

THE CHILDREN OF THE POETS

(*Pall Mall Gazette*, October 14, 1886.)

The idea of this book is exceedingly charming. As children themselves are the perfect flowers of life, so a collection of the best poems written on children should be the most perfect of all anthologies. Yet, the book itself is not by any means a success. Many of the loveliest child-poems in our literature are excluded and not a few feeble and trivial poems are inserted. The editor's work is characterised by sins of omission and of commission, and the collection, consequently, is very incomplete and very unsatisfactory. Andrew Marvell's exquisite poem *The Picture of Little T. C.*, for instance, does not appear in Mr. Robertson's volume, nor the *Young Love* of the same author, nor the beautiful elegy Ben Jonson wrote on the death of Salathiel Pavy, the little boy-actor of his plays. Waller's verses also, *To My Young Lady Lucy Sidney*, deserve a place in an anthology of this kind, and so do Mr. Matthew Arnold's lines *To a Gipsy Child*, and Edgar Allan Poe's *Annabel Lee*, a little lyric full of strange music and strange romance. There is possibly much to be said in favour of such a poem as that which ends with

And I thank my God with falling tears
For the things in the bottom drawer:

but how different it is from

I was a child, and she was a child,
In this kingdom by the sea;
But we loved with a love that was more than love—
 I and my Annabel Lee;
With a love that the wingèd Seraphs of Heaven
 Coveted her and me

The selection from Blake, again, is very incomplete, many of the loveliest poems being excluded, such as those on *The Little Girl Lost* and *The Little Girl Found*, the *Cradle Song*, *Infant Joy*, and others; nor can we find Sir Henry Wotton's *Hymn upon the Birth of Prince Charles*, Sir William Jones's dainty four-line epigram on *The Babe*, or the delightful lines *To T. L. H., A Child*, by Charles Lamb.

The gravest omission, however, is certainly that of Herrick. Not a single poem of his appears in Mr. Robertson's collection. And yet no English poet has written of children with more love and grace and delicacy. His *Ode on the Birth of Our Saviour*, his poem *To His Saviour, A Child: A Present by a Child*, his *Graces for Children*, and his

many lovely epitaphs on children are all of them exquisite works of art, simple, sweet and sincere.

An English anthology of child-poems that excludes Herrick is as an English garden without its roses and an English woodland without its singing birds; and for one verse of Herrick we would gladly give in exchange even those long poems by Mr. Ashby-Sterry, Miss Menella Smedley, and Mr. Lewis Morris (of Penrhyn), to which Mr. Robertson has assigned a place in his collection. Mr. Robertson, also, should take care when he publishes a poem to publish it correctly. Mr. Bret Harte's *Dickens in Camp*, for instance, is completely spoiled by two ridiculous misprints. In the first line 'dimpling' is substituted for 'drifting' to the entire ruin of rhyme and reason, and in the ninth verse 'the *pensive glory* that fills the Kentish hills' appears as 'the *Persian glory* . . .' with a large capital P! Mistakes such as these are quite unpardonable, and make one feel that, perhaps, after all it was fortunate for Herrick that he was left out. A poet can survive everything but a misprint.

As for Mr. Robertson's preface, like most of the prefaces in the Canterbury Series, it is very carelessly written. Such a sentence as 'I . . . believe that Mrs. Piatt's poems, in particular, will come to many readers, fresh, as well as delightful contributions from across the ocean,' is painful to read. Nor is the matter much better than the manner. It is fantastic to say that Raphael's pictures of the Madonna and Child dealt a deadly blow to the monastic life, and to say, with reference to Greek art, that 'Cupid by the side of Venus enables us to forget that most of her sighs are wanton' is a very crude bit of art criticism indeed. Wordsworth, again, should hardly be spoken of as one who 'was not, in the general, a man from whom human sympathies welled profusely,' but this criticism is as nothing compared to the passage where Mr. Robertson tells us that the scene between Arthur and Hubert in *King John* is not true to nature because the child's pleadings for his life are playful as well as piteous. Indeed, Mr. Robertson, forgetting Mamillius as completely as he misunderstands Arthur, states very clearly that Shakespeare has not given us any deep readings of child nature. Paradoxes are always charming, but judgments such as these are not paradoxical; they are merely provincial.

On the whole, Mr. Robertson's book will not do. It is, we fully admit, an industrious compilation, but it is not an anthology, it is not a selection of the best, for it lacks the discrimination and good taste which is the essence of selection, and for the want of which no amount of industry can atone. The child-poems of our literature have still to be edited.

The Children of the Poets: An Anthology from English and American Writers of Three Generations. Edited, with an Introduction, by Eric S. Robertson. (Walter Scott.)

NEW NOVELS

(*Pall Mall Gazette*, October 28, 1886.)

Astray: A Tale of a Country Town, is a very serious volume. It has taken four people to write it, and even to read it requires assistance. Its dulness is premeditated and deliberate and comes from a laudable desire to rescue fiction from flippancy. It is, in fact, tedious from the noblest motives and wearisome through its good intentions. Yet the story itself is not an uninteresting one. Quite the contrary. It deals with the attempt of a young doctor to build up a noble manhood on the ruins of a wasted youth. Burton King, while little more than a reckless lad, forges the name of a dying man, is arrested and sent to penal servitude for seven years. On his discharge he comes to live with his sisters in a little country town and finds that his real punishment begins when he is free, for prison has made him a pariah. Still, through the nobility and self-sacrifice of his life, he gradually wins himself a position, and ultimately marries the prettiest girl in the book. His character is, on the whole, well drawn, and the authors have almost succeeded in making him good without making him priggish. The method, however, by which the story is told is extremely tiresome. It consists of an interminable series of long letters by different people and of extracts from various diaries. The book consequently is piecemeal and unsatisfactory. It fails in producing any unity of effect. It contains the rough material for a story, but is not a completed work of art. It is, in fact, more of a notebook than a novel. We fear that too many collaborators are like too many cooks and spoil the dinner. Still, in this tale of a country town there are certain solid qualities, and it is a book that one can with perfect safety recommend to other people.

Miss Rhoda Broughton belongs to a very different school. No one can ever say of her that she has tried to separate flippancy from fiction, and whatever harsh criticisms may be passed on the construction of her sentences, she at least possesses that one touch of vulgarity that makes the whole world kin. We are sorry, however, to see from a perusal of *Betty's Visions* that Miss Broughton has been attending the meetings of the Psychical Society in search of copy. Mysticism is not her mission, and telepathy should be left to Messrs. Myers and Gurney. In Philistia lies Miss Broughton's true sphere, and to Philistia she should return. She knows more about the vanities of this world than about this world's visions, and a possible garrison town is better than an impossible ghost-land.

That Other Person, who gives Mrs. Alfred Hunt the title for her three-volume novel, is a young girl, by name Hester Langdale, who for the sake of Mr. Godfrey Daylesford sacrifices everything a woman can sacrifice, and, on his marrying some one else, becomes a hospital nurse. The hospital nurse idea is perhaps used by novelists a little too often in cases of this kind; still, it has an artistic as well as an ethical value. The interest of the story centres, however, in Mr. Daylesford, who marries not for love but for ambition, and is rather severely punished for doing so. Mrs. Daylesford has a sister called Polly who develops, according to the approved psychological method, from a hobbledehoy girl into a tender sweet woman. Polly is delightfully drawn, but the most attractive character in the book, strangely enough, is Mr. Godfrey Daylesford. He is very weak, but he is very charming. So charming indeed is he, that it is only when one closes the book that one thinks of censuring him. While we are in direct contact with him we are fascinated. Such a character has at any rate the morality of truth about it. Here literature has faithfully followed life. Mrs. Hunt writes a very pleasing style, bright and free from affectation. Indeed, everything in her work is clever except the title.

A Child of the Revolution is by the accomplished authoress of the *Atelier du Lys*. The scene opens in France in 1793, and the plot is extremely ingenious. The wife of Jacques Vaudes, a Lyons deputy, loses by illness her baby girl while her husband is absent in Paris where he has gone to see Danton. At the instigation of an old priest she adopts a child of the same age, a little orphan of noble birth, whose parents have died in the Reign of Terror, and passes it off as her own. Her husband, a stern and ardent Republican, worships the child with a passion like that of Jean Valjean for Cosette, nor is it till she has grown to perfect womanhood that he discovers that he has given his love to the daughter of his enemy. This is a noble story, but the workmanship, though good of its kind, is hardly adequate to the idea. The style lacks grace, movement and variety. It is correct but monotonous. Seriousness, like property, has its duties as well as its rights, and the first duty of a novel is to please. *A Child of the Revolution* hardly does that. Still it has merits.

Aphrodite is a romance of ancient Hellas. The supposed date, as given in the first line of Miss Safford's admirable translation, is 551 B.C. This, however, is probably a misprint. At least, we cannot believe that so careful an archæologist as Ernst Eckstein would talk of a famous school of sculpture existing at Athens in the sixth century, and the whole character of the civilisation is of a much later date. The book may be described as a new setting of the tale of Acontius and Cydippe, and though Eckstein is a sort of literary Tadema and cares more for his backgrounds than he does for his figures, still he can tell a story very well, and his hero is made of flesh and

blood. As regards the style, the Germans have not the same feeling as we have about technicalities in literature. To our ears such words as 'phoreion,' 'secos,' 'oionistes,' 'Thyrides' and the like sound harshly in a novel and give an air of pedantry, not of picturesqueness. Yet in its tone *Aphrodite* reminds us of the late Greek novels. Indeed, it might be one of the lost tales of Miletus. It deserves to have many readers and a better binding.

(1) *Astray: A Tale of a Country Town*. By Charlotte M. Yonge, Mary Bramston, Christabel Coleridge and Esmé Stuart. (Hatchards.)

(2) *Betty's Visions*. By Rhoda Broughton. (Routledge and Sons.)

(3) *That Other Person*. By Mrs. Alfred Hunt. (Chatto and Windus.)

(4) *A Child of the Revolution*. By the Author of *Mademoiselle Mori*. (Hatchards.)

(5) *Aphrodite*. Translated from the German of Ernst Eckstein by Mary J. Safford. (New York: Williams and Gottsberger; London: Trübner and Co.)

A POLITICIAN'S POETRY

(*Pall Mall Gazette*, November 3, 1886.)

Although it is against etiquette to quote Greek in Parliament, Homer has always been a great favourite with our statesmen and, indeed, may be said to be almost a factor in our political life. For as the cross-benches form a refuge for those who have no minds to make up, so those who cannot make up their minds always take to Homeric studies. Many of our leaders have sulked in their tents with Achilles after some violent political crisis and, enraged at the fickleness of fortune, more than one has given up to poetry what was obviously meant for party. It would be unjust, however, to regard Lord Carnarvon's translation of the *Odyssey* as being in any sense a political manifesto. Between Calypso and the colonies there is no connection, and the search for Penelope has nothing to do with the search for a policy. The love of literature alone has produced this version of the marvellous Greek epic, and to the love of literature alone it appeals. As Lord Carnarvon says very truly in his preface, each generation in turn delights to tell the story of Odysseus in its own language, for the story is one that never grows old.

Of the labours of his predecessors in translation Lord Carnarvon makes ample recognition, though we acknowledge that we do not consider Pope's *Homer* 'the work of a great poet,' and we must protest that there is more in Chapman than 'quaint Elizabethan conceits.' The metre he has selected is blank verse, which he regards as the best compromise between 'the inevitable redundancy of rhyme and the stricter

accuracy of prose.’ This choice is, on the whole, a sensible one. Blank verse undoubtedly gives the possibility of a clear and simple rendering of the original. Upon the other hand, though we may get Homer’s meaning, we often miss his music. The ten-syllabled line brings but a faint echo of the long roll of the Homeric hexameter, its rapid movement and continuous harmony. Besides, except in the hands of a great master of song, blank verse is apt to be tedious, and Lord Carnarvon’s use of the weak ending, his habit of closing the line with an unimportant word, is hardly consistent with the stateliness of an epic, however valuable it might be in dramatic verse. Now and then, also, Lord Carnarvon exaggerates the value of the Homeric adjective, and for one word in the Greek gives us a whole line in the English. The simple εσπεριος, for instance, is converted into ‘And when the shades of evening fall around,’ in the second book, and elsewhere purely decorative epithets are expanded into elaborate descriptions. However, there are many pleasing qualities in Lord Carnarvon’s verse, and though it may not contain much subtlety of melody, still it has often a charm and sweetness of its own.

The description of Calypso’s garden, for example, is excellent:

Around the grotto grew a goodly grove,
Alder, and poplar, and the cypress sweet;
And the deep-winged sea-birds found their haunt,
And owls and hawks, and long-tongued cormorants,
Who joy to live upon the briny flood.
And o’er the face of the deep cave a vine
Wove its wild tangles and clustering grapes.
Four fountains too, each from the other turned,
Poured their white waters, whilst the grassy meads
Bloomed with the parsley and the violet’s flower.

The story of the Cyclops is not very well told. The grotesque humour of the Giant’s promise hardly appears in

 Thee then, Noman, last of all
Will I devour, and this thy gift shall be,

and the bitter play on words Odysseus makes, the pun on μητις, in fact, is not noticed. The idyll of Nausicaa, however, is very gracefully translated, and there is a great deal that is delightful in the Circe episode. For simplicity of diction this is also very good:

So to Olympus through the woody isle
Hermes departed, and I went my way
To Circe's halls, sore troubled in my mind.
But by the fair-tressed Goddess' gate I stood,
And called upon her, and she heard my voice,
And forth she came and oped the shining doors
And bade me in; and sad at heart I went.
Then did she set me on a stately chair,
Studded with silver nails of cunning work,
With footstool for my feet, and mixed a draught
Of her foul witcheries in golden cup,
For evil was her purpose. From her hand
I took the cup and drained it to the dregs,
Nor felt the magic charm; but with her rod
She smote me, and she said, 'Go, get thee hence
And herd thee with thy fellows in the sty.'
So spake she, and straightway I drew my sword
Upon the witch, and threatened her with death.

Lord Carnarvon, on the whole, has given us a very pleasing version of the first half of the *Odyssey*. His translation is done in a scholarly and careful manner and deserves much praise. It is not quite Homer, of course, but no translation can hope to be that, for no work of art can afford to lose its style or to give up the manner that is essential to it. Still, those who cannot read Greek will find much beauty in it, and those who can will often gain a charming reminiscence.

The Odyssey of Homer. Books I.-XII. Translated into English Verse by the Earl of Carnarvon. (Macmillan and Co.)

MR. SYMONDS' HISTORY OF THE RENAISSANCE

(*Pall Mall Gazette*, November 10, 1886.)

Mr. Symonds has at last finished his history of the Italian Renaissance. The two volumes just published deal with the intellectual and moral conditions in Italy during the seventy years of the sixteenth century which followed the coronation of Charles the Fifth at Bologna, an era to which Mr. Symonds gives the name of the Catholic Reaction, and they contain a most interesting and valuable account of the position of Spain in the Italian peninsula, the conduct of the Tridentine Council, the specific organisation of the Holy Office and the Company of Jesus, and the state of society upon which those forces were brought to bear. In his previous volumes Mr. Symonds

had regarded the past rather as a picture to be painted than as a problem to be solved. In these two last volumes, however, he shows a clearer appreciation of the office of history. The art of the picturesque chronicler is completed by something like the science of the true historian, the critical spirit begins to manifest itself, and life is not treated as a mere spectacle, but the laws of its evolution and progress are investigated also. We admit that the desire to represent life at all costs under dramatic conditions still accompanies Mr. Symonds, and that he hardly realises that what seems romance to us was harsh reality to those who were engaged in it. Like most dramatists, also, he is more interested in the psychological exceptions than in the general rule. He has something of Shakespeare's sovereign contempt of the masses. The people stir him very little, but he is fascinated by great personalities. Yet it is only fair to remember that the age itself was one of exaggerated individualism and that literature had not yet become a mouthpiece for the utterances of humanity. Men appreciated the aristocracy of intellect, but with the democracy of suffering they had no sympathy. The cry from the brickfields had still to be heard. Mr. Symonds' style, too, has much improved. Here and there, it is true, we come across traces of the old manner, as in the apocalyptic vision of the seven devils that entered Italy with the Spaniard, and the description of the Inquisition as a Belial-Moloch, a 'hideous idol whose face was blackened with soot from burning human flesh.' Such a sentence, also, as 'over the Dead Sea of social putrefaction floated the sickening oil of Jesuitical hypocrisy,' reminds us that rhetoric has not yet lost its charms for Mr. Symonds. Still, on the whole, the style shows far more reserve, balance and sobriety, than can be found in the earlier volumes where violent antithesis forms the predominant characteristic, and accuracy is often sacrificed to an adjective.

