commerce, the reign of the successful business man, and I take delight in doing honour so far as I can to one who had as little as possible in common with the successful business man. To many of these, I doubt not, Burns's life appears to be a failure. Let a man give his attention to literature, and even if he do good work in it, his commercially-minded friends will vote him queer if, while failing to make it pay, he persists in following it up. On the other hand, let him or another write the most arrant piffle—stuff which the writer himself admits is nonsense—and if he can make money by it he will be voted shrewd

and capable. Every year as the 25th comes round one hears pointless complaints about the way in which Burns was treated by his contemporaries while alive. There are some superstitions—‘some popular delusions’—that will never die. So far as literature is concerned, the average man, like the Bourbons, ‘learns nothing and forgets nothing.’ I grant that the world allows its Morgans Carnegies to have a better time in some respects than it permits to its Burneses and Chattertons. But it is only crass perversity which seeks to make out that Burns was neglected or was a failure in his own day. He always ‘poor.’ But he was great enough to be able to do without money wealth. Although he could write and feel ‘Man was made to mourn,’ I think it extremely probable that he crowded plain pleasure and high artistic delight into his life in a degree which more than compensated him for the loss of the

business man's sober satisfaction in that he is doing well. To hear the fat and flatulent prosperous man professing to pity Burns for the alleged ill-treatment he received is for the most part merely amusing, though it does become tiresome during a few days in January each year. Your pity, gentlemen, is just a trifle superfluous, even if it did not come so late in the day.

The Artist's Satisfaction.

Burns was the successful lover of several really fine women, making due allowance for his poet's idealisation of them. He was feted in Edinburgh and honoured by the highest in the land, and he kept all his best friends to the end. Above all—though this is what the non-artistic capacity will not see—Burns tasted during many years the sweetest joys of literary creative effort, which alone is its own exceeding great reward. For myself, I confess I have

nothing but hopeless, admiring envy for the man who was found on the banks of the Nith declaiming for the first time, with tears of joy, the immortal lines of 'Tam o' Shanter.' Burns had his full taste of the sweet and the bitter sweet of life. I cannot see that he could have lived his life otherwise than as he did. Even his moods of profoundest melancholy were turned to account for the purposes of his amend, and as an artist he would then be most happy when his lines were best calculated to boot sadness in others.

If those who affect to pity Burns could crowd as much happiness into the square hour as he did, they would not be the dull fellows we know them for. As it is, they will pursue their beaverisms with prosaic success, and, in order to live, will destroy the reasons for living; and when they go hence at the end of their long tedious lives

they will soon be forgotten. Posterity will know them only from a graveyard epitaph, and history will all be read as if they had not been, Whereas Burns is the idol of a people; the spokesman, along with Shakespeare, of all Saxon-speaking humanity; and, as already said, had on the whole a thoroughly good time while he lived. To those critics I say: Read Burns if you will, gentlemen. Understand him if you can. Appreciate him if you must. But your pity! He did not need it while he lived, and still less does he need it now.

James Leatham, writing on Sir Walter Scott in 1915

A Word about Sir Walter

Last year was the centenary of the publication of 'Waverley'; 1915 is the centenary of 'Guy Mannering', and next year will see the hundredth anniversary of 'The Antiquary.' As at the end of a century of fame one still meets many good people who say they 'can't read Scott,' a word may not be out of place as to this great man and great writer by one who owes so much to him as I do. I had begun to read the Waverley novels before entering my teens, and I have been reading and re-reading them ever since, with increasing appreciations.

One offset to the disadvantages of being a Scot is that you stand an extra chance of being grounded in the Waverley novels. In severe Scottish households of a former generation prose fiction was contraband: but an exception was always made as regards Sir Walter on the plea that his tales were 'founded on facts' – as if the writings of other novelists were not, or as if it made any difference, as a rule, whether they were or not. The average modern story is of course largely autobiographical; it is inconceivable that it should be otherwise, inconceivable that novelists should evolve narrative incident, and characterisation out of their inner consciousness. As an intensely fecund and rapid inventor, Scott's incidents and characters were probably, in most cases, formed to a much less extent on actual occurrences and personages than those of less fertile improvisators. What the plea in favour of Sir Walter most probably meant

was that he never chose themes that were not in the highest degree epic and worthy; that his must uttered nothing small.

To know Scott's work in its length and breadth is to have secured the respectable beginnings of a working knowledge of the history of the world. I know of no books that might more fittingly be turned to account for school lessons than just precisely the novels of Sir Walter. They represent history teaching by examples. To have read 'Ivanhoe' is to have a knowledge of life, of dress, fare, habits, and housing in early Norman England such as no serious history could possibly convey. It is inconceivable that any young person should read through the novels of Scott without becoming a student of history for life. He ransacked the life of the world, from the middle ages to the nineteenth century, for stirring themes with which to engage his romantic pen.

Scott and History.

The Crusades are discussed at close quarters in 'The Talisman,' the Santon of the desert and the Saracenic warrior coming in for treatment as well as the crusaders themselves.

In 'Count Robert of Paris,' the last and poorest of all Scott's novels, and written when his mind was breaking up, the court of Constantinople in pre-Mahometan days is discussed, with special reference to the Saxons of the Varangian guard, men who, rather than accept the Norman dominations in England, had accepted service under the Emperors of the East.

In 'Castle Dangerous' the vexed and

turbulent life of the Border is presented.

Switzerland and the strange International secret society known as the Vehmgericht are handled in 'Anne of Geirstein, or the Maiden of the Mist.'

The savage strife and lawlessness of Scotland under the early Stewarts is graphically presented in 'The Fair Maid of Perth.'

The spacious days of Queen Elizabeth form the theme of 'Kenilworth' in which the Virgin Queen herself and Raleigh and Leicester move across the scene.

The break-up of the monastic system and the Reformation in Scotland are inwound with the sad fortunes of Queen Mary and the amusing affectations of the Euphuists in 'The Monastery,' and its sequel 'The Abbot.'

It is at the court of the first Stewart king of England that we follow 'The Fortunes of Nigel,' a young Scottish lord who followed the British Solomon to his new capital.

The 'Legend of Montrose' is laid in the time of the revolutionary government of Charles the First's reign as that movement went forward in Scotland; and as a work of art this tale is notable as containing the character of David Dalgetty, the quaint soldier of fortune who loves to refer to Marischal College, Aberdeen, as his alma mater.

'Woodstock' is a tale of the Cromwellian period, in which Sir Walter, despite his strong aristocratic sympathies, is as fair to the great Protector as he is severe to the roystering cavalier types.

'Peveril of the Peak' relates to the

reign of Charles the Second, and introduces the celebrated dwarf Geoffrey Hudson.

‘Old Mortality’ is a splendid handling of the Covenanting period, the tale itself of great interest, and the portrayal of the Covenanters wonderfully fair, especially when we consider that Sir Walter was a high Churchman who deprecated anything approaching to zeal in religion.

‘Rob Roy’ is laid in the period, if it has little to do with the incidents of the rebellion of 1715. ‘Waverley’ follows the fortunes of Charles Edward Stewart in the ’45. ‘Redgauntlet’ revives echoes of this uprising, is full of incident, and has quaint characters such as the Quakers of Mount Sharon with their net fisheries, Wandering Willie and his tale, and the pathetic Peter Peebles, prototype of poor Miss Flyte, the ruined and crazy litigant in ‘Bleak House.’

‘The Heart of Midlothian,’ besides containing such splendid characters as Jeanie Deans, the Laird of Dumbledykes and douce Davie, embodies the notable episode of the Porteous riots, so typical of the turbulent Edinburgh mob of a bygone day.

This, it must be admitted, represents a wonderful series of historic novels, tapping the story of the nations at some of the most stirring stages in the life of the world.

All the history is comparatively good and safe so far as it goes. When Scott notably deviates from historical accuracy the fact is usually stated.

Historical Portraits.

Let us take, first, 'Quentin Durward,' as illustration how the Great Magician could make himself at home abroad. Its lifelike portraits of 'the sagacious, perfidious, superstitious, jocular, political tyrant, Louis XI and of Charles the Bold, and the vivid colour and movement of this first great romance of the lowlands of Europe, secured for it a rapturous welcome in France, which, of course had seen nothing of the kind before. On its first appearance in Edinburgh 'Quentin Durward' had been, as Scott said, frostbitten; but the French enthusiasm reacted upon Britain, and the novel had at last the reception it deserved in the country of its birth. Germany had long before been fully awake to the merits of Sir Walter, and was, indeed, unflinching and steady in its appreciation.

'Quentin Durward' contains, so far as we shall ever know, as faithful portraits of Louis XI and Charles the Bold, Duke of

Burgundy, as we are ever likely to have. Scott simply went to Philip des Comines as Shakespeare went to Plutarch, and breathed the breath of life into characters to whom the historian had given everything except colour, speech, and movement. Louis here appears to us in his habit as he lived, his worn clothes and shabby hat stuck round with leaden images, to which, taking off his hat, he would offer a prayer. We see him suspicious yet trustful, sceptical yet superstitiously credulous, hanging upon the horoscopes of his astrologer, yet ready to turn upon him at the least sign of a miscarriage in the fulfilment of these forecasts. We realise him as shunning war, yet capable of taking command, and showing both cool courage and sagacious generalship when war could no longer be avoided; witty and superficially kind, yet ready to be promptly and mercilessly cruel; by turns lavish and penurious with his

money; driving away the nobility of France from his own court by his lack of taste for the parade and adventure of kingcraft and by his disinclination to foster any kind of power in the realm save his own; making favourites of his barber and executioner, yet promptly checking any disposition on their part to forget their real position. Such and so varied are the features of this complex personality, helping us to realise once again how very mixed and mingled good and bad may be in human nature as a whole – a fact which we constantly tend to forget.

The dangers of wilfulness in the head of State are graphically brought out in the picture of Charles of Burgundy. The character of this stormy and headlong ruler is shown, not so much by the descriptive analysis as in the blustering speeches and violent commands he issues. It is self-revelation in the true method and spirit of

drama.

Scott's Dramatic Faculty.

Scott was an aristocrat in sentiment and opinion. He preferred to write of kings and nobles, of tournaments and sieges and pitched battles and hand to hand encounters. He loved the high parley of court and camp rather than the 'clink of teaspoons and the accents of the curate.' He spoke of his own manner as 'the bow-wow style,' and of giving his characters 'a cane and a cocked hat.' But he was full of universal human sympathy as well.' As with Chaucer, no character was too humble for his art, and, unlike Shakespeare, he did not introduce such characters to make game of them. They are not dolts and butts

in his page, but men and women with whom we can sympathise. In 'Ivanhoe' we have the faithful if surly Gurth the swineherd as well as his master Cedric; we have Wamba the jester as well as Athlestane, descendent of kings; Friar Tuck is sketched with rather more fullness of sympathetic detail than is expended on his boon companion of a night, Coeur de Lion, the crusading King of England.

Scott's men and women in humble life are the real flesh and blood folk of fiction. Nothing is more signally characteristic of him than his dramatic faculty of going out of himself, of putting himself in the place of the widely diverse characters by whose mouth he speaks. Whether they be old wives such as Meg Merrilees, Mause Headrigg, or Meg Dodds, or old men like Trapbois, ready to do anything 'for a consideration'; Hubert the Archer whose 'grandsire drew a good bow at the Battle of

Hastings'; Edie Ochiltree, the king's bedesman; or Jonathan Oldbuck, the antiquary whom Edie loved to banter over his 'finds,' they are all thoroughly human, with character lineaments that live on the mental retina. Andrew Fairservice, the pragmantical gardener-theologian; Cuddie Hedrigg, the placable and plausible ploughman; Caleb Balderstone, most faithful of servants, and intensely concerned about covering the nakedness of the land; Richie Moniplies with his 'sifflictation,' a true Scottish Sancho Panza of the seventeenth century – these are the best characters in the realm of Scott folk.

His heroes and heroines are for the most part mere lay figures without individualising traits. In the tale before us, Quentin Durward, the fair-haired young Scottish adventurer in France, is indeed rather a full-blooded fellow. We can form some idea of his tall athletic figure, his

readiness for hard knocks and prompt words, his naïve frankness and shrewd watchfulness. But of his fiancée, Isabella Countess of Croye, how little we know! Wilfred of Ivanhoe engages our sympathies by his misfortunes if nothing else; but at best he is a shadowy character; and as for the fair Rowena, we have to take the author's word for her all the time. Neither of them does or says anything by which we could remember them. If by possibility we could meet either, how should we know them?

As shown in 'Quentin Durward.'

In 'Quentin Durward' also it is the minor characters of whom we have the most vivid recollection. Hayraddin, Maugrabin, the

gipsy of the elf-locks, the knavish tricks, and the indomitable spirit; Ludovic of the Scar; the whimsical assistant executioner Petit-Andre, who uttered jocosities as he fixed the hempen cravat about the victim's neck – these are more realisable than the counts and court dames who make speeches at Louis and Duke Charles.

Scott's great dramatic impartiality is very well indicated in 'Quentin Durward.' Aristocrat as he avowed himself to be, and despising tradesmen and merchants as he causes his kings and cavaliers to do, he is nevertheless willing to concede 'points' to the burghers of Liège. The portrait of Pavillon, the tanner Syndic of that great free city, is not ill-natured in effect, whatever Scott's intention may have been in his satirical account of the fat tanner's difficulties with his armour and his repugnance to fighting. From quite as good an authority as Sir Walter, from John

Froissart himself, we know that the burghers of Ghent at least gave a very good account of themselves again and again even when they took the field against the chivalry of the time handicapped by famine and inferior numbers. Scott makes the Liègeois party to the murder of the Bishop of Liège. Indeed he makes a butcher of Liège the Bishop's executioner. In point of fact the Bishop was murdered by William de la Marck's own hand, and the citizens of Liège, though they had joined in the conspiracy against the Bishop, were as much horrified at his murder as was the rest of Christendom at the time. But while Sir Walter is unfair to the Liègeois in the mass, his dramatic conscience will not allow him to be downright unfriendly to these rich and free burghers as individuals. Pavillon the tanner, his lieutenant Peterkin, his daughter Gertrude and Hans Glover, Gertrude's bachelor, all appear in a

kindly light as performing friendly offices, at some risk to themselves, to Quentin and his young Countess. Scott also has the fairness to admit that these burghers showed a degree of taste in their household appointments not to be matched even in the royal castles of France.

But the most signal proof the novel affords of Scott's dramatic fairness is his treatment of the wild and reckless gipsy Maugrabin. When the gipsy is sentenced to death for masquerading as a herald in order to deliver an insolent message from the Boar of Ardennes, Quentin Durward tries to impress upon him the need of receiving a priest that he may make his peace with god. The wild man refuses this counsel. 'What can'st thou expect,' says Quentin, 'dying in such opinions and impenitent?'

'To be resolved into the elements,' said

the gipsy Pantheist, pressing his fettered arms against his bosom: 'my hope, trust, and expectation is that the mysterious frame of humanity shall melt into the general mass of nature, to be recompounded in the other forms with which she daily supplies those which daily disappear, and return under different forms – the watery particles to streams and showers, the earthly parts to enrich their mother earth, the airy portions to wanton in the breeze, and those of fire to supply the blaze of Aldeboran and his brethren. In this faith have I lived, and I will die in it! Hence! Begone! Disturb me no further! I have spoken the last word that mortal ears shall listen to!'

These opinions would doubtless be as far as possible from representing the views of Scott himself.

The Time of 'Quentin Durward.'

The period of the tale is the vastly interesting third quarter of the fifteenth century, just after the invention of the art of printing (1444), the fall of Constantinople (1453), and the dissemination of Arabian learning over Europe. Hardly an echo of these great events, or other great events which were even then preparing, finds its way into the novel. There is a bare reference by one of the characters to the winged art of printing; it was almost impossible that Scott, an author and partner in a printing business, could have avoided that. But when we see the abundant and picturesque use made by Charles Reade, in 'the Cloister and the Hearth,' of the general social stir of that teeming time, and, in particular, the marvels of the printing press as

successor to the labours of the monkish scribe and illuminator, we realise the strides which the novel has made, in the best hands, since Sir Walter's day.

Fighting, ambuscades, an escape from hanging, an escape from drowning, the safe conveying of distressed ladies, the discussions of Louis, Charles and their courtiers with a pitched battle to crown all – such are the elements of 'Quentin Durward.' The characterisation and still more the dialogue, have Sir Walter's usual spirit and wit, and if we realise that the great modern romancists – Hugo, Dumas and Reade in the great fiction already referred to – had yet to come, we are, nevertheless, not surprised to learn that 'Quentin Durward' was received with as much enthusiasm in Paris as 'Waverley' had been, earlier in the day, in Edinburgh. There was, in truth, nothing in French literature even remotely approaching in

character or quality to this novel of French life. The publisher, Constable, had indulged in gloomy forecasts as to its reception – for no reason to be discovered from the tale itself. But the fervour of the welcome extended to it in France reacted on the popular estimation of it in this country. It was quickly translated into German and Italian, and everywhere on the Continent was received with great favour, not less as a true historical study than as a tale of living human interest.

On His Own Ground.

I propose now to give some little examination to the third novel, 'The Antiquary,' as representing Sir Walter on Scottish ground, where he was

undoubtedly at his best. 'The Antiquary' was Scott's own favourite novel, and the reason of this preference should not be difficult to understand. He wrote it when his mind was still fresh and full. 'Waverley' and 'Guy Mannering' had gone before, and the fervour with which they had been received would deepen Scott's conviction that he had struck a new vein of romantic writing as noble in its kind and even more distinctive than the plays of Shakespeare compared with other writings of the Elizabethan dramatists. Jonson, Massinger and Marlowe were all inferior to Shakespeare: but the genre was similar. Whereas Scott had neither precursors nor contemporaries in romantic prose fiction. There was Galt – who never came into his own – coeval with Scott, and a master in his own very different field – and soon there were plenty of followers of much merit.

But if we would appreciate how completely original Scott was we have only to think of the novelists who came before him. Richardson, Fielding, Smollet, Goldsmith – how different they all are from Sir Walter! There was ‘The Castle of Otranto,’ the wooden romance of lively Horace Walpole, who was utterly an Englishman of the eighteenth century, and incapable of sincere constructive imagination. All of them were living and some of them were writing about the time of the Rebellion of 1745, when the wild ‘petticoat men’ penetrated as far south as Derby; yet there is no echo in their novels of that most startling incursion. We cannot conceive Scott living in and writing of such a period without turning to account its most outstanding public event.

Since Sir Walter set the example of illustrating history in the historic romance there is scarcely a period, incident, or great

personage that has not been made to do duty by writers of prose fiction; though it must be said that the Scots and the French have done and are doing much more in this field than English writers, who, with the genius of their nation, have a history but are nowise interested in it, nor seek to interest their fellow-countrymen. Dickens wrote of the period of the Gordon riots, and Thackeray of the reign of Queen Anne; but they, in common with most of their fellow-countrymen, preferred to deal with the life of their own times.

That the glamour of the past and the golden radiance of the future should be discarded for the greyest realities of the everyday present is not easy to understand. The stories of George Gissing and Mr Pett Ridge, for instance – how determinedly drab they are! The struggles of poverty, the hundred and one manifestations of snobbery, the perpetual dragging in of

commonplace details about food and eating, as if the authors had never become accustomed to having enough to stay their stomachs – how can anything of a public be found for that philosophy of the starveling, which is only the more contemptible when the people are represented as bearing their disgraceful, preventable poverty with base contentment. How could a fine writer like Gissing, how can a clever writer like Mr Pett Ridge, sit down day after day to work on elements such as these when the whole world of space and time was and is open to their choice? To say that their work is true to life is nothing to the point. The Multiplication Table is true; but it is not an exhilarating study. A brick wall is a solid fact: but as an object of contemplation or analysis it is not capable of much human or any other kind of interest.

Gissing greatly admired Dickens, but does not seem to have noted that his hero

was in all he wrote the politician, the social reformer, the healthy cheerful man who portrayed the poor not without hope that their poverty was remediable, and that with the conviction that it was the business of the man of letters to help to remedy it, preparing the way for the politician by moulding public opinion. Charles Reade was imbued with a similar purpose. Sir Walter himself dealt with the historical struggles for freedom – the Reformation, the Civil War, the Covenanters; and, Tory as he was, his scrupulous fairness compelled him to show the merits of the men he portrayed, with a leaning (if anything), not to his own side, but to the other. From a perusal of 'Woodstock' we rise with a just sense that the Cavalier type as represented in roustering Roger Wildrack was by much the inferior of the psalm singing Puritan whom he mocked. Similarly in 'Old Mortality' we find the Covenanters depicted as men of more

character and prowess than the men who harried them. Thus Balfour of Burleigh, insultingly challenged to a fall by the trooper Bothwell, throws the challenger, a bigger man, with such violence that he lies for a moment as if dead. It is in the same splendid tale that we witness the heroic constancy under torture of the young preacher MacBriar, who swoons under the agony of 'the boot,' but protests against the secular usurpation with his last breath. These are scenes of which the stuff of public spirit and civic genius is made.

Who would not, on a deliberate view, rather pore upon the noble canvas of 'The Cloister and the Hearth' or 'Old Mortality' than 'The Wickhamses' or 'The House of Cobwebs'? The one is as true as the other, while in incident, background, atmosphere, and noble characterisation the historical novels leave the drab cockney realism in the mud. This is what Ruskin had in view

when he spoke of the characters of a distinguished English novelist as 'the sweepings of a Pentonville omnibus.' Who writes of snobbery must himself be a snob. Scott kept aristocratic company, had the Duke of Buccleuch for kinsman; hobnobbed with George the Fourth and his brother the Duke of York; but when he occasionally introduces a Duke or an earl into his story, they appear as natural human beings, not like the rococo noblemen of Disraeli, who have always to be surrounded with the paraphernalia of their rank, from the peacock on the terrace to the coronet on the chair-back. Even then, it was on humble characters that he expended his most detailed and sympathetic art – the old beggarman Edie Ochiltree, the old gipsy wife Meg Merriliees; Mause Headrigg, the old scolding Covenanter wife and her son the pawky ploughman, Cuddie.

His art was in accordance with his life in this respect. The bustling alewife at Fushie Bridge said of Sir Walter: 'Oh, but he's company for kings, an' yet he'll mak himsel' company for me, he's so aiffable an' pleasant to a' ranks.' One of his favourite anecdotes was of an elderly woman who warmed his heart by calling herself 'a poor old struggler,' When in Ireland he gave a shilling to a man for some sixpenny service, he said 'Remember, Pat, y0u owe me sixpence.' And Pat delighted him by replying, 'May your honour live till I pay ye!' Lockhart recounts how Scott, tired with a long walk, leaned upon the shoulder of Tom Purdie, his gamekeeper and forester, how he scolded Tom for neglecting to carry out his instructions as to the thinning of a hedgerow, and thereafter transferred his hand to the shoulder of Constable the bookseller. Tom disconsolately dropped behind; but, the party coming to a gate, he ran forward to

open it. Scott, seeing the ex-poacher's chagrin, asked him for a pinch of snuff, and put his hand on the shoulder once more. The forgiven and gratified henchman was then pleased to say to Sir Walter that he 'would take his advice' about the thinning. It was Scott himself, who, with great enjoyment, told the last part of the story.

To our Tale.

'The Antiquary' is to some extent autobiographical. In a preface to the edition of 1830 Scott speaks of the chief character, Jonathan Oldbuck, as reflecting the characteristics of a worthy old friend of his boyhood's days, and this was understood to mean George Constable of Wallace-Craigie. But Scott himself had

some of the features of his Antiquary. Jonathan Oldbuck was both book-collector and antiquary, and so was Scott. The one lives at Monkbarns, and the other at Abbotsford. The author was a sheriff, the character was a justice of the peace. Both were landed proprietors. Oldbuck was descended from a famous printer, the founder of the house. Scott was a partner in the great printing concern of Ballantyne & Co. Both had been disappointed in love. The Antiquary amused himself by chiding and chaffing his nephew Captain Hector McIntryre, and Scott's letters to his son Walter, also an officer, have banter and reproof as their constant notes.

But George Constable certainly was an antiquary, a landed proprietor, and may have had other features of Jonathan Oldbuck. It was he who helped to form Scott's tastes as a collector when the author of 'The Antiquary' was a young man

haunting the beach and the cliffs about Prestonpans, where the scene of the novel is laid. Scott's tastes had so much in common with those of the laird of Monkbarns that he was moved in his later years to begin a descriptive catalogue (never finished) of the contents of the Gabions of the late Jonathan Oldbuck, Esq.' That the zeal shown by the Antiquary of the novel in adding to his collection was excelled by Scott himself is shown by many a letter to Daniel Terry, the actor, in London, who besides dramatizing a number of the novels (terryifying, Scott called it), bought much antique furniture and armour for him. Thus in the fortieth chapter of Lockhart's 'Life' the following passage occurs in the very first letter we light upon: -

I was now anxious to complete Abbotsford... I am quite feverish about the armoury. I have two pretty complete suits

of armour – one Indian one and a cuirassiers, with boots, casque, etc; many helmets corslets, and steel caps, swords and poinards without end, and about a dozen of guns, ancient and modern. I have beside two or three battleaxes and maces, pikes and targets, a Highlander's accoutrement complete, a great variety of branches of horns, pikes, bows and arrows, and the clubs and creases of Indian tribes.

These details are interesting as showing that Scott knew something of the weapons and the clothes of the armed men, who figure so numerous in his pages; though they were hardly collected as mere 'properties' to the writer. Scott lived in the old world. His reading and thoughts were remote from the time of his life, so much so, that when in his later years he took to pamphleteering against the Reform Bill his friends had to tell him that the arguments had already been put forward by other

Tories and had been completely and decisively answered from the other side. A man cannot write from 6am till breakfast time, and neglect the periodical press as Scott did, without being hopelessly behind the time, as millions of voters still are, without having Scott's good excuse.

'The Antiquary' abounds in great scenes and descriptive passages. The treasure-hunting in the old Priory of St Ruth and the rescue of Sir Arthur and Miss Wardour from the Halkethead Craggs will appeal to a large class; but such incidents have been much handled by other novelists; though one does not recall any writer who had introduced them before Scott. The most characteristic scene is that in which Oldbuck delivers to Lovel his enthusiastic disquisition on the Kaim of Kinprunes, that account into which the old bedesman Edie Ochiltree breaks with his deadly untimely 'Praetorian here,

Praetorian there, I mind the biggin' o't.' The stone bearing a sacrificing vessel, and marked 'A.D.L.L.' was to the fervid Antiquary nothing less than a Roman monument whose inscription might 'without much violence' stand for Agricola Dicavit Libens Lubens. Old Edie's cruel explanation that the vessel was, as the initials indicated Aiken Drum's Lang Ladle, appears to have amused Dickens so much that he paraphrases the incident in a chapter of 'Pickwick' in which an inscription on a stone discovered by the members of the Club is ultimately found to mean nothing more historically momentous than 'Bill Stamps his Mark.'

Of the descriptive passages two stand out beyond the others. The one is the account of the Antiquary's study, with its little black Elzevirs, its calthrops, spurs and buckles, its mutilated copy of 'The Complaynt of Scotland,' its old ballads and

broadsides 'not one of them later than 1700 and some of them an hundred years older,' and, as the genius loci of the apartment, a big black cat. The other is the account of the achievements of the Antiquary's redoubtable ancestor, the printer, who won the hand of his former master's daughter, under the terms of her father's will, by being the only one among her many suitors who could set the types and pull a proof of his work, which he did, as clean 'as a triple revise' (that is a third corrected impression.)

Jonathan Oldbuck.

Here again, as so often in his novels, Scott seems actually to go out of his way to write up the opposite views to those which he

himself held. The Antiquary is a Whig, proud of his descent from the early German printer Oldenbuck, and rather scornful about the 'old nobility' generally, and the ancestors of his Tory neighbour Sir Arthur Wardour, in particular. When that pompous knight obliquely reflects upon the Antiquary's descent from a Westphalian printer, old Jonathan makes the spirited reply; 'I conceive that my descent from that painful and industrious typographer Aldobrand Oldbuck, who, in the month of December, 1493, under the patronage, as the colophon tells us, of Sebaldus Scheyter and Sebastian Kammermaister, accomplished the printing of the great Chronicle of Nuremberg - I conceive, I say, that my descent from that great restorer of learning is more creditable to me as a mean of letters than if I had number in my genealogy all the brawling, bullet-headed, iron-fisted, old Goth barons since the days of Crentheminchcrime - not one of whom,

I suppose, could write his own name.'

'If you mean the observation as a sneer at my ancestry,' said the knight with an assumption of dignified superiority and composure, 'I have the pleasure to inform you that the name of my ancestor, Gamelyn de Guardover, Miles, is written fairly with his own hand in the earliest Ragman Roll.'