Amongst the most interesting chapters of the book are those on the Inquisition, on Sarpi, the great champion of the severance of Church from State, and on Giordano Bruno. Indeed the story of Bruno's life, from his visit to London and Oxford, his sojourn in Paris and wanderings through Germany, down to his betrayal at Venice and martyrdom at Rome, is most powerfully told, and the estimate of the value of his philosophy and the relation he holds to modern science, is at once just and appreciative. The account also of Ignatius Loyola and the rise of the Society of Jesus is extremely interesting, though we cannot think that Mr. Symonds is very happy in his comparison of the Jesuits to 'fanatics laying stones upon a railway' or 'dynamiters blowing up an emperor or a corner of Westminster Hall.' Such a judgment is harsh and crude in expression and more suitable to the clamour of the Protestant Union than to the dignity of the true historian. Mr. Symonds, however, is rarely deliberately unfair, and there is no doubt but that his work on the Catholic Reaction is a most

valuable contribution to modern history—so valuable, indeed, that in the account he gives of the Inquisition in Venice it would be well worth his while to bring the picturesque fiction of the text into some harmony with the plain facts of the footnote.

On the poetry of the sixteenth century Mr. Symonds has, of course, a great deal to say, and on such subjects he always writes with ease, grace, and delicacy of perception. We admit that we weary sometimes of the continual application to literature of epithets appropriate to plastic and pictorial art. The conception of the unity of the arts is certainly of great value, but in the present condition of criticism it seems to us that it would be more useful to emphasise the fact that each art has its separate method of expression. The essay on Tasso, however, is delightful reading, and the position the poet holds towards modern music and modern sentiment is analysed with much subtlety. The essay on Marino also is full of interest. We have often wondered whether those who talk so glibly of Euphuism and Marinism in literature have ever read either *Euphuus* or the *Adone*. To the latter they can have no better guide than Mr. Symonds, whose description of the poem is most fascinating. Marino, like many greater men, has suffered much from his disciples, but he himself was a master of graceful fancy and of exquisite felicity of phrase; not, of course, a great poet but certainly an artist in poetry and one to whom language is indebted. Even those conceits that Mr. Symonds feels bound to censure have something charming about them. The continual use of periphrases is undoubtedly a grave fault in style, yet who but a pedant would really quarrel with such periphrases as *sirena de' boschi* for the nightingale, or *il novella Edimione* for Galileo?

From the poets Mr. Symonds passes to the painters: not those great artists of Florence and Venice of whom he has already written, but the Eclectics of Bologna, the Naturalists of Naples and Rome. This chapter is too polemical to be pleasant. The one on music is much better, and Mr. Symonds gives us a most interesting description of the gradual steps by which the Italian genius passed from poetry and painting to melody and song, till the whole of Europe thrilled with the marvel and mystery of this new language of the soul. Some small details should perhaps be noticed. It is hardly accurate, for instance, to say that Monteverde's *Orfeo* was the first form of the recitative-Opera, as Peri's *Dafne* and *Euridice* and Cavaliere's *Rappresentazione* preceded it by some years, and it is somewhat exaggerated to say that 'under the régime of the Commonwealth the national growth of English music received a check from which it never afterwards recovered,' as it was with Cromwell's auspices that the first English Opera was produced, thirteen years before any Opera was regularly established in Paris. The fact that England did not

make such development in music as Italy and Germany did, must be ascribed to other causes than 'the prevalence of Puritan opinion.'

These, however, are minor points. Mr. Symonds is to be warmly congratulated on the completion of his history of the Renaissance in Italy. It is a most wonderful monument of literary labour, and its value to the student of Humanism cannot be doubted. We have often had occasion to differ from Mr. Symonds on questions of detail, and we have more than once felt it our duty to protest against the rhetoric and over-emphasis of his style, but we fully recognise the importance of his work and the impetus he has given to the study of one of the vital periods of the world's history. Mr. Symonds' learning has not made him a pedant; his culture has widened not narrowed his sympathies, and though he can hardly be called a great historian, yet he will always occupy a place in English literature as one of the remarkable men of letters in the nineteenth century.

Renaissance in Italy: The Catholic Reaction. In Two Parts. By John Addington Symonds. (Smith, Elder and Co.)

A 'JOLLY' ART CRITIC

(*Pall Mall Gazette*, November 18, 1886.)

There is a healthy bank-holiday atmosphere about this book which is extremely pleasant. Mr. Quilter is entirely free from affectation of any kind. He rollicks through art with the recklessness of the tourist and describes its beauties with the enthusiasm of the auctioneer. To many, no doubt, he will seem to be somewhat blatant and bumptious, but we prefer to regard him as being simply British. Mr. Quilter is the apostle of the middle classes, and we are glad to welcome his gospel. After listening so long to the Don Quixote of art, to listen once to Sancho Panza is both salutary and refreshing.

As for his *Sententiæ*, they differ very widely in character and subject. Some of them are ethical, such as 'Humility may be carried too far'; some literary, as 'For one Froude there are a thousand Mrs. Markhams'; and some scientific, as 'Objects which are near display more detail than those which are further off.' Some, again, breathe a fine spirit of optimism, as 'Picturesqueness is the birthright of the bargee'; others are jubilant, as 'Paint firm and be jolly'; and many are purely autobiographical, such as No. 97, 'Few of us understand what it is that we mean by Art.' Nor is Mr. Quilter's manner less interesting than his matter. He tells us that at this festive season of the year, with Christmas and roast beef looming before us, 'Similes drawn from eating and its results occur most readily to the mind.' So he announces that 'Subject is the diet of painting,'

that 'Perspective is the bread of art,' and that 'Beauty is in some way like jam'; drawings, he points out, 'are not made by recipe like puddings,' nor is art composed of 'suet, raisins, and candied peel,' though Mr. Cecil Lawson's landscapes do 'smack of indigestion.' Occasionally, it is true, he makes daring excursions into other realms of fancy, as when he says that 'in the best Reynolds landscapes, one seems *to smell the sawdust*,' or that 'advance in art is of a *kangaroo* character'; but, on the whole, he is happiest in his eating similes, and the secret of his style is evidently 'La métaphore vient en mangeant.'

About artists and their work Mr. Quilter has, of course, a great deal to say. Sculpture he regards as 'Painting's poor relation'; so, with the exception of a jaunty allusion to the 'rough modelling' of Tanagra figurines he hardly refers at all to the plastic arts; but on painters he writes with much vigour and joviality. Holbein's wonderful Court portraits naturally do not give him much pleasure; in fact, he compares them as works of art to the sham series of Scottish kings at Holyrood; but Doré, he tells us, had a wider imaginative range in all subjects where the gloomy and the terrible played leading parts than probably any artist who ever lived, and may be called 'the Carlyle of artists.' In Gainsborough he sees 'a plainness almost amounting to brutality,' while 'vulgarity and snobbishness' are the chief qualities he finds in Sir Joshua Reynolds. He has grave doubts whether Sir Frederick Leighton's work is really 'Greek, after all,' and can discover in it but little of 'rocky Ithaca.' Mr. Poynter, however, is a cart-horse compared to the President, and Frederick Walker was 'a dull Greek' because he had no 'sympathy with poetry.' Linnell's pictures, are 'a sort of "Up, Guards, and at 'em" paintings,' and Mason's exquisite idylls are 'as national as a Jingo poem'! Mr. Birket Foster's landscapes 'smile at one much in the same way that Mr. Carker used to "flash his teeth,"' and Mr. John Collier gives his sitter 'a cheerful slap on the back, before he says, like a shampooer in a Turkish bath, "Next man!"' Mr. Herkomer's art is, 'if not a catch-penny art, at all events a catch-many-pounds art,' and Mr. W. B. Richmond is a 'clever trifler,' who 'might do really good work' 'if he would employ his time in learning to paint.' It is obviously unnecessary for us to point out how luminous these criticisms are, how delicate in expression. The remarks on Sir Joshua Reynolds alone exemplify the truth of *Sententia* No. 19, 'From a picture we gain but little more than we bring.' On the general principles of art Mr. Quilter writes with equal lucidity. That there is a difference between colour and colours, that an artist, be he portrait-painter or dramatist, always reveals himself in his manner, are ideas that can hardly be said to occur to him; but Mr. Quilter really does his best and bravely faces every difficulty in modern art, with the exception of Mr. Whistler. Painting, he tells us, is 'of a different quality to mathematics,' and finish in art is 'adding more

fact! Portrait painting is a bad pursuit for an emotional artist as it destroys his personality and his sympathy; however, even for the emotional artist there is hope, as a portrait can be converted into a picture 'by adding to the likeness of the sitter some dramatic interest or some picturesque adjunct'! As for etchings, they are of two kinds—British and foreign. The latter fail in 'propriety.' Yet, 'really fine etching is as free and easy as is the chat between old chums at midnight over a smoking-room fire.' Consonant with these rollicking views of art is Mr. Quilter's healthy admiration for 'the three primary colours: red, blue, and yellow.' Any one, he points out, 'can paint in good tone who paints only in black and white,' and 'the great sign of a good decorator' is 'his capability of doing without neutral tints.' Indeed, on decoration Mr. Quilter is almost eloquent. He laments most bitterly the divorce that has been made between decorative art and 'what we usually call "pictures,"' makes the customary appeal to the *Last Judgment*, and reminds us that in the great days of art Michael Angelo was the 'furnishing upholsterer.' With the present tendencies of decorative art in England Mr. Quilter, consequently, has but little sympathy, and he makes a gallant appeal to the British householder to stand no more nonsense. Let the honest fellow, he says, on his return from his counting-house tear down the Persian hangings, put a chop on the Anatolian plate, mix some toddy in the Venetian glass, and carry his wife off to the National Gallery to look at 'our own Mulready'! And then the picture he draws of the ideal home, where everything, though ugly, is hallowed by domestic memories, and where beauty appeals not to the heartless eye but the family affections; 'baby's chair there, and the mother's work-basket . . . near the fire, and the ornaments Fred brought home from India on the mantel-board'! It is really impossible not to be touched by so charming a description. How valuable, also, in connection with house decoration is *Sententia* No. 351, 'There is nothing furnishes a room like a bookcase, and plenty of books in it.' How cultivated the mind that thus raises literature to the position of upholstery and puts thought on a level with the antimacassar!

And, finally, for the young workers in art Mr. Quilter has loud words of encouragement. With a sympathy that is absolutely reckless of grammar, he knows from experience 'what an amount of study and mental strain *are* involved in painting a bad picture honestly'; he exhorts them (*Sententia* No. 267) to 'go on quite bravely and sincerely making mess after mess from Nature,' and while sternly warning them that there is something wrong if they do not 'feel *washed out* after each drawing,' he still urges them to 'put a new piece of goods in the window' every morning. In fact, he is quite severe on Mr. Ruskin for not recognising that 'a picture should denote the frailty of man,' and remarks with pleasing courtesy and felicitous grace that 'many phases of feeling . . . are as much a dead letter to this great art teacher, as Sanskrit to *an*

Islington cabman. Nor is Mr. Quilter one of those who fails to practice what he preaches. Far from it. He goes on quite bravely and sincerely making mess after mess from literature, and misquotes Shakespeare, Wordsworth, Alfred de Musset, Mr. Matthew Arnold, Mr. Swinburne, and Mr. Fitzgerald's *Rubaiyat*, in strict accordance with *Sententia* No. 251, which tells us that 'Work must be abominable if it is ever going to be good.' Only, unfortunately, his own work never does get good. Not content with his misquotations, he misspells the names of such well-known painters as Madox-Brown, Bastien Lepage and Meissonier, hesitates between Ingrès and Ingres, talks of *Mr. Millais* and *Mr. Linton*, alludes to Mr. Frank Holl simply as 'Hall,' speaks with easy familiarity of Mr. Burne-Jones as 'Jones,' and writes of the artist whom he calls 'old Chrome' with an affection that reminds us of Mr. Tulliver's love for Jeremy Taylor. On the whole, the book will not do. We fully admit that it is extremely amusing and, no doubt, Mr. Quilter is quite earnest in his endeavours to elevate art to the dignity of manual labour, but the extraordinary vulgarity of the style alone will always be sufficient to prevent these *Sententiæ Artis* from being anything more than curiosities of literature. Mr. Quilter has missed his chance; for he has failed even to make himself the Tupper of Painting.

Sententiæ: Artis: First Principles of Art for Painters and Picture Lovers. By Harry Quilter, M.A. (Isbister.)

[A reply to this review appeared on November 23.]

A SENTIMENTAL JOURNEY THROUGH LITERATURE

(*Pall Mall Gazette*, December 1, 1886.)

This is undoubtedly an interesting book, not merely through its eloquence and earnestness, but also through the wonderful catholicity of taste that it displays. Mr. Noel has a passion for panegyric. His eulogy on Keats is closely followed by a eulogy on Whitman, and his praise of Lord Tennyson is equalled only by his praise of Mr. Robert Buchanan. Sometimes, we admit, we would like a little more fineness of discrimination, a little more delicacy of perception. Sincerity of utterance is valuable in a critic, but sanity of judgment is more valuable still, and Mr. Noel's judgments are not always distinguished by their sobriety. Many of the essays, however, are well worth reading. The best is certainly that on *The Poetic Interpretation of Nature*, in which Mr. Noel claims that what is called by Mr. Ruskin the 'pathetic fallacy of literature' is in reality a vital emotional truth; but the essays on Hugo and Mr. Browning are good also; the little paper entitled *Rambles by the Cornish Seas* is a real marvel of delightful description, and the monograph on Chatterton has a good deal of merit, though we must protest very strongly against Mr. Noel's idea that Chatterton must be

modernised before he can be appreciated. Mr. Noel has absolutely no right whatsoever to alter Chatterton's 'yonge damoysselles' and 'anlace fell' into 'youthful damsels' and 'weapon fell,' for Chatterton's archaisms were an essential part of his inspiration and his method. Mr. Noel in one of his essays speaks with much severity of those who prefer sound to sense in poetry and, no doubt, this is a very wicked thing to do; but he himself is guilty of a much graver sin against art when, in his desire to emphasise the meaning of Chatterton, he destroys Chatterton's music. In the modernised version he gives of the wonderful *Songe to Ælla*, he mars by his corrections the poem's metrical beauty, ruins the rhymes and robs the music of its echo. Nineteenth-century restorations have done quite enough harm to English architecture without English poetry being treated in the same manner, and we hope that when Mr. Noel writes again about Chatterton he will quote from the poet's verse, not from a publisher's version.

This, however, is not by any means the chief blot on Mr. Noel's book. The fault of his book is that it tells us far more about his own personal feelings than it does about the qualities of the various works of art that are criticised. It is in fact a diary of the emotions suggested by literature, rather than any real addition to literary criticism, and we fancy that many of the poets about whom he writes so eloquently would be not a little surprised at the qualities he finds in their work. Byron, for instance, who spoke with such contempt of what he called 'twaddling about trees and babbling o' green fields'; Byron who cried, 'Away with this cant about nature! A good poet can imbue a pack of cards with more poetry than inhabits the forests of America,' is claimed by Mr. Noel as a true nature-worshipper and Pantheist along with Wordsworth and Shelley; and we wonder what Keats would have thought of a critic who gravely suggests that *Endymion* is 'a parable of the development of the individual soul.' There are two ways of misunderstanding a poem. One is to misunderstand it and the other to praise it for qualities that it does not possess. The latter is Mr. Noel's method, and in his anxiety to glorify the artist he often does so at the expense of the work of art.

Mr. Noel also is constantly the victim of his own eloquence. So facile is his style that it constantly betrays him into crude and extravagant statements. Rhetoric and over-emphasis are the dangers that Mr. Noel has not always succeeded in avoiding. It is extravagant, for instance, to say that all great poetry has been 'pictorial,' or that Coleridge's *Knight's Grave* is worth many *Kubla Khans*, or that Byron has 'the splendid imperfection of an Æschylus,' or that we had lately 'one dramatist living in England, and only one, who could be compared to Hugo, and that was Richard Hengist Horne,' and that 'to find an English dramatist of the same order before him we must go back to Sheridan if not to Otway.' Mr. Noel, again, has a curious habit of classing together the

most incongruous names and comparing the most incongruous works of art. What is gained by telling us that 'Sardanapalus' is perhaps hardly equal to 'Sheridan,' that Lord Tennyson's ballad of *The Revenge* and his *Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington* are worthy of a place beside Thomson's *Rule Britannia*, that Edgar Allan Poe, Disraeli and Mr. Alfred Austin are artists of note whom we may affiliate on Byron, and that if Sappho and Milton 'had not high genius, they would be justly reproached as sensational'? And surely it is a crude judgment that classes Baudelaire, of all poets, with Marini and mediæval troubadours, and a crude style that writes of 'Goethe, Shelley, Scott, and Wilson,' for a mortal should not thus intrude upon the immortals, even though he be guilty of holding with them that *Cain* is 'one of the finest poems in the English language.' It is only fair, however, to add that Mr. Noel subsequently makes more than ample amends for having opened Parnassus to the public in this reckless manner, by calling Wilson an 'offal-feeder,' on the ground that he once wrote a severe criticism of some of Lord Tennyson's early poems. For Mr. Noel does not mince his words. On the contrary, he speaks with much scorn of all euphuism and delicacy of expression and, preferring the affectation of nature to the affectation of art, he thinks nothing of calling other people 'Laura Bridgmans,' 'Jackasses' and the like. This, we think, is to be regretted, especially in a writer so cultured as Mr. Noel. For, though indignation may make a great poet, bad temper always makes a poor critic.

On the whole, Mr. Noel's book has an emotional rather than an intellectual interest. It is simply a record of the moods of a man of letters, and its criticisms merely reveal the critic without illuminating what he would criticise for us. The best that we can say of it is that it is a Sentimental Journey through Literature, the worst that any one could say of it is that it has all the merits of such an expedition.

Essays on Poetry and Poets. By the Hon. Roden Noel. (Kegan Paul.)

COMMON-SENSE IN ART

(*Pall Mall Gazette*, January 8, 1887.)

At this critical moment in the artistic development of England Mr. John Collier has come forward as the champion of common-sense in art. It will be remembered that Mr. Quilter, in one of his most vivid and picturesque metaphors, compared Mr. Collier's method as a painter to that of a shampooer in a Turkish bath. [119] As a writer Mr. Collier is no less interesting. It is true that he is not eloquent, but then he censures with just severity 'the meaningless eloquence of the writers on æsthetics'; we admit that he is not subtle, but then he is careful to remind us that Leonardo da Vinci's views on painting are nonsensical; his qualities are of a solid, indeed we may say of a stolid order; he is thoroughly honest, sturdy and downright, and he advises us,

if we want to know anything about art, to study the works of 'Helmholtz, Stokes, or Tyndall,' to which we hope we may be allowed to add Mr. Collier's own *Manual of Oil Painting*.

For this art of painting is a very simple thing indeed, according to Mr. Collier. It consists merely in the 'representation of natural objects by means of pigments on a flat surface.' There is nothing, he tells us, 'so very mysterious' in it after all. 'Every natural object appears to us as a sort of pattern of different shades and colours,' and 'the task of the artist is so to arrange his shades and colours on his canvas that a similar pattern is produced.' This is obviously pure common-sense, and it is clear that art-definitions of this character can be comprehended by the very meanest capacity and, indeed, may be said to appeal to it. For the perfect development, however, of this pattern-producing faculty a severe training is necessary. The art student must begin by painting china, crockery, and 'still life' generally. He should rule his straight lines and employ actual measurements wherever it is possible. He will also find that a plumb-line comes in very useful. Then he should proceed to Greek sculpture, for from pottery to Phidias is only one step. Ultimately he will arrive at the living model, and as soon as he can 'faithfully represent any object that he has before him' he is a painter. After this there is, of course, only one thing to be considered, the important question of subject. Subjects, Mr. Collier tells us, are of two kinds, ancient and modern. Modern subjects are more healthy than ancient subjects, but the real difficulty of modernity in art is that the artist passes his life with respectable people, and that respectable people are unpictorial. 'For picturesqueness,' consequently, he should go to 'the rural poor,' and for pathos to the London slums. Ancient subjects offer the artist a very much wider field. If he is fond of 'rich stuffs and costly accessories' he should study the Middle Ages; if he wishes to paint beautiful people, 'untrammelled by any considerations of historical accuracy,' he should turn to the Greek and Roman mythology; and if he is a 'mediocre painter,' he should choose his 'subject from the Old and New Testament,' a recommendation, by the way, that many of our Royal Academicians seem already to have carried out. To paint a real historical picture one requires the assistance of a theatrical costumier and a photographer. From the former one hires the dresses and the latter supplies one with the true background. Besides subject-pictures there are also portraits and landscapes. Portrait painting, Mr. Collier tells us, 'makes no demands on the imagination.' As is the sitter, so is the work of art. If the sitter be commonplace, for instance, it would be 'contrary to the fundamental principles of portraiture to make the picture other than commonplace.' There are, however, certain rules that should be followed. One of the most important of these is that the artist should always

consult his sitter's relations before he begins the picture. If they want a profile he must do them a profile; if they require a full face he must give them a full face; and he should be careful also to get their opinion as to the costume the sitter should wear and 'the sort of expression he should put on.' 'After all,' says Mr. Collier pathetically, 'it is they who have to live with the picture.'

Besides the difficulty of pleasing the victim's family, however, there is the difficulty of pleasing the victim. According to Mr. Collier, and he is, of course, a high authority on the matter, portrait painters bore their sitters very much. The true artist consequently should encourage his sitter to converse, or get some one to read to him; for if the sitter is bored the portrait will look sad. Still, if the sitter has not got an amiable expression naturally the artist is not bound to give him one, nor 'if he is essentially ungraceful' should the artist ever 'put him in a graceful attitude.' As regards landscape painting, Mr. Collier tells us that 'a great deal of nonsense has been talked about the impossibility of reproducing nature,' but that there is nothing really to prevent a picture giving to the eye exactly the same impression that an actual scene gives, for that when he visited 'the celebrated panorama of the Siege of Paris' he could hardly distinguish the painted from the real cannons! The whole passage is extremely interesting, and is really one out of many examples we might give of the swift and simple manner in which the common-sense method solves the great problems of art. The book concludes with a detailed exposition of the undulatory theory of light according to the most ancient scientific discoveries. Mr. Collier points out how important it is for an artist to hold sound views on the subject of ether waves, and his own thorough appreciation of Science may be estimated by the definition he gives of it as being 'neither more nor less than knowledge.'

Mr. Collier has done his work with much industry and earnestness. Indeed, nothing but the most conscientious seriousness, combined with real labour, could have produced such a book, and the exact value of common-sense in art has never before been so clearly demonstrated.

A Manual of Oil Painting. By the Hon. John Collier. (Cassell and Co.)

MINER AND MINOR POETS

(*Pall Mall Gazette*, February 1, 1887.)

The conditions that precede artistic production are so constantly treated as qualities of the work of art itself that one sometimes is tempted to wish that all art were anonymous. Yet there are certain forms of art so individual in their utterance, so purely personal in their expression, that for a full appreciation of their style and

manner some knowledge of the artist's life is necessary. To this class belongs Mr. Skipsey's *Carols from the Coal-Fields*, a volume of intense human interest and high literary merit, and we are consequently glad to see that Dr. Spence Watson has added a short biography of his friend to his friend's poems, for the life and the literature are too indissolubly wedded ever really to be separated. Joseph Skipsey, Dr. Watson tells us, was sent into the coal pits at Percy Main, near North Shields, when he was seven years of age. Young as he was he had to work from twelve to sixteen hours in the day, generally in the pitch dark, and in the dreary winter months he saw the sun only upon Sundays. When he went to work he had learned the alphabet and to put words of two letters together, but he was really his own schoolmaster, and 'taught himself to write, for example, by copying the letters from printed bills or notices, when he could get a candle end,—his paper being the trapdoor, which it was his duty to open and shut as the wagons passed through, and his pen a piece of chalk.' The first book he really read was the Bible, and not content with reading it, he learned by heart the chapters which specially pleased him. When sixteen years old he was presented with a copy of Lindley Murray's Grammar, by the aid of which he gained some knowledge of the structural rules of English. He had already become acquainted with *Paradise Lost*, and was another proof of Matthew Prior's axiom, 'Who often reads will sometimes want to write,' for he had begun to write verse when only 'a bonnie pit lad.' For more than forty years of his life he laboured in 'the coal-dark underground,' and is now the caretaker of a Board-school in Newcastle-upon-Tyne. As for the qualities of his poetry, they are its directness and its natural grace. He has an intellectual as well as a metrical affinity with Blake, and possesses something of Blake's marvellous power of making simple things seem strange to us, and strange things seem simple. How delightful, for instance, is this little poem:

'Get up!' the caller calls, 'Get up!'
And in the dead of night,
To win the bairns their bite and sup,
I rise a weary wight.

My flannel dudden donn'd, thrice o'er
My birds are kiss'd, and then
I with a whistle shut the door
I may not ope again.

How exquisite and fanciful this stray lyric:

The wind comes from the west to-night;
So sweetly down the lane he bloweth

Upon my lips, with pure delight
From head to foot my body gloweth.

Where did the wind, the magic find
To charm me thus? say, heart that knoweth!
'Within a rose on which he blows
Before upon thy lips he bloweth!'

We admit that Mr. Skipsey's work is extremely unequal, but when it is at its best it is full of sweetness and strength; and though he has carefully studied the artistic capabilities of language, he never makes his form formal by over-polishing. Beauty with him seems to be an unconscious result rather than a conscious aim; his style has all the delicate charm of chance. We have already pointed out his affinity to Blake, but with Burns also he may be said to have a spiritual kinship, and in the songs of the Northumbrian miner we meet with something of the Ayrshire peasant's wild gaiety and mad humour. He gives himself up freely to his impressions, and there is a fine, careless rapture in his laughter. The whole book deserves to be read, and much of it deserves to be loved. Mr. Skipsey can find music for every mood, whether he is dealing with the real experiences of the pitman or with the imaginative experiences of the poet, and his verse has a rich vitality about it. In these latter days of shallow rhymes it is pleasant to come across some one to whom poetry is a passion not a profession.

Mr. F. B. Doveton belongs to a different school. In his amazing versatility he reminds us of the gentleman who wrote the immortal handbills for Mrs. Jarley, for his subjects range from Dr. Carter Moffatt and the Ammoniaphone to Mr. Whiteley, Lady Bicyclists, and the Immortality of the Soul. His verses in praise of Zoedone are a fine example of didactic poetry, his elegy on the death of Jumbo is quite up to the level of the subject, and the stanzas on a watering-place,

Who of its merits can e'er think meanly?
Scattering ozone to all the land!

are well worthy of a place in any shilling guidebook. Mr. Doveton divides his poems into grave and gay, but we like him least when he is amusing, for in his merriment there is but little melody, and he makes his muse grin through a horse-collar. When he is serious he is much better, and his descriptive poems show that he has completely mastered the most approved poetical phraseology. Our old friend Boreas is as 'burly' as ever, 'zephyrs' are consistently 'amorous,' and 'the welkin rings' upon the smallest provocation; birds are 'the feathered host' or 'the sylvan throng,' the wind 'wantons o'er the lea,' 'vernal gales' murmur to 'crystal rills,' and Lemprière's Dictionary supplies

the Latin names for the sun and the moon. Armed with these daring and novel expressions Mr. Doveton indulges in fierce moods of nature-worship, and botanises recklessly through the provinces. Now and then, however, we come across some pleasing passages. Mr. Doveton apparently is an enthusiastic fisherman, and sings merrily of the 'enchanted grayling' and the 'crimson and gold trout' that rise to the crafty angler's 'feathered wile.' Still, we fear that he will never produce any real good work till he has made up his mind whether destiny intends him for a poet or for an advertising agent, and we venture to hope that should he ever publish another volume he will find some other rhyme to 'vision' than 'Elysian,' a dissonance that occurs five times in this well-meaning but tedious volume.

As for Mr. Ashby-Sterry, those who object to the nude in art should at once read his lays of *The Lazy Minstrel* and be converted, for over these poems the milliner, not the muse, presides, and the result is a little alarming. As the Chelsea sage investigated the philosophy of clothes, so Mr. Ashby-Sterry has set himself to discover the poetry of petticoats, and seems to find much consolation in the thought that, though art is long, skirts are worn short. He is the only pedlar who has climbed Parnassus since Autolycus sang of

Lawn as white as driven snow,
'Cypress black as e'er was crow,

and his details are as amazing as his diminutives. He is capable of penning a canto to a crinoline, and has a pathetic monody on a mackintosh. He sings of pretty puckers and pliant pleats, and is eloquent on frills, frocks and chemisettes. The latest French fashions stir him to a fine frenzy, and the sight of a pair of Balmoral boots thrills him with absolute ecstasy. He writes rondels on ribbons, lyrics on linen and lace, and his most ambitious ode is addressed to a Tomboy in Trouserettes! Yet his verse is often dainty and delicate, and many of his poems are full of sweet and pretty conceits. Indeed, of the Thames at summer time he writes so charmingly, and with such felicitous grace of epithet, that we cannot but regret that he has chosen to make himself the Poet of Petticoats and the Troubadour of Trouserettes.

(1) *Carols from the Coal-Fields, and Other Songs and Ballads*. By Joseph Skipsey. (Walter Scott.)

(2) *Sketches in Prose and Verse*. By F. B. Doveton. (Sampson Low, Marston and Co.)

(3) *The Lazy Minstrel*. By J. Ashby-Sterry. (Fisher Unwin.)

A NEW CALENDAR

(*Pall Mall Gazette*, February 17, 1887.)

Most modern calendars mar the sweet simplicity of our lives by reminding us that each day that passes is the anniversary of some perfectly uninteresting event. Their compilers display a degraded passion for chronicling small beer, and rake out the dust-heap of history in an ardent search after rubbish. Mr. Walter Scott, however, has made a new departure and has published a calendar in which every day of the year is made beautiful for us by means of an elegant extract from the poems of Mr. Alfred Austin. This, undoubtedly, is a step in the right direction. It is true that such aphorisms as

Graves are a mother's dimples

When we complain,

or

The primrose wears a constant smile,

And captive takes the heart,

can hardly be said to belong to the very highest order of poetry, still, they are preferable, on the whole, to the date of Hannah More's birth, or of the burning down of Exeter Change, or of the opening of the Great Exhibition; and though it would be dangerous to make calendars the basis of Culture, we should all be much improved if we began each day with a fine passage of English poetry. How far this desirable result can be attained by a use of the volume now before us is, perhaps, open to question, but it must be admitted that its anonymous compiler has done his work very conscientiously, nor will we quarrel with him for the fact that he constantly repeats the same quotation twice over. No doubt it was difficult to find in Mr. Austin's work three hundred and sixty-five different passages really worthy of insertion in an almanac, and, besides, our climate has so degenerated of late that there is no reason at all why a motto perfectly suitable for February should not be equally appropriate when August has set in with its usual severity. For the misprints there is less excuse. Even the most uninteresting poet cannot survive bad editing.

Prefixed to the Calendar is an introductory note from the pen of Mr. William Sharp, written in that involved and affected style which is Mr. Sharp's distinguishing characteristic, and displaying that intimate acquaintance with Sappho's lost poems which is the privilege only of those who are not acquainted with Greek literature. As a criticism it is not of much value, but as an advertisement it is quite excellent. Indeed, Mr. Sharp hints mysteriously at secret political influence, and tells us that though Mr. Austin 'sings with Tityrus' yet he 'has conversed with Æneas,' which, we suppose, is a

euphemistic method of alluding to the fact that Mr. Austin once lunched with Lord Beaconsfield. It is for the poet, however, not for the politician, that Mr. Sharp reserves his loftiest panegyric and, in his anxiety to smuggle the author of *Leszko the Bastard* and *Grandmother's Teaching* into the charmed circle of the Immortals, he leaves no adjective unturned, quoting and misquoting Mr. Austin with a recklessness that is absolutely fatal to the cause he pleads. For mediocre critics are usually safe in their generalities; it is in their reasons and examples that they come so lamentably to grief. When, for instance, Mr. Sharp tells us that lines with the 'natural magic' of Shakespeare, Keats and Coleridge are 'far from infrequent' in Mr. Austin's poems, all that we can say is that we have never come across any lines of the kind in Mr. Austin's published works, but it is difficult to help smiling when Mr. Sharp gravely calls upon us to note 'the illuminative significance' of such a commonplace verse as

My manhood keeps the dew of morn,
 And what have I to give;
Being right glad that I was born,
 And thankful that I live.

Nor do Mr. Sharp's constant misquotations really help him out of his difficulties. Such a line as

A meadow ribbed with drying swathes of hay,

has at least the merit of being a simple, straightforward description of an ordinary scene in an English landscape, but not much can be said in favour of

A meadow ribbed with dying swathes of hay,

which is Mr. Sharp's own version, and one that he finds 'delightfully suggestive.' It is indeed suggestive, but only of that want of care that comes from want of taste.

On the whole, Mr. Sharp has attempted an impossible task. Mr. Austin is neither an Olympian nor a Titan, and all the puffing in Paternoster Row cannot set him on Parnassus.

His verse is devoid of all real rhythmical life; it may have the metre of poetry, but it has not often got its music, nor can there be any true delicacy in the ear that tolerates such rhymes as 'chord' and 'abroad.' Even the claim that Mr. Sharp puts forward for him, that his muse takes her impressions directly from nature and owes nothing to books, cannot be sustained for a moment. Wordsworth is a great poet, but bad echoes of Wordsworth are extremely depressing, and when Mr. Austin calls the cuckoo a

Voyaging voice

and tells us that

The stockdove broods
Low to itself,

we must really enter a protest against such silly plagiarisms.