'Which,' says the ready Antiquary, 'only serves to show that he was one of the earliest who set the mean example of submitting to Edward I.'

As against the pompous futility of Sir Arthur and the tragic gloom and remoteness of the Earl of Glenallan, the Antiquary shows as a man of admirable shrewdness and spirit, whose liability to be deceived over Roman camps and his professed dislike of 'womenkind' are

engaging fallibilities from which the dull and ordinary are exempt.

Eddie Ochiltree.

The dramatic power which enabled Scott to place himself at the start point of the old Whig Antiquary serves him equally well with the splendid sustained character of Eddie Ochiltree, the old beggar who refuses to be provided for on the ground that he does not need it, and that any change in his state must needs be for the worse.

‘I am,’ says Eddie, ‘the idlest auld carle that ever lived. I downa be bound down to hours o’ eating and sleeping; and, to speak the honest truth, I wad be a very bad example in ony weel-regulated family... I

could never abide staying still in ae place, and just seeing the same joists and couples aboon my head night after night... and then what wad the country about do for want o' auld Edie Ochiltree, that brings news and country cracks frae ae farm steading to anither, and gingerbread to the lunes and helps the lads to mend their fiddles and the gudewives to clout their pans, and plaits rushes and grenadier caps for the weans, and busks the hinds flees, and has skill o' cow-ills and horse-ills, and kens mair auld sangs and tales than a' the barony besides, and gars ilka body laugh wherever the comes? - troth, my leddy, I canna lay down my vocation; it would be a public loss.'

When Miss Wardour tries to tempt him with the prospect of being independent, the old man says: -

'I am mair independent as I am. I want

nae mair at ony single house than a meal o' meat, or maybe but a mouthfu' o't – if it's refused at ae place I get it at anither – sae I canne be said to depend on ony body in particular, but just on the country at large.'

He has just helped to save Miss Wardour's life and that of her father, and she presses him to accept a sum of money at least.

'That I might be robbed and murdered some night between town and town! Or what's as bad, that I might live in constant apprehensions o't! Im no – (lowering his voice to a whisper, and looking keenly about him) I'm no that clean unprovided for neither; and though I should die at the back o' a kike, they'll find as muckle quilted in this auld blue gown as will bury me like a Christian, and gie the lads and lasses a blythe lykewake too; sae there's

the gaberlunzie's burial provided for, and I need nae mair – were the like o' me ever to change a note, wha the deil d'ye think wad be sic fules as to gie me charity afiter that? It would flee through the country like wildfire that auld Edie suld had done siccan a like thing, and then, I'se warrant, I might grane my heart out or ony body wad gie me either a bane or a bodle.'

It is it the grand apologia for all the gangrel fraternity, of which there are still many representatives in the land of Edie.

Scott's attitude towards the old-fashioned beggar of Edie's type is amusingly brought out in the memorandum contributed by Allan Cunningham to Lockhart's 'Life' Recounting a conversation they had, Cunningham tells how he said to Scott:

'I knew a man, the last of a race of

district tale-tellers, who used to boast of the golden days of his youth, and say that the world, with all its knowledge, was grown sixpence a day worse for him.'

Scott: How was that? How did he make his living? By telling tales and singing ballads?

Cunningham: By both; he had a devout tale for the old and a merry song for the young; he was a sort of beggar.

Scott: Out upon thee Allan! Dost thou call that begging! Why, man, we make our bread by story-telling, and honest bread it it.

There are suggestions that for the character in the lyric and epic revelry of Burn's 'Jolly Beggars'; but Edie lives to us as a more flesh-and-blood beggarman than any that we have met even in real life. *

*For that matter there are suggestions for the character of the Antiquary in the seven poems addressed to Captain Francis Grose, the real antiquary of whom Burns writes:

He has a fouth o' auld nick- nackets:

Rusty airn caps and jinglin' jackets,

Wad haud the Lothians three in tackets

A townmont gude:

*And parritch pats, and ault saut-
backets,*

Before the Flood.

The hero, Lovel, is not very lifelike. He shares the usual characteristics of Scott's heroes, who are apt to be the sport of middle-aged caprice, or tutelage. Isabella Wardour, too, is a somewhat colourless heroine, such a young gentlewoman, in fact, as we might expect to be sketched by a sensible middle-aged man who had been married seventeen years before, at the age of twenty-six. Sex-love is not a very large element in a manly life; and it is only another recommendation that the 'love interest' is kept comparatively subordinate in the Waverley novels. It is something that Lovel contrives to be a young man of spirit, address, and capacity, combined with modesty. If he has few recognisable lineaments, there is plenty of 'character' in the tale without.

As a bustling picture of Scottish life in

the first decade of the nineteenth century, when coastwise folk lived in daily and nightly expectation of a landing by the French 'The Antiquary' has a special topical interest for us at present. Besides the chapters devoted to the alarm of invasion, a German charlatan and rogue serves as the villain of the tale. The many variations played on the surname Dousterswivel illustrates Scott's genius for coining amusing and suggestive names of every kind. These he seemed to have on tap, and he introduced them in his speech and letters as if the supply were inexhaustible. Thus, in a letter to Terry, he refers to the actor's infant son as Master Mumblecrust, though the happy cognomen would probably be invented for no other reason than that he had momentarily forgotten the child's Christian name.

Conclusion.

We are apt to think of our own day as being exclusively the period of literary 'booms' and big things; but it is interesting to learn from Lockhart that the first 6,000 copies of 'The Antiquary' were taken up in six days. Miss Corelli and Mr Hall Caine can easily beat that with the much larger population and advertising methods of today. But it was a great event for the year 1816.

With the intoxicating demand there was for the writings of this great man of letters it is not surprising that Scott, his printer partners, his publishers, and all associated with him should have lost their heads. Sir Walter had put £6,000 into Ballantyne's business, which had been transferred from Kelso to Edinburgh at his instance. This was pure goodwill to the Ballantynes because they were good

printers and men of literary taste. When we read animadversions on Scott's anxiety for money and his often careless writing, it is well to remember that he shared his prosperity freely with others, and that when the crash came through no fault of his, he gallantly shouldered and bore the burden of writing off a debt of £117,000, such a kind of liability as no man ever tried to lift by such means, the power of a single rapidly-moving pen. That he so greatly succeeded is a splendid tribute to both his genius and his character.

The criticisms of his hasty style — of what Stevenson calls 'his brave neglect' are misplaced to the extent that probably he could work in no other way. There was nothing niggling or stippling in his genius. The mark of his style is a certain splendid naturalness and sober animation. He had no particular mannerisms; yet what reader of discernment could fail to tell a prose

passage of his at once? He wrote from an overflowing mind, which all his life and experience contributed to fill. If he wrote much he read much, and his intense acuteness, his marvelous memory, his enormous circle of friends, and his essential happy-heartedness, wit, humour, and kindly feeling represented such an equipment for his work as no writer of fiction had before or has shown since. He and Robert Burns have been Scotland's greatest asset; for the soul of a country is the most material thing about it. When all the generals, judges, statesmen, captains of industry, and even great physicians and surgeons Scotland has produced are forgotten, the world created by these two will be freshly remembered and still potent to cheer, inform, and fortify all who directly or indirectly owe the best part of their thoughts to the printed word, as who does not?

John Barbour, Father of English Poetry.

A lecture delivered to the Scottish Literature and Song Association, Aberdeen.

By JAMES LEATHAM

An Afterthought, Yet a Preface.

Many of us—Scotsmen in particular—are too apt to look back and be absorbed in the life and literature of the past, to the exclusion of a needful interest in the present, as well as necessary hopes and strivings for a better future. The best type of student is interested in the past, not as an antiquary nor a romantic dreamer, but largely because of the guidance and encouragement it gives for life in the present and the necessary additions which each age, and if possible every individual,

should make to the inheritance to be handed on to posterity. In this view history is not merely the engrossing story of yesterday, but a guide for to-day and to-morrow, indicating what to do and what to avoid, and justifying the person of public spirit by examples of those who dared and achieved under difficulties that must sometimes have seemed overwhelming.

As regards "The Bruce," its quality of "soothfastness" places it very high in value in comparison with "stories that are nought but fable," in our poet's own words. To be a Scotsman living and working in Scotland always was a handicap; but Sir Walter Scott surmounted it, and with Scots at least John Barbour should have honour such as he has not had. All good literature would die if people of taste and enthusiasm did not keep quoting and praising the masters of it. The public really prefers

skimble-skamble stuff, provided it be new — ‘the spawn of the press on the gossip of the hour’ as Emerson has it. And it is because Barbour is a Scot, on a theme which does not commend itself to Englishmen, that he has been so resolutely ignored by a press become steadily anglicised, even dialect Scottish books now appearing from London

John Barbour, Father of English Poetry.

As a matter of all-important chronology, the Father of English poetry is not Geoffrey Chaucer, but John Barbour, of Aberdeen. Chaucer has been modernised by the skilful hands of Tyrwhitt and Cowden Clarke, and Barbour has been modernised by several unnoted editors, and in the end as at the beginning Barbour is a poet more nearly English than is the Southerner. If

Barbour is more Scots, Chaucer is more French, and Scots and English have much more in common than French and English.

From Layamon onward there were poets who wrote a kind of English before Chaucer, as in Scotland there were poets, from Thomas the Rhymer onward, who wrote a kind of English before Barbour. But Chaucer is called the Father of English poetry because of the merit and volume of his work; and in quality and quantity Barbour also makes a great figure.

Personalia.

The band is not sent out when a child is born (though in some rural parts they used upon occasion to ring the church bell), and there was no registration of births in the early fourteenth century. The date of Barbour's birth is variously placed in 1316, 1320, and even as late as 1330. As by 1357,

however, he was Archdeacon of Aberdeen—that is, chief administrator of the Church's considerable estate—it is hardly likely that he was then a young man of twenty-seven only; so that the earlier dates given for his birth are more feasible. There is the same uncertainty as to the birth-year of Chaucer. It is given as probably 1328. In any case, "The Canterbury Tales" were not begun till 1391. Some of Chaucer's minor poems are said to date from his college days; but this is conjecture. What is assured is that Chaucer was a bustling man of business till he was over 60.

Barbour, on the other hand, himself tells us in his poem that "The Bruce" was fully half-finished by 1375, and a sum of £10 paid to him by the king's order in 1377 is usually regarded as a royal gift made on the completion of his great poem of some 14,000 lines.

City and Shire.

Barbour is sometimes referred to as a native of Aberdeenshire; but that he was an Aberdonian—that is, a native of Aberdeen city—is assumed by the authorities on fairly feasible evidence. The account of St. Ninian in the "Legends of the Saints" is accepted as being from the hand of John Barbour, and in it is a story of Jacques (James) Trampoure who had land in Aberdeen adjoining that of Andrew Barbour. The adventure of James Trampoure is so vivid in detail that the particulars are believed to have come directly and orally from Trampoure himself, and his being a neighbour of the Barbour family would explain how the story found its way into a Life or Legend of St. Ninian. The Andrew Barbour of the story is accepted as being the father or other near relative of John. A charter of

David II. shows that an Andrew Barbour owned a tenement in the Castlegate of Aberdeen, from which, in the year 1350, an endowment was granted to the Carmelite Friars; but there is nothing to connect this Andrew with the archdeacon, John. There have been other attempts to find a father for John Barbour; but in the end the only certainty is that he had a father, and the hypothesis that connects him with Aberdeen is the most probable. In medieval Scotland barbers would most probably be found only in the larger centres, and that the name is derivatively a craft surname is accepted as evidence of the poet's plebeian origin. Be it said, the great poets, from Homer, the blind beggar of Chios, on to Robert Burns, the son of an Ayrshire crofter, mostly have been of plebeian origin. It is not only that they learned in experience and suffering what they taught in song, but they had the abounding

interest in life in general which the folk of rank and riches reserve for themselves and their families. The poet pauses to wonder and ponder at the past or passing pageant. The climber, self-regardingly climbing, pauses to ponder only as to the next step in his own ladder: and as he has cared for nobody, in the end nobody cares for him.

Inglis.

I call Barbour the father of English poetry because the early Scottish "makkirs" called their medium "Inglis." By this they meant that their language was neither Norman-French nor Anglo-Saxon, as was the language in which the earliest British poems were written, among them Caedmon's Paraphrase and the Romance of Beowulf. It is true that Bishop Gavin Douglas, who was the first to translate an ancient classic into a spoken tongue, called his diction "Scottis"; but that was a century

later than Barbour, and at a time when Scotland was specially emphasising its independence in several ways.

Before Chaucer, then; before King James the First of Scotland; before Dunbar, "darling of the Scottish muse," as he has been called, was John Barbour, of Aberdeen, with the greatest theme and the greatest hero that a poet of that age could have chosen. His theme was the making of a nation out a handful of beaten and almost despairing folk, their natural leaders on the side of the powerful invader. Moses and William the Silent are the only characters to be compared with the Bruce, and neither had his personal prowess. The poet who celebrated Scotland's national deliverer might well have more honour in his native city and in Scotland as a whole.

My old friend William Cadenhead, himself a graceful and pleasing poet, says of Old

Aberdeen :

O stilly, grey, auld-farrant toun,
I cannot pace thy ancient
street,
But, some quaint corner turnin'
roun',
The auld-warld caries I think to
meet—
Barbour intent upon the Bruce,
Scougal, that mild and gentle
star,
Boece, the learned and abstruse,
Or Elphinstone or Gavin
Dunbar.*

**Henry Scougal (1650-78), professor of theology in King's College at the age of 24, and author of the famous treatise "The Life of God in the Soul of Man." Hector Bocce (Boethius), a great Latinist, first principal of Kines College. Elphinstone and Gavin*

Dunbar, bishops of Aberdeen.

Barbour Travelled.

It is a pleasant and a natural fancy; but although Barbour was archdeacon of the diocese and prebendary of Rayne in the Garioch, the probability is that at the time when he was intent upon the Bruce he was a good deal absent from Aberdeen. The offices he held proved his capacity for affairs; but they must have been to some extent sinecures; for on August 13 in the year 1357, when he is first mentioned as archdeacon, he appears as having received a safe-conduct to go with three companions, for purposes of study, to the university of Oxford. There was then no university in Scotland, and scholars desirous of extending their studies under preceptors often went to the English

colleges, a practice which even in the time of Edward III. the authorities south of the Border were very willing to encourage.

In 1364 Barbour is again in England with four horsemen (*equitibus*), and the following year he goes to St. Denis, near Paris, this time with six companions on horseback. In 1368-9 he pays a second visit to France, accompanied by two servants (*vallētis*) and two horses, The University of Paris had then a high reputation for the study of philosophy and canon law, and as an administrator Barbour would have to be something of a lawyer.

It is not easy to decide whether these were visits for prolonged study or merely holiday excursions. If they were the sojournings of a student they would suggest that Barbour's archdiaconal duties sat lightly upon him.

Barbour at Court.

That he was by no means closely tied to Aberdeen there is still stronger, evidence relating to subsequent years. In 1372 he appears as clerk of the audit of the king's household, the king being Robert II., the first of the Stewart monarchs. In 1373 he is mentioned as an auditor of exchequer. After this date he is evidently busy upon his great poem, which may or may not have been written, in whole or in part, in Aberdeen. If he required access to documents or to be in touch with survivors of the War of Independence, both of these would be more available in the midlands of Scotland; for Aberdeen had not then become "The Oxford of the North," as it was at one time called.

Barbour was certainly a favourite of the Stewarts, and his references to them are affectionate; though it should be

remembered that it was not necessary to go south to enjoy Court favour. The Scottish kings travelled the country with their court, the kair contributions to the Crown being collected and consumed in the locality. They used to spend Yuletide in Aberdeen, the Exchequer accounts bearing entries of the King's "lossis at the cartes."

Rewards of Authorship.

"The Bruce" was finished in 1376, and there is a grant of £m, by the King's order, from the customs of Aberdeen entered under date 14th March, 1377, As the £10 would be ten pounds Scots (16/8 in all), it was as well that the poet was otherwise provided for; though 16/8 would be worth at least ten times as much as it is now.

The following year there is a pension—not a gift—of 20 shillings sterling annually, granted to Barbour and his assigns in perpetuity. It is one of the advantages of a celibate clergy that, having no offspring, they are without motives to personal acquisition, and Barbour devised that, on his death, this pension should go the cathedral church of Aberdeen "for a yearly mass for his own soul and for the souls of his relations and all the faithful dead." At the Reformation it would cease.

In 1382-3-4 Barbour again appears as an auditor of exchequer. But at the end of these three years he perhaps took on another piece of literary work; for in 1386 he has royal gifts of £10 and £6 13/4, and in 1388 receives a fresh pension of £10 for life "for faithful service," to be paid half-yearly in equal portions.

It lasted, however, only seven years. On

April 25, 1396, the first legacy payment of 20s. is made to the Dean and Chapter of Aberdeen, so that Barbour must have been dead before April 5, 1395, when the accounts for the year began. The date of his anniversary mass was 13th March, so that this is probably the date of his death in 1395.

Thus, born a few years after Bannockburn, he had lived in the reigns of the Bruce, his son David, and the Stewarts, Robert II. and Robert III.

Other Writings.

Barbour, as already stated, wrote lives or legends of saints, and there are poems on Alexander the Great, and a Trojan Book, which survives only in Lydgate's "Siege of Troy," where parts of it are used to bridge the gaps in Lydgate's MS. They are introduced with the rubric: "Here endis

Barbour and beginnis the Monk."

Wyntoun, who admires Barbour greatly, credits him with a metrical genealogy, "The Stewartis Oryginalle," but this is questioned—in any case, it has not survived; and Professor Skeat suggests that another of Barbour's lost pieces is a poem on the mythical colonisation of Britain by the Roman Brutus. One of Barbour's saintly legends deals with St. Machar, a purely Aberdeen saint.

"The Bruce."

But his fame rests upon his poem The Bruce, or, to give it its full title, "The Life and Actes of the Most Victorious Conquerour, Robert Bruce, King of Scotland." I am a hater of war, and president of the branch of the League of Nations Union in my adopted town; but Barbour's poem on the fighting man Bruce

(who was also a wise man and a statesman) is no jingo effusion. The difference between the soldier who attacks and the soldier who defends is as the difference between the madman running amok and the policeman or other stout citizen who arrests his career and brings him down. And that is simply all the difference in the world. War has been repeatedly, solemnly, and publicly renounced as an instrument of State policy, and all men and women of intelligence and goodwill must wish well to the Kellogg and other similar Pacts.

The Times.

But history has to deal with the past, and I would have you make an effort with me to carry your thoughts back into the early years of the fourteenth century. The

Golden Age of Scotland had come to an end with the death of Alexander III., in 1286. During the following quarter of a century Scottish men and women knew all the degradations of a country nominally and weakly governed, first, by the girlish Maid of Norway, and then by the faineant king, Baliol, with a brief interlude of mastery under the rule of Wallace the Guardian. From the cruel death of Wallace in 1385 the garrisons of Scotland were full of Englishmen who robbed, who insulted men, who outraged women, and generally tyrannised over a nation that had almost lost hope if we judge by the support given to alien rule by even Scotsmen themselves.

But in the Bruce came at last a Deliverer. He had hesitated long, had fought against his countrymen, and had tried, as Blind Harry tells us, to persuade Wallace that it was no use trying to make a stand against

"proud Edward's power," but that he (Wallace) might become a vassal king under the English overlord. Wallace repelled the suggestion and berated the Bruce in angry terms, calling him

*Thou runnagat that never yet did good,
Schamyst thou not that devourest thine own
blood?*

Whereat, we are told by Blind Harry, the Bruce "leuch." But he did ask for a further interview with Wallace, as if he were not quite sure of himself and the advice he had given. Indeed, one account says that he wept at Wallace's denunciation and his determination to hold the field.

Bruce Gets Rid of a Trimmer.

The defeat, betrayal, and death of Wallace, so far from adding to Bruce's acceptance of the apparent permanent conquest of

Scotland, left him so ill at ease that the English king, with reason, distrusted him and had him spied upon. Bruce's life was considered to be, at last, so much in danger that on a friendly warning he fled from the English court to Scotland. Here he began his public career as a claimant to the Scottish crown by the murder of his rival John Comyn, the deed being sacrilegiously done on the altar steps of the church of the Minorite Friars in Dumfries. The provocation was that the Bruce had offered to support the Comyn if he would be a king independent of England, or that the Comyn should support him on the same footing, and the rival claimant's answers were so evasive that Bruce lost his temper and dealt the fatal dagger-blow. When we comment adversely on the bloodshed in the revolutions of other nations—as France and Russia—it behoves us to remember how few of the Scottish kings died in their

beds and how the struggle for Scottish independence began with this double crime.

Bruce's Good Luck.

But Bruce, despite this rash and angry act, had astonishingly good fortune if we consider what might have been the results in an age when people made up for their lack of morals by being all the more superstitious. Murder was a daily occurrence, but sacrilege was really serious. Although Bruce had to live the life of a hunted outlaw for years, he never lacked for devoted followers of all ranks, and, most notable of all, the heads of the Church in Scotland favoured his cause despite the double crime he had committed. The loyalty to Bruce of the Scottish clergy was so puzzling to the Pope that he sent over two Legates to see what the Scots meant by it. When John of England was excommunicated by the Pope the whole

country fell under the ban. Church services were suspended. There was no mass, no marriage in church, no christening, no burial in consecrated ground. In Scotland, however, nothing of that kind took place. The Irish, nearer our own day, have similarly defied the Pope. Forty years ago he denounced the Trish Plan of Campaign; but Ireland, in practice, suggested that he mind his own business, and went on its way.

The Scottish stoutness, however, was shown six centuries earlier, and it was shown in an age when a great emperor, Charlemagne, had done penance out of doors in his shirt on a snowy day at the bidding of the Church.

The Passion for Independence.

The explanation is that the Scottish people were transported beyond all other

considerations by the passion for independence and getting rid of the alien invader whose domineering had driven Wallace, James Douglas, and many another spirited Scot into rebellion and the wild places.

The successes of the Bruce had indeed worked up this passion to fever heat, but it had burned for Wallace just a few years before, and after Bannockburn the flame continued. At the Parliament of Arbroath in 1320 a remonstrance was drawn up by the assembled notables that still stirs the blood. After recounting the oppressions and cruelties of the English in Scotland, this eloquent document, which would of course be drafted in Latin, proceeds:—

But at length it pleased God . . . to restore to us liberty from these innumerable calamities by our most valiant Prince and King, Lord Robert, who, for the delivering

of his people and his own rightful inheritance from the enemies' hand, like another Jonia, hath most cheerfully undergone all manner of toil, fatigue, hardship, and hazard. The Divine Providence, the right of succession, and the customs and laws of the kingdom, which we will maintain till death, and the due and lawful consent and assent of all the people, make him our king and prince. To him we are obliged and resolved to adhere in all things, both on account of his right and his merit, as the person who hath restored the people's safety in defence of their liberties. But after all, if this prince shall leave those principles which he hath so nobly pursued, and consent that we or our kingdom be subjected to the king or people of England, we will immediately endeavour to expel him as our enemy and the subverter of both his own and our rights, and will choose another king who

will defend our liberties; for so long as one hundred of us remain alive we will never consent to subject ourselves to the English. For it is not glory, it is not riches, neither is it honour, but it is liberty alone that we fight for, which no honest man will lose but with his life.

This resolute talk to Pope John had the desired effect. The pontifical interdict was removed.

It was to a people imbued with this fiery zeal that Barbour belonged and for whom he wrote. It was not aggressive or aggrandising zeal, as of Spanish conquistadores out for loot, but the defensive pride and resolution which turned back the conquistadores of England.

The Great Poem.

"The Bruce" is in eight-syllabled verse, and has knightly prowess, frankly, as its

theme, albeit including wise generalship, and a great deal of human nature, both good and bad. This poem, written before Chaucer, has the true method, skill, and spirit of poetry. Writers have claimed that its theme is freedom, and indeed its notable paean to freedom is the most frequently quoted of Barbour's lines.

Ah, freedom is a noble thing!
Freedom makes man to have
liking,
Freedom all solace to men gives,
He lives at ease that freely lives.
A noble heart may have none
ease,
Nor nought else that may it
please,
If freedom fail; for free liking
Is yarned o'er all other thing.
Nay, he that aye has lived free
May not know well the
propertie,

The anger, nor the wretched
doom,
That coupled is to foul thralldom.
But if he had assayed it,
Then all perquer he should it
wit,
And should think freedom more
to prize
Than all the gold in world that
is.

The poet himself states his theme in the opening passages of the poem, and, as will be seen, they contain no reference to freedom. He begins :

Stories to read are delectable,
Suppose that they be nought but
fable;
Then should stories that
soothfast were,
If they were said in good
manner,

Have double pleasance in
hearing.

The first pleasance is the
carping,
And the other the soothfastness,
That shows the thing right as it
was.

And soothfast things that are
likand,

To men's hearing are most
pleasand.

Therefore I would fain set my
will,

If my wit might suffice theretil,
To put in writ a soothfast story,
That it last aye forth in memory,
So that no length of time it let,
Nor gar it haily be forget.

For old stories that men reads,
Represents to them the deeds
Of stalwart folk that lived air,
Right as they then in presence
were.

And certes they should well have
prise
That in their time were wight
and wise,
And led their life in great travel,
And oft in hard stour of battel
Wan right great prize of
chevalry,
And voided were of cowardy.
As was King Robert of Scotland,
That hardy was of heart and
hand,
And good Sir James of Douglas,
That in his time so worthy was,
That of his price and his bounty,
Into far lands renowned was he.
Of them I think this book to ma;
Now God give grace, that I may
swa
Treat it, and bring it to ending,
That I say nought but soothfast
thing.

Freedom the Underlying Spirit.

Freedom, however, is the motive implicit in and underlying the whole movement of which Bruce was the head and inspiration. And this freedom was not a negation—the mere absence of restraint, but the power to enjoy the peace and privileges of home and country, of property and independence under the law, to all of which the presence of an invader is a constant menace and actual daily abrogation. When Caliban utters his "Heyday, freedom; freedom, heyday!" Shakespeare meant to show a mentally and physically deformed wretch exulting in the removal of wholesome restraints. But the comparison does not apply to the normal inhabitants of any invaded country. The British Tommy, in occupation of German territory, did not domineer, but made friends of German men, and he married German women. His

English forebears in Scotland were not restrained by law and were not restrained by natural amiability. William Wallace, returning from the river with his catch of fish, a boy carrying the basket, is asked to stand and deliver. How he dealt with the three insolent soldiers who made this demand is a matter of history, and the incident is typical of what the occupation of Scotland by an English garrison meant to the people over whom they were set. When Barbour called it foul thralldom he was uttering the general sentiment of all Scotsmen of spirit, and that there were districts of the country, such as Galloway and Buchan, where this sentiment was not shared, may have its explanation, but I have never seen it given.

The celebration of martial prowess and chivalry is, as we have seen, Barbour's declared theme; but the poet who in that

remote day sang the praise of freedom and the foulness of thralldom as he did had more in view than the dealing of hard knocks and the exploits of individual swordsmen. This would not be worth stating if the contrary view had not been put forward.

Cleric as he is, he has an ardent admiration for the Bruce as a paladin who held at bay in a narrow pass 300 of the men of Galloway, his own countrymen, but in arms against him. Barbour pictures his followers gathering around him after an exploit of this kind, marvelling at and worshipping him for his prowess., When on the eve of Bannockburn, Sir Henry de Bohun, fully armed and mounted on a heavy charger, rides against Bruce, the lively Aberdeen cleric glories in the cool deftness with which the King turns his pony from the deadly lance, and, as the

knight passes him, rises in his stirrups and sends his battleaxe crashing through helmet and skull. When the Bruce is chided by his lords for endangering his person, handicapped as he is, he has for sole answer that he has broken his good battleaxe. The risk proved worth the price; for—

This was the first stroke of the
fight,
That was performed doughtily.
And when the king's men so
stoutly
Saw him right, it the first
meeting, .
Forouten doubt or abaysing,
Have slain a knight so at a
strike,
Sik hardiment thereat they take
That they came on right hardily,
When Englishmen saw them
stoutly

Come on, they had great
abasing,
And specially for that the king
So smartly that good knight has
slain
That they withdrew them
e'erilkane,
And durst not one abide to fight,
So dread they for the king his
might.

Hard Knocks the Price of Liberty.

As the world has gone, hard knocks have been the price of liberty. The English yoke sat sorely upon the Scottish people, and there was only this way of ending it. It has been so many times since then. In 1914 Germany was the Mad Dog of Europe, as Japan is now the Mad Dog of Asia, and so of the world. There is, unfortunately, only one way of dealing with mad dogs.

The economic boycott of Japan has done much to curb her aggression, and this has been backed by the adverse public opinion of the world. May the world's opinion wax in efficacy! It could not have served in 1314. Nay, what public opinion there was ranked itself behind England. The army of Edward II. was probably only a fifth of the number of 100,000 usually given, and the Scottish army was probably only a fifth of the thirty thousand usually credited to it—18 to 20 thousand on the one side and six to eight thousand on the other. But even so, the English king had Irish, French, and even Scottish allies fighting on his side for the worse cause. Perhaps it was because they came unwillingly to the muster that they were so willing to "turn and flee." Anyhow, here was a simple people, small in numbers, but with the best of causes and the greatest of leaders; and, however little delight a civilised human being can take in

the slaughter of his fellow-men, the result of Bannockburn is an encouragement to all who fight in a good cause against heavy odds, whatever the nature and scale of the struggle. Truth and right have often failed, and will fail again; but here was one supreme occasion when they triumphed gloriously.

Moral Values.

All law rests finally upon force. It is little use passing laws unless you have the power to enforce them, though this pressure, of course, takes many forms, not all of them lethal. The moral of this great poem—great in scale, in subject, and in execution—is still valid for us. It is that the virtue of courage is the keeper of all the other virtues. It matters not how sound our principles may be if we have not the courage to stand by them. One every day sees men bend and bear for want of the

stalk of carte hemp in their moral make-up. And the great value of a poem such as "The Bruce " is that it fortified the Scottish nation for the centuries of recurring struggle which were to follow, in the Reformation, the Covenanting struggle, and the centuries during which, without a great leader, they had to preserve their independence against a rich and populous neighbour, who, after the manner of power, grudges all rivalry, and especially the rivalry of those nearest, There have been those who, like Sir Herbert Maxwell, were prepared to declare that they regarded Bannockburn as a calamity which merely deferred for four centuries the inevitable union of the northern and southern halves of this island. The answer is that a free union preserved the self-respect of the smaller nation, whereas a forced union would not only have been evil in itself, but in its lasting consequences, as

in the cases of Ireland, Poland, Bohemia, and other conquered peoples have proved.

So much for the theme of "The Bruce" and the man and the conditions that inspired it. What of the treatment —the texture and quality of the poem itself?

II

I confess that I prefer to read the less archaic versions of "The Bruce," and the confession is made without apology. Who that really cares for Shakespeare wants to read the First Folio, with its long esses, omissions, and all the gross errors that Theobald corrected only after they had been current for centuries?

Lord Hailes, writing in the eighteenth century, said that Blind Harry's "Wallace" and Barbour's "Bruce" formed the Bible of

the Scottish people. If that was true in his day it is very far from true now.

Bibliographical.

But there was undoubtedly much truth in what Lord Hailes wrote. Hugh Miller tells us that when he was about ten years of age he first read Blind Harry from a common stall edition of the poem, and straightway became conscious of his nationality. He certainly could not pick up a common stall edition of the "Wallace" now. I had been on the outlook for it all my life, and it is less than ten years since I acquired my black letter copy of it, with "The Bruce" bound in, from an Edinburgh bookseller's catalogue and at a fairly long price. Hugh Miller's copy was the Hamilton modernised version; and the point of chief interest in his remarks is his reference to the intense enjoyment with which, at ten years of age, he read it. This means that "The Bruce" is

not difficult to understand.

"The Bruce" as a book it much easier to pick up than "Wallace"; but I find that even Blind Harry's poem must have been in fairly popular demand. A bibliography of the scarcer poem gives over fifty separate reprints of it, apart altogether from manuscript copies that must have been in circulation, or at any rate in existence, since at least 1488, the date of the only known manuscript copy of Blind Harry's poem, which is in the Advocates' Library, Edinburgh. It was first printed at Edinburgh in 1570, and long enjoyed great popularity among the Scottish peasantry. Some of the reprints were made in smallish Scots towns such as Ayr, Perth, Hawick, Falkirk, and other places not ordinarily to be regarded as publishing centres except for the ballads and chapbooks vended by the old-time hawker. My double volume is

dated Edinburgh, 1758. It bears no publisher's name, and appears to be the edition printed by Robert Freebairn in 1715 or 1716, but issued (probably re-issued) with a false title-page forty-two years later. It includes the "Arnaldi Blair Relationes," Arnold Blair having been a monk of Dunfermline and Wallace's chaplain.*

**John Major, who was born about 1469, says: "Henry the Minstrel, who was blind from his birth, composed in the time of my youth the whole book of William Wallace, and embodied all the traditions about him in the ordinary measure, in which he was well skilled. By the recitation of these [stories of Wallace] in the presence of the great, he procured, as indeed he deserved, food and clothing." The only Manuscript copy of Henry's works is that in the Advocates' Library, Edinburgh, dated 1488.*

It was first printed at Edinburgh in 1570. In his "Tales of Scottish Worthies," Patrick Fraser Tytler (Lord Woodhouselee) claims for it a certain historical worth as "the work of an ignorant man, who was yet in possession of valuable and authentic materials." On account of its glorification of the national hero it has enjoyed a long popularity among the Scottish peasantry, but it possesses no poetical merit except a certain rude fire and energy....Encyclopedia Britannica, 9th Ed., Vol. X., Blind Harry.

There is said to be no copy extant of Barbour's original manuscript of "The Bruce." A manuscript of the poem is preserved in the Advocates' Library, Edinburgh, which was penned by John Ramsay in 1489. This Ramsay is stated to have been afterwards prior of the Carthusian monastery at Perth. In the library of St. John's College, Cambridge, is

a manuscript dated 1487, and from the similarity of the writing to that of the Advocates' Library Manuscript, and from the fact that the initials of the transcriber are J. R., it is supposed to be another copy made by the monk Ramsay.

The Common Man Enjoyed the Book.

These details as to the one-time popularity of "The Bruce" are given to show that the wayfaring man enjoyed the poem, and enjoyment without comprehension is unthinkable. So that, despite words that are archaic, and stresses of accentuation that are artificial, the voice of John Barbour still speaks to us sincerely and vividly over the gulf of six centuries of time.

His language was in his day no jargon, but the speech of the people in all the northern midlands from York to the Highland line.

Such words as "gar" for compel, "waur" for worse, "teem" for pour or empty, are still current, albeit fading in usage, in parts of Yorkshire where I have lived. Barbour and Blind Harry both use the word "while" for "until," and this is still the common form in the midlands of England, although it has died out in Scotland.

There is no classic Scots. The differences between the speech of one county and another are so marked that south country folk cannot readily follow our north-country speech, and I should say that the novels of George MacDonald and William Alexander would be read with more appreciation in the north of England than in the south of Scotland. The poems of Edwin Waugh and Tim Bobbin in the Lancashire dialect show more deviation from standard English than does the verse of Barbour or the prose of Scott and

Stevenson. What do you make of this, which I heard uttered by a Yorkshire baker :—

"There's tricks i' all trades, but none i' yars; though they do say as we gets uz mael from Jere Kaye's."

The translation is :

There are tricks in all trades, but none in ours; though they do say that we get our oatmeal from Jere Kaye's.

Jere Kaye's was a sawmill, and the libel on the trade was that the oatmeal was really sawdust.

In a popular Lancashire song, much sung in public houses, Edwin Waugh says?—

Aw've just mended th' fire wi' a
cob,
Owd Swaddle has browt thi new
shoon,

There's some nice bacon collops
o' th' ob,
An' a quart o' ale posset th' oon,

Aw've browt thi topcwoat, dosta
know,
For the rain's cumin' dahn very
dree,
An' the har'stone's as white as
new snow—
Come w'oam to the childer an'
me.

Is "wioam" or is "flame," I ask, nearer to
the actual word "home"?

Barbour has many useful words that are no
longer current in English speech or
writing; and in a less degree the same may
be said of Chaucer, though there the
uncommon words are often obsolete.

French forms such as the negative *ne*;
and then there is all the tribe of *y-clads*
and *y-mades*, with the stressing of the final
. Apart from his frequent stressing of the
participial *ing*, which Barbour works very
hard, he is much more truly an English
poet than Chaucer. With the help of a
glossary or Jamieson's "Dictionary or of the
Scottish Language" no reader who cares to
try to enjoy Barbour need have any
continued difficulty. It is not in the least a
case of having to learn a new language.

This relates to the medium; but what of
the quality? Barbour fulfils the Miltonic
standard that poetry should be "simple,
sensuous, passionate." The *douce cleric* is
not very passionate, it is true. His theme is
so moving in itself that he can allow the
details to arouse excitement without
writing up. Quietly graphic and
affectionately garrulous, he is also, as old

man Chaucer was, silyly witty.

Of Greeting.

Thus in the outlaw stage, when the Bruce, with 200 of a following, has to make for Cantyre as a rendezvous for the winter, it becomes necessary to cross Loch Lomond. This is done in a single, small, leaky boat which the foraging Douglas has found in the loch. When they had been transported there three at a time they were hunting on the other side with some clamour. The Earl of Lennox and his men, hearing the din, concluded that it must be the Bruce's company. Each had given the other up for lost, perhaps dead or prisoners, and they had great joy in meeting thus, and there was much weeping and kissing among these great hearted companions-in-arms, On this Barbour has these bantering lines.

And all the Lordis that were
there
Right joyful of their meeting
were,
And kissed him in great daintie.
It was great pity for to see
How they for joy and pity grat
When that they with their
fellows met,
That they weened had been
dead; for thy
They welcom'd him more
heartfully,
And he for pity grat again,
That never of meeting was so
fain.
Though I say that they grat
soothly,
It was not greeting properly;
For I trow traistly that greeting
Comes unto men through
misliking,
And that none may but angry

greet,
But it be women, that can weet
Their cheeks, whene'er they list,
with tears,
The where well of them nothing
dears.

But I wot well, without leeing,
Whate'er men say of sik
greeting,
That meikle joy or yet pitie
May gar men so amoved be
That water from the heart will
rise,
And wet the e'en on sik a wise
That it is like to be greeting,
Though it be not so in all thing;
For when men greets inkerly,
The heart is sorrowful or angry.
But for pity I trow greeting
Be nothing but an opening
Of heart, that shows the
tenderness
Of ruth that in it closed is.

As a cleric Barbour may have officiated at weddings or baptisms where the women wept, since there are tears of joy as well as of sorrow.

Bruce's Compassion.

One of the very creditable incidents in the career of the Scottish king occurred when he was helping his redoubtable brother Edward in an attempt to win Ireland for a kingdom. The Scottish army has just fought a successful action against an Irish and English force, of greatly superior numbers, and is about to resume the march, when, as Barbour says—

The King has heard a woman
cry.

He asked what that was in hy.

“it Is the layndar, sir,” said ane,

“That her child-ill right now has

tane,
And mon leave now behind us
here,
Therefore she makes yon evil
cheer."

The King said, "Certes, it were
pitie

That she in that point left should
be;

For certes, I trow there's no man
That he will not rue woman
than."

His host all there arrested he,
And gart a tent soon stented be,
And gart her gang in hastily,
And other women to be her by
While she was delivered, he
bade,

And sync forth on his wayis
rade,
And how she forth should carried
be

Or ere he forth Pure, ordain'd

he.

This was a full great courtesy
That sik a king, and so mighty,
Gart his men dwell in this
manere
But for a poor lavender.

Feeling for Nature.

It is said that Barbour shows little feeling for the beauties of Nature, being in this very unlike most of the Scots and English poets who followed him. A feeling for Nature is not likely to be very pronounced in men who are sieging and fighting and foraging, and it is natural that the poet who sings their deeds should share their mood.

But when the artful necessity arises for a dramatic pause in the narrative, Barbour can open with a graceful description of the springtide, as being the season when the Bruce leaves his winter home in Arran for

the memorable Carrick exploit.

This was in Ver, when
wintertide,
With his blasts hideous to bide,
Was overdriven, and birdis small
As throstle and the nightingale,
Began right merrily to sing,
And for to make in their singing
Sweet notes and also sounds so
seer
And melodies pleasant to hear;
And als the trees begouth to ma
Burgeons, and bright blossoms
alswa
To win the healing of their head,
That wicked winter had them
made,
And all grasses begouth to
spring.

I do not know if Chaucer had read these

lines and other passages of a like kind, such as the charming prelude to the Bruce's Irish campaign in the month of May. They were written fifteen years before the English poet sat down to compose the Prologue to the Canterbury Tales, with its well-known similar opening about Aprile with his shoures sote, that had perced to the rote, the smalle foules makes melody, and the rest of it. I am not decrying good Dan Chaucer, whose art and large humanity I alike admire; but John Barbour was first, and the distance between the two, in merit as in time, is not so great as to justify the advancement of the one and the comparative declassing of the other. Barbour, I repeat, was the earlier. Easy to improve upon another man's model.

Barbour shows his classical scholarship in the tales he puts into the mouth of the

Bruce, of whom the tradition is that he loved to encourage his small following with heartening stories of pagan bravery. As the stories he told had not then appeared in any spoken language, it is good to think of the Bruce as a scholar as well as a paladin.

And, Catholic though John Barbour was, and living in the dark ages at that, he indulges in a long argument against astrology. It is fine to believe and admire and also to be sceptical, always in the right place.

Human Nature.

I have said there is a good deal of human nature in "The Bruce," meaning by that human frailty. The wild-blood of the story is the king's brother Edward—brave, rash, and head-long. It is he who encourages Robert to remain and fight it out when it is discovered that the beacon fire which has

lured them to the Carrick shore has not been lit by friends, but by enemies. And if it be Edward who has made a rash bargain as to the relief of Stirling Castle, it is Edward who boldly inspires the King to accept the position and make it good. He offends once again in Ireland, when, with his vanguard, he gets ahead and out of touch with the main body, who have to bear a formidable attack from which better scouting might have saved them. He is scolded by the King, and is indeed hopelessly incapable of the canny course supposed to be so characteristic of his countrymen.

The Bruce brothers were obviously no Galahads; and Barbour's truthfulness compels him – loyal man and cleric though he be – to admit that Edward is living apart from his wife, and has as his paramour the sister of Sir Walter Ross.

Edward Bruce's slighted wife Isobel is the sister of the Earl of Athol, and as the Earl's own wife is Johanna, daughter of the slain Comyn, it is not wonderful if the Earl, with his double grievance against the Bruces, should be on the side of the King, and even after Bannockburn remained so.

Having a Great Story to Tell.

The great advantage John Barbour had over poets such as Chaucer and Dunbar was that while they had to tell little stories, he had a great story to tell.

It is very natural that Aberdeen city should have provided the Bruce and his cause with a poet-biographer. Bruce had enemies in Buchan as he had enemies in the south of Scotland. But Aberdeen city and district were loyal, and it was at Inverurie and Oldmeldrum that the king, hardly recovered from a great sickness, took the

field against his enemies, and, routing them in battle, burned Buchan in revenge for its support of his enemy the Comyn. At the same time he rewarded Aberdeen for its fidelity, not only by assigning it the motto of 'Bon-Accord' which it still bears, but by granting it the royal forest of Stocket, endowing the hospital of Turriff with the lands of Petty in perpetuation of the memory of his murdered brother Nigel, and compelling the recalcitrant Bishop Cheyne to expiate his disloyalty by building a bridge over the Don at Balgownie.

We should do well to keep green and fragrant the memory of John Barbour of Aberdeen, the first notable singing-bird of a nation of singers. The most material thing about a nation is not its lands, its minerals, its machines or its populous towns, but the soul and spirit of its people. Granted courage, resolution, and the

‘engine’ of which Barbour’s countrymen have shown throughout the ages, all good things may be at their command. When the captains and the kings have departed they are mostly forgotten; but the name and fame of a true poet is in sooth immortal. Empires and systems may rise and decay, but so long as a single copy of a great piece of literature remains it can be reproduced and perpetuated to a life beyond life. The poet may have been blind and poor, a wandering minstrel, a beggar, or a measurer of ale-barrels; but when the great ones of the moment are forgotten, he will be remembered and honoured with the homage that men in the last resort always pay to man's highest attribute, mind.

Was Darwin Right

By

James
Leatham

The following paper, first published as The Crowning Glory of the Victorian Era, and long since out of print in its pamphlet form, is issued at the present time because of the interest in Darwinism aroused once again by Sir Arthur Keith's address to the British Association.

Although born at Oldmachar, near Aberdeen, Arthur Keith was brought up at the farm of Kinnermit on the other side of the valley from where I write. The farm would be visible but for the belt of trees on the opposite side of the road. The family is still referred to as the

clever Keiths of Kinnermit, But Sir Arthur's views are by no means accepted with favour in the town and district, any more than farther afield.

J. L.

The crowning glory of the Victorian era was the promulgation of the theory of evolution, which, by tracing the ascent and gradual differentiation of all life from the most lowly and primitive forms of organization, opened up endless vistas of attainment for all sentient creatures.

This discovery of an implied great terrestrial future for mankind is usually and deservedly associated chiefly with the honoured name of Charles Darwin. As a matter of fact, it was almost simultaneously discovered and announced by a number of thinkers. It

was even anticipated by Robert Chambers, whose intuitive, rather than scientific, 'Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation' showed that he had the central idea of the evolution theory even if he had not the facts to prove its validity. Those facts were patiently and modestly marshalled by Darwin and to a less extent by Dr. Alfred Russel Wallace. The extent to which both writers could draw upon the facts and ideas of others in specific departments showed that the same idea was working more or less in many different minds. In his noble threnody, 'In Memoriam,' Tennyson, ten years before the appearance of 'The Origin of Species,' wrote:-

They
say

The
solid
earth
whereon
we
tread
In
tracts
of
fluent
heat
began,
And
grew
to
seeming-
random
forms,
The
seeming
prey
of

cyclic
storms,
Till
at
the
last
arose
the
man;

Who throve
and branched
from clime to
clime, The
herald of a
higher race,
And
of
himself
in
higher
place,

If
so
he
type
this
work
of
time

Within
himself,
from
more
to
more;
Or,
crowned
with
attributes
of
woe
Like
glories,

move his
course,
and show
That life
is not as
idle ore;

But
iron
dug
from
central
gloom,
And
heated
hot
with
burning
fears,
And
dipt
in
baths

of
hissing
tears,
And battered with the
shocks of doom

To
shape
and
use.
Arise
and
fly
The
reeling
Faun,
the
sensual
feast;
Move
upward;
working
out the

beast,
And let
the ape
and
tiger
die.

Even the terminology of Darwinism was to some extent ready to Darwin's hand when he wrote 'The Origin of Species,' first published in 1859, and he was able to quote from Herbert Spencer the expression 'Survival of the Fittest' which he uses as an alternative title to his chapter on 'Natural Selection.'

The Difference It Made.

What is it, then, that distinguishes the

theory worked out by Darwin from the numerous similar theories propounded or hinted at by his forerunners. Shortly it is this. Pre-Darwinian evolutionists assigned no sufficient motive-cause for the progressive development in which they believed, whereas with Darwin and Wallace the sufficient motive-cause was the Struggle for Existence and the necessity of the organism adapting itself to its environment or going under.

‘What is the meaning of the expression ‘the quick and the dead?’” asked the teacher.

‘The quick is them as gets out of the way of the motor cars; the dead is them as

doesn’t,’ was the answer of the boy. This is a familiar and up-to-date illustration of how the theory of natural selection has worked. The mylodon, the mastodon, and

the megatherium were not quick enough to find their food or to elude or overcome their natural enemies, including man. The result is that they are all three of the dead, the extinct. With unconscious remorselessness, Nature has preserved the species that are quick to run or fly from danger, swift to descend on their prey, powerful and fierce in the fight with enemies, hardy and adaptable under stress of climate or enforced change of habitat.

And as it was the swift, the strong, the fierce, and the hardy that lived, so it was they who transmitted their characteristics; and the swifter, stronger, and fiercer the races became, the swifter, stronger, and fiercer they would become.

The Graces as well.

But natural selection preserved the graces as well as the thews and sinews. The male chose the best of the females of his own species, often after having fought with and killed a rival claimant for her hand. Thus Darwin quotes the observation of M. Fabre, who had frequently seen a fight between two males of the hymenoptera, the lady sitting by, 'an apparently unconcerned beholder of the struggle,' and after the fight retiring as a matter of course with the conqueror. Darwin describes alligators as 'fighting, bellowing, and whirling round like Indians in a war dance for the possession of the females.' Male salmon, he says, have been seen fighting with their hooked jaws for whole days; and the male stag-beetle bears wounds from the mandibles of other males. And although the male

birds win their mates mostly by their gay plumage or their greater power of song, the cock pigeon beats off his rivals with wing and beak and sheer hustling with breast and shoulder.

Making Fit for Success.

The consequences of this struggle for food, for mates, for safety of life itself must necessarily be the steady perfecting of the qualities that make for what in the human sphere is called 'success in life.'

The endless ramifications of the struggle for existence are made vastly interesting by Darwin. Among much else that is curious and important in the economy of Nature, he indicates the dependence of the red clover on the humble bee which fertilises the flowers with pollen. Hive

bees are too short in the body to penetrate to the nectar in the recesses of the red clover, and consequently they do not visit it, Deprived of the pollen carried by the bees, the clover is not fertilised. Heads of red clover that were experimentally protected from the visits of bees did not produce a single seed. But the existence of the humble bee is itself dependent on immunity from the visits of field-mice, which attack the honey and destroy the comb. The existence of the field- mouse is in turn dependent on the number of cats; and an investigator found that in the neighbourhood of villages and small towns the nests of humble bees were much more numerous than in less populous parts, which he attributed to the number of the cats that destroyed the field-mice. This chain of causation, then, made the fertilization of red clover

dependent on the number and activity of cats in the neighbourhood.

What Art has done.

A glance at 'artificial' selection will support the case for natural selection.

Breeders of domestic animals, by mating the males and females that have the desired points in greatest perfection, can produce the type of horse, ox, or sheep they fancy. All the varieties of fancy pigeons, including birds so dissimilar as the fantail and the pouter, have been bred from the wild blue, barred rock dove. The tail feathers of the rock pigeon slope downward and backward as a rule; but the scientific breeding of pigeons has gone on for thousands of years of recorded history, and, by selecting for

pairing birds whose tails spread at first slightly and then more and more outward and upward, breeders have steadily evolved tails of a greater upward, outward, and at last forward tendency, till the fantail was at last produced - a bird which, compared with the wild blue rock type, is a veritable monstrosity, a monstrosity glorying in its monstrousness, taking pride in the inverted tail, through which it puts its head with such excited zest that often, in the case of the most highly bred birds, it falls on its back. The oil vessels in the tail-feathers of these pigeons are perverted in accordance with the upward growth of the tail.

The pouter, tested by the blue-rock standard, is hardly less monstrous. It would be twice the size of the short-faced tumbler pigeon, and the

characteristic which gives rise to its name is its habit of inflating its crop, and strutting with a jumping motion while proudly distending with air the enormous bag which in a state of repose hangs beneath its beak. All pigeons in cooing distend the crop more or less, and the pouter has simply been produced by mating the birds with the largest crops and bodies.

In the same way the shortfaced tumbler, which is very small in the body, short in the beak, and rounded in the head, has been evolved by the mating of small and ever smaller birds of the tumbler variety.

As an experimenter with pigeons, Darwin showed that it was possible to reverse the process by which species had been evolved. He crossed the highly specialised Barb (or Barbary pigeon) with other breeds, till he worked back in no

long time to the blue rock or wild pigeon, securing the disappearance of the fleshy iris round the eye and the fleshy wattle on the beak which are both salient characteristics of the Barb.

In a few centuries the British ox in all its varieties has been bred out of recognition from a lean, long-legged beef-barrel upon four feet with which we are familiar in the showyards; and the same may be said about sheep and horses. The original Scottish-horse, a little pot-bellied garron which carried its load slung in panniers on either side, has become the short-necked, large, and powerful Clydesdale, unequalled in the world as a draught-horse.

The existence in all bodies of rudimentary, aborted, or atrophied organs affords further proofs of the

mutability of species. The embryo whale has teeth which disappear at birth. Calves have a row of teeth in the upper jaw that are never 'cut.' The human face bears dormant muscles surviving from the days when our arboreal ancestors erected their ears the better to listen. The human scalp is furnished with muscles similar to those with which we raise or lower the eyebrows, and Darwin cites a case of two French families whose members, generation after generation, could twitch these scalp muscles so violently as to be able to throw off a pile of books from the top of the head. Instances could be multiplied extensively on these points.

What Nature has done.

The breeder has done much by selection

in a few centuries, but nothing to what Nature herself has accomplished in the long æons of natural, including sexual, selection, in which a thousand years count but as a day. Many of the steps in the process can only be guessed at. The geological record, for one thing, is extremely imperfect. Only a small part of the whole area of the globe has been surveyed by geologists. Organic remains rarely become fossilised, and when they do it is by their being exposed to the preservative properties of siliceous elements, which have not apparently done much to preserve the many well-known species now extinct. But to the extent that the survey has proceeded it has yielded results that are entirely favourable to the theory of evolution. Many prehistoric and so-called antediluvian remains have been found in the frozen steppes of Siberia, these

including mammoths not represented in the fauna of the present age.

Among the many facts which favour the theory of evolution as against the idea of special creation is the fact that the birds and beasts found on islands are always akin to those found on the nearest mainland, that the species on an island are fewer than those on a continent, that animals which cannot traverse wide oceanic spaces are not found on remote islands, and that island species tend to be peculiar and endemic.

The Morality of Nature.

Many more creatures are born into the world than can possibly live, and obviously those that survive will be those that are best fitted for the struggle. But

this does not

mean that the struggle rages without help or mercy. There is sufficient of struggle to warrant the poet's description of Nature as 'red in tooth and claw.' Darwin himself spoke of the antelope having to run for its life ten times in a day. But Prince Kropotkin has shown that there is a morality in Nature too. He shows how animals co-operate for defence, the kites chasing the eagle, the sparrows turning on the hawk, the buffalo herd posting its sentinels while the rest are feeding; how they co-operate in labour, as ants, bees, and beavers; how they co-operate for surgery, monkeys picking thorns from each other's bodies and larger animals licking each other's wounds and scratching each other in places which the animal unit finds inaccessible; how they co-operate in the hunt, not merely lion with lion and

jackal with lion, but the lion and the leopard together; and how they will observe each other's territory, even the tigers, which now prey upon man and his domestic animals, keeping each to his own village or district. There are laws of the jungle which protect the weak from the strong, and the animals combine to enforce them and to punish their infraction, as in human society.

A Gospel.

Practically everybody whose opinion counts now accepts the Darwinian theory as to the origin of species; but by many that hypothesis is still dismissed with ribald scorn as the theory that man is descended from the monkey. As to this I would say that I have seen a range of

skulls graded from those of the higher apes up through primitive man to the fully developed Caucasian head, and it would have been impossible to say where the apes skulls ended and the men's began. What Darwin's doctrine was to him during the greater part of a long life of patient study and modest statement, may be judged from the following passage. Surveying the wide field in which Natural Selection has worked, and considering Nature's methods in their length and breadth, he eloquently says:-

It may metaphorically be said that natural selection is daily and hourly scrutinising, throughout the world, the slightest variations; rejecting those that are bad, preserving and adding up all that are good; silently and insensibly working, *wherever and whenever opportunity offers*, at the improvement

of each organic being in relation to its organic and inorganic conditions of life.

That is surely a gospel of vast consolation and encouragement, applying as it does to man as well as the lower animals, and to man morally as well as physically.

Before Darwin, philosophers had traced morals from a divinely implanted 'Ought.' The moral sense was held to be innate. The 'knowledge of duty' was declared by Kant to be a 'mysterious gift of unknown origin,' whereas Darwin, fully recognising that his theory would, as he said, 'lead to a new philosophy,' derived the sense of duty from the social feelings which were instinctive, not only in man, but in the lower animals as well, though of course in varying degrees of intensity. These social instincts, he said, led 'the animal to take pleasure in the society of its fellows, to

feel a certain amount of sympathy with them, and to perform various services for them.' 'The social instincts which must have been acquired by man in a very rude state, and probably even by his ape-like progenitors, still give the impulse for some of his best actions' - that is to say, for some of his most nobly self-sacrificing actions, up to the sacrifice of life itself in the interests of the community, as in the case of the Greek and Roman heroes, or merely for another individual, as in the case of the miner, seaman, or dock labourer who risks his life in rescue work. Darwin claims that this social instinct, developed by natural selection for its own sake, being useful for the wellbeing and the preservation of the species, is so fundamental that when it runs against another instinct, even one so strong as the attachment of the parents to their offspring, it gains

the mastery. Birds, when the time comes for their annual migration, will leave behind their tender young, not yet old enough for a prolonged flight, and follow their comrades. These birds may instinctively feel that to remain behind with their young means the death of themselves and their offspring as well, and so the social feeling impels them in the interests of self and race preservation to leave in spite of the strength of the parental feeling.

Morality from Nature.