Perhaps, however, we are treating Mr. Sharp too seriously. He admits himself that it was at the special request of the compiler of the Calendar that he wrote the preface at all, and though he courteously adds that the task is agreeable to him, still he shows only too clearly that he considers it a task and, like a clever lawyer or a popular clergyman, tries to atone for his lack of sincerity by a pleasing over-emphasis. Nor is there any reason why this Calendar should not be a great success. If published as a broad-sheet, with a picture of Mr. Austin 'conversing with Æneas,' it might gladden many a simple cottage home and prove a source of innocent amusement to the Conservative working-man.

Days of the Year: A Poetic Calendar from the Works of Alfred Austin. Selected and edited by A. S. With Introduction by William Sharp. (Walter Scott.)

THE POETS' CORNER—II

(*Pall Mall Gazette*, March 8, 1837.)

A little schoolboy was once asked to explain the difference between prose and poetry. After some consideration he replied, "blue violets" is prose, and "violets blue" is poetry.' The distinction, we admit, is not exhaustive, but it seems to be the one that is extremely popular with our minor poets. Opening at random *The Queens Innocent* we come across passages like this:

Full gladly would I sit
Of such a potent magus at the feet,

and this:

The third, while yet a youth,
Espoused a lady noble but not royal,
One only son who gave him—Pharamond—

lines that, apparently, rest their claim to be regarded as poetry on their unnecessary and awkward inversions. Yet this poem is not without beauty, and the character of Nardi, the little prince who is treated as the Court fool, shows a delicate grace of

fancy, and is both tender and true. The most delightful thing in the whole volume is a little lyric called *April*, which is like a picture set to music.

The Chimney-piece of Bruges is a narrative poem in blank verse, and tells us of a young artist who, having been unjustly convicted of his wife's murder, spends his life in carving on the great chimney-piece of the prison the whole story of his love and suffering. The poem is full of colour, but the blank verse is somewhat heavy in movement. There are some pretty things in the book, and a poet without hysterics is rare.

Dr. Dawson Burns's *Oliver Cromwell* is a pleasant panegyric on the Protector, and reads like a prize poem by a nice sixth-form boy. The verses on *The Good Old Times* should be sent as a leaflet to all Tories of Mr. Chaplin's school, and the lines on Bunker's Hill, beginning,

I stand on Bunker's towering pile,
are sure to be popular in America.

K. E. V.'s little volume is a series of poems on the Saints. Each poem is preceded by a brief biography of the Saint it celebrates—which is a very necessary precaution, as few of them ever existed. It does not display much poetic power, and such lines as these on St. Stephen,—

Did ever man before so fall asleep?
A cruel shower of stones his only bed,
For lullaby the curses loud and deep,
His covering with blood red—

may be said to add another horror to martyrdom. Still it is a thoroughly well-intentioned book and eminently suitable for invalids.

Mr. Foskett's poems are very serious and deliberate. One of the best of them, *Harold Glynde*, is a Cantata for Total Abstinents, and has already been set to music. *A Hindoo Tragedy* is the story of an enthusiastic Brahmin reformer who tries to break down the prohibition against widows marrying, and there are other interesting tales. Mr. Foskett has apparently forgotten to insert the rhymes in his sonnet to Wordsworth; but, as he tells us elsewhere that 'Poesy is uninspired by Art,' perhaps he is only heralding a new and formless form. He is always sincere in his feelings, and his apostrophe to Canon Farrar is equalled only by his apostrophe to Shakespeare.

The Pilgrimage of Memory suffers a good deal by being printed as poetry, and Mr. Barker should republish it at once as a prose work. Take, for instance, this description of a lady on a runaway horse:—

Her screams alarmed the Squire, who seeing the peril of his daughter, rode frantic after her. I saw at once the danger, and stepping from the footpath, show'd myself before the startled animal, which forthwith slackened pace, and darting up adroitly, I seized the rein, and in another moment, had released the maiden's foot, and held her, all insensible, within my arms. Poor girl, her head and face were sorely bruised, and I tried hard to staunch the blood which flowed from many a scalp-wound, and wipe away the dust that disfigured her lovely features. In another moment the Squire was by my side. 'Poor child,' he cried, alarmed, 'is she dead?' 'No, sir; not dead, I think,' said I, 'but sorely bruised and injured.'

There is clearly nothing to be gained by dividing the sentences of this simple and straightforward narrative into lines of unequal length, and Mr. Barker's own arrangement of the metre,

In another moment,
The Squire was by my side.
'Poor child,' he cried, alarmed, 'is she dead?'
'No, sir; not dead, I think,' said I,
'But sorely bruised and injured,'

seems to us to be quite inferior to ours. We beg that the second edition of *The Pilgrimage of Memory* may be issued as a novel in prose.

Mr. Gladstone Turner believes that we are on the verge of a great social cataclysm, and warns us that our *cradles* are even now being rocked by *slumbering volcanoes*! We hope that there is no truth in this statement, and that it is merely a startling metaphor introduced for the sake of effect, for elsewhere in the volume there is a great deal of beauty which we should be sorry to think was doomed to immediate extinction. *The Choice*, for instance, is a charming poem, and the sonnet on *Evening* would be almost perfect if it were not for an unpleasant assonance in the fifth line. Indeed, so good is much of Mr. Gladstone Turner's work that we trust he will give up rhyming 'real' to 'steal' and 'feel,' as such bad habits are apt to grow on careless poets and to blunt their ear for music.

Nivalis is a five-act tragedy in blank verse. Most plays that are written to be read, not to be acted, miss that condensation and directness of expression which is one of the secrets of true dramatic diction, and Mr. Schwartz's tragedy is consequently

somewhat verbose. Still, it is full of fine lines and noble scenes. It is essentially a work of art, and though, as far as language is concerned, the personages all speak through the lips of the poet, yet in passion and purpose their characters are clearly differentiated, and the Queen Nivalis and her lover Giulio are drawn with real psychological power. We hope that some day Mr. Schwartz will write a play for the stage, as he has the dramatic instinct and the dramatic imagination, and can make life pass into literature without robbing it of its reality.

(1) *The Queen's Innocent, with Other Poems*. By Elise Cooper. (David Stott.)

(2) *The Chimney-piece of Bruges and Other Poems*. By Constance E. Dixon. (Elliot Stock.)

(3) *Oliver Cromwell and Other Poems*. By Dawson Burns, D.D. (Partridge and Co.)

(4) *The Circle of Saints*. By K. E. V. (Swan Sonnenschein and Co.)

(5) *Poems*. By Edward Foskett. (Kegan Paul.)

(6) *The Pilgrimage of Memory*. By John Thomas Barker. (Simpkin, Marshall and Co.)

(7) *Errata*. By G. Gladstone Turner. (Longmans, Green and Co.)

(8) *Nivalis*. By J. M. W. Schwartz. (Kegan Paul.)

GREAT WRITERS BY LITTLE MEN

(*Pall Mall Gazette*, March 28, 1887.)

In an introductory note prefixed to the initial volume of 'Great Writers,' a series of literary monographs now being issued by Mr. Walter Scott, the publisher himself comes forward in the kindest manner possible to give his authors the requisite 'puff preliminary,' and ventures to express the modest opinion that such original and valuable works 'have never before been produced in any part of the world at a price so low as a shilling a volume.' Far be it from us to make any heartless allusion to the fact that Shakespeare's *Sonnets* were brought out at fivepence, or that for fourpence-halfpenny one could have bought a Martial in ancient Rome. Every man, a cynical American tells us, has the right to beat a drum before his booth. Still, we must acknowledge that Mr. Walter Scott would have been much better employed in correcting some of the more obvious errors that appear in his series. When, for instance, we come across such a phrase as 'the brotherly liberality of the brothers *Wedgewood*,' the awkwardness of the expression is hardly atoned for by the fact that the name of the great potter is misspelt; Longfellow is so essentially poor in rhymes that it is unfair to rob him even of one, and the misquotation on page 77 is

absolutely unkind; the joke Coleridge himself made upon the subject should have been sufficient to remind any one that 'Comberbach' (*sic*) was not the name under which he enlisted, and no real beauty is added to the first line of his pathetic *Work Without Hope* by printing 'lare' (*sic*) instead of 'lair.' The truth is that all premature panegyrics bring their own punishment upon themselves and, in the present case, though the series has only just entered upon existence, already a great deal of the work done is careless, disappointing, unequal and tedious.

Mr. Eric Robertson's *Longfellow* is a most depressing book. No one survives being over-estimated, nor is there any surer way of destroying an author's reputation than to glorify him without judgment and to praise him without tact. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow was one of the first true men of letters America produced, and as such deserves a high place in any history of American civilisation. To a land out of breath in its greed for gain he showed the example of a life devoted entirely to the study of literature; his lectures, though not by any means brilliant, were still productive of much good; he had a most charming and gracious personality, and he wrote some pretty poems. But his poems are not of the kind that call for intellectual analysis or for elaborate description or, indeed, for any serious discussion at all. They are as unsuited for panegyric as they are unworthy of censure, and it is difficult to help smiling when Mr. Robertson gravely tells us that few modern poets have given utterance to a faith so comprehensive as that expressed in the *Psalm of Life*, or that *Evangeline* should confer on Longfellow the title of 'Golden-mouthed,' and that the style of metre adopted 'carries the ear back to times in the world's history when grand simplicities were sung.' Surely Mr. Robertson does not believe that there is any connection at all between Longfellow's unrhymed dactyls and the hexameter of Greece and Rome, or that any one reading *Evangeline* would be reminded of Homer's or Virgil's line? Where also lies the advantage of confusing popularity with poetic power? Though the *Psalm of Life* be shouted from Maine to California, that would not make it true poetry. Why call upon us to admire a bad misquotation from the *Midnight Mass for the Dying Year*, and why talk of Longfellow's 'hundreds of imitators'? Longfellow has no imitators, for of echoes themselves there are no echoes and it is only style that makes a school.

Now and then, however, Mr. Robertson considers it necessary to assume a critical attitude. He tells us, for instance, that whether or not Longfellow was a genius of the first order, it must be admitted that he loved social pleasures and was a good eater and judge of wines, admiring 'Bass's ale' more than anything else he had seen in England! The remarks on *Excelsior* are even still more amazing. *Excelsior*, says Mr. Robertson, is not a ballad because a ballad deals either with real or with supernatural

people, and the hero of the poem cannot be brought under either category. For, 'were he of human flesh, his madcap notion of scaling a mountain with the purpose of getting to the sky would be simply drivelling lunacy,' to say nothing of the fact that the peak in question is much frequented by tourists, while, on the other hand, 'it would be absurd to suppose him a spirit . . . for no spirit would be so silly as climb a snowy mountain for nothing'! It is really painful to have to read such preposterous nonsense, and if Mr. Walter Scott imagines that work of this kind is 'original and valuable' he has much to learn. Nor are Mr. Robertson's criticisms upon other poets at all more felicitous. The casual allusion to Herrick's 'confectioneries of verse' is, of course, quite explicable, coming as it does from an editor who excluded Herrick from an anthology of the child-poems of our literature in favour of Mr. Ashby-Sterry and Mr. William Sharp, but when Mr. Robertson tells us that Poe's 'loftiest flights of imagination in verse . . . rise into no more empyreal realm than the *fantastic*,' we can only recommend him to read as soon as possible the marvellous lines *To Helen*, a poem as beautiful as a Greek gem and as musical as Apollo's lute. The remarks, too, on Poe's critical estimate of his own work show that Mr. Robertson has never really studied the poet on whom he pronounces such glib and shallow judgments, and exemplify very clearly the fact that even dogmatism is no excuse for ignorance.

After reading Mr. Hall Caine's *Coleridge* we are irresistibly reminded of what Wordsworth once said about a bust that had been done of himself. After contemplating it for some time, he remarked, 'It is not a bad Wordsworth, but it is not the real Wordsworth; it is not Wordsworth the poet, it is the sort of Wordsworth who might be Chancellor of the Exchequer.' Mr. Caine's *Coleridge* is certainly not the sort of *Coleridge* who might have been Chancellor of the Exchequer, for the author of *Christabel* was not by any means remarkable as a financier; but, for all that, it is not the real *Coleridge*, it is not *Coleridge* the poet. The incidents of the life are duly recounted; the gunpowder plot at Cambridge, the egg-hot and oronokoo at the little tavern in Newgate Street, the blue coat and white waistcoat that so amazed the worthy Unitarians, and the terrible smoking experiment at Birmingham are all carefully chronicled, as no doubt they should be in every popular biography; but of the spiritual progress of the man's soul we hear absolutely nothing. Never for one single instant are we brought near to *Coleridge*; the magic of that wonderful personality is hidden from us by a cloud of mean details, an unholy jungle of facts, and the 'critical history' promised to us by Mr. Walter Scott in his unfortunate preface is conspicuous only by its absence.

Carlyle once proposed in jest to write a life of Michael Angelo without making any reference to his art, and Mr. Caine has shown that such a project is perfectly

feasible. He has written the life of a great peripatetic philosopher and chronicled only the peripatetics. He has tried to tell us about a poet, and his book might be the biography of the famous tallow-chandler who would not appreciate the *Watchman*. The real events of Coleridge's life are not his gig excursions and his walking tours; they are his thoughts, dreams and passions, his moments of creative impulse, their source and secret, his moods of imaginative joy, their marvel and their meaning, and not his moods merely but the music and the melancholy that they brought him; the lyric loveliness of his voice when he sang, the sterile sorrow of the years when he was silent. It is said that every man's life is a Soul's Tragedy. Coleridge's certainly was so, and though we may not be able to pluck out the heart of his mystery, still let us recognise that mystery is there; and that the goings-out and comings-in of a man, his places of sojourn and his roads of travel are but idle things to chronicle, if that which is the man be left unrecorded. So mediocre is Mr. Caine's book that even accuracy could not make it better.

On the whole, then, Mr. Walter Scott cannot be congratulated on the success of his venture so far, The one really admirable feature of the series is the bibliography that is appended to each volume. These bibliographies are compiled by Mr. Anderson, of the British Museum, and are so valuable to the student, as well as interesting in themselves, that it is much to be regretted that they should be accompanied by such tedious letterpress.

(1) *Life of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow*. By Eric S. Robertson.

(2) *Life of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*. By Hall Caine. 'Great Writers' Series. (Walter Scott.)

A NEW BOOK ON DICKENS

(*Pall Mall Gazette*, March 31, 1887.)

Mr. Marzials' *Dickens* is a great improvement on the *Longfellow* and *Coleridge* of his predecessors. It is certainly a little sad to find our old friend the manager of the Theatre Royal, Portsmouth, appearing as 'Mr. Vincent Crumules' (*sic*), but such misprints are not by any means uncommon in Mr. Walter Scott's publications, and, on the whole, this is a very pleasant book indeed. It is brightly and cleverly written, admirably constructed, and gives a most vivid and graphic picture of that strange modern drama, the drama of Dickens's life. The earlier chapters are quite excellent, and, though the story of the famous novelist's boyhood has been often told before, Mr. Marzials shows that it can be told again without losing any of the charm of its interest, while the account of Dickens in the plenitude of his glory is most appreciative and

genial. We are really brought close to the man with his indomitable energy, his extraordinary capacity for work, his high spirits, his fascinating, tyrannous personality. The description of his method of reading is admirable, and the amazing stump-campaign in America attains, in Mr. Marzials' hands, to the dignity of a mock-heroic poem. One side of Dickens's character, however, is left almost entirely untouched, and yet it is one in every way deserving of close study. That Dickens should have felt bitterly towards his father and mother is quite explicable, but that, while feeling so bitterly, he should have caricatured them for the amusement of the public, with an evident delight in his own humour, has always seemed to us a most curious psychological problem. We are far from complaining that he did so. Good novelists are much rarer than good sons, and none of us would part readily with Micawber and Mrs. Nickleby. Still, the fact remains that a man who was affectionate and loving to his children, generous and warm-hearted to his friends, and whose books are the very bacchanalia of benevolence, pilloried his parents to make the groundlings laugh, and this fact every biographer of Dickens should face and, if possible, explain.