Conscience - the Ought, 'the categorical imperative' of the pre-evolution philosophers

- was, they admitted, mysterious in its origin; but they argued, in effect, that it

was implanted in the individual by a single creative fiat. The evolutionist view of all sentient creatures, including man, is that conscience, the Ought, has so many varying dictates that it must clearly have been a gradual growth which has been modified by circumstances. Murder (except in war or as punishment) is viewed by the civilised man with horror, and even hardened criminals are often so pursued with remorse for the taking of a human life that they give themselves up for punishment at the hands of the law. So far is this feeling from being universal, however, that the Red Indian keeps the scalps of his victims as trophies, and the Thug also keeps tally of those whom he has murdered, while it is not so very long ago since the successful duellist plumed himself, and was admired by others, in proportion to the number of

adversaries whom he had slain. Clearly, a divinely-implanted conscience could not regard the homicidal act as a virtue in one age, or in one country, and the most heinous of sin and crimes in another age, and another country. Every day we see new standards being established and acts heretofore regarded as harmless coming within the category of offences or even of crimes. Thus as I write it has just been established by the court of public opinion that Cabinet Ministers shall not buy and sell shares through a stockbroker, the accusers being men who themselves a few years ago were directors and even chairmen of railway companies and other trading concerns which had extensive dealings with the Government, as the American Marconi Company had not and was not likely to have. Perhaps, in the process of moral evolution we

shall ere long see railway directors forbidden to vote upon railway legislation, factory-owners debarred by public opinion from resisting legislative improvements in the position of their employees, and landlords from blocking bills conceived in the interests of farmers or agricultural labourers. The new canon is that a legislator shall be above suspicion of interested motives, and by way of reducing the doctrine to its logical absurdity, we need only point out that the enforcement of it would leave the affairs of the nation in the hands of those who have no interest in and no knowledge of the matters discussed and voted upon, the railway employee, the agricultural labourer, and the rest of them being equally denied direct representation on the ground of interested motives. Where disinterested members are to be found would then be

the problem. The new standard which brands as an offence the supporting of a deserving enterprise with the necessary capital certainly shows that the moral sense is subject to constant and even rapid change in its sanctions!

Opponents of the evolutionary theory of morals argue that the Ought does not forbid or sanction specific acts. The morality of the Ought lies in the fact that so soon as an act is regarded as wrong the conscience of the moral man forbids his committing that act. Carrying their theory further than I have ever known them do themselves, the apologists of the intuitional theory of conscience might argue that it is not enough to set up a standard; that there will always be men and women who, with the fullest knowledge of good and evil, will shun the good and choose the

evil ; that knowing is a matter of the intellect, and doing or forbearing is a matter of moral feeling, in other words of conscience.

This brings us to the crux of the question, which resolves itself into a matter of social sympathy. The criminal is simply a man who is deficient in one or other or several of the social feelings. He has somehow missed his share, or some part of his share, of the full fruits of evolution; though it will probably be found that the criminal or anti-social type, while defective on one side, is the more fully developed on another. Murderers have frequently been exceedingly fond of animals, and attention has recently been called to the case of a Frenchman of homicidal mania who, while he killed many adult persons, showed great fondness for children and

for pigeons, his affection for the children being warmly reciprocated. There are many reasons for believing that the man or woman of certain criminal or anti-social tendencies may on balance carry as large a proportion of the virtues as the average well-behaved citizen.

Atavism.

The evolutionist theory with respect to the murderer or other person who shows a lack of conscience is that he represents a throw-back to a remote ancestral type in whom the moral standard was not developed on a certain point or points. But this implies that inseparable connection between specific ethics and 'the categorical imperative' which the intuitionist philosophers did not admit.

In any case it must be admitted that conscience without specific moral standards cannot be of practical use. To know that we ought not to do what we ought not to do is of little use unless the anti-social act is particularised and a healthy social sentiment aroused on the matter. Even then, most people would be more shocked to find that they had broken the law and were liable to punishment than they would be at any amount of moral reprobation from their acquaintances.

Morals have been a steady growth in which tribal opinion, public opinion, the church, and the law which crystallises public opinion, have been the all-potent formative factors, with comparatively little reference to conscience, which is itself almost entirely subject to the prevailing sentiment of the time. There

was a time when even good men like Joseph Addison were very frequently the worse for liquor. They knew it to be wrong; but Society regarded it indulgently as the peccadillo of men of spirit and good feeling. But a Premier or other man of affairs who drank port to the extent that the Younger Pitt did would be impossible nowadays, so much has the social sentiment altered upon the subject of drinking and drunkenness.

Do Men Change.

There are those who roundly assert that species do not change. The pictured negroes who attended upon Semiramis and Rhamses four thousand years ago are, they say, the same as those whom we see to-day. If the negro has not

changed in four thousand years, why, they say; should we be asked to believe that he changes at all?

We take leave to doubt if even the negroes are the same. There are, of course, many different negroid types, and we should require to know which types are compared. What we do know is that Caucasian man changes within two generations or less, according to his food, work, and environment. The French peasant before the Revolution was emaciated and prematurely aged. To-day he is plump and lusty with good food and wine.

It is worth while pointing out that four thousand years is no great space of time from the evolutionist point of view. For the rest, a species will change only under conditions that compel a change. A period of equilibrium during which no

change takes place may last for a longer or shorter period according to conditions, and the species, race, nation, tribe, or class may either improve or degenerate to extinction. Thus the aristocracy of Spain was at one time so exclusive, and there was so much in-breeding, that ugliness and decrepitude became the true characteristics of a hidalgo.

Taking a longer period, we find that, in spite of artificial city life, sedentary habits, and nerve strain, the average duration of life is longer, less sickness is experienced,

and the stature and chest measurement have apparently increased. The sword-hilts of the fifteenth century are too small for the average twentieth-century hand. Suits of armour reputed to have been worn by full-grown men are too small for the men of to-day. The stone

coffins of antiquity will not admit the latter-day man. And the lowness and narrowness of mediæval doorways and seats also point to an increase in the average size of the adult human being. It is true that the height and chest measurements for the army have been successively reduced; but that only means that recruits are more difficult to secure and that the big men who in former days joined the army now join the police, and are probably bigger men than the grenadiers of Wellington were.

Conclusion.

The ape and tiger are very certainly dying out in man. Cock-fighting, rat-baiting, and dog-fighting are no longer the recognised Sunday recreations of the

workman. The savage street-fights of Caroline and Georgian times, at which the mob rejoiced over an eye gouged out or an arm broken, are no longer conceivable. Husbands no longer 'chastise' their wives and servants as a proper thing; and the cruel beating of children has given way to what many kind people regard as over-indulgence. A century ago the inmates of Bedlam, raving and foaming at the mouth, formed one of the stock sights of London; but the descendants of the people who gloated over this, to whom an execution was a gala, and the man in the stocks or the pillory, would be shocked and indignant at such displays to-day.

Britain, and probably other countries, are suffering at present from an epidemic of frivolity due to the fact that

the great body of the people have not been educated to the proper use and enjoyment of life. But this will probably pass; for unworthy pleasure palls, humanity is eminently teachable, and it must be taught.

The great lesson of evolution, so fortifying to those who labour in the cause of humankind, is that man, having come so immeasurably far, is destined by the logic of his career to unimaginable glories of still further achievement. This does not mean that every stage in the evolution must needs be inevitable and right. Nor does it mean that the type produced by the unchecked struggle for existence will always be the ideally best. Darwin says:-

Natural selection, or the survival of the fittest, does not necessarily include progressive development – it only takes advantage of such variations as arise and

are beneficial to each creature under its complex relations of life.

Given bad conditions, the bad will be the fittest to survive, as in a sewer the fiercest, strongest, and most cunning rats drive out the weaker. It is the business of civilization to correct the excesses of the struggle and to give an increasing chance to what is bright and benevolent, to what is lovely and charming and gay, so that all may have the *debonair* gentleness which is now the attribute chiefly of the favoured few who have succeeded in extricating themselves from the press of the struggle. For the survival of the fittest, who at present are too often the coarsely strong or the merely unscrupulous, legislation, education, and improved taste must gradually substitute the Survival of the Best .

The Place of the Novel.

Culture indefatigably tries, not to make what each raw person may like, the rule by which he fashions himself, but to draw ever nearer to a sense of what is indeed useful, beautiful, and becoming, and to get the raw person to like that. - MATTHEW ARNOLD.

In the library of a wise man the department of prose fiction need not be more than sparingly represented. Life is short; and in novels one must read much to learn little. Modern novelists have mostly forgotten - if they ever knew - the original purpose of the novel. As conceived by Samuel Richardson, the father of the countless tribe, the novel was to convey information and 'moral reflections' through the medium of a story, the plot to stand in the same relation to the solid, informative part of the work as the string in a necklace

does to the beads. Though lacking in the technique, the superior diction, and the more subtle character-analysis of the best modern prose fiction, the early novels - say from those of Fielding and Smollett on to those of Scott and Jane Austen - had a certain social and psychological value from the fact that the types of character brought together in them were always broad and distinct, illustrating the thought, speech, and manners of a class.

But now the genuinely popular novels tend to be all string and no beads. The novelists most in favour are writers who are neither formative nor informative, who rarely generalise, who have no discernible social or psychological purpose in view, whose characters are not types, but simply people to whom things happen. A novelist is esteemed by the average reader, not for how much he can teach through the

medium of his art, but for the directness of his narrative and its exclusion of everything except the dialogue, incidents, and 'situations' strictly needed to help on the plot. The short story is, in this view, the ideal story; Hugh Conway is the ideal story-teller; not Kipling, or Jacobs, or Joseph Conrad. Meredith, Hardy, Mrs. Humphrey Ward, and H. G. Wells are of the class of teaching novelists; but the fact that they are not as popular as 'Ethel Dell' and Mr. Charles Garvice shows that their writing is not the sort of thing the public wants is accustomed to get.

The Fault of the Novel.

The fault of the novel is that it is so largely concerned with 'machinery.' In literature one wants life experiences clarified and concentrated. To read of railway journeys and sea voyages, to eat other people's dinners over again in black-and-white, to

wade through pages upon pages of non-didactic dialogue or descriptions of faces and postures - all this is too tiresome even if it were not so unprofitable. Novels are good enough for people who can't assimilate an idea unless it is presented in a pictorial or dramatic setting, or for those who don't want ideas at all, but read merely to kill the time in a life which they don't know how to use. To those who read to learn, Green's 'History' is more entertaining than the best modern novel; and as regards the great majority of novels of all sorts, it is only sober fact to say of them that truth is especially stranger than that sort of fiction.

In a lively 'Gossip on Romance,' Louis Stevenson argues that there is a deep craving for incident; and he appears to assume that this craving is legitimate and commendable simply because it is there.

Eloquence and thought, character and conversation (he says) were but obstacles to brush aside as we dug blithely after a certain sort of incident like a pig for truffles. . . . Certain dank gardens cry aloud for a murder; certain old houses demand to be haunted; certain coasts are set apart for shipwreck.

The existence of this desire for incident is undeniable; but there is good reason to believe that it has been largely fomented, if not in some minds altogether begotten, by the writers of fiction themselves. The craving for incident appears at its natural worst in the case of the boy who robs his employer, runs away from home, and is presently found by the police with a loaded revolver and a collection of blood-curdling tales in his possession. The passion for incident might be as general as the belief in ghosts and witchcraft has been; but that

we should encourage it, and that a whole class of men and women should make it the serious business of their lives to cater for it, seems more than doubtful.

This craving for incident was, as we should expect to find, abnormally strong in Stevenson, and, since it gave us 'The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde,' we may be glad and thankful for it. But although it can be turned to good account in the hands of a novelist, it is not therefore necessarily healthy and desirable in men and women generally. The general cultivation of the spirit of adventure would have - indeed, already has - a strong tendency to turn men and women from the plain and noble utilities of life, inclining them to follow romantic pursuits, and to look for sudden strokes of fortune providing that which they might more certainly get by honest work.

'Things as they are.'

I do not wish to be ranked among the Philistines. I trust that the army of the light may always be well recruited; for if that army does not keep the world sweet, it does much to prevent it turning sour. But the world must always in the main consist of people who have more or less prosaic work to do; and their need is not so much to be fed upon romantic incident as, in the words of Bishop Butler, to see 'things as they are.' By the prevalent wholesale devouring of novels their opportunities are enormously abridged of learning the history, position, and prospects of the country and the world in which they live and of knowing what life is in itself.

If incident and romance must be had, are there not plenty of the elements of romance, without its illusions, in the narrative of 'things as they are' and have

been? Are the friends of the novel prepared to contend that truth is, after all, *not* stranger than fiction? In order to justify the pre-eminence sought to be given to the novel of incident, it would be necessary to justify the love of incident. But that is not all. It would also be necessary to show that, in the novel, the incident is more abundant as well as more engrossing than it is in history and biography.

Now, the experience of well-read persons is that they remember the occurrences in fiction much less readily than the events of history. The really vivid 'situations' and the realisable flesh-and-blood characters in fiction are, after all, few in number. Micawber, Mark Tapley, Pecksniff, Baillie Nicol Jarvie, old Trapbois, Mrs. Poyser, Becky Sharpe, Allan Breck - these and a very few more would exhaust the list; and these are widely remembered and their

sayings often quoted chiefly because Dickens and Scott, George Eliot and Thackeray have ten readers where Plutarch and Gibbon and Macaulay have but one.

What we Remember.

But I repeat that, to those who read history as well as fiction, the pictures of the historian live more vividly on the mental retina than those of the novelist, be the latter ever so skilful. Leonidas and his Spartans in the Pass of Thermopylæ; Scaevola before Lars Porsena; Regulus before the Roman Senate; the exclamation of Caesar at finding Brutus among the assassins; the midnight alarm given by the geese of the Capitol, which betrayed the advance of the barbarians, and for the time saved the power of Rome; Canute on the sea beach: the adventures of Alfred, Wallace, and Bruce - those form the

incidents we remember rather than the tame tableaux of the novelist. Is there anything in fiction more horrible, if horrors are wanted, than the murder of Edward II.; more breathlessly enthralling than the taking of Edinburgh Castle by Lord Randolph, more romantically daring than the attack on the Armada by the cockboats of Howard and Drake, of Hawkins and Frobisher? What scenes of martyrdom are there in fiction that thrill us in the reading like the death scenes of Ridley and Cranmer, or those of Servetus, of Bruno, or of George Wishart? Where shall we see beauty in distress as we see it in Queen Mary's chamber at the slaying of Rizzio? Where shall we see aught stranger than the spectacle of physical ugliness and moral turpitude prevailing for a time over all disadvantages and all obstacles as in the story of the Third Richard? What hero of fiction could be made to vie in gifts and

graces and accomplishments with the veritable personage known as the Admirable Crichton? The Marquis of Montrose, Napoleon, Garibaldi, Mazzini had each of them a career far more romantic, significant, and lofty than those of the Esmonds or Mortons, the Ivanhoes or Devereuxs of the novel at its best. If a mighty canvas, great figures, and stirring incidents are required, what in fiction can compare with the very soberest history of the French Revolution?

The Strangeness of Truth.

The novelist cannot safely afford to outrage probability. He must draw upon the incidents and experiences of real life. But history and biography show probability outraged every day in real life. It is in real life that precedents are established and 'records' beaten. Steam, gas-lighting, balloons, electricity, were all part of the

machinery of life before they became properties to the novelist; and although Jules Verne anticipates science in tales like 'Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Sea' and 'From the Earth to the Moon,' he stands almost alone in that department, while even he has in every case got his first hint from science. (This was written before the advent of H. G. Wells as the pseudo-scientist in fiction. In this department Wells is surely the last word in ingenuity; but my contention still holds good; for Wells stands pretty much alone as the successor of Verne.)

Would it be utterly banal to say that, as a conceiver and bringer-forth of things strange and new, Verne must take a subordinate place to the inventor of the phonograph?

As it is in science and the arts, so it is in the problems of the mind. In all the

elements of the fearful and wonderful, the new and the true, the useful and the absorbingly interesting, history, biography, and the daily papers are grander and more fertile than fiction. I know a man who falls asleep over 'Oliver Twist,' but reads *The Times* money columns with zest at midnight!

The lives of men in general are humdrum enough, not because there is not scope for legitimate adventure and wholesome variety, but because men live and move in the ruts of custom, preferring to do over again what they have often done before. If they are to find in literature the variety and excitement which they do not find in life itself, the antidote to monotony is to be looked for, not so much in fiction as in history and biography, in 'the fairy tales of science' and the creations of 'the poet's teeming head.'

Incident without Illusion.

It may be said that to prove all this is to prove too much. To condemn the novel because it consists largely of incident, and then to extol history because it abounds in incident of a more engrossing kind than that of the novel, may look like inconsistency. But apart from the interest attaching to historical incidents, enacted on the great scale, and didactic with all the force of truth and reality, and apart, also, from the value of the historian's disquisitions on the characters of notable men and important institutions, history, considered merely as a narrative of events, has one enormous advantage over fiction. In history we get incident without illusion. In novels the incidents are modified, are made subordinate and contributory to the climax of the plot. They are illusory because worked up with a given end in

view. The climax of a novel is usually of the nature of either tragedy or comedy; and the characters in the novel pass through only the one tragedy or the one comedy. But in history as in real life men and nations pass through comedies and tragedies in chequered succession; and the greater value of history is that it shows us men and nations failing or succeeding in the long run very much according to their deserts - failing when they attempt the impossible or the undesirable, failing when they do not choose the proper means to a given end, or do not properly use the means they have adopted - failing from such causes, succeeding from causes the reverse of these.

One of the well-known illusions fostered by fiction is the idea that vice finds speedy punishment and virtue speedy reward. But there are sins, both secret and open, whose

consequences fall even more heavily upon the son and the son's son than upon the sinner himself. Novels are already sufficiently long – the bad ones much too long. But for certain purposes they are, and must be, too short. There are great life principles - good and bad, social and personal - which require more than a lifetime, more than the life of a generation, for their proper working out. (Zola's 'Rougon-Macquart' series, being the *Histoire Naturelle et Sociale d'une Famille sous le Second Empire*, narrated in twenty volumes, forms a tacit recognition of the truth of this.)

They require to be in operation, it may be, for centuries before their results can be adequately known and appraised. Think how long the intolerable burdens of the *ancien régime* were tolerated in France! For the due development of such principles

the scale and scope of the novel are necessarily too limited. But it is not so with history. There the scale embraces centuries of time and the scope millions of persons. For while the novel deals only with a portion of the life of imaginary persons, history deals with the continuous life of real nations. The novel, again, represents men and women steering, intuitively rather than intelligently, by the pole star of truth and righteousness, yet defeated for a time by the machinations of successful villainy. Then one day villainy is unmasked and punished, virtue is rewarded, couples are paired off for marriage, and the customary impression of post-nuptial bliss is conveyed either expressly or by implication. This does not apply to the realistic school, whose exponents are chiefly remarkable for microscopical minuteness in description, inconsequential dialogue, the unexpected killing-off of the

chief characters, the gradual, unnoticed, dropping-out of the minor ones, with a trick of now breaking off the narrative suddenly, or again drawing it out to a long-deferred, lame, and impotent conclusion. One of the chief aims of the realistic novel is to be as unlike the ordinary novel as possible. It perhaps comes nearer the truth than does the ordinary novel; but is it art? And can any one pretend that up to this point realism, in the almost exclusive attention which it has devoted to the ugly, the diseased, and the wicked, has not been grossly lop-sided?

History, to resume the comparison, gives no countenance to the illusion, fostered by fiction, that our troubles end with marriage. It has comparatively little to say about strokes of luck and the chapter of accidents. Its tendency is to show that 'Providence' fights on the side of the

strongest battalions, whatever the nature of the warfare may be. The historian, also, has more than primary colours upon his literary palette: he does not divide his personages into good and bad, silly and crafty, heroes and villains. He shows us vice and virtue, wisdom and folly largely intermingled in the same natures. He shows us a man like Lord Bacon, sycophantic, mean, greedy; yet sagacious, learned, full of intellectual curiosity and zeal for science to the day of his death. He shows us ecclesiastics, such as Calvin and Knox, narrow and bigoted on matters of doctrine and church government, yet on questions of popular and secular education open-minded and progressive. He shows us men prepared, like Guy Fawkes, to commit a great crime from an excess of disinterested zeal. Portraying the characters of men who have been by turns grasping and generous, cruel and humane,

vindictive and magnanimous, history guards us against summary judgments and sweeping general propositions. Obligated to give us at least an approximation to the truth, history avoids alike the juvenile optimism of the old-fashioned novel and the pessimistic 'realism' of the modern. Instead of fostering illusions it dispels them, while at the same time it gives us hopes based on the certainty of past progress,

Province of the Novel.

Of course the novel has its province. At the best - and a splendid best that is - fiction is psychology, ethics, common sense, and the conduct of life teaching by examples. At the worst - and the worst is greatly in excess - it consists of tediously perverse heroics, fatuous 'yearning,' or tedious, meaningless gossip - 'the clink of teaspoons and the accents of the curate.' If it be argued that the reader should study what he most

affects, on the ground that 'no profit comes where is no pleasure ta'en,' the answer is that one of the chief functions of criticism is to appraise the relative value of the various forms of literature, and thereby show the reader what he ought to affect. If this has to be done with regard to prose fiction, that branch of letters must be placed quite last on the list.

The view of the novel here expressed is no merely puritanical negation; neither is it to be dismissed as the carping criticism of a misanthropical Dryasdust. It is a view which, in less or more definite form, has been held and expressed by the novelists themselves. As all the world knows, Scott turned to prose fiction only when he found himself eclipsed at poetry by Byron. Charles Reade coveted success as a dramatist rather than as a novelist. George Eliot was less anxious to be known as a

novelist than as a poetess. From the numerous volumes of delightful essays Stevenson produced, there is reason to suspect that even he - prince of romancers as he was - preferred the essay form of composition to novel-writing.

Novelists on their Art.

To most authors of the better sort the novel has been mainly a species of literary pot-boiler. They have written novels, not because they considered that the best, most useful, or most congenial work they could do, but because they found it the most profitable. The public does not so much want to be edified as to be amused; and the author who wishes to make something beyond his salt must keep his ideas, but trot out his puppets. Mr. Grant Allen, in the heyday of his career as a brilliant and versatile litterateur, and himself a prolific and successful novelist, wrote:

I do not approve of novels. They are for the most part a futile and unprofitable form of literature; and it may be profoundly regretted that the mere blind laws of supply and demand should have diverted such an immense number of the ablest minds in England, France, and America from more serious subjects to the production of such very frivolous and, on the whole, ephemeral works of art.

By this time of day the novelists can well afford to have their art estimated at something like its true value. No class of literary men have received more of the favours of the public, not only in the form of fame and 'honours,' but also in the form of hard cash for comparatively light and facile labours. (I can well remember being struck as a boy with the description given of the change that came over Walter Scott's method of work when, in his later

days, he turned from novels to write the 'Life of Napoleon.' It was no longer a case of reeling off 'a chapter of 'The Pirate' before breakfast.' It had been his custom to write rapidly and easily, one hand on the desk and the other left free to caress the head of the hound Maida by his knee; but now he sat surrounded by piles of volumes - on the table and around him on the floor - to which he made frequent reference, the work proceeding with a comparative slowness which must have been specially irksome to him, pressed as he was by the necessity of making money, and long accustomed to the habit of rapid and careless composition.)

By persistent puffery and mutual log-rolling some of them have succeeded in persuading a large section of the reading public that excellence in prose fiction represents the high-water mark of literary

production, and that if there be anything of moment the public has to learn from books the approved medium for its communication is the novel. And this latter idea has found so much acceptance that everything must now be cast more or less in the novel form. History, politics, economics, sociology, art, physical science, 'the sex question' - all are filtered in dribblets through the novel,

One result of this straining-after knowledge-made-easy is that the reading public, though enormously enlarged, is a public possessing less of the power of close reading and sustained thinking than belonged to the generations which read 'The Spirit of Laws,' 'The Decline and Fall,' 'The Letters of Junius,' which read Hume, Burke, and Adam Smith, Channing, Emerson, and John Stuart Mill. Without wishing to make too much of the saying

that 'a little learning is a dangerous thing,' it is still easy to see that much harm may be done by confining the teaching of grown-up people mainly to those things that can be served up through the medium of the novel. The powers of the mind, like those of the body, become atrophied from disuse; and a population fed upon the spoon-meat of fiction is bound to lose the power of making that use of the mental molars which all serious problems require for their proper mastication.

The Novel with a Purpose.

The novel without a purpose is often a sorry inanity enough; but in view of the importance attached to the novel with a purpose, it requires to be said that even the latter leaves much to be desired on the score of utility. Not a few of our young people of both sexes are developing the habit of thinking that they understand a

subject and are entitled to lay down the law upon it merely because they have read some novelist's fragmentary and superficial treatment of it. Large sections of the population are 'free lovers,' chauvinists, or rebels, according to the special type of fiction they happen to have alighted upon; but whatever they may be they are shallow and ill-informed in it, because their mental constitution has been nourished on the shreds and snippets of the novelist's literary confectionery.

Even the imaginative faculties and the sense of humour are dulled by this sort of reading. Acquaint a man with facts and general principles, and his imagination must of necessity work upon the materials he assimilates - for facts are more suggestive, more stimulating, than speculations or fancies - while his sense of proportion will be cultivated by his

knowledge of the actual relations of things. But the person who makes himself or herself a mere conduit for the impressions, the imaginings of others will in time possess a mind mainly of the cataleptic order, with less originality than if he had read nothing at all. Who is more vacuous and artificial than the person gorged with fiction, who in a given situation cannot help thinking of what his or her heroes or heroines would have said or done in similar circumstances?

If one could see the class of novel-readers passing up and on from that sort of mental pabulum to stronger meat, it would be possible to regard the novel as an unmixed blessing. But in point of fact, novel-reading, so far from being a mere stage in the intellectual development of the reader, is in the majority of cases a life-habit. The assistants at public libraries could tell of

tens of thousands of people who, all their lives through, never, save by mistake, take out any books except works of fiction. There are, of course, men and women who seek recreation from arduous brain work in light reading, which invariably means novels. That is natural enough; though there are some who consider Macaulay as light and certainly brighter, more vivid, than Gaboriau. But the great mass of the readers using the lending libraries go on devouring novel after novel, never dreaming of making an excursion into the field of general literature. It were really better for such if the insipid stuff were not available for them at all: they might then be driven into reading ever so small a portion of a good book once in a while.

Remedies.

For a long time, probably, little can be done to lessen the evil. Some improvement

might be effected by library committees spending less of their income on works of fiction and more of it on dear and inaccessible books - which is the direct contrary of their present policy - but even then a large number of the confirmed novel-readers would simply go to the private circulating libraries for their only literary diet. And the conversion of the library committees would of itself take some time and trouble.

The improvement of education, along the line of attaching greater significance to the teaching of English literature as a school subject, would do much to produce an extended taste for good literature and a wiser discrimination in the choice of books. But unless something can be done with the writers as well as with the readers, the improvement will be slow and attended with difficulty. Grant Allen's admission

that the blind laws of supply and demand have diverted an immense number of the ablest minds to the production of novels is very significant. Since the days when Milton sold the greatest epic in the language for £5, letters have become to too great an extent a mere profession; and to the man who writes for a living, the temptation to turn out that which can be written fluently, and which appeals to a large public, is very strong.

But there are signs that those who do the hard and necessary work of the world will insist more and more, as time goes on, upon greatly reduced hours of labour, greatly increased leisure, and a larger share of the good things of life in general. The effects of this will tell on literature in a number of ways. Increased leisure and the power to purchase good books, following on the wide diffusion of better

education, will bring about a steady improvement in the general standard of literary taste. That much will be effected so far as the *demand* of the reading public is concerned.

But social and economic amelioration will also have its effects on the *supply* of books. For one thing, men and women of parts, finding the ordinary business of life much less irksome and exacting than they do at present, will be content to earn a livelihood in the trades and professions, cultivating literature as Shakespeare and Bacon, Burns, Lamb, and Mill cultivated it - that is to say, as amateurs, not less but more brilliant than the professionals, because freed from the necessity of writing for a living, and able to give us of their best.

Of course we shall always have a professional literary class. There is as much need for the making of good books as

for the building of houses; and the author is as worthy of his hire as any other labourer. A writer who spends the better part of a lifetime in the production of one great work (as Gibbon did), or a vast synthetic series (as Herbert Spencer did), will do his work better if he has no other vocation seriously to divide his attention. In such cases substantial remuneration will not only be politic, but also just and necessary.

But as Matthew Arnold well said 'Literary production, where it is sound, is its own exceeding great reward'; and with literature valued more for its own sake and less as a means of making money, the spinning of cobwebs of fiction may well be reduced to a minimum. The professional literary man, with his dyspepsia, his insomnia, his nervous headaches, his smoking of 'infinite tobacco,' and his

disordered nerves, may thus in coming years be remembered only as one of the strange phenomena of the nineteenth century. Then men of talent may cease taking 'orders,' as the late Mr. Justin M'Carthy did, for two score of tales at a time, and the Garvices and Corellis may lend a hand with the really useful and necessary work of the world.

John Galt, The First of the Kailyarders

A neglected Man of Genius – and Why

By James Leatham.

What's the matter with John Galt? The author of a whole library of books that were widely read and praised in their day, member of Parliament, Colonial pioneer, friend and biographer of Byron, rival of Sir Walter, first and greatest of the kailyarders, most Scottish of the Scots, poet, politician, playwright, man of business, he has long since been 'out of print' except for a single volume in a popular series. Those who would read Galt can do so only in scarce volumes of an old date.

'The Entail,' probably Galt's greatest

fiction, was read three times by Scott and three times by Byron who wrote to Lady Blessington that:

There is a quaint humour and observance of character in his novels that interest me very much, and when he chooses to be pathetic he fools one to his best. I assure you 'The Entail' beguiled me of some portion of watery humours, yclept tears, 'albeit unused to the melting mood.'

Of this same novel, Dr Carruthers, the editor of the Inverness Courier, wrote with reference to the inimitable Grizzly Hypel, otherwise Leddy Grippy, the chief character in it: -

What exquisite delight she must have afforded our biographer, as coyly and by reluctant degrees her various charms of character unfolded to his imagination! We have her in all relations – from a blooming

bride to a reverend grandmother; but 'age cannot wither her.' Our author's fancy seems to have run riot with Grizzly Hypel, and he has ransacked every element to find some name and appropriate attribute to adorn this pet heroine, till she comes at last a perfect counterpart of the lovers of Apelles – a thing compounded of every creature's best.

Christopher North revelled in characteristically boisterous praise of Galt's work, and Dr. Moir ('Delta') who paid Galt the sincerest compliment of all by imitating his style and choice of subject in 'Mansie Wauch,' wrote thus of 'Sir Andrew Wylie' and 'The Entail' :-

He has shown great ingenuity and readiness in keeping up that sort of interest which arises from accumulation and complication of incident, as well as exhibiting truth and originality of

portraiture... Claud Walkinshaw and Witty the Natural are each in his way inimitable, and leave on the mind an impress not easy of obliteration and old Leddy Grippy was pronounced by Lord Byron as surpassed for truth, nature, and no female character since the days of Shakespeare. The Earl of Blessington had a series of pictures painted from scenes in this very striking work; and his copy of the book, which was lent to the author of 'Childe Harold,' then resident in Venice, was rendered peculiarly valuable from the number of marginal annotations in the handwriting of the noble poet. 'The Provost' may exhibit some bolder sketching, and it may contain some deeper touches of pathos, as well as some more ethereal flashes of imagination, but as a whole, 'The Entail' is Mr. Galt's greatest and most successful work. We are delighted at once with its truthful observations, its *naturweld*, its pathos, its descriptive prose – witness the storm on

the north coast – and with the fine feeling of nature that pervades it, as well as the ingenious adaptation of its parts.

Personalia

The author on whose work these eulogies were pronounced was born at Irvine, in Ayrshire, on May 2nd 1779. His father was skipper of a West Indiaman, and is spoken of as a kind and genial man. His mother appears to have been a woman of strong personality, with what her son describes as a ‘relish for the ridiculous’ and ‘incomparable occasional Scottish phraseology.’ She was shocked at his ‘love of reading and inactive habits,’ and doubtless often gave expression to the opinion of him which he himself reflects in the character of Colin Mavis, the parish poet of Dalmailing (‘Annals of the Parish,’

42nd chapter). Colin is described as:

A long soople laddie, who, like all bairns that grow fast and tall, had but little smeddum. He could not be called a dolt, for he was observant and thoughtful, and given to making sagacious questions; but there was a sleepiness about him, especially in the kirk, and he gave, as the master said, but little application to his lessons, so that folk thought that he would turn out a sort of gaunt-at-the-door, more mindful of meat than of work. He was, however, a good-natured lad.

The good minister who is supposed to be writing 'The Annals' secures for Colin a post in a merchant's office,

Where to the surprise of everybody, he proved a wonderful eydent and active lad, and, from less to more, has come at the

head of all the clerks, and deep in the confidentials of his employers. But though this was a great satisfaction to me, and to th widow woman his mother, it somehow was not so much to the rest of the parish, who seemed, as it were, angry that poor Colin had not proved himself such a dolt as they had expected and foretold... He has since put out a book, whereby he has angered all those that had foretold he would be a do-nae-good.

Galt was in his early twenties when his first production appeared in Constable's *Edinburgh Magazine* and the *Greenock Advertiser*. In 1804, when he was 25, tall, broad shouldered, dark, and keen, he left Greenock and went to London, with numerous letters of introduction and the manuscript of 'The Battle of Largs,' an epic descriptive of the invasion of Scotland by Haco of Norway. The poem was published,

but was not a success.

Galt entered into partnership with a younger man, from the same part of Scotland, of the name of M'Lachlan. They were successful beyond expectation; but at the end of three years the failure of other mercantile houses brought them down in spite of all Galt's resource and courage.

He then entered at Lincoln's Inn, and a visit to Oxford suggest a Life of Cardinal Wolsey, of which two editions appeared (1812 and 1817)

Byron and Galt.

Having little prospect of being called to the bar for some time, and still less knowledge of where he was to secure briefs, being, for all the alleged Scots clannishness, without

friends likely to employ him, he undertook a private embassy to Italy, Greece, and Asia Minor, from which British commerce had been shut out. This was in 1809-10 and in the course of the voyage he met Byron and his friend Hobhouse.

Galt has no very favourable account to give of the poet, who was still young enough to be concerned about his dignity. They met again when Galt was returning from his varied and adventurous journey, and were rather more intimate on the second and subsequent meetings. Galt was later to publish a 'Life of Lord Byron' (1830). The explanation of how they did not attain a thoroughly friendly relationship was afterwards generously explained by the poet himself. Writing to the Countess of Blessington in returning her copy of 'The Entail,' as already mentioned, he said:

When I knew Galt years ago I was not

in a frame of mind to form an impartial opinion of him. His mildness and equanimity struck me even then; but, to say the truth, his manner had not deference enough for my then aristocratical taste, and finding I could not awe him into respect sufficiently profound for my sublime self, either as a peer or as an author, I felt a little grudge towards him which has now completely worn off.

This is a very pleasant reading for the sake of Galt and Byron. Reading Galt's 'Autobiography' – an unsatisfactory book, reluctantly written when he was out of humour and fortune, as a means of raising money and on the solicitation of a publishing firm – one begins to harbour a suspicion that Galt's misfortunes arose from a certain touchiness on his part. He is transparently honest; but he seems to have rubbed up against a series of singularly

perverse and ill-conditioned people, and the mere narrative of his treatment at the hands of these undesirables begets the feeling that the faults could not, surely, have been all on one side. This, however, appears to be an unfair assumption, which is contradicted by the testimony of those who knew him. The facts of his narrative are borne out from other quarters, and as Mr Baillie MacDonald says, in commenting on Galt's experiences, 'what need to apologise on behalf of Samson for the number and the behaviour of the Philistines?' That indeed! The perfectly just, frank, and sincere man of exceptional ability and originality will often have a bad time of it in a world where *finesse* bears the bell as against straightforward merit. Add to this the dislike or distrust felt towards the literary character.

Galt's southern journey found record in 'Voyages and Travels in the years

1809, 1810 and 1811,' published in 1812, and in 'Letters from the Levant' issued the following year.

But in spite of his professes belittling of literary work, which he always placed subordinate to 'business,' these two books did not represent the sole literary output at this time. The year 1812 saw the publication also of the four tragedies, 'Maddalow, Agamemnon, Lady MacBeth, Antonia and Clyemnaestra,' as well as biographies of Admirals Hawke, Byron, and Rodney; and in this same year he became editor of the

Political Review.

Over his Canadian experiences one would hurry rapidly. The company which sent him out was less concerned about doing

good in Canada than about its own dividends, whereas Galt regarded himself as a pioneer of civilization, and instead of jobbing profitably in land and making much money for the absentee proprietors, he was scrupulously fair and kind to settlers, and made excellent foundational arrangements which bore fruit in the subsequent course of events, in which his son Sir Thomas Galt bore an honourable part. His reception in Canada was marked from the outset by misunderstandings which it is impossible to see how he could have avoided. At the end of three years he returned to London considerably the loser by the time he had spent in Upper Canada. It is with the man of letters we have to do here.

Galt and Sir Walter.

Galt is sometimes spoken of as an imitator of Scott. They were both Scotsmen, they were contemporaries, Galt was Sir Walter's enthusiastic admirer, and his frequent references to the Great Magician show that Scott was very much in Galt's mind. But except that Scottish life and character were largely the themes of both, their types of mind were widely different. Scott was a romanticist, living very much in the past, a collector of old armour and weapons, an aristocrat claiming kin with the Duke of Buccleuch, a poet abandoning himself to reverie over old buildings, and treating his characters with rapid, graphic objectivity. His Mortons and Waverles are figures in a stirring pageant rather than highly individualised human beings with whom we get into intimate touch. Indeed, Scott did not get very closely in touch with them himself. He was not enamoured of his rather wooden heroes. He referred to young Waverley as 'a sneaking piece of

imbecility,' and declared that if Flora M'Ivor had married him she would have put him down on the mantelpiece as did the wife of the Polish dwarf Count Borrolanski.

Nothing of all this applies to Galt. He lived very much in the present and always had an eye to business. Visiting glorious Rouen – then, as Morris says, 'a veritable piece of the middle ages' – Galt could not find 'anything in the antiquities of the city to me particularly interesting.' What he was interested in was the cotton industry in the suburb of Deville. As a youth wandering among the hills behind Greenock he evolved plans for bringing additional water supplies to the town. And he describes how a sandbank in the firth opposite Greenock engaged his attention. He explains that the bank was often dry at low water, and he had a cheap and feasible plan for making arable land of it, but that

it belonged to the Crown, and was too sacred to be improved. Here speaks the ingenious, practically minded man who in after years was to found the Canadian town of Guelph, cutting through the primitive forest an avenue over seven miles long and two hundred feet wide, through trees standing about 130 feet on either side. Sir Walter makes a trip to the Shetlands, and his impressions and speculations take shape in 'The Pirate.' Galt crosses the Atlantic four times and does not seem to have been at all moved by the extended experience of the long and adventurous voyage of those days.

Galt did, indeed, write historical novels. 'Rothelan' (1824) deals with the reign of Edward III; 'The Spaewife' (1823) relates to the time of James I; 'Ringan Gilhaize' (1823) is a story of the Covenanters; and 'The Wandering Jew, or Travels and Observations of Hareach the

Prolonged' (1820) has the largest of all historical canvases. But these are later writings, whose subjects are suggested, we feel, by the success of Sir Walter in historical fields.

Galt's Chosen Field.

Galt's chosen period is the time just preceding his own, his locality the west country, his characters the humble folk of the little towns in which his boyhood and youth had been spent. The 'Annals of the Parish of Dalmailing,' though not published till 1822, was written nine years previous – that is to say, in 1813, a year before the appearance of 'Waverley' the first of Sir Walter's novels. The previous year there had been published in *Blackwood's Magazine* 'The Ayrshire Legatees,' a story told in a series of letters from the Rev Dr.

Pringle, his wife, son, and daughter, who have inherited a fortune from a cousin, an Indian colonel, and who go up to London to see to the business in connection with the inheritance. The success of these letters as pourtrayals of the character of the writers and descriptions of the parochial types who come together to hear the letters read, was instantly recognised by Blackwood the publisher, and it was on his recommendation that 'The Annals of the Parish,' purporting to be written by the parish minister, the Rev Micah Balwhidder, was unearthed in '*Blackwood's Magazine*.'

The notice these serials attracted caused them to be attributed to Scott. But they have no little resemblance, in style, in topics, or in spirit, to the work of Sir Walter that the hatching of such a theory as to their authorship shows only how little of a critical faculty the average reader

possesses.

Galt and Scott have both styles of marked individuality, and Galt's is really the more marked of the two. But no two styles could be more dissimilar in essence than the hasty, objective, 'big bow wow' style of romantic Sir Walter and the sly, leisurely, pawky, minute, analytical style of the realist Galt. Sir Walter's Scotticisms are unintentional, except when they are dialect speech of the characters. They are the Scotticisms that find their way into the sentences of Scots writers trying to write English but unconscious of the differences of idiom and term between the speech of North and South Britain. From having resided in England and abroad, Galt was probably more conscious of these differences than Sir Walter.

Galt's Style.

The Scots Galt writes is deliberately and droll-ly unique. To this day no well-known writer has made so much of the Scottish air and manner of expression. The late S.R.Crockett and Mr John Buchan catch something of the trick; but what was a natural turn with Galt, as being the language of his contemporaries, and especially his own 'droll, peculiar' mother, is with later writers a thing overlaid and artificial. It is not that Galt wallows in dialect. Far from it. There is broad Aberdeenshire in George MacDonald's fictions, and some fairly recognisable Lothians in Stevenson. But Galt's Scots is not local. He has a copious Scots vocabulary, composed, not of localisms, but of such words as will be found in Jameson's 'Dictionary of the Scottish Language' as being in fairly general use.

I am not of those who pretend that there is such a thing as classic Scots. Burns wrote Ayrshire Scots, Stevenson (as he himself says) ‘the drawling Scots of the Lothians.’ George MacDonald and William Alexander wrote very pure Aberdeenshire. Galt’s Scots has little or no dialect in it. Sir Walter similarly avoids dialect. But there is a Scots *manner* of writing, and there are occasional Scots words – ‘galravitching,’ for instance – and Scots expressions, often borrowed from scripture – ‘chambering and wantoning’ occurs to one – that set a stamp of Scottish individuality upon a piece of English writing and Galt has this character to a degree that is nowhere equalled. His best imitator is Dr. Moir in ‘Mannie Wauch.’

What is a Kailyarder?

This is why I call Galt the first of the kailyarders. I do not know that I have ever seen a definition or short description of what a kailyarder is, but I take it the essential feature of the school is its concern with the old-fashioned life of the village or small town where every family had its own garden of simple kitchen stuff and a few homely flowers. An old song represents the younger members of the family as ‘ busy, busy coortin’ in oor kailyard,’ and the singer declares:

... I dinna like the love

That’s written on a caird;

I’d rather hae’t by word o’ mou’

In oor kailyard.

With the primitive housing of the

village community, the garden would in any kind of feasible weather, be the natural place of resort both for 'talking age and whispering lovers.'

This absorption of Galt in the 'annals of the poor' is perhaps the reason why he is so largely forgotten. It was a small and petty life. In the 'Thrums' series of tales we are invited to smile at its absurdities, its gossip, its spying, and the hopeless contradictions of its outlook. A London journalist, misreading Mr Barrie, long ago visited Kirriemuir expecting to find a community of humourists and overlooking the patent fact that we laugh *at* and not *with* Sam'l Todds and Snecky Hobarts. He declared that the inhabitants of Thrums posed as humourists; but the results were ghastly. This was so entirely what he might have expected that one wonders why he went. Mr Barrie no more presented his fellow countrymen as humourists than

George Eliot and Thomas Hardy conceive their chaw-bacons as humourists. To laugh with the inventor or discoverer of humour is one thing, and to laugh at unconscious absurdity is something totally different. The simple villager, one foot resting upon the bottom of an upturned pail, solemnly describing what he would say to Queen Victoria and how he would say it, and the simply bystanders solemnly drinking it in, all parties showing that they have no knowledge whatever of what the other world is like, is grotesque enough; but that the characters should be devoid of humour is an essential condition of the characterization. That is what the author means.

No Reformer.

It is partly because Galt chose this field

that he has been forgotten. The annals of the poor make a drab narrative at best, and often the details are sordid in proportion to the felicity of the picture. Where the tale is illumined by hope, a purpose, and the divine discontent that makes for better thing, as in the works of Dickens, Zola, Mrs Gaskell and Messrs'. Besant and Rice, we can read, and enjoy, and sympathise. But from the hopeless, pruposless photograph of the lives of the poor we turn with dull repulsion. It is not snobbery to dwell upon the pleasant aspects of life.

Galt wrote a novel called 'The Member: An Autobiography' (1832) and the same year published 'The Radical: An Autobiography.' But Galt was no Radical. In 'The Member' he reveals himself as an opponent of Parliamentary Reform and of Free Trade; not averse to the manoeuvring and sharp practice by which seats were

won in those days; giving steady support to the Government in power; and behaving generally as a 'private member' – that is to say, a man of no very ardent political views and not much of a partisan, but giving his attention to the ingratiating arts which will please his local supporters and advance local interests as distinguished from general national progress.

We know very little of Galt's actual political career. His 'Autobiography' (1833) is upon all essentials of his life exceedingly obscure, and his political career is never once referred to. We know that he was entrusted with the carrying through of a Canals Bill; and that is exactly the kind of non-party, practical measure that we would associate him with.

A Realist without Hope.

So that Galt is a realist without apparent hope. Thoreau says that to look at Nature with the dry eye of science is like looking at the head of Medusa - it turns the beholder to stone. Something of that applies to the study of the baser aspects of human nature. As Thackeray studied snobbery because he himself was something of a snob and a cynic, and doubtless became more snobbish and cynical from his pursuits, so Galt pictured the life of small communities because in these lay his great, inextinguishable, unaccountable interests. We are told that even as a youth he loved the society of old women, of whom there is always a disproportionately large number of both sexes, in small communities. It was a queer taste, even for a novelist in embryo.

There is a large-minded type of man who comes from the country, and compared with the greater scale and diversity of city

life, becomes more urban than the born-and-bred citizen. Stratford was a small town when William Shakespeare left it to become more metropolitan or cosmopolitan than the Londoners themselves. But the man from a small community too often cannot get above the grave disabilities of a youth begun in the atmosphere of pettiness. Critics have commented upon the tendency of men from little towns to dwell upon the unimportant, and, even when they have travelled, to cherish homely thoughts which the transplanted city man sheds.

Small Towns.

Plutarch has said 'We may reasonably expect that those arts by which men gain glory or profit should be neglected and fall into decay in small and obscure towns.' :

Euripedes does not hesitate to declare that 'the first thing necessary for a perfectly happy man is that he should be born a citizen of some famous city' ' and the Apostle Paul boasted 'I am a citizen of no mean city.' If mere citizenship covered the whole ground then nobody should have a look in against the natives of London, Paris, and Rome, whereas Cromwell, Gambetta, and Cincinnatus were all men of rural antecedents. Success is, of course, no test of mental breadth and greatness, since success itself may be the outcome of a certain narrow, cleaving simplicity of mind—the one thing-I-do type.

Anyhow, Galt started out with the powerful backing of the house of Blackwood, and his prestige was ministered to by his Parliamentary career, the ultimate success, in other hands, of his Canadian pioneering , his friendship with Byron, and the absence of competition in

the field which he was not the first to cultivate. If in spite of all he is now mostly forgotten, it is not without interest to canvas the reasons why.

Fatal Facility.

It is not because he write slovenly English – Scot wrote slovenly English and is as popular as ever. Galt perpetrates such expressions as ‘An uniformity of style,’ ‘Was awoke,’ ‘An humble,’ and the purely English and not at all Scottish colloquialism ‘Those kind of incidents.’ But the public does not mind, mostly does not notice, that kind of slipshodness.

Nor is it that Galt belittled or even professed to despise literary pursuits. He often wrote such passages as the following:

With me book-making has always been a secondary pursuit, arising from a facility in composition. I did then think myself qualified to do something more useful than 'stringing blethers into rhyme,' or writing clishmaclaves in a closet.

The last clause is not a bad description of what he did do, whether it was his chosen work or not. But it is not necessarily this deprecation of book-making that explains Galt's drop into obscurity. He may have had too much 'facility in composition,' but we do not know whether or not he could have made his books better by taking longer time over them. Shakespeare's writing was superficially subordinate to his theatrical leseeship; but it is hard to believe that he did not put his best into it.

Scott professed to regard literature as a cane rather than a crutch; but others tell us that so far as he was concerned it was the legal work rather than the books that suffered from his divided allegiance.

The Book-Maker v. the 'Business Man.'

That the making of good books should be regarded as of less value to the world than the work of the merchant or the politician is a view devoid of basis in either economics or sense. The author is a producer of wealth. Instructor, exhorter, reprove, guide, friend, entertainer, he calls something out of the void as truly as does the husbandman who makes two ears of grain grow where none grew before. To every man his *metier* if you please; when all is said the merchant does but send to our doors that which the producer has

made elsewhere, he, the producer, being himself both maker and merchant, since he necessarily sells his wares as well as makes them. The legislator at his best does but facilitate production and the distribution of the product. If Galt felt that his writing was merely the 'writing of chishmaclavers in a closet' he did well to be modest about it. But although Burns gave him the first part of the scornful reference – that about 'stringing blethers into rhyme' – Burns represented his own better self when he breathed the aspiration that he might be empowered, for Scotland's sake,

Some usefu' plan or book to make,

Or sing a sang at least.

Let Galt speak only for himself. He put a low estimate upon the calling of the

author, and the world has taken him at his word. It has taken him at his word, however, not because the word was uttered, but because the word in his case represented his conception of values, and the conception doubtless found expression in his books.

Other men thought well of their calling and gave it of their best. Thomas Carlyle wrote slowly and with much travail because he was not readily pleased with easy extempore effects. Stevenson, another fellow-countryman, so far from boasting of 'facility in composition,' used to pour contempt on a morning's copious output as 'slack journalesy stuff,' and rewrote it better. Dickens, still popular abroad as at home, used to erase and interline every paragraph of his carefully-written manuscript. Tennyson smoked many pipes over a single line, having the critical capacity to mistrust 'facility in

composition.'

Galt's World Forbidding.

But when liberal discount has been made on the score of hasty writing, we come back to the original drawback to Galt's fictions. It is not an attractive world that he introduces us to. The scheming and self-seeking of 'The Provost,' the still more sordid scheming and petty ambition of 'The Entain,' the absence of any kind of lift or nobility about the 'Annals' or the 'Legatees,' the sly chicanery of 'The Member' may all be very Scottish; but if so they represent aspects of Scottish character which had best be discouraged and lived down. At any rate the Scottish people are apparently not enamoured of the picture of themselves presented in these stories: for they do not read them.

And despite the merits of the tales, one cannot pretend to be entirely sorry.

‘The Annals of the Parish,’ by the nature of the case, make more of the bursting of a milldam and the gift of £50 to the kirk-session than they do to the American War or the French Revolution. That is the human nature of small communities. It is the business of literature to correct this absorption in the infinitely little.

Scott’s genius occupies itself with the great events and movements of history, tending to make us better because more understanding citizens. His fictions teach us the relative proportion of things, and we cannot but believe that he wrote of life as he conceived it. If we apply the same test to Galt, we are shut up to the belief that he

wrote of the little things because he was the most engrossed by them. Goldsmith, an exile from home, said he 'dragged at each remove a lengthening chain,' and the loving care he devoted to the very smallest feature of 'The Deserted Village,' his own kindly, distant Lissoy, showed that his heart was there, though his bod, tricked out in garish garb, walked the streets of London, and he associated with men illustrious in literature, politics and art. We cannot but believe that as it was with Goldsmith, so it was with John Galt. The difference lies in the art. The simple beauty and gentle epigrammatic humour of the Irish poet still hold the world in thrall, gentle and simple, abroad as at home. But John Galt is 'out of print.' Even the house of Blackwood, with all its command of the market, cannot now find a public for the writer who, under its auspices, had such a vogue in former days. All popular verdicts are not so sound, and Galt may conceivably

have a revival; there is a public for work of vastly less merit: but John Galt has had his day, and it is no accident, no freak of taste, no remissness on part of the critics, that have led to his fading into obscurity. Yet he was undoubtedly the first of a school, and has still distinctive merits as a stylist unapproached in the writing of old Scots-English.

Education and the Enjoyment of Life

Has popular taste improved?

A comparison with a generation ago. (First published in Gateway, Feb 1917)

The head of a great shipbuilding concern said the other day that the object of education was not merely to teach men how to earn a living, but how to live. This is very far from being a new idea; though as the declared opinion of a 'captain of industry,' it is distinctly novel – so novel, indeed, that the smaller sort of journalist turns it over as if it had never been heard before. It is a long time since Ruskin wrote 'Industry without art is brutality.' The Romans had a saying, 'Vita sine literis mors est' (Life without literature is death.) The French Academy was founded in the seventeenth century by Cardinal Richelieu 'To keep the fine quality of the French

spirit unimpaired.’ (maintenere la delicatessen de l’esprit francais.) Bacon said, still earlier, that ‘studies are for delight, for ornament, for ability’; and he also said: ‘Reading maketh a full man, converse a ready man, and writing an exact man.’ So that the doctrine that education is not intended merely or chiefly to make chemists, technicians, foreign correspondents, and ‘smart’ typists, but to enable people to make the most of life, is a very fairly old doctrine, even if we do not cite the declaration in the Shorter Catechism as to ‘man’s chief end.’ As to the interpretation of this last there would appear to be some doubt. One man defined it as ‘To Glorify God and enjoy him(self) for ever.’ Another said man’s chief end was to get ends to meet – an anxious-minded view with which one has much less sympathy than with the other rather epicurean reading.

But what signs are there that the place of studies as a necessary equipment for civilised life is at all adequately realised? Exceedingly little. Today I have seen two catalogues of books which seem to have special significance here. The one is a long and closely-printed catalogue of an old-established Edinburgh bookseller, whose customers would mostly be professional men and well-to-do people generally. There are not a score of novels in its 28 double-columned pages of small print, and those that figure there are first editions of classics. This is typical of the proportion of fiction in such catalogues, of which I regularly see a number. The other catalogue I have seen today is the list of additions to a library supposed to be popular. The library is assumed to be an auxiliary of a society whose business is professedly educative. The proportion of fiction to general literature is six to one,

and the general 'literature' is of the lightest. The experience of the ordinary bookseller dealing in new books is that fiction, and the lightest of fiction at that, makes up by far and away the major part of his trade.

Much has been made of the success of certain popular series, such as the Everyman Library; but booksellers have pointed out that if Everyman is selling, it only means that other series are neglected in its favour. One bookseller has reminded us that there is nothing today to be compared, in value, interest, and real novelty, with the International Science Series of twenty to thirty years ago. All the volumes in that series were copyright books by the most distinguished authors then living, and they were published at prices from three to five times the price of the Everyman volumes, the latter being

non-copyright books, from which the authors, mostly dead, derive no benefit, besides being old books from which latter-day science, theories, speculations, and current thought generally are excluded. In any popular series fiction holds by much the larger place. The buyers and readers of such books are doing nothing for literature, and in the trifling prices they pay for their mental fare they give no proof of any literature worth mentioning. To give ninepence for a fat novel that will keep the whole household reading, one member after another, for months, is a mere war economy of the most obvious kind. And the fashion of the sixpennies and sevenpennies (now raised to ninepence) had set in long before the outbreak of Armageddon.

It is true that more single-volume books are issued at long prices than ever before; but that is the worst sign of all.

When one could buy a substantial new book by Herbert Spencer, Tyndall, Darwin, or Bain, for five shillings, it was a sign that a liberal education as to numbers had been printed; but when a book of three or four hundred pages is priced at sixteen shillings it means that the publisher expects a limited sale and has to take his expenses out of a much increased price. There will probably be less for the author than there would have been out of the lower priced book.

Does all this matter? Will doubtless be asked. It matters just all the world. It means that we are falling under suspicion of becoming a nation of light-minded ignoramuses, living butterfly lives in which we desire nothing more than to be vacuously amused, to pass the time with tosh that we forget as soon as read, for the excellent reason that there is nothing in it

to remember worth the snuff of a candle.

In the really great periods of history the nations that were doing things generally had a literary output in accordance with their achievements in other fields. The Golden Age of Greece, the era of the great naval victory of Salamis and the great military victory of Marathon, in which a mighty despotism was beaten by a small free State, was the age of Aeschylus and Aristophanes, the former commemorating the triumph of freedom by writing the drama of 'The Persians' with its magnificent choruses. The spacious and fruitful days of Elizabeth, that saw the formidable power of Spain broken in the Netherlands and on the seas, was the age of Shakespeare and a galaxy of other writers who are still read. The 'days of good Queen Anne' not only witnessed a succession of brilliant victories over the

armies of despotic France, but it was a period of copious and classical output in literature. The long Victorian era, most glorious of all in achievement of every kind, was never without a host of poets, orators, historians, critics, playwrights, and novelists who created real characters, who never wrote without a genuinely useful social purpose, and who are still alive in their most immortal part, their writings.