As for Mr. Marzials' critical estimate of Dickens as a writer, he tells us quite frankly that he believes that Dickens at his best was 'one of the greatest masters of pathos who ever lived,' a remark that seems to us an excellent example of what novelists call 'the fine courage of despair.' Of course, no biographer of Dickens could say anything else, just at present. A popular series is bound to express popular views, and cheap criticisms may be excused in cheap books. Besides, it is always open to every one to accept G. H. Lewes's unfortunate maxim that any author who makes one cry possesses the gift of pathos and, indeed, there is something very flattering in being told that one's own emotions are the ultimate test of literature. When Mr. Marzials discusses Dickens's power of drawing human nature we are upon somewhat safer ground, and we cannot but admire the cleverness with which he passes over his hero's innumerable failures. For, in some respects, Dickens might be likened to those old sculptors of our Gothic cathedrals who could give form to the most fantastic fancy, and crowd with grotesque monsters a curious world of dreams, but saw little of the grace and dignity of the men and women among whom they lived, and whose art, lacking sanity, was therefore incomplete. Yet they at least knew the limitations of their art, while Dickens never knew the limitations of his. When he tries to be serious he succeeds only in being dull, when he aims at truth he reaches merely platitude. Shakespeare could place Ferdinand and Miranda by the side of Caliban, and Life recognises them all as her own, but Dickens's Mirandas are the young ladies out of a fashion-book, and his Ferdinands the walking gentlemen of an unsuccessful

company of third-rate players. So little sanity, indeed, had Dickens's art that he was never able even to satirise: he could only caricature; and so little does Mr. Marzials realise where Dickens's true strength and weakness lie, that he actually complains that Cruikshank's illustrations are too much exaggerated and that he could never draw either a lady or a gentleman.

The latter was hardly a disqualification for illustrating Dickens as few such characters occur in his books, unless we are to regard Lord Frederick Verisopht and Sir Mulberry Hawk as valuable studies of high life; and, for our own part, we have always considered that the greatest injustice ever done to Dickens has been done by those who have tried to illustrate him seriously.

In conclusion, Mr. Marzials expresses his belief that a century hence Dickens will be read as much as we now read Scott, and says rather prettily that as long as he is read 'there will be one gentle and humanising influence the more at work among men,' which is always a useful tag to append to the life of any popular author. Remembering that of all forms of error prophecy is the most gratuitous, we will not take upon ourselves to decide the question of Dickens's immortality. If our descendants do not read him they will miss a great source of amusement, and if they do, we hope they will not model their style upon his. Of this, however, there is but little danger, for no age ever borrows the slang of its predecessor. As for 'the gentle and humanising influence,' this is taking Dickens just a little too seriously.

Life of Charles Dickens. By Frank T. Marzials. 'Great Writers' Series. (Walter Scott.)

OUR BOOK-SHELF

(*Pall Mall Gazette*, April 12, 1887.)

The Master Of Tanagra is certainly one of Ernst von Wildenbruch's most delightful productions. It presents an exceedingly pretty picture of the bright external side of ancient Greek life, and tells how a handsome young Tanagrian left his home for the sake of art, and returned to it for love's sake—an old story, no doubt, but one which gains a new charm from its new setting. The historical characters of the book, such as Praxiteles and Phryne, seem somehow less real than those that are purely imaginary, but this is usually the case in all novels that would recreate the past for us, and is a form of penalty that Romance has often to pay when she tries to blend fact with fancy, and to turn the great personages of history into puppets for a little play. The translation, which is from the pen of the Baroness von Lauer, reads very pleasantly, and some of the illustrations are good, though it is impossible to reproduce by any process the delicate and exquisite charm of the Tanagra figurines.

M. Paul Stapfer in his book *Molière et Shakespeare* shows very clearly that the French have not yet forgiven Schlegel for having threatened that, as a reprisal for the atrocities committed by Napoleon, he would prove that Molière was no poet. Indeed, M. Stapfer, while admitting that one should be fair 'envers tout le monde, même envers les Allemands,' charges down upon the German critics with the brilliancy and dash of a French cuirassier, and mocks at them for their dulness, at the very moment that he is annexing their erudition, an achievement for which the French genius is justly renowned. As for the relative merits of Molière and Shakespeare, M. Stapfer has no hesitation in placing the author of *Le Misanthrope* by the side of the author of *Hamlet*. Shakespeare's comedies seem to him somewhat wilful and fantastic; he prefers Orgon and Tartuffe to Oberon and Titania, and can hardly forgive Beatrice for having been 'born to speak all mirth, and no matter.'

Perhaps he hardly realises that it is as a poet, not as a playwright, that we love Shakespeare in England, and that Ariel singing by the yellow sands, or fairies hiding in a wood near Athens, may be as real as Alceste in his wooing of Célimène, and as true as Harpagon weeping for his money-box; still, his book is full of interesting suggestion, many of his remarks on literature are quite excellent, and his style has the qualities of grace, distinction, and ease of movement.

Not so much can be said for *Annals of the Life of Shakespeare*, which is a dull though well-meaning little book. What we do not know about Shakespeare is a most fascinating subject, and one that would fill a volume, but what we do know about him is so meagre and inadequate that when it is collected together the result is rather depressing. However, there are many people, no doubt, who find a great source of interest in the fact that the author of *The Merchant of Venice* once brought an action for the sum of £1, 15s. 10d. and gained his suit, and for these this volume will have considerable charm. It is a pity that the finest line Ben Jonson ever wrote about Shakespeare should be misquoted at the very beginning of the book, and the illustration of Shakespeare's monument gives the inscription very badly indeed. Also, it was Ben Jonson's stepfather, not his 'father-in-law,' as stated, who was the bricklayer; but it is quite useless to dwell upon these things, as nobody nowadays seems to have any time either to correct proofs or to consult authorities.

One of the most pleasing volumes that has appeared as yet in the Canterbury Series is the collection of Allan Ramsay's poems. Ramsay, whose profession was the making of periwigs, and whose pleasure was the making of poetry, is always delightful reading, except when he tries to write English and to imitate Pope. His *Gentle Shepherd* is a charming pastoral play, full of humour and romance; his *Vision* has a good deal of natural fire; and some of his songs, such as *The Yellow-hair'd*

Laddie and *The Lass of Patie's Mill*, might rank beside those of Burns. The preface to this attractive little edition is from the pen of Mr. J. Logie Robertson, and the simple, straightforward style in which it is written contrasts favourably with the silly pompous manner affected by so many of the other editors of the series.

Ramsay's life is worth telling well, and Mr. Robertson tells it well, and gives us a really capital picture of Edinburgh society in the early half of the last century.

Dante for Beginners, by Miss Arabella Shore, is a sort of literary guide-book. What Virgil was to the great Florentine, Miss Shore would be to the British public, and her modest little volume can do no possible harm to Dante, which is more than one can say of many commentaries on the *Divine Comedy*.

Miss Phillimore's *Studies in Italian Literature* is a much more elaborate work, and displays a good deal of erudition. Indeed, the erudition is sometimes displayed a little too much, and we should like to see the lead of learning transmuted more often into the gold of thought. The essays on Petrarch and Tasso are tedious, but those on Aleardi and Count Arrivabene are excellent, particularly the former. Aleardi was a poet of wonderful descriptive power, and though, as he said himself, he subordinated his love of poetry to his love of country, yet in such service he found perfect freedom.

The article on Edoardo Fusco also is full of interest, and is a timely tribute to the memory of one who did so much for the education and culture of modern Italy. On the whole, the book is well worth reading; so well worth reading, indeed, that we hope that the foolish remarks on the Greek Drama will be amended in a second edition, or, which would be better still, struck out altogether. They show a want of knowledge that must be the result of years of study.

(1) *The Master of Tanagra*. Translated from the German of Ernst von Wildenbruch by the Baroness von Lauer. (H. Grevel and Co.)

(2) *Molière et Shakespeare*. By Paul Stapfer. (Hachette.)

(3) *Annals of the Life of Shakespeare*. (Sampson Low, Marston and Co.)

(4) *Poems by Allan Ramsay*. Selected and arranged, with a Biographical Sketch of the Poet, by J. Logie Robertson, M.A. 'Canterbury Poets.' (Walter Scott.)

(5) *Dante for Beginners*. By Arabella Shore. (Chapman and Hall.)

(6) *Studies in Italian Literature*. By Miss Phillimore. (Sampson Low, Marston and Co.)

A CHEAP EDITION OF A GREAT MAN

(*Pall Mall Gazette*, April 18, 1887.)

Formerly we used to canonise our great men; nowadays we vulgarise them. The vulgarisation of Rossetti has been going on for some time past with really remarkable success, and there seems no probability at present of the process being discontinued. The grass was hardly green upon the quiet grave in Birchington churchyard when Mr. Hall Caine and Mr. William Sharp rushed into print with their *Memoirs and Recollections*. Then came the usual mob of magazine-hacks with their various views and attitudes, and now Mr. Joseph Knight has produced for the edification of the British public a popular biography of the poet of the Blessed Damozel, the painter of Dante's Dream.

It is only fair to state that Mr. Knight's work is much better than that of his predecessors in the same field. His book is, on the whole, modestly and simply written; whatever its other faults may be, it is at least free from affectation of any kind; and it makes no serious pretence at being either exhaustive or definitive. Yet the best we can say of it is that it is just the sort of biography Guildenstern might have written of Hamlet. Nor does its unsatisfactory character come merely from the ludicrous inadequacy of the materials at Mr. Knight's disposal; it is the whole scheme and method of the book that is radically wrong. Rossetti's was a great personality, and personalities such as his do not easily survive shilling primers. Sooner or later they have inevitably to come down to the level of their biographers, and in the present instance nothing could be more absolutely commonplace than the picture Mr. Knight gives us of the wonderful seer and singer whose life he has so recklessly essayed to write.

No doubt there are many people who will be deeply interested to know that Rossetti was once chased round his garden by an infuriated zebu he was trying to exhibit to Mr. Whistler, or that he had a great affection for a dog called 'Dizzy,' or that 'sloshy' was one of his favourite words of contempt, or that Mr. Gosse thought him very like Chaucer in appearance, or that he had 'an absolute disqualification' for whist-playing, or that he was very fond of quoting the *Bab Ballads*, or that he once said that if he could live by writing poetry he would see painting d---d! For our part, however, we cannot help expressing our regret that such a shallow and superficial biography as this should ever have been published. It is but a sorry task to rip the twisted ravel from the worn garment of life and to turn the grout in a drained cup. Better, after all, that we knew a painter only through his vision and a poet through his song, than that the image of a great man should be marred and made mean for us by the clumsy geniality of good intentions. A true artist, and such Rossetti undoubtedly was, reveals himself so perfectly in his work, that unless a biographer has something more valuable to give

us than idle anecdotes and unmeaning tales, his labour is misspent and his industry misdirected.

Bad, however, as is Mr. Knight's treatment of Rossetti's life, his treatment of Rossetti's poetry is infinitely worse. Considering the small size of the volume, and the consequently limited number of extracts, the amount of misquotation is almost incredible, and puts all recent achievements in this sphere of modern literature completely into the shade. The fine line in the first canto of *Rose Mary*:

What glints there like a lance that flees?

appears as:

What glints there like a glance that flees?

which is very painful nonsense; in the description of that graceful and fanciful sonnet *Autumn Idleness*, the deer are represented as '*grazing* from hillock eaves' instead of gazing from hillock-eaves; the opening of *Dantis Tenebræ* is rendered quite incomprehensible by the substitution of 'my' for 'thy' in the second line; even such a well-known ballad as *Sister Helen* is misquoted, and, indeed, from the *Burden of Nineveh*, the *Blessed Damozel*, the *King's Tragedy* and Guido Cavalcanti's lovely *ballata*, down to the *Portrait* and such sonnets as *Love-sweetness*, *Farewell to the Glen*, and *A Match with the Moon*, there is not one single poem that does not display some careless error or some stupid misprint.

As for Rossetti's elaborate system of punctuation, Mr. Knight pays no attention to it whatsoever. Indeed, he shows quite a rollicking indifference to all the secrets and subtleties of style, and inserts or removes stops in a manner that is absolutely destructive to the lyrical beauty of the verse. The hyphen, also, so constantly employed by Rossetti in the case of such expressions as 'hillock-eaves' quoted above, 'hill-fire,' 'birth-hour,' and the like, is almost invariably disregarded, and by the brilliant omission of a semicolon Mr. Knight has succeeded in spoiling one of the best stanzas in *The Staff and Scrip*—a poem, by the way, that he speaks of as *The Staff and the Scrip* (*sic*). After this tedious comedy of errors it seems almost unnecessary to point out that the earliest Italian poet is not called Ciullo D'Alcano (*sic*), or that *The Bothie of Toper-na-Fuosich* (*sic*) is not the title of Clough's boisterous epic, or that *Dante and his Cycle* (*sic*) is not the name Rossetti gave to his collection of translations; and why *Troy Town* should appear in the index as *Tory Town* is really quite inexplicable, unless it is intended as a compliment to Mr. Hall Caine who once dedicated, or rather tried to dedicate, to Rossetti a lecture on the relations of poets to politics. We are sorry, too, to find an English dramatic critic misquoting Shakespeare, as we had

always been of opinion that this was a privilege reserved specially for our English actors. We sincerely hope that there will soon be an end to all biographies of this kind. They rob life of much of its dignity and its wonder, add to death itself a new terror, and make one wish that all art were anonymous. Nor could there have been any more unfortunate choice of a subject for popular treatment than that to which we owe the memoir that now lies before us. A pillar of fire to the few who knew him, and of cloud to the many who knew him not, Dante Gabriel Rossetti lived apart from the gossip and tittle-tattle of a shallow age. He never trafficked with the merchants for his soul, nor brought his wares into the market-place for the idle to gape at. Passionate and romantic though he was, yet there was in his nature something of high austerity. He loved seclusion, and hated notoriety, and would have shuddered at the idea that within a few years after his death he was to make his appearance in a series of popular biographies, sandwiched between the author of *Pickwick* and the Great Lexicographer. One man alone, the friend his verse won for him, did he desire should write his life, and it is to Mr. Theodore Watts that we, too, must look to give us the real Rossetti. It may be admitted at once that Mr. Watts's subject has for the moment been a little spoiled for him. Rude hands have touched it, and unmusical voices have made it sound almost common in our ears. Yet none the less is it for him to tell us of the marvel of this man whose art he has analysed with such exquisite insight, whose life he knows as no one else can know it, whom he so loyally loved and tended, and by whom he was so loyally beloved in turn. As for the others, the scribblers and nibblers of literature, if they indeed reverence Rossetti's memory, let them pay him the one homage he would most have valued, the gracious homage of silence. 'Though you can fret me, yet you cannot play upon me,' says Hamlet to his false friend, and even so might Rossetti speak to those well-intentioned mediocrities who would seem to know his stops and would sound him to the top of his compass. True, they cannot fret him now, for he has passed beyond the possibility of pain; yet they cannot play upon him either; it is not for them to pluck out the heart of his mystery.

There is, however, one feature of this book that deserves unstinted praise. Mr. Anderson's bibliography will be found of immense use by every student of Rossetti's work and influence. Perhaps Young's very powerful attack on Pre-Raphaelitism, as expounded by Mr. Ruskin (Longmans, 1857), might be included, but, in all other respects, it seems quite complete, and the chronological list of paintings and drawings is really admirable. When this unfortunate 'Great Writers' Series comes to an end, Mr. Anderson's bibliographies should be collected together and published in a separate volume. At present they are in a very second-rate company indeed.

Life of Dante Gabriel Rossetti. By Joseph Knight. 'Great Writers' Series. (Walter Scott.)

MR. MORRIS'S ODYSSEY

(*Pall Mall Gazette*, April 26, 1887.)

Of all our modern poets, Mr. William Morris is the one best qualified by nature and by art to translate for us the marvellous epic of the wanderings of Odysseus. For he is our only true story-singer since Chaucer; if he is a Socialist, he is also a Saga-man; and there was a time when he was never wearied of telling us strange legends of gods and men, wonderful tales of chivalry and romance. Master as he is of decorative and descriptive verse, he has all the Greek's joy in the visible aspect of things, all the Greek's sense of delicate and delightful detail, all the Greek's pleasure in beautiful textures and exquisite materials and imaginative designs; nor can any one have a keener sympathy with the Homeric admiration for the workers and the craftsmen in the various arts, from the stainers in white ivory and the embroiderers in purple and gold, to the weaver sitting by the loom and the dyer dipping in the vat, the chaser of shield and helmet, the carver of wood or stone. And to all this is added the true temper of high romance, the power to make the past as real to us as the present, the subtle instinct to discern passion, the swift impulse to portray life.

It is no wonder the lovers of Greek literature have so eagerly looked forward to Mr. Morris's version of the Odyssean epic, and now that the first volume has appeared, it is not extravagant to say that of all our English translations this is the most perfect and the most satisfying. In spite of Coleridge's well-known views on the subject, we have always held that Chapman's *Odyssey* is immeasurably inferior to his *Iliad*, the mere difference of metre alone being sufficient to set the former in a secondary place; Pope's *Odyssey*, with its glittering rhetoric and smart antithesis, has nothing of the grand manner of the original; Cowper is dull, and Bryant dreadful, and Worsley too full of Spenserian prettinesses; while excellent though Messrs. Butcher and Lang's version undoubtedly is in many respects, still, on the whole, it gives us merely the facts of the *Odyssey* without providing anything of its artistic effect. Avia's translation even, though better than almost all its predecessors in the same field, is not worthy of taking rank beside Mr. Morris's, for here we have a true work of art, a rendering not merely of language into language, but of poetry into poetry, and though the new spirit added in the transfusion may seem to many rather Norse than Greek, and, perhaps at times, more boisterous than beautiful, there is yet a vigour of life in every line, a splendid ardour through each canto, that stirs the blood while one reads like the sound of a trumpet, and that, producing a physical as well as a spiritual delight, exults

the senses no less than it exalts the soul. It may be admitted at once that, here and there, Mr. Morris has missed something of the marvellous dignity of the Homeric verse, and that, in his desire for rushing and ringing metre, he has occasionally sacrificed majesty to movement, and made stateliness give place to speed; but it is really only in such blank verse as Milton's that this effect of calm and lofty music can be attained, and in all other respects blank verse is the most inadequate medium for reproducing the full flow and fervour of the Greek hexameter. One merit, at any rate, Mr. Morris's version entirely and absolutely possesses. It is, in no sense of the word, literary; it seems to deal immediately with life itself, and to take from the reality of things its own form and colour; it is always direct and simple, and at its best has something of the 'large utterance of the early gods.'

As for individual passages of beauty, nothing could be better than the wonderful description of the house of the Phœacian king, or the whole telling of the lovely legend of Circe, or the manner in which the pageant of the pale phantoms in Hades is brought before our eyes. Perhaps the huge epic humour of the escape from the Cyclops is hardly realised, but there is always a linguistic difficulty about rendering this fascinating story into English, and where we are given so much poetry we should not complain about losing a pun; and the exquisite idyll of the meeting and parting with the daughter of Alcinous is really delightfully told. How good, for instance, is this passage taken at random from the Sixth Book:

But therewith unto the handmaids goodly Odysseus spake:

'Stand off I bid you, damsels, while the work in hand I take,
And wash the brine from my shoulders, and sleek them all around.
Since verily now this long while sweet oil they have not found.
But before you nought will I wash me, for shame I have indeed,
Amidst of fair-tressed damsels to be all bare of weed.'

So he spake and aloof they gat them, and thereof they told the may,
But Odysseus with the river from his body washed away
The brine from his back and his shoulders wrought broad and mightily,
And from his head was he wiping the foam of the untilled sea;
But when he had throughly washed him, and the oil about him had shed
He did upon the raiment the gift of the maid unwed.

But Athene, Zeus-begotten, dealt with him in such wise
That bigger yet was his seeming, and mightier to all eyes,
With the hair on his head crisp curling as the bloom of the daffodil.
And as when the silver with gold is o'erlaid by a man of skill,
Yea, a craftsman whom Hephæstus and Pallas Athene have taught

To be master over masters, and lovely work he hath wrought;
So she round his head and his shoulders shed grace abundantly.

It may be objected by some that the line

With the hair on his head crisp curling as the bloom of the daffodil,

is a rather fanciful version of

ουλας ηκε κομας, νακινθινω ανθει ομοιας

and it certainly seems probable that the allusion is to the dark colour of the hero's hair; still, the point is not one of much importance, though it may be worth noting that a similar expression occurs in Ogilby's superbly illustrated translation of the *Odyssey*, published in 1665, where Charles II.'s Master of the Revels in Ireland gives the passage thus:

Minerva renders him more tall and fair,
Curling in rings like daffodils his hair.

No anthology, however, can show the true merit of Mr. Morris's translation, whose real merit does not depend on stray beauties, nor is revealed by chance selections, but lies in the absolute rightness and coherence of the whole, in its purity and justice of touch, its freedom from affectation and commonplace, its harmony of form and matter. It is sufficient to say that this is a poet's version of a poet, and for such surely we should be thankful. In these latter days of coarse and vulgar literature, it is something to have made the great sea-epic of the South native and natural to our northern isle, something to have shown that our English speech may be a pipe through which Greek lips can blow, something to have taught Nausicaa to speak the same language as Perdita.

The Odyssey of Homer. Done into English Verse by William Morris, author of *The Earthly Paradise*. In two volumes. Volume I. (Reeves and Turner.)

For review of Volume II. see *Mr. Morris's Completion of the Odyssey*, page 215.

A BATCH OF NOVELS

(*Pall Mall Gazette*, May 2, 1887.)

Of the three great Russian novelists of our time Tourgenieff is by far the finest artist. He has that spirit of exquisite selection, that delicate choice of detail, which is the essence of style; his work is entirely free from any personal intention; and by

taking existence at its most fiery-coloured moments he can distil into a few pages of perfect prose the moods and passions of many lives.

Count Tolstoi's method is much larger, and his field of vision more extended. He reminds us sometimes of Paul Veronese, and, like that great painter, can crowd, without over-crowding, the giant canvas on which he works. We may not at first gain from his works that artistic unity of impression which is Tourgenieff's chief charm, but once that we have mastered the details the whole seems to have the grandeur and the simplicity of an epic. Dostoieffski differs widely from both his rivals. He is not so fine an artist as Tourgenieff, for he deals more with the facts than with the effects of life; nor has he Tolstoi's largeness of vision and epic dignity; but he has qualities that are distinctively and absolutely his own, such as a fierce intensity of passion and concentration of impulse, a power of dealing with the deepest mysteries of psychology and the most hidden springs of life, and a realism that is pitiless in its fidelity, and terrible because it is true. Some time ago we had occasion to draw attention to his marvellous novel *Crime and Punishment*, where in the haunt of impurity and vice a harlot and an assassin meet together to read the story of Dives and Lazarus, and the outcast girl leads the sinner to make atonement for his sin; nor is the book entitled *Injury and Insult* at all inferior to that great masterpiece. Mean and ordinary though the surroundings of the story may seem, the heroine Natasha is like one of the noble victims of Greek tragedy; she is Antigone with the passion of Phædra, and it is impossible to approach her without a feeling of awe. Greek also is the gloom of Nemesis that hangs over each character, only it is a Nemesis that does not stand outside of life, but is part of our own nature and of the same material as life itself. Aleósha, the beautiful young lad whom Natasha follows to her doom, is a second Tito Melema, and has all Tito's charm and grace and fascination. Yet he is different. He would never have denied Baldassare in the Square at Florence, nor lied to Romola about Tessa. He has a magnificent, momentary sincerity, a boyish unconsciousness of all that life signifies, an ardent enthusiasm for all that life cannot give. There is nothing calculating about him. He never thinks evil, he only does it. From a psychological point of view he is one of the most interesting characters of modern fiction, as from an artistic he is one of the most attractive. As we grow to know him he stirs strange questions for us, and makes us feel that it is not the wicked only who do wrong, nor the bad alone who work evil.

And by what a subtle objective method does Dostoieffski show us his characters! He never tickets them with a list nor labels them with a description. We grow to know them very gradually, as we know people whom we meet in society, at first by little tricks of manner, personal appearance, fancies in dress, and the like; and afterwards

by their deeds and words; and even then they constantly elude us, for though Dostoevski may lay bare for us the secrets of their nature, yet he never explains his personages away; they are always surprising us by something that they say or do, and keep to the end the eternal mystery of life.

Irrespective of its value as a work of art, this novel possesses a deep autobiographical interest also, as the character of Vania, the poor student who loves Natasha through all her sin and shame, is Dostoevski's study of himself. Goethe once had to delay the completion of one of his novels till experience had furnished him with new situations, but almost before he had arrived at manhood Dostoevski knew life in its most real forms; poverty and suffering, pain and misery, prison, exile, and love, were soon familiar to him, and by the lips of Vania he has told his own story. This note of personal feeling, this harsh reality of actual experience, undoubtedly gives the book something of its strange fervour and terrible passion, yet it has not made it egotistic; we see things from every point of view, and we feel, not that fiction has been trammelled by fact, but that fact itself has become ideal and imaginative. Pitiless, too, though Dostoevski is in his method as an artist, as a man he is full of human pity for all, for those who do evil as well as for those who suffer it, for the selfish no less than for those whose lives are wrecked for others and whose sacrifice is in vain. Since *Adam Bede* and *Le Père Goriot* no more powerful novel has been written than *Insult and Injury*.

Mr. Hardinge's book *Willow Garth* deals, strangely enough, with something like the same idea, though the treatment is, of course, entirely different. A girl of high birth falls passionately in love with a young farm-bailiff who is a sort of Arcadian Antinous and a very Ganymede in gaiters. Social difficulties naturally intervene, so she drowns her handsome rustic in a convenient pond. Mr. Hardinge has a most charming style, and, as a writer, possesses both distinction and grace. The book is a delightful combination of romance and satire, and the heroine's crime is treated in the most picturesque manner possible.

Marcella Grace tells of modern life in Ireland, and is one of the best books Miss Mulholland has ever published. In its artistic reserve, and the perfect simplicity of its style, it is an excellent model for all lady-novelists to follow, and the scene where the heroine finds the man, who has been sent to shoot her, lying fever-stricken behind a hedge with his gun by his side, is really remarkable. Nor could anything be better than Miss Mulholland's treatment of external nature. She never shrieks over scenery like a tourist, nor wearies us with sunsets like the Scotch school; but all through her book there is a subtle atmosphere of purple hills and silent moorland; she makes us live with nature and not merely look at it.

The accomplished authoress of *Soap* was once compared to George Eliot by the *Court Journal*, and to Carlyle by the *Daily News*, but we fear that we cannot compete with our contemporaries in these daring comparisons. Her present book is very clever, rather vulgar, and contains some fine examples of bad French.

As for *A Marked Man*, *That Winter Night*, and *Driven Home*, the first shows some power of description and treatment, but is sadly incomplete; the second is quite unworthy of any man of letters, and the third is absolutely silly. We sincerely hope that a few more novels like these will be published, as the public will then find out that a bad book is very dear at a shilling.

(1) *Injury and Insult*. By Fedor Dostoieffski. Translated from the Russian by Frederick Whishaw. (Vizetelly and Co.)

(2) *The Willow Garth*. By W. M. Hardinge. (Bentley and Son.)

(3) *Marcella Grace*. By Rosa Mulholland. (Macmillan and Co.)

(4) *Soap*. By Constance MacEwen. (Arrowsmith.)

(5) *A Marked Man*. By Faucet Streets. (Hamilton and Adams.)

(6) *That Winter Night*. By Robert Buchanan. (Arrowsmith.)

(7) *Driven Home*. By Evelyn Owen. (Arrowsmith.)

SOME NOVELS

(*Saturday Review*, May 7, 1887.)

The only form of fiction in which real characters do not seem out of place is history. In novels they are detestable, and *Miss Bayle's Romance* is entirely spoiled as a realistic presentation of life by the author's attempt to introduce into her story a whole mob of modern celebrities and notorieties, including the Heir Apparent and Mr. Edmund Yates. The identity of the latter personage is delicately veiled under the pseudonym of 'Mr. Atlas, editor of the *World*,' but the former appears as 'The Prince of Wales' *pur et simple*, and is represented as spending his time yachting in the Channel and junketing at Homburg with a second-rate American family who, by the way, always address him as 'Prince,' and show in other respects an ignorance that even their ignorance cannot excuse. Indeed, His Royal Highness is no mere spectator of the story; he is one of the chief actors in it, and it is through his influence that the noisy Chicago *belle*, whose lack of romance gives the book its title, achieves her chief social success. As for the conversation with which the Prince is credited, it is of the most amazing kind. We find him on one page gravely discussing the depression of trade with Mr. Ezra P. Bayle, a

shoddy American millionaire, who promptly replies, 'Depression of fiddle-sticks, Prince'; in another passage he naïvely inquires of the same shrewd speculator whether the thunderstorms and prairie fires of the West are still 'on so grand a scale' as when he visited Illinois; and we are told in the second volume that, after contemplating the magnificent view from St. Ives he exclaimed with enthusiasm, 'Surely Mr. Brett must have had a scene like this in his eye when he painted *Britannia's Realm*? I never saw anything more beautiful.' Even Her Majesty figures in this extraordinary story in spite of the excellent aphorism *ne touchez pas à la reine*; and when Miss Alma J. Bayle is married to the Duke of Windsor's second son she receives from the hands of royalty not merely the customary Cashmere shawl of Court tradition, but also a copy of *Diaries in the Highlands* inscribed 'To the Lady Plowden Eton, with the kindest wishes of Victoria R.I.', a mistake that the Queen, of all persons in the world, is the least likely to have committed. Perhaps, however, we are treating *Miss Bayle's Romance* too seriously. The book has really no claim to be regarded as a novel at all. It is simply a society paragraph expanded into three volumes and, like most paragraphs of the kind, is in the worst possible taste. We are not by any means surprised that the author, while making free with the names of others, has chosen to conceal his own name; for no reputation could possibly survive the production of such silly, stupid work; but we must say that we are surprised that this book has been brought out by the Publishers in Ordinary to Her Majesty the Queen. We do not know what the duties attaching to this office are, but we should not have thought that the issuing of vulgar stories about the Royal Family was one of them.

From Heather Hills is very pleasant reading indeed. It is healthy without being affected; and though Mrs. Perks gives us many descriptions of Scotch scenery we are glad to say that she has not adopted the common chromo-lithographic method of those popular North British novelists who have never yet fully realised the difference between colour and colours, and who imagine that by emptying a paint box over every page they can bring before us the magic of mist and mountain, the wonder of sea or glen. Mrs. Perks has a grace and delicacy of touch that is quite charming, and she can deal with nature without either botanising or being blatant, which nowadays is a somewhat rare accomplishment. The interest of the story centres on Margaret Dalrymple, a lovely Scotch girl who is brought to London by her aunt, takes every one by storm and falls in love with young Lord Erinwood, who is on the brink of proposing to her when he is dissuaded from doing so by a philosophic man of the world who thinks that a woodland Artemis is a bad wife for an English peer, and that no woman who has a habit of saying exactly what she means can possibly get on in smart

society. The would-be philosopher is ultimately hoist with his own petard, as he falls in love himself with Margaret Dalrymple, and as for the weak young hero he is promptly snatched up, rather against his will, by a sort of Becky Sharp, who succeeds in becoming Lady Erinwood. However, a convenient railway accident, the *deus ex machina* of nineteenth-century novels, carries Miss Norma Novello off; and everybody is finally made happy, except, of course, the philosopher, who gets only a lesson where he wanted to get love. There is just one part of the novel to which we must take exception. The whole story of Alice Morgan is not merely needlessly painful, but it is of very little artistic value. A tragedy may be the basis of a story, but it should never be simply a casual episode. At least, if it is so, it entirely fails to produce any artistic effect. We hope, too, that in Mrs. Perks's next novel she will not allow her hero to misquote English poetry. This is a privilege reserved for Mrs. Malaprop.

A constancy that lasts through three volumes is often rather tedious, so that we are glad to make the acquaintance of Miss Lilian Ufford, the heroine of Mrs. Houston's *A Heart on Fire*. This young lady begins by being desperately in love with Mr. Frank Thorburn, a struggling schoolmaster, and ends by being desperately in love with Colonel Dallas, a rich country gentleman who spends most of his time and his money in preaching a crusade against beer. After she gets engaged to the Colonel she discovers that Mr. Thorburn is in reality Lord Netherby's son and heir, and for the moment she seems to have a true woman's regret at having given up a pretty title; but all ends well, and the story is brightly and pleasantly told. The Colonel is a middle-aged Romeo of the most impassioned character, and as it is his heart that is 'on fire,' he may serve as a psychological pendant to *La Femme de Quarante Ans*.

Mr. G. Manville Fenn's *A Bag of Diamonds* belongs to the Drury Lane School of Fiction and is a sort of fireside melodrama for the family circle. It is evidently written to thrill Bayswater, and no doubt Bayswater will be thrilled. Indeed, there is a great deal that is exciting in the book, and the scene in which a kindly policeman assists two murderers to convey their unconscious victim into a four-wheeled cab, under the impression that they are a party of guests returning from a convivial supper in Bloomsbury, is quite excellent of its kind, and, on the whole, not too improbable, considering that shilling literature is always making demands on our credulity without ever appealing to our imagination.

The Great Hesper, by Mr. Frank Barrett, has at least the merit of introducing into fiction an entirely new character. The villain is Nyctalops, and, though we are not prepared to say that there is any necessary connection between Nyctalopy and crime, we are quite ready to accept Mr. Barrett's picture of Jan Van Hoeck as an interesting example of the modern method of dealing with life. For, Pathology is rapidly becoming the

basis of sensational literature, and in art, as in politics, there is a great future for monsters. What a Nyctalops is we leave Mr. Barrett to explain. His novel belongs to a class of book that many people might read once for curiosity but nobody could read a second time for pleasure.

A Day after the Fair is an account of a holiday tour through Scotland taken by two young barristers, one of whom rescues a pretty girl from drowning, falls in love with her, and is rewarded for his heroism by seeing her married to his friend. The idea of the book is not bad, but the treatment is very unsatisfactory, and combines the triviality of the tourist with the dulness of good intentions.