The person who does not read history does not *know* history, and there is no way of having sound views of present facts and tendencies or of gauging future probabilities without a knowledge of the past. Everything that exists or takes place has antecedents. The present war, for instance, is merely a fresh outbreak of the Franco-Prussian war after an interval of forty years, during which time France has

never ceased to talk of the revanche and to make much of her army as the means of securing it. The alliance with Russia was made, not for defence but for offence. So soon as Karl Marx heard that Germany was to annex Alsace-Lorraine he had declared that France would form an alliance with Russia. And the forecast was speedily fulfilled.

I recollect hearing an English Tory inveighing against Home Rule as being unheard of, impossible, unworkable, and absurd; and when it was pointed out that Ireland had a Parliament for centuries, and that at the time her last Parliament was taken from her the population was double its figure at the time he was speaking, he collapsed like a house of cards, murmuring that he 'didn't know that.'

No; but his ignorant vote would help to

keep the desired and desirable change back in this as in other matters where all that is needed is a little liberalising knowledge.

Economics, political science and philosophy, poetry, criticism, biography are all necessary ,not only to the performance of our civic duties, but to anything like adequate intelligent enjoyment of life. Let anyone listen to the talk of an average casual collection of workmen or middle-class men, and what a mass of prejudice, half-baked opinion, and timid shying off from first principles and essential fact it will be found to be! Listen, for example, to a discussion on women's suffrage, and what sort of 'arguments' will be oftenest heard. Those in favour will have much to say of how women pay rates and taxes and manage businesses, and therefore they ought to have votes. Those against will doubtless rest content with nothing beyond

jeers, cheap chaff, or the mere statement that they are not in favour; there is always a kind of honest man who thinks the mere statement of his hostility is enough.

None of the disputants seems to think of appealing to facts, to the experience of how Votes for Women has worked. In every branch of local politics women have long had the vote, and have almost uniformly misused it in the most flagitious way. In some of our colonies women have all the franchises, and nobody can say anything more than that they have increased the labour and expense of elections.

Women councillors initiate nothing. Woman is not an initiator. She does not even initiate her own hats. William Morris, a married man and a good cook, declared that no woman ever invented a new dish or failed to spoil an old one. Women have no

pockets, and are constantly losing their handbags. They wear frocks that button up the back, and they need someone else to truss and untruss them.

The case against Votes for Women might be allowed to rest upon the one physiological fact that the female animal, including women, converts the energy she stores to a different purpose from that to which a man devotes it. The energy which goes in man to the nourishment of brain and biceps, in woman goes largely to the nourishment of the generative and lacteal organs, whether she wishes it or not. The man-like woman who writes powerful books (like 'George Eliot') or who becomes a soldier (like Christian Davies) is an unsexed woman. Her female functions are starved in the interests of her masculinity.

Tell this to the average suffragist,

male or female, and there will not only be not reply, but you will probably be assured that they never heard of this aspect of the case.

The fact is, the state of political intelligence is such that there are far too many uninformed voters in the country already; and so far from its being desirable to increase the number, a good case could be made of disfranchising many men, except that you can't take a bone from a dog. The franchise in the hands of the ignorant or unreasoning is like a revolver in the hands of a child – a deadly weapon – and it was never meant to be that. To give women the vote because they have worked at munitions and conducted tramcars is an utterly irrelevant plea. Women's most valuable and dangerous service to the State is not and always has been the bearing and rearing of children. If services

rendered gave a claim, that would be the strongest claim presentable on her behalf. But the franchise is given for the good of the state, and there is no reason to believe that Votes for Women would be anything but a reactionary evil of the most dangerous kind, as the results of municipal elections have abundantly proved.

To return from our overgrown illustration to the male thesis, I have no hesitation in saying that, be the causes what they may, the popular taste in literature is not only much lower than it was forty years ago, but it may be almost said to be non-existent. The grounds of this serious statement are so numerous that only a very few of them can be even mentioned here.

Books that used to be read as a matter of eager delight, and that are still so read

by those who know good literature, are now used in the schools as lesson-books, not at all to the satisfaction of the pupil. Forty years ago boys of the poorest class bought and read the plays of Shakespeare in penny pamphlets, printed in small type. Now Shakespeare is much less read and much less played. The Waverley novels were issued in threepenny editions by the enterprising Dicks, and were bought and read by poor boys who raided their scanty pocket-money for them as a treat. So great was the demand for the better class of fiction 35 to 40 years ago that journals were produced consisting almost exclusively of standard novels run as serials. The authors represented included Scott, Dickens, Thackeray, Lytton, Fielding, Smollet and Antony Trollope. The same class of literature has not become lessons! Imagine a youngster treating 'Ivanhoe,' 'Old Mortality' or 'Kenilworth' as

a task to be conned and to be examined in! Forty years ago we read these books for pleasure after our home lessons were done, or, indeed, often and often before they were begun.

A secondary school teacher was complaining the other night that he could not get his class to take the least interest in the exploits of Hannibal, even in war time; whereas forty years ago we read about the Punic wars as a matter of keen pleasure, finding money for 'The Wars of the Carthaginians' with small encouragement from our seniors.

Thackeray tells of how, passing through a poor quarter of London, longer ago than forty years, a seamstress's child recognised him and cried 'There goes Becky Sharpe!' Many of the tales of both Dickens and Thackeray appeared in fortnightly

numbers, and into many a humble household they went as a matter of course. Some of us were familiar from infancy with these novels in the blue and the green covers in which they appeared in their serial form. The home which did not contain a set of the Waverley novels, the poems of Burns, 'The Pilgrim's Progress,' Pollok's 'Course of Time,' and Milton's 'Paradise Lost,' was poor indeed. The Sketch and the Mirror are a very wretched exchange for these books and for the widely circulated periodicals issued by the house of Chambers in those days.

The modern writers who might most appropriately be compared, in point of merit and status, with Dickens and Thackeray, would be H.G.Wells, G.B.Shaw, Arnold Bennet, and G.K.Chesterton. Could one fancy the child of a poor seamstress recognising any of

these as they passed down a modern mean street?

One knows households, whose head owns a motor car and has a bank balance of four or five figures, in which there are no books of general literature except such as have been got by the young people for school use. And ordinarily (I mean except in war time) we have to wait until these people, by God alone knows what process, make up what they are pleased to call their minds that something shall be done now which ought quite obviously to have been done fifty years ago. Our cities and the people in them might be made beautiful, the lease of life might be greatly extended, work might be made a pleasure, the man with the muck rake might be a gentleman not too dainty for daily use, the wealth of the country might be increased at least tenfold, if – and what virtue in an if! – if

prejudice could be dissipated by the dissipation of ignorance. But ignorance is hugged like a garment, and the heart of the reformer is broken and his unselfish life wasted by the neglect and the defeat, again and again, of proposals that would, in practice, beneficently transform the whole face of society. The man who knows what has been successfully done, and would enlarge the sum of human good, may well have the feeling of one who is kept out of a great estate by the mere dog-in-the-manger obstinacy of others who do not even want the estate for themselves.

A people which does not read cannot reason. A people which does not read has no mental furniture; and the mind does not work in vacuo – it must have something to work with and upon. We reason by analogies, and the analogies of the non-reader must be few and curtailed.

The amazing thing is the lack of a worthy curiosity. It seems only natural to want to know exactly what took place at a time of historic crisis; how exactly the thing happened, who were the actors, how an institution, say, like the ancient and powerful monarchy of the Bourbons at last toppled and fell. When you recommend Dickens's 'Tale of Two Cities', and give an outline of the story, the hearer will say, 'Oh, I have seen it at the pictures.' It is something that one would imagine their curiosity would be aroused to know the whole story, say, as it is narrated by Thomas Carlyle in his graphic and witty history of the French Revolution. One result of the war has been to lead me to browse in the ten volumes of Carlyle's 'History of Frederick the Great' in order to find out how the Prussians came to be so infatuated with their precious Hohenzollerns. This is the natural thing to

do.

The way in which everybody fell away from the last of the Jameses, and how the English Revolution was compassed by the king's flight at last, is an intensely interesting story, with many memorable touches as it is told by Macaulay; and one simply cannot understand how any adult English-speaking person is not curious to know the full particulars of an event so interesting in itself and so momentous in its consequences.

But there is no widespread curiosity about this epoch or about anything of the kind. We have left behind us for the time serious study and inquiry. A characteristic so human, so nobly human, as intellectual curiosity, must recur again to the nation; but there are no present signs of it.

There are many improvements in taste – in furniture, clothes, domestic architecture, the production of books, the arrangement of newspapers, the services in church. But the taste in literature, music and the drama has steadily deteriorated; English is still the Cinderella of popular education; and rag-time, and the cinema, and the musical comedy oust the better class of music and the best class of play from most theatres.

Will education become more narrowly 'utilitarian' as a result of the war? Shall we beat the Germans in the field only to copy their ideas and methods in education and business? There is vast need for improvement certainly; but surely not in the direction of imitating the training that has produced the Hun, a slave to his taskmasters and a monster of aggressive cruelty to all against whom his wolfish

ferocity is directed.

What is the good of education?

Where ignorance is bliss, why seek to be
wise?

Are the masses happy?

An Answer to Important Inquiries.

Syllables govern the world – Seldon

Reading maketh a full man – Bacon.

A Leeds teacher, in asking us to send him a copy of a catalogue of books, goes on, with delightful inconsistency, to say:-

There is a matter which troubles me at times, and to which I have not yet found a

satisfactory answer. Perhaps you, with your wider knowledge and experience, can answer the riddle. I really should write what I mean in well-thought-out essay form, but I will try to make my point clear in this letter.

At times when I get a-thinking I wonder if one's study of art, science, and literature is a curse instead of a benefit. What does literature do for one? It makes for wider knowledge, enables one to see the follies and operations of the great mass, the iniquities of the men in power, the ignorance of the vast majority of workers and fellow-men. But what good does this feeling of superiority do us? Literature and teachers have existed for hundreds of year,

and here we are, still struggling in the mire. If I can see all this, why don't my fellow-men see it, and strive for an alteration? The average man cares nothing for literature, and is apparently quite happy and content with a visit to a picture-house and a talk with his friends about football or horse-racing – in fact anything which does not matter. He, without reading or study, does not see the important things of life, but providing he has enough to eat and a roof over his head he is happy.

If I had not read I should be the same, and the problems of life would not trouble me, so why should I bother to study and read the so-called classics? Why not give all

up, and, apart from the working hours, spend my time in being entertained by paid professionals in the music halls? If I want to read, well, there is a class of literature or reading matter which is light and exciting, but of no value reckoned from any fair standard of value, but it passes the time on.

Cui bono?

First a word as to the general question: we shall come our correspondent's specific points afterwards.

Cui bono? – what is the good? – is a very ancient question. The Romans asked

it with respect to many matters widely differing from the topic broached by our correspondent. The subject of books and reading is discussed at some length in 'The Best of Friends' printed in The Gateway of Nov 1913 (No 17, Vol II), and what is said here must be comparatively offhand and merely supplementary.

I am bound to confess I have never had any of these misgivings or questionings, have never doubted the supreme value of books and reading. That a man should be able to sit down, and by looking at a series of outlines upon paper, be transported into another world — laughing, weeping, fiercely excited, or feverishly absorbed by the hour, insensible

to heat and cold, impatient of interruption, regardless of the chances of making money, changing the settled conviction of years, differentiating himself from the non-reading ruck around him – seems to me the most wonderful of man's 'many inventions.'

The other night I lighted in to the household of a master tailor and found him telling stories to his eldest boy with some impatience. He could not understand why the boy, a bright lad, did not rather wish to read the stories for himself. I could not and cannot understand that either. To me the poorest print has a dignity that does not attach to the stateliest speech. I would always much rather read a play than see and hear it. The last time I saw 'Hamlet,'

Forbes Robertson played the prince, and I came away, as always, disappointed. Sometimes he rollicked in the part, sometimes he stormed. But to me he was never Hamlet, but always Forbes Robertson, whereas when I *read* the tragedy, it is the veritable prince that speaks. There is no intrusion of an alien modern personality. Who is Forbes Robertson? What is any ordinary star actor but a patterer of words written by wiser men? I have seen many Hamlets but I know only one Prince of Denmark, and for him I have to go to the printed word of Shakespeare.

Reality and Print.

Reality is disappointing: print redresses the balance. The address which was marred by the personal defects of the orator has an effect when read next day that a mere speech to a mob of people could not command. Gladstone used to say 'constitootion'; Chamberlain could not get rid of the superfluous r's in such words as 'law' and 'idea,' which he rendered as 'lor' and 'idear.' But of course none of this banality appeared in the reports. There all was so finished that the speaker was known as 'the Birmingham essayist.' A famous declaration of his – 'What I have said I have said' – was spoken at a hotel table between the puffs of his pipe – quite

unimpressively.

Joseph Cowen, newspaper proprietor and wealthy merchant, a great Russophobe to whom no Russian refugee applied for succour in vain, was known to the initiated as a speaker of barbed and glancing periods; but he spoke with a thick Newcastle burr, and his puffy face and lank hair gave the lie to all that we read of the personal charm and magnetism of the great orator. It must have been unpleasant for a cultured person to listen to him; but you will find the volumes of his printed speeches on the tables of all knowing politicians who aim at effective platform work.

Places.

As it is with speakers, so it is with scenes. As a boy I knew an ex-soldier who had done sentry-go at 10 Downing Street. He was, when I knew him, a great slaughterer of cattle – was known in fact as Jamie Death. A silent man he was when sober; but I shall never forget the impression made on me when this butcher one night, in his cups, told me that Gladstone, coming down the steps, had said to him, 'Good morning, soldier!' The whole sense I had of 10 Downing Street was spoiled when I first saw that shabby little house itself.

A few years ago I travelled miles by rail and by road to see the farm of Ellisland, into which Burns took his newly-wedded wife Jean Armour. I knew that some of Robert's best poems were written there and that some of his happiest years were spent there. Allan Cunningham's father had said that in renting Ellisland Burns had made a poet's choice rather than a farmer's. This might fairly be taken to mean that Ellisland was a spot of great natural beauty. We found it so. The Nith flows close by the door as of old. 'Burns's Ballroom,' as a certain tower-like building is called, still rises sheer from the river. The path under the trees where Jean found Burns trudging up and down on the river's

brink declaiming with tears of joy some of the just-composed lines of 'Tam o' Shanter,' is still very much what it must have been in the poet's day. Dalswinton Loch and the mansion-house of the Millers are still the lairds of Ellisland. John Grierson, the tenant of the farm, would have been a great favourite with Burns; for Grierson is a character. But the place, seen in its winter bareness especially, lost the pastoral and sylvan glamour that it had in the book. To see the little shell of Alloway Kirk, scene of the elaborately horrific phantasmagoria of 'Tam o'Shanter,' is to realise how much genius can make of the scantiest materials. The tiny church would hardly have held witches, coffins, piping

Devil, and the rest of the awful paraphernalia, let alone affording room for the dance. And tramcars run to the place!

So it must be always. Life is confused: but literature sorts it out. People we meet and incidents that transpire are casual, irrelevant. But the historian, biographer, critic, playwright, novelist, select, co-ordinate, exclude the unessential. We are now living in specially notable times; but we cannot see the wood for the trees. Small men make a big splash for the moment; but time will relegate them to their due level, and in history, and in history only, shall we see men and events in their proper perspective. Life is for time, but literature, the greatest of the arts, is for eternity.

The Strongest Plea.

The strongest plea for reading is that it is the only way of finding out remote and essential things. Calamitous mistakes are daily made because men did not read and do not know. The history of the world's failures and disasters is the story of its ignorances, superstitions, and duties neglected from sheer lack of certainty that the task had to be performed. Of all sad words of tongue and pen, the saddest are these – I did not know. The German people, when they allowed the military Frankenstein to grow up and wax all powerful in their midst did not know that

he would cost them and Europe so much; but the lesson was plain enough in history that he would controls the army controls the people and that aggression is the life0blood of a military despotism. Had the advice of Lassalle and Bebel and old William Liebknecht been taken when it was tendered year after year long ago, not Armageddon but the Co-operative Commonwealth and the United States of Europe would have been the result. We have to read, not only in order to know, but that we may be trained to observe, to weigh evidence, and to estimate probabilities.

Why bother?

Why bother? Asks our correspondent. But it is no bother. The bother is, not to read, but to do without. There are railway journeys, periods of waiting, illnesses, spells of enforced idleness from one cause and another; and it would be pure punishment if one had to pass the time in vacancy.

'Light' Reading.

But why not read 'light' and 'exciting' literature in preference to 'the so-called classics'? he asks. Well, most people do. When the average person asks for a book it is usually a novel that is meant, and not

even one of the best at that. But why ‘so-called classics’? A heedless orator referred scornfully to ‘the so-called nineteenth century.’ If any book is called a classic we may be pretty sure it has earned the title. It has stood the test of time, a test that is more captiously applied to writings than to any other work of man’s hands; for books are man’s refuge and resort in his worst moods, and woe betide the poor author if he fail to soothe, amuse or stimulate. The books that have weathered the fads, megrims, finical fastidiousness, and sheer stupidity of generations of readers fully deserve the title of ‘classics.’

If we are to talk of the ‘so-called’ we ought to apply the derogatory epithet to so-

called 'light' literature. The first thing that strikes one about the so-called light literature is the extreme heaviness of it. It is full of people who do not matter figuring in incidents of no significance that never took place. The full, true, and particular account of how Ermytrude transferred her affections from her husband to her chauffeur – why should that be considered 'light' reading while Green's History or Plutarch's Lives are set down as serious reading, and therefore, I suppose, heavy reading?

The Real Great and the Imaginary Small.

Why should anyone have more interest in Sam Weller than in Alfred the Great or his wise Premier, Archbishop Dunstan? Who wants to keep the company of imaginary inferior people when he might consort with real great men? During one of the darkest periods of my life I read through 'The Rise of the Dutch Republic,' and found solace and stimulus in the noble constancy of William the Silent and the gradual emergence of the Netherlanders as a nation from under the heel of a terrorising Spaniard. We get help in our small matters from the great men and the great occasions. I was then striving to save an old-established newspaper from the wreckers, and I did save it, and prolonged

its life for thirteen years, till incompetence once more got hold of it. I did not know of any 'light' literature that could have helped me, or that would have been anything except impossibly dull at such a time.

What we remember.

Real people, and what they said and did on momentous occasions, are surely more memorable and interesting and every way more important than 'the clink of teaspoons and the accents of the curate.' The things we remember are not the saying and 'situations' in fiction, but the dramatic incidents of history – Scaevola

putting his right hand in the altar fire, the quacking of the geese in the Capitol that betrayed the approach of the barbarians, Canute on the sea-beach, King Alfred and the cakes, Bruce and the spider, Bruce and de Bohun, the noble advice of the Miller of St Albans to his fellow rebels in the Peasant's Revolt, Catherine Douglas putting her white arm in the staple of the broken door-lock to withstand the murderers of her king, Joan of Arc's replies to the miserable tribunal that sought her peerless life; the single saying of Kirkpatrick and of old Bell-the-Cat, the many picturesque sayings of Cromwell ('Stop rolling that snowball' – a lie; 'Take away that bauble,' 'I beseech you

gentlemen in the bowels of Christ, to believe it possible that you may be mistaken') ; the characteristic declaration of George II – 'I see no good in bainting and boatry'; the vastly significant foreboding of the first Reform Bill, 'God forgive you this measure, I never can!' and the similar but more resigned speech of Robert Lowe at the passing of the second Reform Bill, 'We must now educate our masters.'

That we remember such incidents and sayings is the best proof that we are startled and entertained by them. If that be not 'lightness', I do not know the meaning of the word.

On the other hand, what do we

remember of the so-called 'light' literature? Some time ago I read, for want of anything better to do, a fearful but wonderful story called 'The Gamblers,' by (I believe) William de Queux. I do not recall a single incident, or a single character of it. It was the most absolute melodrama, not on, but between, the boards. This is the characteristic feature of 'light' reading — that one promptly forgets all about it, the memory becoming a complete *tabula rasa* six weeks after the event.

During many years I attended the theatre as a dramatic critic. Of 'Girls who took the wrong turning' of 'Worst Girls in London,' of 'Spans of Life' and 'Grips of Iron' I have witnessed scores; and from not

one of them does one carry away a single definite recollection, whereas from the classics – novels or plays that have stood the attrition of the years – the least attentive have tags of wisdom and poetry for the everyday need, recollections of whimsy from Falstaff and Dogberry, of poignant pathos from Lear:

Pray do not mock me:

*I am a very foolish fond
old man.*

*Fourscore and upward,
not an hour more nor less,*

And to deal plainly,

*I fear I am not in my
perfect mind.*

*Methinks I should
know you, and know this
man;*

*Yet I am doubtful, for I
am mainly ignorant*

*What place this is; and
all the skill I have*

*Remembers not these
garments; nor I know not*

*Where I did lodge last
night. Do not laugh at me,*

*For, as I am a man, I
think this lady*

*To be my child
Cordelia.*

You may read 'The Speckled Bird,' or 'The Blue Lagoon,' if you like. 'No profit comes where is no pleasure ta'en.' But I find the best good enough for me. It is no more merit to read what one likes than it was for Jack Horner to put in his thumb and pull out a plum. He said he was a good boy because he did what he wanted to do. That is where the humour of the rhyme lies. But if a man toils at the so-called classics when

he would rather be reading Nat Gould's latest, it is not quite so droll. I do not read Nat Gould because I do not care for Nat Gould. I read Shakespeare because I care for Shakespeare. But if it does not take all sorts of people to make a world, there are certainly all sorts of people *in* the world. When one night not long ago I heard Olivia at the theatre ask her Uncle Toby, who is drunk as usual, 'How came you by this lethargy so early in the day?' the delicate humour of it made me laugh aloud, but I felt a little shamefaced when I found myself alone in the enjoyment of the joke. And yet why should I? A man ought to be glad that he finds something good where others find nothing at all. Which brings me

to another question.

Are the Masses Happy?

Our correspondent seems to rather pity himself that the masses are happy in their sloppy reading, their talk about nothing, and their music halls, enjoyed while he 'bothers' with the so-called classics. Good Lord! The boot is so entirely on the other leg. Who can honestly say that the masses are happy? Are the lower animals happy? How can they be? Last night I looked out of the window of a railway carriage and found a waggon-load of beeves opposite. There they stood, packed head and tail, standing

in the cold and dark, jolted about with the lurches of the train, with probably little memory of the past, without comfort in body, with no resource of speech or song, with nothing to do but keep their feet and thole it out. We in the carriage had seats, light, company, speech, our pipes, and the freedom to get out at the next stopping-place if we cared to. Who has not seen pigeons humping themselves on the housetop by the hour, their heads in their feathers, looking, and we may be sure feeling, unutterably bored and without possibility of comfort or entertainment?

That is certainly how I see the great mass of mankind. They perform the same dull tasks day after day, with no

entertainment save occasional grumbling and swearing. Their rudeness to other people and even to each other is to me the proof that they are miserable. Let no one mistake for happiness the howl of the hooligans at race or football match, or the mirthless skirl of the hoyden in the streets. Those who need to be in a crowd before they can laugh do but make-believe to be happy. But he that laughs in a solitude over a book enjoys himself to a surety. Watch a crowd at a fire or riot or the baiting of an unpopular speaker. The passions that build up without real provocation on those instances are the ebullitions of misery. The Scotsman baited in London or Dublin, the Jew baited

everywhere, know in their deepest consciousness that the stupidest men take the largest share in the persecution; the measure of the stupidity is the measure of the spleen. Many working men beat their wives, and the more ignorant and miserable they are the greater is their cruelty.

The theory of Arcadian simplicity and accompanying good nature will not hold water. Kindness is a product of cultivation. Offer something to a poor man, and he will say 'What, for nothing!' Give a casually met out-of-work silver money, and he will exclaim in amazement 'Well, I'll go to hell!' The well-bred person does kindnesses, and he understands them when he receives in

kind. If the well-bred man is not always a well-read man he has learned from those who are. If he 'has not been to school he has met the scholars.'

It is true that reading sensitises the student to the ills of life; but if it also enables him to help in the redress of those ills, the balance is more than adjusted, and he has done his duty, and pleased himself in addition. The plain way of wisdom is to reduce the pains and increase the lawful pleasures of life. It is not enough to be happy with cakes and ale. A pig is happy in its sty. Man has to fulfil the law of his being, and try to be happy in the best possible way. To the conscientious man who realises that the world is not to be

bettered without effort the alternative to doing his duty is that he shall be miserable at the thought of opportunities neglected and of lions that have *not* been met in the path. Even then, there are consolations by the way, and one of these is the contemplation (in literature) of the great and glorious deeds of the illustrious dead who walked the way before us.

The struggle *does* avail. We are not quite so much 'in the mire' as we were in comparatively recent days. The war is a temporary set-back to many of our hopes; but the war itself may well be the fruitful occasion of tremendous events in the direction of making democracy the real master in its own house.

Autumn on Deveronside.

A HOMELY LAY ON A HOMELY THEME.

1.

The bonnie sheaves they a' day lead -
Kind Nature's golden treasure!
There's ne'er a year but brings its breid,
And *this* gies heapit measure.

Oor ain bit Haugh was early cleared -
The first in a' the pairish -
And though wi' aits sae aften eared,
Again the yield was fairish.*

Already girss is grouin' green
Faur lately waved the yellow,

And snod and loesome lies the scene,
While autumn still is mellow.

The trees yet keep their leafy dress,
The burn rins low and clearly,
The daylight oors weir less and less,
And frosts are late and early.

The fishers haunt the waterside,
And tempt the trout fu' eydent
Faur darklin' waters slowly glide,
And banks gie shade to hide in't.

The reaper's birr comes owre the hill,
Though cairts are likewise leadin',
And though the dronin' thrashin'-mill
Keeps tenty hands a-feedin'.

Trig, lythe, yet airy stands oor toon
On Deveronside rale jaunty,
Wi' trees, and knowes, and streams aroun',
And fowk and bields fu' canty.

The vale 'twixt here and Hatton's towers
Lies level as 'tis spacious,
An emerald strath and emerald bowers,
A prospect wide and gracious.

** The Haugh lands belonging to the Town of Turiff were reaped, cleared, and the crop threshed by the last Saturday in August, and the oats fetched 22s. a quarter, the weight being 45½ lbs. to the bushel, or 3½ lbs. above the standard, though it was the third corn crop in succession on cold and wet land. The work was directed by the Burgh Surveyor, who has no regular staff, but simply hired casual labour. The neighbouring farmers are still struggling with the harvest in the second week of October, and the price of oats has fallen in the interim to 18s. to 20s. This is presumably another illustration of how inefficient public enterprise is as compared*

with private enterprise!

2.

To a' that till the earth, and drive
A bargain hard wi' Natur,
We gie the wish, Lang may ye thrive,
Ilk man an' mither's cratur!

The fowk in ceeties get their keep
In mony a curious set o't,
And if ye tak them in the heap,
They're maybe in oor debt o't,

'Tis true they send us ferlies grand -
News, music, books, and fashions,
But 'tis the country-workin' band
That hands them gaun in rashuns.

Meal, mutton, eggs, and pork and beef,
The steens to bigg their dwellins,
Wi' sticks to cover fleer and reef,

An' furnish forth their hallans.

The '00 that cleeds their backs, the lint
For bed and table linens,
Cheese, butter, milk (wi' fushion in't!),
And vegetable trimmins.

Fruit, nits, and floers, the feathered race,
The salmon fae the rivers,
The coal that lights and warms a place,
And likewise cooks your vivers.

They're a' the products o' the lan',
An' got by folk deservin';
The miner, quarrier, husbandman
Stand first at life-preservin'.

3.

'Tis for the labourer himsel'
To see he's richt rewardit;
They that would live, and live full well,

Their standard they maun guard it.

If fashions cheenge and meal gaes oot,
And corn an' bear's less wantit,
We jist maun turn oorsels about,
Refusin' to be dauntit.

If grain comes in fae foreign pairts
At figures past the beatin',
And aye the price for yowes and mairts
Suggests that some fowk's cheatin',

We're free to buy and sell direct
In sound Co-operation.
Lat interaistit fowk object -
The middleman's ruination.

We hae the pooer the law to set,
That, spite o' a', the boddom
Is nae ca'd oot o' Scotland yet
If we'll but show some smeddum.

Nae vexin' tariffs we would seek
To hamper naitral tradin',
And fill the pooches o' a clique
Already money-laden.

Gie public servants full Control
O' import beef and grain stock,
And free't at prices that would thole
A livin' to oor ain folk.

The profits made would be for a'
Instead o' for the feow, man,
And agriculture far awa
Would thrive as weel, I trow, man.

For husbandry the warld owre
Fares in but poorish wyes, man,
And time it is we harled owre
The system, reet and rise, man.

There's plenty still for willin' hands

That would fulfil the Scriptur,
And, cultivatin' gratefu' lands,
Enjoy the honest raptur

O' cleedin' honest backs wi' 'oo,
And feedin' still the hungry;
For plenty follows still the ploo -
To doot o't maks me angry.