'Mr. Winter' is always amusing and audacious, though we cannot say that we entirely approve of the names he gives to his stories. *Bootle's Baby* was a masterpiece, but *Houp-la* was a terrible title, and *That Imp* is not much better. The book, however, is undoubtedly clever, and the Imp in question is not a Nyctalops nor a specimen for a travelling museum, but a very pretty girl who, because an officer has kissed her without any serious matrimonial intentions, exerts all her fascinations to bring the unfortunate Lovelace to her feet and, having succeeded in doing so, promptly rejects him with a virtuous indignation that is as delightful as it is out of place. We must confess that we have a good deal of sympathy for 'Driver' Dallas, of the Royal Horse, who suffers fearful agonies at what he imagines is a heartless flirtation on the part of the lady of his dreams; but the story is told from the Imp's point of view, and as such we must accept it. There is a very brilliant description of a battle in the Soudan, and the account of barrack life is, of course, admirable. So admirable indeed is it that we hope that 'Mr. Winter' will soon turn his attention to new topics and try to handle fresh subjects. It would be sad if such a clever and observant writer became merely the garrison hack of literature. We would also earnestly beg 'Mr. Winter' not to write foolish prefaces about unappreciative critics; for it is only mediocrities and old maids who consider it a grievance to be misunderstood.

(1) *Miss Bayle's Romance: A Story of To-Day*. (Bentley and Son, Publishers in Ordinary to Her Majesty the Queen.)

(2) *From Heather Hills*. By Mrs. J. Hartley Perks. (Hurst and Blackett.)

(3) *A Heart on Fire*. By Mrs. Houston. (F. V. White and Co.)

(4) *A Bag of Diamonds*. By George Manville Fenn. (Ward and Downey.)

(5) *The Great Hesper*. By Frank Barrett. (Ward and Downey.)

(6) *A Day after the Fair*. By William Cairns. (Swan Sonnenschein and Co.)

(7) *That Imp*. By John Strange Winter, Author of *Booties' Baby*, etc. (F. V. White and Co.)

THE POETS' CORNER—III

(*Pall Mall Gazette*, May 30, 1887.)

Such a pseudonym for a poet as 'Glenessa' reminds us of the good old days of the Della Cruscans, but it would not be fair to attribute Glenessa's poetry to any known school of literature, either past or present. Whatever qualities it possesses are entirely its own. Glenessa's most ambitious work, and the one that gives the title to his book, is a poetic drama about the Garden of Eden. The subject is undoubtedly interesting, but the execution can hardly be said to be quite worthy of it. Devils, on account of their inherent wickedness, may be excused for singing—

Then we'll rally—rally—rally—

Yes, we'll rally—rally O!—

but such scenes as—

Enter ADAM.

ADAM (excitedly). Eve, where art thou?

EVE (surprised). Oh!

ADAM (in astonishment). Eve! my God, she's there
Beside that fatal tree;

or—

Enter ADAM and EVE.

EVE (in astonishment). Well, is not this surprising?

ADAM (distracted). It is—

seem to belong rather to the sphere of comedy than to that of serious verse. Poor Glenessa! the gods have not made him poetical, and we hope he will abandon his wooing of the muse. He is fitted, not for better, but for other things.

Vortigern and Rowena is a cantata about the Britons and the Danes. There is a Druid priestess who sings of Cynthia and Endymion, and a chorus of jubilant Vikings. It is charmingly printed, and as a libretto for music quite above the average.

As truly religious people are resigned to everything, even to mediocre poetry, there is no reason at all why Madame Guyon's verses should not be popular with a large section of the community. Their editor, Mr. Dyer, has reprinted the translations Cowper made for Mr. Bull, added some versions of his own and written a pleasing preface about this gentle seventeenth-century saint whose life was her best, indeed her only true poem.

Mr. Pierce has discovered a tenth muse and writes impassioned verses to the Goddess of Chess whom he apostrophises as 'Sublime Caissa'! Zukertort and Steinitz are his heroes, and he is as melodious on mates as he is graceful on gambits. We are glad to say, however, that he has other subjects, and one of his poems beginning:

Cedar boxes deeply cut,
China bowls of quaint device,
Heap'd with rosy leaves and spice,
Violets in old volumes shut—

is very dainty and musical.

Mr. Clifford Harrison is well known as the most poetic of our reciters, but as a writer himself of poetry he is not so famous. Yet his little volume *In Hours of Leisure* contains some charming pieces, and many of the short fourteen-line poems are really pretty, though they are very defective in form. Indeed, of form Mr. Harrison is curiously careless. Such rhymes as 'calm' and 'charm,' 'baize' and 'place,' 'jeu' and 'knew,' are quite dreadful, while 'operas' and 'stars,' 'Gaútama' and 'afar' are too bad even for Steinway Hall. Those who have Keats's genius may borrow Keats's cockneyisms, but from minor poets we have a right to expect some regard to the ordinary technique of verse. However, if Mr. Harrison has not always form, at least he has always feeling. He has a wonderful command over all the egotistic emotions, is quite conscious of the artistic value of remorse, and displays a sincere sympathy with his own moments of sadness, playing upon his moods as a young lady plays upon the piano. Now and then we come across some delicate descriptive touches, such as

The cuckoo knew its latest day had come,
And told its name once more to all the hills,

and whenever Mr. Harrison writes about nature he is certainly pleasing and picturesque but, as a rule, he is over-anxious about himself and forgets that the personal expression of joy or sorrow is not poetry, though it may afford excellent material for a sentimental diary.

The daily increasing class of readers that likes unintelligible poetry should study *Æonial*. It is in many ways a really remarkable production. Very fantastic, very daring, crowded with strange metaphor and clouded by monstrous imagery, it has a sort of turbid splendour about it, and should the author some day add meaning to his music he may give us a true work of art. At present he hardly realises that an artist should be articulate.

Seymour's Inheritance is a short novel in blank verse. On the whole, it is very harmless both in manner and matter, but we must protest against such lines as

And in the windows of his heart the blinds
Of happiness had been drawn down by Grief,

for a simile committing suicide is always a depressing spectacle. Some of the other poems are so simple and modest that we hope Mr. Ross will not carry out his threat of issuing a 'more pretentious volume.' Pretentious volumes of poetry are very common and very worthless.

Mr. Brodie's *Lyrics of the Sea* are spirited and manly, and show a certain freedom of rhythmical movement, pleasant in days of wooden verse. He is at his best, however, in his sonnets. Their architecture is not always of the finest order but, here and there, one meets with lines that are graceful and felicitous.

Like silver swallows on a summer morn
Cutting the air with momentary wings,

is pretty, and on flowers Mr. Brodie writes quite charmingly. The only thoroughly bad piece in the book is *The Workman's Song*. Nothing can be said in favour of

Is there a bit of blue, boys?
Is there a bit of blue?
In heaven's leaden hue, boys?
'Tis hope's eye peeping through . . .

for optimism of this kind is far more dispiriting than Schopenhauer or Hartmann at their worst, nor are there really any grounds for supposing that the British workman enjoys third-rate poetry.

(1) *The Discovery and Other Poems*. By Glenessa. (National Publishing Co.)

(2) *Vortigern and Rowena: A Dramatic Cantata*. By Edwin Ellis Griffin. (Hutchings and Crowsley.)

(3) *The Poems of Madame de la Mothe Guyon*. Edited and arranged by the Rev. A. Saunders Dyer, M.A. (Bryce and Son.)

(4) *Stanzas and Sonnets*. By J. Pierce, M.A. (Longmans, Green and Co.)

(5) *In Hours of Leisure*. By Clifford Harrison. (Kegan Paul.)

(6) *Æonial*. By the Author of *The White Africans*. (Elliot Stock.)

(7) *Seymour's Inheritance*. By James Ross. (Arrowsmith.)

(8) *Lyrics of the Sea*. By E. H. Brodie. (Bell and Sons.)

MR. PATER'S IMAGINARY PORTRAITS

(*Pall Mall Gazette*, June 11, 1887.)

To convey ideas through the medium of images has always been the aim of those who are artists as well as thinkers in literature, and it is to a desire to give a sensuous environment to intellectual concepts that we owe Mr. Pater's last volume. For these Imaginary or, as we should prefer to call them, Imaginative Portraits of his, form a series of philosophic studies in which the philosophy is tempered by personality, and the thought shown under varying conditions of mood and manner, the very permanence of each principle gaining something through the change and colour of the life through which it finds expression. The most fascinating of all these pictures is undoubtedly that of Sebastian Van Storck. The account of Watteau is perhaps a little too fanciful, and the description of him as one who was 'always a seeker after something in the world, that is there in no satisfying measure, or not at all,' seems to us more applicable to him who saw Mona Lisa sitting among the rocks than to the gay and debonair *peintre des fêtes galantes*. But Sebastian, the grave young Dutch philosopher, is charmingly drawn. From the first glimpse we get of him, skating over the water-meadows with his plume of squirrel's tail and his fur muff, in all the modest pleasantness of boyhood, down to his strange death in the desolate house amid the sands of the Helder, we seem to see him, to know him, almost to hear the low music of his voice. He is a dreamer, as the common phrase goes, and yet he is poetical in this sense, that his theorems shape life for him, directly. Early in youth he is stirred by a fine saying of Spinoza, and sets himself to realise the ideal of an intellectual disinterestedness, separating himself more and more from the transient world of sensation, accident and even affection, till what is finite and relative becomes of no interest to him, and he feels that as nature is but a thought of his, so he himself is but a passing thought of God. This conception, of the power of a mere metaphysical abstraction over the mind of one so fortunately endowed for the reception of the

sensible world, is exceedingly delightful, and Mr. Pater has never written a more subtle psychological study, the fact that Sebastian dies in an attempt to save the life of a little child giving to the whole story a touch of poignant pathos and sad irony.

Denys l'Auxerrois is suggested by a figure found, or said to be found, on some old tapestries in Auxerre, the figure of a 'flaxen and flowery creature, sometimes wellnigh naked among the vine-leaves, sometimes muffled in skins against the cold, sometimes in the dress of a monk, but always with a strong impress of real character and incident from the veritable streets' of the town itself. From this strange design Mr. Pater has fashioned a curious mediæval myth of the return of Dionysus among men, a myth steeped in colour and passion and old romance, full of wonder and full of worship, Denys himself being half animal and half god, making the world mad with a new ecstasy of living, stirring the artists simply by his visible presence, drawing the marvel of music from reed and pipe, and slain at last in a stage-play by those who had loved him. In its rich affluence of imagery this story is like a picture by Mantegna, and indeed Mantegna might have suggested the description of the pageant in which Denys rides upon a gaily-painted chariot, in soft silken raiment and, for head-dress, a strange elephant scalp with gilded tusks.

If *Denys l'Auxerrois* symbolises the passion of the senses and *Sebastian Van Storck* the philosophic passion, as they certainly seem to do, though no mere formula or definition can adequately express the freedom and variety of the life that they portray, the passion for the imaginative world of art is the basis of the story of *Duke Carl of Rosenmold*. Duke Carl is not unlike the late King of Bavaria, in his love of France, his admiration for the *Grand Monarque* and his fantastic desire to amaze and to bewilder, but the resemblance is possibly only a chance one. In fact Mr. Pater's young hero is the precursor of the *Aufklärung* of the last century, the German precursor of Herder and Lessing and Goethe himself, and finds the forms of art ready to his hand without any national spirit to fill them or make them vital and responsive. He too dies, trampled to death by the soldiers of the country he so much admired, on the night of his marriage with a peasant girl, the very failure of his life lending him a certain melancholy grace and dramatic interest.

On the whole, then, this is a singularly attractive book. Mr. Pater is an intellectual impressionist. He does not weary us with any definite doctrine or seek to suit life to any formal creed. He is always looking for exquisite moments and, when he has found them, he analyses them with delicate and delightful art and then passes on, often to the opposite pole of thought or feeling, knowing that every mood has its own quality and charm and is justified by its mere existence. He has taken the sensationalism of Greek philosophy and made it a new method of art criticism. As for his style, it is

curiously ascetic. Now and then, we come across phrases with a strange sensuousness of expression, as when he tells us how Denys l'Auxerrois, on his return from a long journey, 'ate flesh for the first time, tearing the hot, red morsels with his delicate fingers in a kind of wild greed,' but such passages are rare. Asceticism is the keynote of Mr. Pater's prose; at times it is almost too severe in its self-control and makes us long for a little more freedom. For indeed, the danger of such prose as his is that it is apt to become somewhat laborious. Here and there, one is tempted to say of Mr. Pater that he is 'a seeker after something in language, that is there in no satisfying measure, or not at all.' The continual preoccupation with phrase and epithet has its drawbacks as well as its virtues. And yet, when all is said, what wonderful prose it is, with its subtle preferences, its fastidious purity, its rejection of what is common or ordinary! Mr. Pater has the true spirit of selection, the true tact of omission. If he be not among the greatest prose writers of our literature he is, at least, our greatest artist in prose; and though it may be admitted that the best style is that which seems an unconscious result rather than a conscious aim, still in these latter days when violent rhetoric does duty for eloquence and vulgarity usurps the name of nature, we should be grateful for a style that deliberately aims at perfection of form, that seeks to produce its effect by artistic means and sets before itself an ideal of grave and chastened beauty.

Imaginary Portraits. By Walter Pater, M.A., Fellow of Brasenose College, Oxford. (Macmillan and Co.)

A GOOD HISTORICAL NOVEL

(*Pall Mall Gazette*, August 8, 1887.)

Most modern Russian novelists look upon the historical novel as a *faux genre*, or a sort of fancy dress ball in literature, a mere puppet show, not a true picture of life. Yet their own history is full of such wonderful scenes and situations, ready for dramatist or novelist to treat of, that we are not surprised that, in spite of the dogmas of the *école naturaliste*, Mr. Stephen Coleridge has taken the Russia of the sixteenth century as the background for his strange tale. Indeed, there is much to be said in favour of a form remote from actual experience. Passion itself gains something from picturesqueness of surroundings; distance of time, unlike distance of space, makes objects larger and more vivid; over the common things of contemporary life there hangs a mist of familiarity that often makes their meaning obscure. There are also moments when we feel that but little artistic pleasure is to be gained from the study of the modern realistic school. Its works are powerful but they are painful, and after a time we tire of their harshness, their violence and their crudity. They exaggerate the importance of

facts and underrate the importance of fiction. Such, at any rate, is the mood—and what is criticism itself but a mood?—produced in us by a perusal of Mr. Coleridge's *Demetrius*. It is the story of a young lad of unknown parentage who is brought up in the household of a Polish noble. He is a tall, fair-looking youth, by name Alexis, with a pride of bearing and grace of manner that seem strange in one of such low station. Suddenly he is recognised by an exiled Russian noble as Demetrius, the son of Ivan the Terrible who was supposed to have been murdered by the usurper Boris. His identity is still further established by a strange cross of seven emeralds that he wears round his neck, and by a Greek inscription in his book of prayers which discloses the secret of his birth and the story of his rescue. He himself feels that the blood of kings beats in his veins, and appeals to the nobles of the Polish Diet to espouse his cause. By his passionate utterance he makes them acknowledge him as the true Tsar and invades Russia at the head of a large army. The people throng to him from every side, and Marfa, the widow of Ivan the Terrible, escapes from the convent in which she has been immured by Boris and comes to meet her son. At first she seems not to recognise him, but the music of his voice and the wonderful eloquence of his pleading win her over, and she embraces him in presence of the army and admits him to be her child. The usurper, terrified at the tidings, and deserted by his soldiers, commits suicide, and Alexis enters Moscow in triumph, and is crowned in the Kremlin. Yet he is not the true Demetrius, after all. He is deceived himself and he deceives others. Mr. Coleridge has drawn his character with delicate subtlety and quick insight, and the scene in which he discovers that he is no son of Ivan's and has no right to the name he claims, is exceedingly powerful and dramatic. One point of resemblance does exist between Alexis and the real Demetrius. Both of them are murdered, and with the death of this strange hero Mr. Coleridge ends his remarkable story.

On the whole, Mr. Coleridge has written a really good historical novel and may be congratulated on his success. The style is particularly interesting, and the narrative parts of the book are deserving of high praise for their clearness, dignity and sobriety. The speeches and passages of dialogue are not so fortunate, as they have an awkward tendency to lapse into bad blank verse. Here, for instance, is a speech printed by Mr. Coleridge as prose, in which the true music of prose is sacrificed to a false metrical system which is at once monotonous and tiresome:

But Death, who brings us freedom from all falsehood,
Who heals the heart when the physician fails,
Who comforts all whom life cannot console,
Who stretches out in sleep the tired watchers;

He takes the King and proves him but a beggar!
He speaks, and we, deaf to our Maker's voice,
Hear and obey the call of our destroyer!
Then let us murmur not at anything;
For if our ills are curable, 'tis idle,
And if they are past remedy, 'tis vain.
The worst our strongest enemy can do
Is take from us our life, and this indeed
Is in the power of the weakest also.