There's beet for sugar, hens for eggs,
And swine for ham and bacon;
If corn's less nott for feedin' naigs,
By pigs and hens it's taken.

5.

And so I say, enjoy this time
When hairst is led and thackit;
In every land, in every clime
We'll still be fed and happit.

And if the produce o' the rigs

Can nae be sell't for cash, man,
We still can weir and eat it. Fegs,
Oor thooms we needna fash, man!

Though stocks and shares and foreign
trade
Had a' gane helter-skelter,
We'd still be fed and warmed and claid,
And still hae fun and shelter.

Whatever serves man's lawfu' need
Is wealth withoot financin'
The fowk that haud the contrar' creed,
It's they that are romancin'.

The willin' lan', the eydent sun
Reward our due endeavour,
And while the world its course shall run
We'll still enjoy this favour.

Turriff, Sept., 1926.

The Dual Purpose of the Dickens Novels

By James Leatham

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**Was Dickens what is called a
Gentleman?**

By Way of Preface

The question with which this page is headed is more or less answered,

incidentally, in the body of the essay. Accepting the etymology of the word 'Gentleman,' there can be no safer definition of it than that which is usually given last, though that, as we shall see, is not adequate. The first dictionary I open gives: 'A man that is well born; one that is of good family; one that bears arms, but has no title'; and last and best of all, 'One of gentle or refined manners.' None of these definitions covers the ground. Men who have been cretins physically and blackguards morally have been both 'well born' and 'of good family.' There were Richard Crookback, the Dauphin who gave up Joan of Arc, and John Churchill, first Duke of Marlborough.

The only safe ground is stated by Shakespeare when he says of Brutus, 'His *life* was gentle.' He was a giver, not a taker. He worked for his livelihood, and did not take money from the poor by force of arm, either legal or lethal. John Milton's idea of a gentleman was to

Defend the poor and desolate,

And rescue from the hands

Of wicked men the low estate

Of him that help demands.

And Dickens said: 'I have *systematically* tried to turn fiction to the good account of showing the *preventable*

wretchedness and misery in which the masses of the people dwell.’

That is a better title to gentleness than ‘gentle and refined manners,’ which may be, and often are, quite compatible with the robbery of the poor and the intensification of their misery. One of the gentlest men I have known was an owner of rack-rented slum property. Dickens’s championship of the poor did not help him. It was not a stunt. And although Queen Victoria sent him her book as from ‘The Least to the Greatest of Authors,’ there were others besides Macaulay who thought they decried Dickens’s Humanity when they called it Socialism.

The Dual Purpose of the Dickens Novels

I

I have just been asked if I proposed to attend a lecture by a professor of *belles lettres* on 'The Art of Charles Dickens.' Those in the confidence of the lecturer explained to me that it was 'the art of Dickens, not his teaching,' with which the lecturer proposed to deal.

Now, I am very far from being uninterested in the art of Dickens, even as so delimited and narrowed. I should,

indeed, say that I was interested in the craft of literary composition in all its minutiae beyond even most authors. I have been writing myself, and considering the writing of others, too long and too practically to be indifferent to 'the form of sound words.' As regards Dickens, I have had for many years a facsimile copy of the manuscript of his 'Christmas Carol,' which I sometimes show to young people as an example of *how* Dickens actually wrote English with his very hand. He was a very deliberate artist with as little as possible of the hasty improviser about his methods. His printed works shows that. His manuscript shows it. We know it from his correspondence. As a reporter he could and

did write descriptive journalese very rapidly, and transcribed many columns of short-hand notes in coach journeys, in spite of the bad light, the jolting, and the distractions caused by his fellow passengers. But his early career as a reporter is not reflected in the mechanism of his style. There is no easy journalistic writing in his novels. In its animation and concentration, his style is, after that of Thomas Carlyle, the most individual and instantly recognisable of any prose in the language. He got the last scintilla of imaginative suggestion out of all situations, characters, appearances, and incidents.

A Matter that Matters

With these features I shall deal in detail later on. But before proceeding further I wish to say that to divorce Dickens's style from the varying message by which it was always inspired and informed, to confine one's attention to his manner and discount his matter, is as if we admired a carpenter's dexterity in throwing off shavings or driving nails, with no thought of what he was actually engaged in making.

There is a dull colourlessness of character which chooses neither good nor evil, neither truth nor error, but does not choose at all. It drifts, and is swept up by

one current of movement after another, no matter how mutually exclusive and contradictory these tendencies may be, voting Tory at one election and Liberal or Labour at the next, according to what may appear to be the prevailing opinion in the constituency at the moment. There is a gaping gawkinsness, by no means confined to yokels, which sits astonished at all manifestation of ability, while paying no noticeable heed to its value, if any – positive, comparative, or superlative. This cataleptic passivity has no standards of judgment, because it is without sincerity. On all settled questions there was a right and a wrong even before they were settled. But they never would have been settled if

the men who settled them, instead of being men of strong and declared convictions, had been careless Gallios who could not make up their minds one way or the other on the moral merits. The ability to define, distinguish, and decide is the basis of all capacity whatever. The absence of it is a defect. In my hotly propagandist days, working from Manchester as a centre, I used to have the curiosity to ask what sort of speaker so-and-so was— meaning someone whom I frequently preceded or followed, but whom I had never heard. ‘A champion speaker!’ was, in the nineties, the most customary formula, with such indeterminate variants as ‘fine,’ ‘At,’ or ‘grand.’ Once in a while you met a person

who had the moral sincerity to be dissatisfied with the descriptive adjectives that did not describe. Such an one would tell you that the object of your inquiry was ‘an analytical speaker,’ or ‘witty,’ or ‘emotional and powerful,’ or ‘homely and picturesque,’ or ‘very fond of statistics,’ or – best of all – he would give specific points or lines of argument or illustration used by the speaker. This was the descriptive method of persons interested in both the matter and the manner, and all the more interested in the one because interested in the other.

‘What are you reading my lord?’ asks Ophelia. ‘Words,’ answers Hamlet. That is intended for sarcasm: but to those for

whom style is the great, almost the only, thing the sarcasm in its full impact must be lots. Ophelia naturally adds: 'But I mean the matter?' To Ophelia the matter seemed to be a matter that supremely mattered. And there we shall leave the matter for the present.

Dictation.

We read of successful novelists who dictate to a stenographer, the lady (it is usually a lady) taking down off the hand words in shorthand and then transcribing the notes into typescript. Making all due allowance for the superior readiness of the modern

mind, as also for the extent to which practice in dictation perhaps makes for tense accuracy, it is difficult to believe that anything like the best results can be achieved by dictation.

This facsimile of the MS of the 'Christmas Carole' shows that Dickens made many changes in his phrasing. The interlineations, substitutions, and erasures are carefully and thoroughly made, and all the alterations are improvements. Thus the first chapter had been headed 'Old Marley's Ghost'; but the 'Old' is struck out. The small improvement is undoubted. Marley's partner is describes as 'old Scrooge.' They had both been old men; but apart from the fact that too much use of the word 'old' was

to be deprecated, the ghost was *not* old. Marley had just died, so that his ghost would really be a new ghost. Then brevity is good in itself – ‘the soul of wit,’ said Pope; while Byron said, ‘brevity is good, whether you are or are not understood.’

Now, all these erasures and interlineations and substitutions represent not only second, but third or fourth thoughts. On the evidence of his highly-wrought manuscript, Dickens was the last man who could or would have cared to dictate to an amanuensis. Dictation may be good enough for the easy requirements or mere formulas of commercial correspondence; but literature is made of distilled words, and dictation and

distillation are not very near relations. It was a defect of the old-fashioned typewriter that the writing was not visible to the typist at work; and the desirability of *seeing* one's words while composing is so evident that inability to see them is one of the great drawbacks of dictating. The presence of a second party, too, prevents one from feeling alone with the idea and turning it over in one's mind at leisure, and without the awkwardness involved in keeping the stenographer waiting. H.G.Wells tells of a novelist whose typist used to show by a scarce perceptible shrug and hesitation when she disapproved of what was dictated to her. Wells much have realised this from his own experience. Even

the signs of approval from an amanuensis would be detraction from the intense, the more than intimate privacy and brooding, the hatching slowness, the tentative, tortuous, oft-abandoned attempts, with recastings of phrase, sentence and paragraph, that go to the best writing.

We could not conceive of Shakespeare dictating. Stevenson and Gibbon wrote passages and chapters over and over again, and improved them, we may be sure, at each re-writing.

The Hasty Improver.

Scott and Dumas would probably represent

the opposite method of composition – the method of hasty improvisation. Scott's facility was so great that, at a time when he was suffering from prolonged and acute neuralgia, he was nevertheless able to dictate to his secretary, Willie Laidlaw, the whole of the powerful tale 'The Bride of Lammermuir,' with its fine and laughable portrayal of the shifts of Caleb Balderstone to cover the nakedness of the land at Ravenswood. Often Scott's enunciation would be broken by an irrepressible groan; the devoted Laidlaw shed tears of sympathy while he wrote or waited; and when the finished story was put into its author's hands it was almost as a new book to him.

Dumas, again, was always writing against time, the printer's messenger coming and taking away instalments of 'copy,' for which he sometimes had to wait. These instalments, moreover, would often be comparatively small; just enough to keep the compositors going and complete the sheet of 'eights' or 'sixteens' immediately in hand.

Dumas, indeed, was so much the improver, bent on filling the sheets, that he is said to have been the first to adopt the practice of making every sentence a paragraph – a device which fills a sheet with many blanks, but certainly gets you down the page.

Scott also, like Arnold Bennett today, had to do his daily stent. But even at his worst, Scott wrote from a mind so full as well as so fine and big that there is an appearance of inevitableness about his language and the development of his story such as do not belong to Dumas. The Frenchman's heroes come out for adventures, and they have them in endless chain; but often one has the feeling that the story might take any one of a hundred courses; that Dumas does not in the least know what is to come next; that anything might have happened as readily as the thing that does happen.

In Arnold Bennett, it must be confessed, in spite of his oft-quoted habit of

matter-of-fact word-stringing, it is difficult to see that waiting for inspiration, or taking longer time over his work, would have made much difference. In his newspaper articles he is careless as to whether he finds a synonym or not, and works the same noun or adjective as hard as he would in ordinary slack conversation. Even this is better than stilted writing; but good writing has the charm of variety in the choice of synonyms, in addition to all its other charms.

The Purpose, always the Purpose.

But while Dickens was all the time an

artist, his artistry is only an incidental in the value of his work. The merely literary critic, the *belles lettristic* commentator, professional or other, is almost from the nature of the case, not concerned about the essentials of Dickens's art *as a whole*. Surely to discern the purpose as well to enjoy the art; to accept the teaching with what modifications may be necessary to our own standpoint, is to get vastly more out of these creations than is possible to the non-sociological reader. To read for the art's sake, to regard the man of fiction as a complete identity – what Whitman calls 'a simple, separate person' without regard to the potent social circumstances which shape him, and which he ought to help to

shape in turn, is to ignore the better part of even the 'art' that has created him. There are no simple, separate persons: we are all members of one another.

There are millions of readers, however, who are so little impressed with an author's purpose that they are not conscious of it. One has met Conservatives who were very much surprised to learn that Dickens was hotly Radical, and as such the first editor of the *Daily News*, which began as a Radical newspaper and has continued to be so during the whole course of its fourscore years' existence.

Not to recognise that Dickens was, in all he wrote, distinctly and strongly

Socialistic in tendency is sheer mental blindness. It is quite true that charity, benevolence, and the Christmassy feeling are not politics – are not anything like so good as old age pensions, the ‘dole’ or even a humane Poor Law; but the humanity Dickens loved to propound had to come as preparation of the individual for these legislative changes. With most people the enlightened humanity has still to come.

In Detail.

Let us see, without too much of pedestrian summarising, something of what Charles Dickens did accomplish with those dual

purposes always before him of writing a great story and at the same time aiming at the redress of social scandals.

Even in his early 'Sketches by Boz,' Dickens showed himself as the High Priest of Humanism in Fiction. These sketches were actual pictures of London life, in which the seamstress and the poor street-singer arouse the pity of the young journalist, while the gas-bag of the public-house parlour – that enemy of real reform – equally comes in for realistic treatment. The very name of Boz suggests the source of Dickens's inspiration. He admired so much the writings of Oliver Goldsmith – a social reformer in all he wrote – and the name of Moses, the son of the good Vicar of

Wakefield, was so often on his lips, that his younger brother called him Boz as a child's attempt at the name. And just as the 'Vicar of Wakefield' was the first novel – indeed the first book of any kind – that advocated prison reform and a lightening of the penal code, so in the 'Pickwick Papers' the demoralising life of the debtor's prison was depicted in striking colours derived from the novelist's own experience while his father was an inmate of the Marshalsea prison.

His own experience, gained in the blacking factory where he spent a miserable time with several London guttersnipes, is not less vividly reflected in 'Oliver Twist,' with its sketches of the

young criminals Charley Bates and the Artful Dodger as trained by old Fagin the Jew. In the brutality and unhappiness of Bill Sikes and Nancy he shows the real misery of the crook's life and its inevitable tragic end. Bumbledom, also, is so presented here that, on the whole, it can scarcely be said to have survived it, and the inmates of workhouses are now comparatively pampered. Similarly, the cruel magistrates of Dickens's day, of whom he had not only the special knowledge derived from his experience as a reporter in the courts, but had studied afterwards in the true portrait of Justice Fang and in that alone; for the city stipendiary of today is wonderfully

understanding and clement, and regularly acts as a buffer between the public and an officious police force, in which the promotion of individuals has a tendency to depend upon the number of convictions secured.

The shabby genteel people of 'Nicholas Nickleby,' the warm-heartedness and open-handedness of 'show folk,' the mockery of education as carried on in places of the Dotheboys Hall type, the brainlessness of the aristocracy as exemplified in Lord Verisopht, and its occasional turpitude as in Sir Mulberry Hawk, are further indications of Dickens's strong class feeling and the steadiness of his humanistic purpose.

‘Martin Chuzzlewhit,’ hits off Yankee vulgarity and embalms to immortality Mrs Gamp, the private-enterprise nurse, with her snuff-taking and tippling irresponsibility, and Pecksniff the pharisaical fraud.

‘Dombey and Son’ reproves the pride of wealth with unforgettable and pathetic realism. That it contains such characters as Mrs Pipchin and poor little Paul gilds the philosophic pill; but it seems necessary to point out that the pill is there, since its presence is not always observed apparently. I have known people who were ardent admirers of Dickens, yet continued to believe in the institutions and failings he satirised.

‘Bleak House’ illustrates the folly of those who busy themselves with foreign missions while neglecting domestic concerns. Among much else, it shows how wealth may be punished by the consequences of the poverty itself has made, epidemic disease from the hovel of Tom-All-Along invading the homes of the wealthy. It reveals the mischief done by the law’s delay in the case of Arthur Jarndyce and poor Miss Flite; and it fastens the responsibility for the miserable life and premature death of Poor Jo upon society as a whole.

Not Unerring.

While Dickens's social instinct was sound, his specific approach to a given problem was not always unerring. 'Hard Times,' based upon his experience of a strike in Preston, is wrong as to the place and value it accords to trade unionism, and unjust to trade union leaders as personified in Slackbridge the agitator. Stephen Blackpool is, say what Dickens will, an abetter of blacklegging. No workman can afford rightly to stand off from the union of his calling on the plea that he does not approve of its every act. Broadly, trades unionism has improved the status of all workers, and the benefits it has won cannot rightly be enjoyed while the agency itself is belittled and denied. But the

characters of Gradgrind the man of facts, and Bounderby the bully of humility, with his boasting of how 'I was brought up in the gutter, sir,' are immortal; their names have become epithet; and the influence of the satire is a long way from being spent because unnecessary. There are still public men who are not ashamed to tell that their parents sent them to work at ten and twelve years of age.

'Little Dorrit' exposes the methods of the Barnacles and the Circumlocution Office, evidently not in vain; for the Civil Service is now prompt and efficient, and is open to entrants by examination. The character of the financier Merdle, who makes such wholesale shipwreck of other

people's fortunes and his own, shows that Dickens realised a very long time ago the true inwardness of the methods of the class of Hooleys, Jabez Balrouers, and Whittaker Wrights, who now more than ever prey upon the cupidity of the large class that seeks to secure something for nothing.

Was Dickens a 'Gentleman?'

But it matters not to which of the tales we turn. The social purpose is so obvious that critics who resent Dickens's Humanist tendency long since discovered, first, that he had never portrayed a gentleman, and then that he was not a gentleman himself.

It depends upon the definition. Etymologically the word means a man who is gentle, in speech, manner and action. 'His life was gentle,' says Mark Anthony of Brutus, in Shakespeare's panegyric.

If to be a gentleman means to be a useless person, one who has 'never soiled his hand with trade,' then Dickens had very obviously nothing but contempt for that character. This he shows again and again. It is the whole *motif* of the powerful tale 'Great Expectations,' in which the nominal hero, Pip, is corrupted from the very first hint of his great expectations, and passes from one failure to another till his expectations come to an end and he enters upon a career of self-supporting

effort. The most loveable figure of the book is the honest blacksmith Joe Gargery, whose forbearance and kindness are inexhaustible, and whose good nature is not mere lumpish inertia, but has its basis of reason as stated by him when he points out that his own mother had suffered so much at the hands of a brutal husband that he is, as he says, 'dead afeerd of going wrong in the way of not doing what's right by a woman. I'd fur rather of the two go wrong the tother way and be a little ill-conwenienced myself.' His wife is one of the great shrews of imaginative literature; but he, the powerful smith, has reasoned out his philosophy of forbearance as being the line of wisdom, even when Mrs Joe

takes a handful of whiskers in one of her rampages.

The Sir Leicester Deadlock of 'Bleak House' is the essence of pompous futility, and the character of the conventional 'gentleman,' lightly but significantly touched in Sir Leicester, has all the t's crossed and all the I's dotted in the full-length figure of Podsnap in 'Our Mutual Friend.'

It is the manifest intention of this great creator of character in fiction that we should admire most the minor useful and kind people in his stories – Mark Tapley the optimist servant rather than Martin Chuzzlewit the selfish young master; Sam

Weller, with his sense and fun, rather than the conventional and somewhat footling Pickwick.

There is no more moving or graphic view of the causes that led to the French Revolution than the series of vignettes in 'A Tale of Two Cities.' When the cinema producer wishes to show what the Bastille did to its prisoners, how the marquis's coach ran down the poor in the streets, and how, at the breaking of a wine-cask, the starving poor chewed the very staves, after they had lapped up all they could of the escaping liquor, the cinema producer turns, not to Mignet, or Michelet, or even to Carlyle, but to Dickens.

A Crusade within a Crusade.

Each novel is a crusade, but there are even crusades within the crusades, as where in 'Great Expectations' Dickens pours scorn upon the severity of a penal code which would hang a man who has lived down his past because he dared to come back, a man of property, from the penal settlement to which he has been exiled. Dickens was immensely concerned about the housing of the people, about sanitation, education, the reform of the judicial procedure, the abolition of executions in public, the lightening of the penal code, the improvement of the conditions of servile

labour, the improvement of prisons, the adjustment of copyright, and the abolition of American slavery, the blighting influence of which in the Southern States he powerfully described both in his private correspondence and his published writings.

To emphasise the social and political aims of Dickens is the less superfluous because a race of novelists has arisen which discounts 'missions' and 'messages' and regards the novelist simply as the purveyor of entertaining pot-boilers. This is a departure from the whole motive of the novel as originally conceived and as carried out in practice by the masters of the art. From Cervantes down by way of Fielding, Smollett, Swift and Goldsmith, to Dickens,

the Brontes, Mrs Beecher Stowe, Charles Reade, Mrs Gaskell, Victor Hugo, Emile Zola, George Eliot, Bulwer Lytton, George MacDonald, Sir Walter Besant, H.G.Wells, and Biasco Ibanez, the outstanding writers of prose fiction have all been crusaders, more or less pronounced and declared.

The Entertainers.

One has nothing to say against the mere entertainers. That they are content to forego one-half of the *raison d'être* of their art, to fight with a single broadside, is their affair and the affair of their readers. Even Shakespeare and Scott are supreme

historical expositors, of whom many a student can say, as the Duke of Marlborough did, that they owe more of their knowledge of, and interest in, history to the reading of Shakespeare's plays and Scott's novels than to direct study of the professed historians.

Types that are Real Characters.

Nobody can say that Squire Western is a less lifelike character because historians appropriately choose him as the type (as he was intended to be) of the rough, ignorant, fox-hunting squire of two centuries. The art of Tobias Smollett is not lessened by its

true portraiture of the doddering Duke of Newcastle, long Prime Minister of Britain, or the figures of Commodore Trunnion and Bo'sun Pipes as drawn by the same satirical ex-navy surgeon. Bulwer Lytton's admittedly best fiction, 'My Novel,' gains its merits from its didactic purpose as a view of the 'Varieties of English Life,' as its subtitle declares it to be. The varieties are types, not merely people to whom things happen – not merely 'the sweepings of a Pentonville omnibus,' as Ruskin unflatteringly declared casual collections of ordinary people to be. All this is no mere gratuitous arrogance. In the increasing complexity and difficulty of life, there is so much necessary informative and educative

reading to be done that one grudges the time wasted on books that are merely entertaining, since it is possible to have better entertainment along with the serious teaching, as the writings of Charles Dickens abundantly show. An ignorant and frivolous democracy is at its worst when international danger on an unprecedented scale, and at its best a sad drag upon sound social progress. It is possible to go to the public and circulating libraries for 'best sellers' during a whole lifetime, and yet be as ignorant as dirt on most of the things that really matter.

The Dickens Spirit Not Out of Date.

If Dickens can draw types that afford us unique enjoyment, it is a pure extra to the crusading. The crusading itself is not at all out of date – very far from that. There are still people who live idly upon great expectations and unearned incomes. The law still has its delays. Financiers still swindle the public. Honest industry is still despised. The law still musters the corporate force of society to break butterflies on the wheel, and to make the lives of those already miserable more miserable still. People still worship pedigrees and swell with family pride, the pride being always in inverse ratio to the achievements of the ancestry. Dickens was up against the established order at every

turn; and it is a tribute to the efficacy of his assault that mere ornamental persons, and not much of that, should find that they cannot read him and that he was not a gentleman.

II.

What makes the style of Charles Dickens so individual and recognisable? Shortly stated, it is surely its academic yet whimsical intensity, is it not? Absurdity set forth in graceful language is irresistible. Even his little boys are under all circumstances polite. David Copperfield taken in by the greedy waiter, and little

Pip tilted upside down upon a table tombstone till he sees the church steeple under his feet, never forgot their company manners. Pip addresses as 'Sir,' the terrible convict who threatens him so fiercely and handles him so unceremoniously, and David is abashed in the presence of the cormorant waiter, and answers him with propitiatory courtesy. The contrast of their innocent helplessness, put upon as it is, with the unscrupulousness which abuses it, is enhanced in its pathos by the gentle politeness of the little men. This urbanity is a distinguishing note of Dickens's style.

Attention.

Dickens himself attributed the basis of his powers to Attention. He had, much in the manner of his own little Paul Dombey, observed closely an thought long analytical thoughts about everything that interested him. It is claimed for him, on the strength of a statement of his own, that his memory went back to things he had noticed in his cradle. One has heard this statement called in question: but to doubt it seems gratuitous scepticism. It would be interesting to compare notes with individuals as to when their conscious observation or observant consciousness

began. Such an inquiry would be quite in keeping with the celebrated investigations into human faculty conducted by Francis Galton.

It would be a pity to spoil such an inquiry by self-complacent exaggeration and there would be a tendency to do that; but, speaking for myself, I have a great many definite recollections of infantile activities, adventures, and speculations that must have begun not later than the age of three. My people removed from the house in which I was born when I was at the age of 4 ½ ; and I went to school very tearfully and rebelliously just after the removal; but vivid memories of summers, winters, exploits, and day-dreaming ante-

date this period by what seem so long a stretch that it does not appear at all to be difficult to believe that so exceptional an observer as Dickens might begin his critical, speculative, analytical stocktaking even in his cradle.

Baldly stated, attention as a recipe for mental achievement may not seem to take us far; but let us not rest satisfied with the bald statement of it; let us see in some detail what it means. The admonition of the French preceptor, *Attendez vous* – pay attention – is the most fruitful good advice that an instructor can give. One of the best technical pupils I have had was the daughter of a poor labourer who sometimes said, ‘Will you do that again, please?’ when

she had not quite followed the manual trick of an operation. She seldom needed a third repetition, and the very look of her quiet grey eyes bespoke special attentiveness.

A Hopeful Theory.

That we may do more or less what we wish to do if we are only sufficiently in earnest to attend to the means of success is obviously a hopeful theory; and the more it is examined the more feasible it does seem. It appears to place achievement within the compass of all who can attain to the moral quality of sincerity, in art as in any other branch of human service. When we use the

word 'genius' in *ad captandum* fashion as covering something not to be accounted for, something to be set apart as beyond explanation, we may be ignoring or ruling out a whole process of preparation in the mind, studies, and pursuits of a person whom we suppose to have achieved a certain result by some inexplicable *tour de force*, without preparation, and without the concentration which is itself a preparation. It is common to find men who excel in music, poetry, eloquence, painting, or sculpture defective to the extent of disorderliness on the side of business, figures, and general attention to the requisites of personal material prosperity. What does this mean except that the

genius is so pre-occupied with his art that he has no thought for the small change of general social commerce?

The artist can reproduce scenes or figures by the closeness with which he observes them. Attempts at drawing reveal in line and perspective the degree of notice which the draughtsman has taken of appearances. As the artist has an attentive eye for appearances, for form and colour, so has the actor for the sound of spoken words, the tone, gesture, and facial expression of the speaker. The musician has a closely-related attention for tune, time, and musical enunciation. But to reproduce form and colour by line and pain, to imitate sounds by other sounds, whether

spoken words or notes of music – these are comparatively simple processes as contrasted with the reproduction of sounds, scenery, speeches, atmosphere by means of the totally different medium of words. Yet this last is what the author does. And as such art at its best is the most difficult of all, a corresponding degree of attentiveness is required for mastery in it.

To say that musical, scenic or verbal artists produce their effects by having given specially close attention to the thing to be produced may not seem much of an explanation. The artist must, of course, feel that the thing to which he gives attention is supremely worthy of his attention, or he may just have a turn that way without

having consciously theorised in justification of his state.

Genius.

Genius is the capacity and the will to give attention to trifles, an infinite patience for taking pains, and the more or less conscious belief that the trifles are worth taking pains with. This it is which marks him off from the average man, who is apt to let a job go with 'It will do well enough.' Simple people, savages, and children take the most marvellous work of the human hand and brain as a matter of course.

They have little curiosity. Perhaps they despair of being able to understand. Those who know nothing of machinery give it up: in the case of women they have little attention for it. But a boy, and still more a man who already knows something of mechanics, is interested at once, and will try to master the principle of a machine. The man who reads is more or less interested in all books, and will glance over the titles of a row of volumes even if he has no time to look inside them. But the illiterate give books no thought. they are as incapable of giving them attention as the woman is with the machinery for which she has no use. I was surprised to find that a clever teacher, herself something of a

draughtswoman, had never noticed that the stones or bricks out of which a wall was composed were not laid exactly on top of one another, but were set so that the middle of one stone fell on top of the joining of the two stones below it, one course thus locking another.

People who tell a joke, but leave out the point of it, simply have not attended to the story properly. People who cannot tell one tune from another, have not listened properly, are perhaps *incapable* of listening properly, to musical sounds. That such people can nevertheless reproduce subtle shades of pronunciation would seem to show that they are not so much destitute of 'ear' as that they do not consider music

worth listening to. We can note that in which we are interested. Dull men who forget important facts the moment after they have heard or read them can nevertheless remember small sums that are due to them, and men can often give a prolix account of all the minor circumstances in connection with a matter while forgetting the essential features of what happened.

There is ordinary photographic perception, and there is the selective, didactic perception which we call art. Zola takes down everything. Dickens, or any other true artist, selects, transposes, shortens, heightens, and rejects. Zola was a literary photographer; Dickens a literary

artist.

Laughter-Makers.

But farcical humour is a thing by itself – one of the rarest human gifts. The comedian is always popular, irrespective of the precise value of his talent, because his talent has what economists call a ‘scarcity value.’ That we take the humourist to our hearts, is because, for every thousand writers who can make us shudder, weep, or just follow a plain tale with mild interest, there is but one who can make us laugh. Mark Twain in America, Dickens and Shaw in England are not merely writers

among thousands: there is no arithmetic to express uniqueness.

In many readers and hearers the faculty of laughter is so much a minus quality that unless they are warned beforehand that they are expected to laugh, they fail to do so, in this reminding us of deaf people who laugh too soon or in the wrong place, because they have been told that So-and-so is 'a funny man.' The white face and red nose of the clown are part of the warning, a sign that jokes may be expected. A perception of the grotesque is so little to be counted upon with all individuals that if one wishes a jest to be taken it is safest to put the saying in the mouth of a some character, real or

invented, with a change of voice to indicate that the remark is intended to amuse. Many worthy people need to know a joker for years ere they realise that his every remark is not to be taken seriously, and one has heard the drollest sayings accepted by those to whom they were addressed as if they were ordinary matters of fact.

Attention to trifles makes the genius: but must one be a genius in order to consider the trifles worth attending to and working out? Often one has heard a laugh raised by the saying of something that had occurred to oneself and probably to others present, but that the joker alone had thought worth giving expression to. Even

then, there are trifles that are essential and trifles that are not, and genius is required to distinguish the one from the other. Much of the success of Dickens as a humourist lies in the patience, born of keen personal enjoyment, with which he elaborates an absurdity some features of which had occurred to ourselves, though we had not dwelt on it long enough to get the full flavour of its farcical suggestion. This is not to say that Dickens's humour has not mostly the charm of the perfectly unexpected.

The Charm of the Unexpected.

The following passage from 'Great Expectations' (which happens to be the latest of these novels I have re-read) takes one quite suddenly. It is not introduced by Dickens merely for the sake of fun, but is a necessary part of the narrative. Pip has to hide a portion of his bread for the benefit of the escaped convict, and this is how the humourist turn the necessity to account: -

The effort of resolution necessary to the achievement of this purpose, I found to be quite awful. It was as if I had to make up my mind to leap from the top of a high house, or plunge into a great depth of water. And it was made the more difficult by the unconscious Joe. In our already-mentioned freemasonry as fellow-sufferers,

and in his good-natured companionship with me, it was our evening habit to compare the way we bit through our slices, by silently holding them up to each other's admiration now and then – which stimulated us to new exertions. Tonight Joe several times invited me by the display of his fast-diminishing slice, to enter upon our usual friendly competition; but he found me, each time, with my yellow mug of tea on one knee, and my untouched bread-and-butter on the other. At last I desperately considered that the thing I contemplated must be done, and that it had best be done in the least improbable manner consistent with the circumstances. I took advantage of a moment when Joe

had just looked at me, and got my bread-and-butter down my leg.

Joe was evidently made uncomfortable by what he supposed to be my loss of appetite, and took a thoughtful bite out of his slice, which he didn't seem to enjoy. He turned it about in his mouth much longer than usual, pondering over it a good deal, and after all gulped it down like a pill. He was about to take another bite, and had just got his head on one side for a good purchase on it, when his eye fell on me, and he saw that my bread-and-butter was gone.

The wonder and consternation with which Joe stopped on the threshold of his

bite and stared at me, were too evident to escape my sister's observation.

'What's the matter now?' said she, smartly, as she put down her cup.

'I say, you know!' muttered Joe, shaking his head at me in a very serious remonstrance. 'Pip, old chap! You'll do yourself a mischief. It'll stick somewhere. You can't have chewed it, Pip.'

'What's the matter now?' repeated my sister, more sharply than before.

'If you can cough any trifle on it up, Pip, I'd recommend you to do it,' said Joe, all aghast. 'Manners is manners, but still your 'elth's your 'elth.'

By this time my sister was quite desperate so she pounced on Joe, and, taking him by the two whiskers, knocked his head for a little while against the wall behind him; while I sat in the corner, looking guiltily on.

‘Now perhaps you’ll mention what’s the matter,’ said my sister, out of breath, ‘you staring great stuck pig.’

Joe looked at her in a helpless way; then took a helpless bite, and looked at me again. ‘You know Pip,’ said Joe, solemnly, with his last bite in his cheek, and speaking in a confidential voice, as if we two were quite alone, ‘you and me is always friends, and I’d be the last one to

tell upon you, any time. But such a' – he moved his chair, and looked about the floor between us and then again at me – ‘such an uncommon bolt as that!’

‘Been bolting his food, has he?’ cried my sister.

‘You know old chap,’ said Joe, looking at me, and not at Mrs Joe, with his bite still in his cheek, ‘I Bolted, myself, when I was your age – frequent – and as a boy I’ve been among many a Bolter; but I never see your bolting equal yet, Pip, and it’s a mercy you ain’t Bolted dead.’

My sister made a dive at me, and fished me up by the hair; saying nothing

more than the awful words, 'You come along and be dosed.'

Some medical beast has revived Tar-water in those days as a fine medicine, and Mrs Joe always kept a supply of it in the cupboard; having a belief in its virtues correspondent to its nastiness. At the best of times, so much of this elixir was administered to me as a choice restorative, that I was conscious of going about, smelling like a new fence. On this particular evening, the urgency of my case demanded a pint of this mixture, which was poured down my throat, for my greater comfort, while Mrs Joe held my head under her arm, as a boot would be held in a boot-jack. Joe got off with half-a-

pint; but was made to swallow that (much to his disturbance, as he sat slowly munching and meditating before the fire), 'because he had had a turn.' Judging from myself, I should say he certainly had a turn afterwards, if he had none before.

It was no wonder if Mrs Gargery was exasperated at her husband; and Pip had a grievance against him too.

If we speak of the charm of the unexpected, what could be less expected than the suggestion in the conclusion of this passage?

'You look very well, Mr Barkiss,' I said, thinking he would like to know it. Mr

Barkiss rubbed his cheek with his cuff, and then looked at his cuff as if he expected to find some of the bloom upon it.

There is a remark that lingers in my mind from the first boyish reading of 'Nicholas Nickelby': these things will never hit us again with the original laughter-raising impact. Round the area door of Arthur Gride, notorious miser, there gathers the human flotsam of a city street, attracted by loud knocking to which there is no response. Some held that old Gride's housekeeper had fallen asleep, some that she had burnt herself to death, some that she had got drunk. The atmosphere would be ominous of tragedy except that the life of the street relieves the gloom. At any

rate, tragedy is effectually turned to comedy when a very fat man in the little crowd suggests that Peg Sliderskew, the miser's old housekeeper, has seen something to eat, which has frightened her so much (not being used to it) that she has fallen into a fit!

A General Characteristic.

Dickens's style is not simple. It is, for one thing, a Latinised style. We could not fancy him writing 'cheap' – he writes 'inexpensive.' When the ironmaster is announced to Sir Leicester Deadlock he asks that 'the ferruginous gentleman' be

shown in. Mr Pumblechook's shop is described as 'peppercorny and farinaceous.' The humorous effect is heightened by some of these rather stately locutions. Thus Joe Gargery's reference to a certain sum as 'a cool four thousand,' gives rise to the comment : - 'I never discovered from whom Joe derived the conventional temperature of the four thousand pounds, but it appeared to make the sum of money more to him, and he had a manifest relish in insisting on its being cool.'

The slight stateliness there – and it is but slight - was inseparable from the thought, and these reflective interludes, which are frequent in Dickens's books, are the more effective when they follow the

broad illiterate speech of humble characters out of whom the novelist secures his best comic effects.

In this banter about the transferred epithet 'cool' as applied to money he reminds us of how he makes Mr Dick puncture a similar expression about there being no room to swing a cat in his apartment. 'But I don't want to swing a cat,' says Mr Dick, with the wisdom of folly, which refuses to accept more or less inappropriate tags which pass current with the more sophisticated. 'How old would you be?' asked the lady. And the half-wit answered: 'It's not how old I would be, but how old am I?' Perhaps someone will yet give a really effective flick to such

overworked *clichés* as 'exploring every avenue' and 'leaving no stone unturned.'

These whimsical analyses belong to a leisurely style which has gone out. The old-fashioned novel was much longer than the stories of today. There was more writing up, and less concern for getting ahead with the story. The fairly long-drawn preliminaries of 'David Copperfield,' in which the caul with which he was born, and the views of the old lady who bought it for five shillings, of which she was twopence-halfpenny short, are given at length, probably represented rhetorical sparring for an opening; though there, as always with Dickens, the rhetoric is not wasted, but sparkles and coruscates and

gets charmingly and definitely somewhere. William de Morgan is the only latter-day writer of fiction who gambles with his pen in the same leisurely and sportive way.

Even in the relatively short 'Christmas Carol' Dickens opens with a characteristic whimsical aside:

Old Marley was dead as a door-nail. Mind! I don't mean to say that I know of my own knowledge what there is particularly dead about a door-nail. I might have been inclined, myself, to regard a coffin-nail as the deadest piece of ironmongery in the trade. But the wisdom of our ancestors is in the simile, and my unhallowed hands shall not disturb it...

You will therefore permit me to repeat emphatically that Marley was as dead as a door-nail.

The Rhetoric of High Spirits.

Besides illustrating his turn for whimsical reflective asides, the passage is also an example of that quickness of observation which lets nothing be taken for granted or held as read. In its continuation it also reflects that rhetoric of high spirits which is one of the chief marks of Dickens's style.

Scrooge knew he was dead. Of course he did. How could it be otherwise? Scrooge and he were partners for I don't know how

many years. Scrooge was his sole executor, his sole administrator, his sole residuary legatee, his sole friend and mourner.

This is the garrulous circumstantiality of one who is happy at his desk, who thoroughly enjoyed playing verbally with his theme. He is in no hurry to get on with the story. The preparation, the creation of the atmosphere, had to be complete.

The mention of Marley's funeral brings me back to the point I started from. There is no doubt that Marley was dead. This must be distinctly understood, or nothing wonderful can come from the story I am going to relate. If we were not perfectly convinced that Hamlet's father died before

the play began, there would be nothing more remarkable in his taking a stroll at night, in an easterly wind, upon his own ramparts, than there would be in any other middle-aged gentleman rashly turning out after dark in a breezy spot – say Saint Paul’s Churchyard for instance – literally to astonish his son’s weak mind.

The best styles are always Latinised, if regard be had, not merely to the music of language, but still more to its content. The English Bible is not at all Latin in style, and it is very beautiful, but not at all subtle. The Biblical writers did not argue, did not discuss. They announced. Shakespeare as a stylist is beautifully balanced and copious, and still, after

fourscore years, the most delightfully humorous writer in English, both in sudden suggestion and sustained comic analysis. This would hardly seem worth mentioning if so many people did not find that they 'can't read him.'

Personifying the Impersonal.

He has this in common with Shakespeare, that he is much given to personifying the impersonal. Indeed, he carries this further than the dramatist did. When Shakespeare makes the reeds 'lackey the dull stream' he is giving a human attribute to the mere rushes. But he does it in one word. Whereas Dickens resorts to personification of things more freely than Shakespeare

does, and he stretches the personification to greater lengths. Thus of a dirty newspaper he says 'It had taken the measles in a highly irregular form.' And he says: 'Occasionally the smoke came rolling down the chimney as though it could not bear to go out on such a cold night.' And again; 'The day came creeping on, halting and whimpering and shivering, and wrapped in patches of cloud and rags of mist like a beggar.'

These examples are taken more or less at random from the nearest novel to hand. They will at once be recognised as examples of Dickens's habitual trick, sometimes pursued at great length and with powerful imaginative ingenuity, of

giving human attributes to insensate things. It is this breaking into sudden passionate soliloquy that caused Dickens to be classed as of the 'spasmodic' school. It is quite likely that matter-of-fact, donnish people will not follow him in fanciful speculations say over a dull and gusty morning. But such fancies are in the true line of imaginative writing if we are to accept as exemplars the Psalmist who makes the mountains dance, and the Dramatist who causes the sun to 'flatter the mountain-tops with sovereign eye,' and that later poet who figured the torrents of Mont Blanc as 'fiercely glad.' These devices of personification are with Dickens dramatic pauses which immensely enhance

the effectiveness of the situation that follows.

The Names in the Novels

One great open secret of the classic stamp which is upon these fictions lies in the author's happy choice of unforgettable names, both for places and for characters. We learn from Forster's 'Life' – what we might have divined from experience of the range and peculiarity of actual English names – that the nomenclature in Dickens, when it was not obviously coined, as in Do-the-boys Hall, was taken down from signboards, nameplates, newspaper

reports, and the everyday hearing of the ear.

To Scotsmen, Welshmen, or Irishmen who have never lived away from their own country, the Dickens names often appear incredibly absurd. There are ugly names in the Celtic lands – McCulloch, MacFadyen, MacGurk, Auchinachie are not exactly verbal poems – but at least the Celtic names have a meaning: *Mac* is ‘the son of,’ and *auch* is ‘a field.’ But some English names would appear to have been affixed for their absurdity. No name is too grotesque, too jeering, too gross, or too ugly to be an actual name carried through life by some unfortunate English man or woman who must repeat it to strangers, be

addressed by it in speech or writing, or hear it announced at a great public assembly. What are we to think of Hogben, Quirk, Titterington, Coffin, Bugg, Ragg, and Juggins? Passing along Chester Road, Manchester, one day with Robert Blatchford and William Palmer the artist, we sighted a brass plate bearing the legend: 'Tipper, Contractor.' My companions smiled when I called attention to its appropriateness; but they had evidently seen without thinking of it before. A little later, in Stretford Road, we came upon the name 'Godbehere' over a Bible shop, and again it was the northern newcomer who was struck with the oddity rather than the English journalist and the

English artist who passed the shop regularly.

When in Dickens's page we light upon place names like Chinks's Basin, Millpond Bank, and the Old Green Copper Ropewalk we may be sure that the great writer has seen these names and joyfully jotted them down for use. They were almost certainly real names. In Hull to this day there is a Bowlalley Lane and a Land of Green Ginger.

The surnames in these novels are forever identifies with typical human characteristics as adjectives and substantives. Coined names like Gradgrind and Bounderby carry their meaning in

their face; but names less indicative of personal characteristics have nevertheless become generically descriptive. The groveller is Uriah Heep; the whole tribe of cracksmen are Bill Sikes; Sarah Gamp's surname has provided a short synonym for umbrellas that have now little in common with the plethoric *paraplui* she carried; Chadband and Stiggins stand for the class of theologians - now mostly extinct, one would say - whose unction was in inverse ratio to their sincerity.

Pairs.

The names seem to go in pairs, because

they are chosen upon a principle, and we link them so much with pleasure in the mere enumeration. There is Jarley and Marley, and Lillyvick and Linkinwater. There are Podsnap and Snodgrass, Peg Sliderskew and Poll Sweedlepipe. We bracket Joe Gargery who had 'sich larks' with Barkiss who 'was willin.' When we think of two hard, hermit-like old hunks we couple Scrooge who was hard bitten by habit rather than nature with the diabolical Quilp who rioted in badness. If we think of lawyers it is impossible to remember Spenlow & Jorkins without recalling Dodson & Fogg. There are names that suggest the qualities of the characters who bear them, as they were, of course,

intended to do – the Brothers Cheeryble as optimists, Murdstone, the hard man whose name is suggested by grindstone; Miss Flyte, whose estate took flight in litigation; Serjeant Buzfuz who was indeed all fuss and buzz; Trotty Veck, Silas Wegg, Newman Noggs, Mark Tapley (the very name for a man from a public house) ; Mrs Pipchin (what a name!) and Mrs Gummidge , who grumbled so long and then turned out a trump. What a galaxy of memories they call up, and how they have served the world with catchwords and similes, from Wilkins Micawber's 'Waiting for something to turn up,' and Captain Cuttle's 'When found make a note of,' to the proverbs and metaphors of the Wellers,

father and son.

To many a million the England of Charles Dickens and his people is the only England there is; and when we read that Germans in the trenches read the novels of Dickens in greater numbers than did our own Tommies, it seemed no wonder that they should have been so ready to fraternise with us at the first Christmas of the Great War, or that afterwards they should have mutinied against fighting the compatriots of an author in whose hands English humanity appears, on the whole, in such a delightful guise.

Well, we may say that the foundation of Dickens's style was the close attention

with which he observed, the intense feeling with which he wrote, and the happy patience with which he unfolded the humours of character in humble individuals with whom both the queerest freakishnesses and the greatest tenderness are oftenest to be found. One thinks of all the art expended on the Aged Parent, deaf and past work, yet affectionately cherished and humoured by his son, who in the city was the hardest of legal nuts. But the secret of Dickens's humour and wit and kindness is beyond us. The combination has a *moral* as well as an intellectual basis. Like Shakespeare, Dickens must have been a great lover of his fellow men.

Exaggeration.

It is often argued that Dickens was greatly given to exaggeration. For anyone who read the daily marvels of the press and keeps an open eye for the marvels of ordinary life it would be hard to say that the greatest wonders of the mere novelist *can* be exaggerated. One has met queerer people in life than any novelist dared to put in his books. There are many things that are impossible, but hardly any that are improbable.

All fictitious presentation of character has by its concentration necessarily the effect of exaggeration. To set down actual occurrences and speeches in the order of

their occurrence, with all the inconsequent, insignificant things said and done in between the events and conversations that are of moment, would not be worth while. The artist must exclude the unessential in word and act. We all have friends and acquaintances who do and say, at intervals, things which we call characteristic. But during most of the time their words and acts are quite ordinary, and of no literary significance. In plays or novels, however, characters must always speak in character, and acts must have dramatic significance. This means that the ordinary must be excluded, and thus exaggeration becomes inevitable. A play or novel, thus, cannot be natural. They can only approximate to

nature. It is enough that Dickens in his exaggeration can always carry us along with him. The story marches as a story, and the oddity of the characters, their odd names, their odd surroundings, their unusual experiences, and the didactic (teaching) significance of the whole tale, give it its value, in Dickens's case a supreme value.

The Open-Eyed Sociologist.

The sociologist in Dickens never sleeps. He cannot take Pip to Mr Pumblechook's shop without giving a picture of the whole High Street which is of vast economic

significance:

Mr Pumblechook appeared to conduct his business by looking across the street at the saddler, who appeared to transact *his* business by keeping his eye on the coachmaker, who appeared to get on in life by putting his hands in his pockets and contemplating the baker, who in his turn folded his arms and stared at the grocer, who stood at his door and yawned at the chemist. The watchmaker, always peering over a little desk with a magnifying glass at his eye, and always inspected by a group in smock-frocks poring over him through the glass of his shop-window, seemed to be about the only person in the High Street whose trade engaged his attention.

That is competitive commerce – the small market town of wasteful hops and idle shopmen, with only one busy craftsman in the street.

As to sentiment, Dickens was one of the earliest of early Victorians; and while his fund is as fresh as ever, the pathos, say, of Little Nell and the old man is tiring. But with all his sentiment, he was ahead of his age, even ahead of the present age, in his socioeconomic shrewdness. It is still the fashion to sympathise with the money-lender's victims, and judges gain cheap popularity by denouncing the money-lender. The dishonesty of borrowers who do not mean to pay, and of idle extravagant people who live well upon credit, taking

goods they have no intention of paying – of this we hear only as a joke, though it is no joke to billed tradesmen and to the honest folk who are charged to make good the losses incurred with the bilkers. On this Dickens eighty years ago was more sound than all the judges who give all their sympathy to the plunging borrower and their scorn to the men who risk their money in the most desperate of all ventures, spending their lives in coping with conscienceless impecuniosity. He makes Arthur Gride in ‘Nicholas Nickleby’) soliloquise:

 Ten thousand pounds! How many proud printed dames would have fawned and smiled, and how many spendthrift

blockheads done me lip-service to my face and cursed me in their hearts, while I turned that ten thousand pounds into twenty! While I ground and pinched and used these needy borrowers for my pleasure and profit, what smooth-tongued speeches and courteous looks and civil letters would have given me! The cant of the lying world is, that men like me compass our riches by dissimulation and treachery; by fawning, cringing and stooping. Why, how many lies, what mean evasions, what humbled behaviour from upstarts who, but for my money, would spurn me aside as they do their betters every day, would that ten thousand pounds have brought me in! Grant that I had

doubled it – made cent. per cent. – for every sovereign told another – there would not be one piece in all the heap which wouldn't represent ten thousand man and paltry lies, told, not by the money-lender, oh, no, but by the money-borrowers, your liberal, thoughtless, generous, dashing folks, who wouldn't be so mean as to save a sixpence for the world.

That is not only good sense, but good drama. The money-lender is made to speak just as a money-lender would speak. It is the essence of drama to be able to put yourself in the place even of characters with whose sorry trade (as in this case) you have no sympathy.

A Parable.

I have quoted extensively from 'Great Expectations,' not only because of its 'artistic' merits as a tale, but because it seems to embody its author's latest, wisest attitude to life. In its conclusion, Pip, who has lived upon the ex-convict's bounty without knowing the source of his unearned income, from the moment the coarse but affectionate man turns up, revolts against accepting another penny of his money.

The money has been lawfully earned abroad: it is the human channel through

which it comes that Pip cannot abide.

How many men and women of today would jib at the fortune that came through such hands? It is such men as Magwitch, coarse in speech, in feature, hands, and habit, who make most of the world's wealth. Are we to believe that because the rents and dividends of the idle well-to-do come through the hands of lawyer or stockbroker the dependence of the well-groomed, well-schooled, travelled, expensively-turned-out people is any less dishonourable?

If the upshot of Dickens's tale counts for anything it is that every man and woman who does not work for a living is in

precisely the same degrading position which Pip found so dishonourable when his patron turned up in person. Pip would not have the course Colonial's money. He and his friend Herbert Pocket alike declared the idea intolerable. Is it tolerable for the well-to-do generally to live upon the labour and earnings of just such men, multiplied manifold, but keeping themselves mostly out of sight?

The miner, the navy, the slaves of the stokehold, the bloated men of the brewery, the anaemic factory hands, the wretched beings from soapworks and chemical works, one of whom declared to an R.A.M.C friend that the life in the trenches was a holiday by comparison with his

ordinary occupation in civil life – these are, *mutatits mutandis* , men very like Abel Magwitch, gnarled hands, bristling hair, sidelong doglike chewing, rude speech and all. But it is from these conscripts of toil that the idle shareholder draws his (or her) dividends. The shareholder cannot help it, it may be said. But he could help to change entirely the system of production and of life. As it is he votes and subscribes to prevent the system being altered.

Dickens does not thus drive home the general social significance of his story; but he must not only have known that it had no other significance, but intended it to carry that significance. Morally the whole story points to that.

Nay, it must be because his well-to-do readers have seen such teaching running through a great part of his work that they discover he was ‘not a gentleman.’

If to be a ‘nice’ man, falling in with the tastes and outlook of the masters rather than the serfs, be the test, then Dickens certainly was not a gentleman. The point need not be laboured. To many of us it will be in such ways, for such teaching, that the real *noblesse oblige* of Charles Dickens – himself a hard worker all his life – most truly emerges.

Conclusion.

Thus we come back to the point from which we set out – the social purpose of these tales.

The large industrious class of pointless writers of fiction are annoyed that we should look for any such. ‘The business of the novelist’ says one of them, is to tell a plain tale in which his characters should be left to express themselves in action.’ So that the tale is to be plain as well as meaningless.

Why a plain tale? We used to say ‘a penny plain, tuppence coloured,’ the colours evidently doubling the value. We can get plain tales from the newspapers; but the significance of them is not shown, and the

simple reader often finds them meaningless on the 'plain' presented elements. The Singh-Robinson case, or any *cause célèbre* of the hour, is much more novel than any novel; but who shall say that the full significance of these plain tales is realised? For the rest, it is desirable that the characters who 'express themselves in [recorded] action' should be worth expressing. So many characters are not.

Yet another best-seller says: 'The novelist should before everything else be an entertainer, a teller of tales.' The implication of this is that worth-while characters, great events, and spirited narrative are not entertaining. This is not only hard on the historian and the

biographer, but it is hard on the novelists who have had a purpose to serve as well as an entertaining story to tell – Dickens, for one, among many.

The author of a particularly sordid story of the East End of London says: ‘All this high falutin’ chatter about ideals! A playwright’s and a missionary’s calling appear to me to be two distinct and separate callings which should not be permitted to overlap. The one aim of a novelist or dramatist is to amuse.’ Poor Shakespeare, the moralist and poet! Poor Shaw, the missionary! Poor Dickens, poor George Eliot, poor Charles Reade, poor Victor Hugo, poor Bellamy, poor Wells, hopeless high falutin’ chattering idealists

all, but also, somehow, great entertainers. Why did you not confine your attention to ladies of the type of 'Liza of Lambeth,' instead of introducing us to Desdemona, Lady Macbeth, Imogen, Constance, Catherine Eliassoen and Joan of Arc?

A lady novelist, whose interest lies in making out that Shakespeare and Dickens are back numbers, in reviewing the book of a brother-in-trade, says;

The philosophy of any novel is negligible; what matters in it is style, atmosphere, imagination, the drama of events or of emotion, and character presentment. 'These Barren Leaves' is restful, refreshing, and entertaining. You

feel at the end of it that you have been paying a leisurely visit to a gossiping and amusing house party, no more unintelligent or tiresome, though a good deal more affectionate, than the average set of people in real life.

Do you want to read about ‘an average set of people in real life?’ Why should you? Is it not better to keep the very best company that you can? Average talk is neither wise nor interesting. Average people are very much opposed to learning anything, and mostly they are appallingly ignorant, even of the business out of which they make a living. This ‘average set of people,’ are the company at a country house. One has sat hour after hour in the

smokeroom of a country house in the company of politicians, proconsuls, physicians, authors and divines, and their conversation ranged over topics the bare mention of which would raise a smile from 'an average set of people.' But their conversation was intensely absorbing, informative, and so stimulating that it impressed one afresh with a sense of one's own limitations, and raised still higher the studious ambition. In addition to that, it was witty and entertaining as the talk of average people never is. Greville of the 'Memoirs' was a horsey man, keeping the company, often, of jockeys and stableboys. But he was, by virtue of his birth and family influence, Clerk to the Privy

Council. He often met in company Macaulay, Sydney Smith, Lord Holland, Lord Melbourne, and the Duke of Wellington. After such a meeting he would enter in his journal remorseful lamentations over time mis-spent with average people, and make good resolutions for the future; and he was on the less wise because these resolutions were not kept.

The best company should be good enough for anyone. If we cannot keep it in person we can do so in literature – the best man in a thousand years are better in their books than ever they were in personal contact. It is not arrogance or superior personism to want to associate with grown-up people. The average person has not

quite grown up. The C3 people wallowing in gossip about the football or the billiards which they do play, and the sporting chances of politicians in whose politics they take no interest, are spectators at a show of whose antecedents, meaning, and possible course they have no idea. Why make books about the Grey Mass when there are outstanding people, events and things to write up?

If we wish occasionally to read novels as a dissipated alternative and alternative to books about real people who matter, important events that did happen or are happening now, or the science and the story of the world and the universe in which we live, the masters of fiction are

good enough; and the test of their quality is the extent to which they have used their tales, not merely for amusement, but in order to shed real light on the life of man the struggler, still so imperfectly known to us. Regarded as entertainers, it is not to the journeymen of the craft that these masters of craft will take a back seat.

Addendum to the Second Edition.

As criticism of the foregoing, it is said that the crusades of the didactic writers will destroy the value of their fictions when the propaganda has done its turn and the evils are exposed no more. But 'Uncle Tom's

Cabin,' is still a great seller *because* it is the most graphic exposure of the many evils of chattel slavery. 'Don Quixote' is not out of date because it satirises the absurdities of medieval chivalry. The grosser evils of the factory system have been removed, but 'Mary Barton' is still a classic because it illustrates them in detail; it has had a lease of life not extended to Mrs Gaskell's less didactic novels, beating even the exquisite semi-autobiographical 'Cranford' which is the Cheshire home of her youth, Knutsford. The Bronte stories have always a serious background, probably all unnoted by the careless reader – the Napoleonic wars, high prices, and the Luddite firing of factories and smashing of

machinery. Sir Walter Scott is not a back number because his tales have usually a purposeful historic setting: it is the non-historic ones such as 'St Ronan's Well,' that are less successful. Thackeray's 'Esmond,' and 'The Virginians' are among his more enduring writings because they revive the atmosphere of an age that is 'dead' only to those whose lack of imagination leaves them uninterested in history, which with Mr Henry Ford, they probably find to be 'all bunk.'

To the thoughtless, 'didactic' means 'of the nature of copybook maxims.' Be it said in passing, the crystallised wisdom of the copybook maxim is better gear than 'the clink of teaspoons and the accents of the

curate,' and much better than the full, true, and particular account of the dawn of Lady Ermytrude's passion for the chauffeur. Didactic means teaching, and now that fiction has become the only reading of the largest class of those who look at a book at all, it is more than ever necessary that it should be informed with purposes. 'The Jungle,' 'King Coal,' 'The Brass Cheek,' 'Looking Backwards,' 'Elmer Gantry,' among the more modern American novels with a purpose —aren't they all good enough tales as such? Of didactic the greatest entertainer of the time has written in the preface to 'Man and Superman': 'When he declares that art should not be didactic, all the people who

have nothing to teach and all the people who do not want to learn agree with him emphatically.'