This is not good prose; it is merely blank verse of an inferior quality, and we hope that Mr. Coleridge in his next novel will not ask us to accept second-rate poetry as musical prose. For, that Mr. Coleridge is a young writer of great ability and culture cannot be doubted and, indeed, in spite of the error we have pointed out, *Demetrius* remains one of the most fascinating and delightful novels that has appeared this season.

Demetrius. By the Hon. Stephen Coleridge. (Kegan Paul.)

NEW NOVELS

(*Saturday Review*, August 20, 1887.)

Teutonic fiction, as a rule, is somewhat heavy and very sentimental; but Werner's *Her Son*, excellently translated by Miss Tyrrell, is really a capital story and would make a capital play. Old Count Steinrück has two grandsons, Raoul and Michael. The latter is brought up like a peasant's child, cruelly treated by his grandfather and by the peasant to whose care he is confided, his mother, the Countess Louis Steinrück, having married an adventurer and a gambler. He is the rough hero of the tale, the Saint Michael of that war with evil which is life; while Raoul, spoiled by his grandfather and his French mother, betrays his country and tarnishes his name. At every step in the narrative these two young men come into collision. There is a war of character, a clash of personalities. Michael is proud, stern and noble. Raoul is weak, charming and evil. Michael has the world against him and conquers. Raoul has the world on his side and loses. The whole story is full of movement and life, and the psychology of the characters is displayed by action not by analysis, by deeds not by description. Though there are three long volumes, we do not tire of the tale. It has truth, passion and power, and there are no better things than these in fiction.

The interest of Mr. Sale Lloyd's *Scamp* depends on one of those misunderstandings which is the stock-in-trade of second-rate novelists. Captain Egerton falls in love with Miss Adela Thorndyke, who is a sort of feeble echo of some of Miss Broughton's

heroines, but will not marry her because he has seen her talking with a young man who lives in the neighbourhood and is one of his oldest friends. We are sorry to say that Miss Thorndyke remains quite faithful to Captain Egerton, and goes so far as to refuse for his sake the rector of the parish, a local baronet, and a real live lord. There are endless pages of five o'clock tea-prattle and a good many tedious characters. Such novels as *Scamp* are possibly more easy to write than they are to read.

James Hepburn belongs to a very different class of book. It is not a mere chaos of conversation, but a strong story of real life, and it cannot fail to give Miss Veitch a prominent position among modern novelists. James Hepburn is the Free Church minister of Mossgiel, and presides over a congregation of pleasant sinners and serious hypocrites. Two people interest him, Lady Ellinor Farquharson and a handsome young vagabond called Robert Blackwood. Through his efforts to save Lady Ellinor from shame and ruin he is accused of being her lover; through his intimacy with Robert Blackwood he is suspected of having murdered a young girl in his household. A meeting of the elders and office-bearers of the church is held to consider the question of the minister's resignation, at which, to the amazement of every one, Robert Blackwood comes forth and confesses to the crime of which Hepburn is accused. The whole story is exceedingly powerful, and there is no extravagant use of the Scotch dialect, which is a great advantage to the reader.

The title-page of *Tiff* informs us that it was written by the author of *Lucy; or, a Great Mistake*, which seems to us a form of anonymity, as we have never heard of the novel in question. We hope, however, that it was better than *Tiff*, for *Tiff* is undeniably tedious. It is the story of a beautiful girl who has many lovers and loses them, and of an ugly girl who has one lover and keeps him. It is a rather confused tale, and there are far too many love-scenes in it. If this 'Favourite Fiction' Series, in which *Tiff* appears, is to be continued, we would entreat the publisher to alter the type and the binding. The former is far too small: while, as for the cover, it is of sham crocodile leather adorned with a blue spider and a vulgar illustration of the heroine in the arms of a young man in evening dress. Dull as *Tiff* is—and its dulness is quite remarkable—it does not deserve so detestable a binding.

(1) *Her Son*. Translated from the German of E. Werner by Christina Tyrrell. (Richard Bentley and Son.)

(2) *Scamp*. By J. Sale Lloyd. (White and Co.)

(3) *James Hepburn*. By Sophie Veitch. (Alexander Gardner.)

(4) *Tiff*. By the Author of *Lucy; or, A Great Mistake*. 'Favourite Fiction' Series. (William Stevens.)

TWO BIOGRAPHIES OF KEATS

(*Pall Mall Gazette*, September 27, 1887.)

A poet, said Keats once, 'is the most unpoetical of all God's creatures,' and whether the aphorism be universally true or not, this is certainly the impression produced by the two last biographies that have appeared of Keats himself. It cannot be said that either Mr. Colvin or Mr. William Rossetti makes us love Keats more or understand him better. In both these books there is much that is like 'chaff in the mouth,' and in Mr. Rossetti's there is not a little that is like 'brass on the palate.' To a certain degree this is, no doubt, inevitable nowadays. Everybody pays a penalty for peeping through keyholes, and the keyhole and the backstairs are essential parts of the method of the modern biographers. It is only fair, however, to state at the outset that Mr. Colvin has done his work much better than Mr. Rossetti. The account Mr. Colvin gives of Keats's boyhood, for instance, is very pleasing, and so is the sketch of Keats's circle of friends, both Leigh Hunt and Haydon being admirably drawn. Here and there, trivial family details are introduced without much regard to proportion, and the posthumous panegyrics of devoted friends are not really of so much value, in helping us to form any true estimate of Keats's actual character, as Mr. Colvin seems to imagine. We have no doubt that when Bailey wrote to Lord Houghton that common-sense and gentleness were Keats's two special characteristics the worthy Archdeacon meant extremely well, but we prefer the real Keats, with his passionate wilfulness, his fantastic moods and his fine inconsistency. Part of Keats's charm as a man is his fascinating incompleteness. We do not want him reduced to a sand-paper smoothness or made perfect by the addition of popular virtues. Still, if Mr. Colvin has not given us a very true picture of Keats's character, he has certainly told the story of his life in a pleasant and readable manner. He may not write with the ease and grace of a man of letters, but he is never pretentious and not often pedantic.

Mr. Rossetti's book is a great failure. To begin with, Mr. Rossetti commits the great mistake of separating the man from the artist. The facts of Keats's life are interesting only when they are shown in their relation to his creative activity. The moment they are isolated they are either uninteresting or painful. Mr. Rossetti complains that the early part of Keats's life is uneventful and the latter part depressing, but the fault lies with the biographer, not with the subject.

The book opens with a detailed account of Keats's life, in which he spares us nothing, from what he calls the 'sexual misadventure at Oxford' down to the six weeks'

dissipation after the appearance of the *Blackwood* article and the hysterical and morbid ravings of the dying man. No doubt, most if not all of the things Mr. Rossetti tells us are facts; but there is neither tact shown in the selection that is made of the facts nor sympathy in the use to which they are put. When Mr. Rossetti writes of the man he forgets the poet, and when he criticises the poet he shows that he does not understand the man. His first error, as we have said, is isolating the life from the work; his second error is his treatment of the work itself. Take, for instance, his criticism of that wonderful *Ode to a Nightingale*, with all its marvellous magic of music, colour and form. He begins by saying that ‘the first point of weakness’ in the poem is the ‘surfeit of mythological allusions,’ a statement which is absolutely untrue, as out of the eight stanzas of the poem only three contain any mythological allusions at all, and of these not one is either forced or remote. Then coming to the second verse,

Oh for a draught of vintage, that hath been
Cool’d a long age in the deep-delvèd earth,
Tasting of Flora and the country-green,
Dance, and Provençal song, and sunburnt mirth!

Mr. Rossetti exclaims in a fine fit of ‘Blue Ribbon’ enthusiasm: ‘Surely nobody wants wine as a preparation for enjoying a nightingale’s music, whether in a literal or in a fanciful relation!’ ‘To call wine “the true, the blushful Hippocrene” . . . seems’ to him ‘both stilted and repulsive’; ‘the phrase “with beaded bubbles winking at the brim” is (though picturesque) trivial’; ‘the succeeding image, “Not charioted by Bacchus and his pards”’ is ‘far worse’; while such an expression as ‘light-winged Dryad of the trees’ is an obvious pleonasm, for Dryad really means *Oak-nymph*! As for that superb burst of passion,

Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird!
No hungry generations tread thee down;
The voice I hear this passing night was heard
In ancient days by emperor and clown:

Mr. Rossetti tells us that it is a palpable, or rather ‘palpable (*sic*) fact that this address . . . is a logical solecism,’ as men live longer than nightingales. As Mr. Colvin makes very much the same criticism, talking of ‘a breach of logic which is also . . . a flaw in the poetry,’ it may be worth while to point out to these two last critics of Keats’s work that what Keats meant to convey was the contrast between the permanence of beauty and the change and decay of human life, an idea which receives its fullest expression in the *Ode on a Grecian Urn*. Nor do the other poems fare much better at Mr. Rossetti’s hands. The fine invocation in *Isabella*—

Moan hither, all ye syllables of woe,
From the deep throat of sad Melpomene!
Through bronzed lyre in tragic order go,
And touch the strings into a mystery,

seems to him 'a *fadeur*'; the Indian Bacchante of the fourth book of *Endymion* he calls a 'sentimental and beguiling wine-bibber,' and, as for Endymion himself, he declares that he cannot understand 'how his human organism, *with respirative and digestive processes*, continues to exist,' and gives us his own idea of how Keats should have treated the subject. An eminent French critic once exclaimed in despair, '*Je trouve des physiologistes partout!*'; but it has been reserved for Mr. Rossetti to speculate on Endymion's digestion, and we readily accord to him all the distinction of the position. Even where Mr. Rossetti seeks to praise, he spoils what he praises. To speak of *Hyperion* as 'a monument of Cyclopean architecture in verse' is bad enough, but to call it 'a Stonehenge of reverberance' is absolutely detestable; nor do we learn much about *The Eve of St. Mark* by being told that its 'simplicity is full-blooded as well as quaint.' What is the meaning, also, of stating that Keats's *Notes on Shakespeare* are 'somewhat strained and *bloated*'? and is there nothing better to be said of Madeline in *The Eve of St. Agnes* than that 'she is made a very charming and loveable figure, *although she does nothing very particular except to undress without looking behind her, and to elope*'? There is no necessity to follow Mr. Rossetti any further as he flounders about through the quagmire that he has made for his own feet. A critic who can say that 'not many of Keats's poems are highly admirable' need not be too seriously treated. Mr. Rossetti is an industrious man and a painstaking writer, but he entirely lacks the temper necessary for the interpretation of such poetry as was written by John Keats.

It is pleasant to turn again to Mr. Colvin, who criticises always with modesty and often with acumen. We do not agree with him when he accepts Mrs. Owens's theory of a symbolic and allegoric meaning underlying *Endymion*, his final judgment on Keats as 'the most Shakspearean spirit that has lived since Shakspeare' is not very fortunate, and we are surprised to find him suggesting, on the evidence of a rather silly story of Severn's, that Sir Walter Scott was privy to the *Blackwood* article. There is nothing, however, about his estimate of the poet's work that is harsh, irritating or uncouth. The true Marcellus of English song has not yet found his Virgil, but Mr. Colvin makes a tolerable Statius.

(1) *Keats*. By Sidney Colvin. 'English Men of Letters' Series. (Macmillan and Co.)

(2) *Life of John Keats*. By William Michael Rossetti. 'Great Writers' Series. (Walter Scott.)

A SCOTCHMAN ON SCOTTISH POETRY

(*Pall Mall Gazette*, October 24, 1887.)

A distinguished living critic, born south of the Tweed, once whispered in confidence to a friend that he believed that the Scotch knew really very little about their own national literature. He quite admitted that they love their 'Robbie Burns' and their 'Sir Walter' with a patriotic enthusiasm that makes them extremely severe upon any unfortunate southron who ventures to praise either in their presence, but he claimed that the works of such great national poets as Dunbar, Henryson and Sir David Lyndsay are sealed books to the majority of the reading public in Edinburgh, Aberdeen and Glasgow, and that few Scotch people have any idea of the wonderful outburst of poetry that took place in their country during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, at a time when there was little corresponding development in England. Whether this terrible accusation be absolutely true, or not, it is needless to discuss at present. It is probable that the archaism of language alone will always prevent a poet like Dunbar from being popular in the ordinary acceptance of the word. Professor Veitch's book, however, shows that there are some, at any rate, in the 'land o' cakes' who can admire and appreciate their marvellous early singers, and whose admiration for *The Lord of the Isles* and the verses *To a Mountain Daisy* does not blind them to the exquisite beauties of *The Testament of Cresseid*, *The Thistle and the Rose*, and the *Dialog betwix Experience and ane Courteour*.

Taking as the subject of his two interesting volumes the feeling for Nature in Scottish Poetry, Professor Veitch starts with a historical disquisition on the growth of the sentiment in humanity. The primitive state he regards as being simply a sort of 'open-air feeling.' The chief sources of pleasure are the warmth of the sunshine, the cool of the breeze and the general fresh aspect of the earth and sky, connecting itself with a consciousness of life and sensuous enjoyment; while darkness, storm and cold are regarded as repulsive. This is followed by the pastoral stage in which we find the love of green meadows and of shady trees and of all things that make life pleasant and comfortable. This, again, by the stage of agriculture, the era of the war with earth, when men take pleasure in the cornfield and in the garden, but hate everything that is opposed to tillage, such as woodland and rock, or that cannot be subdued to utility, such as mountain and sea. Finally we come to the pure nature-feeling, the free delight in the mere contemplation of the external world, the joy in sense-impressions irrespective of all questions of Nature's utility and beneficence. But here the growth

does not stop. The Greek, desiring to make Nature one with humanity, peopled the grove and hillside with beautiful and fantastic forms, saw the god hiding in the thicket, and the naiad drifting with the stream. The modern Wordsworthian, desiring to make man one with Nature, finds in external things 'the symbols of our inner life, the workings of a spirit akin to our own.' There is much that is suggestive in these early chapters of Professor Veitch's book, but we cannot agree with him in the view he takes of the primitive attitude towards Nature. The 'open-air feeling,' of which he talks, seems to us comparatively modern. The earliest Nature-myths tell us, not of man's 'sensuous enjoyment' of Nature, but of the terror that Nature inspires. Nor are darkness and storm regarded by the primitive man as 'simply repulsive'; they are to him divine and supernatural things, full of wonder and full of awe. Some reference, also, should have been made to the influence of towns on the development of the nature-feeling, for, paradox though it may seem, it is none the less true that it is largely to the creation of cities that we owe the love of the country.

Professor Veitch is on a safer ground when he comes to deal with the growth and manifestations of this feeling as displayed in Scotch poetry. The early singers, as he points out, had all the mediæval love of gardens, all the artistic delight in the bright colours of flowers and the pleasant song of birds, but they felt no sympathy for the wild solitary moorland, with its purple heather, its grey rocks and its waving bracken. Montgomerie was the first to wander out on the banks and braes and to listen to the music of the burns, and it was reserved for Drummond of Hawthornden to sing of flood and forest and to notice the beauty of the mists on the hillside and the snow on the mountain tops. Then came Allan Ramsay with his honest homely pastorals; Thomson, who writes about Nature like an eloquent auctioneer, and yet was a keen observer, with a fresh eye and an open heart; Beattie, who approached the problems that Wordsworth afterwards solved; the great Celtic epic of Ossian, such an important factor in the romantic movement of Germany and France; Fergusson, to whom Burns is so much indebted; Burns himself, Leyden, Sir Walter Scott, James Hogg and (*longo intervallo*) Christopher North and the late Professor Shairp. On nearly all these poets Professor Veitch writes with fine judgment and delicate feeling, and even his admiration for Burns has nothing absolutely aggressive about it. He shows, however, a certain lack of the true sense of literary proportion in the amount of space he devotes to the two last writers on our list. Christopher North was undoubtedly an interesting personality to the Edinburgh of his day, but he has not left behind him anything of real permanent value. There was too much noise in his criticism, too little music in his poetry. As for Professor Shairp, looked on as a critic he was a tragic example of the unfortunate influence of Wordsworth, for he was always confusing

ethical with æsthetical questions, and never had the slightest idea how to approach such poets as Shelley and Rossetti whom it was his mission to interpret to young Oxford in his later years; {189} while, considered as a poet, he deserves hardly more than a passing reference. Professor Veitch gravely tells us that one of the descriptions of *Kilmahoe* is 'not surpassed in the language for real presence, felicity of epithet, and purity of reproduction,' and statements of this kind serve to remind us of the fact that a criticism which is based on patriotism is always provincial in its result. But it is only fair to add that it is very rarely that Professor Veitch is so extravagant and so grotesque. His judgment and taste are, as a rule, excellent, and his book is, on the whole, a very fascinating and delightful contribution to the history of literature.

The Feeling for Nature in Scottish Poetry. By John Veitch, Professor of Logic and Rhetoric in the University of Glasgow. (Blackwood and Son.)